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August 25, 2022

An open letter to the residents and communities along the Eglinton Crosstown West Extension

The Eglinton Crosstown West Extension will bring the Eglinton Crosstown LRT another 9.2 kilometres farther west, creating a continuous rapid transit line from the east end of Toronto through the heart of the city and into Mississauga, with a planned future extension to Pearson International Airport. With seven new stations and connections to the UP Express, GO train, GO bus, and TTC and MiWay bus services, it means more rapid transit is coming to your doorstep, reducing congestion in your neighbourhood, making it faster and easier for you to get to work, to visit family and friends and head to destinations throughout the region. Someone travelling from midtown Toronto to Square One in Mississauga – two bustling and growing areas in our region – will save about 14 minutes on their trip.

While the 9.2-kilometre Eglinton Crosstown West Extension will be mostly tunnelled, a small section will be elevated along an approximately 1.5-kilometre stretch of the route between Scarlett Road and Jane Street where it crosses the Humber River alongside the existing bridge. This selected design will result in more travel time savings for riders, the highest ridership potential and easier, more reliable operations once the extension is in service. Importantly, it will also result in a shorter, less disruptive construction timeline for the community. Through conversations at open houses, community walks, and smaller table meetings with local community groups, we know this design approach has emerged as a key area of concern for some.

We know that building rapid transit through Canada's largest city and busiest region will not be easy. That is why we have been engaging and consulting with communities about the project and working together to see how we can deliver it in a way that maximizes benefits and minimizes impacts as much as possible.

This letter responds to these concerns about the elevated portion of the route by clearly outlining why the decision was made to elevate the line in this area, and why it is the best approach for delivering the Eglinton Crosstown West Extension.

We will address the following topics:

- Designing for local conditions
- Protecting parks and strengthening tree cover and green space

- Lowering noise levels and disruption both during construction and once the new line is in operation
- Consulting with and supporting communities

Designing for local conditions

Transit projects often feature a mix of surface, elevated and underground elements. Which approach is used depends on a number of factors, including existing environmental and topographical conditions, ease of construction and operations, integration with other transit, and community impacts.



Elevating the predominately tunnelled Eglinton Crosstown West Extension over the Humber River provides the best results when balancing all the factors mentioned above. Let's have a closer look at some of the technical alternatives that were examined, but ultimately screened out as the benefits of the elevated guideway outweighed those evaluated below:

- Tunnelling
One of the alternatives was to fully tunnel the Eglinton Crosstown West Extension under the Humber River. Excavations for the underground stations at Scarlett-Eglinton and Jane-Eglinton would be up to 30 metres deep, which is as deep as a nine-storey building is tall. This would be more complex, more time-consuming and more disruptive for the community in comparison to an elevated option. For

example, excavating an area for an underground Jane-Eglinton Station and the necessary infrastructure for connecting tracks would mean removing 180,000 cubic metres of soil and rock. Hauling this soil and rock away would mean 100 trucks a day moving in and out of the area, adding to traffic delays and congestion.

To excavate stations of this depth, a much larger area would be needed for construction than what is needed for the elevated guideway. Additional infrastructure for the tunnels and underground stations, including a pocket track, crossover area and two emergency exit buildings, would need to be built. This additional infrastructure and the excavation needed to build it would have required more space for construction, meaning more property would need to be acquired and more park space would be needed for construction staging. This could extend to the more active areas of the parks, including soccer fields and cricket pitches, which are areas that will not be impacted by construction of the elevated guideway.

Tunnelling through this area would have required a much longer construction period, adding up to three years to the project schedule. It would also have required more significant traffic closures, with the potential for half the width of Eglinton Avenue West from just west of Scarlett Road to just east of Jane Street to be closed for up to four years. Pedestrian closures would also have been required at major intersections close to the station construction.

The area around Eglinton Avenue West between Scarlett Road and Jane Street is also an identified flood plain zone in an area that has experienced historic levels of flooding with Hurricane Hazel in 1954 and more recently during the Toronto flood of 2013. The higher risk of flooding around the Humber River poses unique challenges to building underground infrastructure in the area.

The potential for flooding also poses operational risks for underground stations and tunnels once the line is running and could impact the reliability of the service. In the event of a flood, major damage to the line would occur and extensive repairs would be required.

- Partial tunnelling and crossing the Humber River via bridge
Another alternative that our planning and design teams examined was to keep the Eglinton Crosstown West Extension underground on either side of the Humber River, including the Scarlett Road and Jane Avenue stations, but cross the river on a bridge structure that would emerge out of the river's banks, separate from the existing Eglinton Avenue bridge. Again, because the area is in a floodplain, there would have been significant challenges in delivering this option.

Large portal structures on both sides of the Humber River would have been needed to transition from the bridge to the tunnels. These portals would have to be located on the Humber Valley slopes within the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) flood plain, as well as within Eglinton Flats. This would have meant a high potential for flooding during significant rainfall events.

An even larger construction area would be needed compared to a fully tunnelled approach because of these portals and it would have been considerably larger than what is required for the elevated section. It would also require significant tree removal. As with a fully tunnelled approach, two emergency exit buildings would need to be built because of the underground stations, which would not be the case with the elevated guideway and elevated stations. The fully tunnelled approach would also add significant impacts to traffic and transit along Eglinton Avenue West during construction, creating a construction timeline of up to three years longer.

- On the surface of Eglinton Avenue West

Planning and design teams also examined an alternative that ran along the surface of Eglinton Avenue West. In this approach, the trains would transition from tunnels west of Scarlett Road, running down the middle of Eglinton Avenue West to just past Jane Street, before heading back underground.

This approach would have meant major impacts to the traffic lanes and pedestrians along this stretch of Eglinton Avenue West. Construction would have involved widening the Eglinton Ave embankment to accommodate Jane-Eglinton Station, pocket tracks and crossover. The existing Humber River Bridge may have needed widening, which would likely involve widening the Eglinton Avenue embankment within the flood plain. Widening the embankment in this area could result in flooding impacts elsewhere in the Humber Valley. Tree removals would still also be needed along Eglinton Avenue West and Eglinton Flats to widen the embankment and additional property would need to be acquired.

The construction timeframe for this approach would be up to two years longer than what is needed for the elevated guideway.

It is for these reasons that elevating the line between Scarlett Road and Jane Street has been chosen as the best option to balance transit needs and construction impacts on the community.

Protecting parks and strengthening tree cover and green space

Fergy Brown Park, Eglinton Flats and Pearen Park are beautiful areas and places of pride for the community, where people come from all over the city to play, walk and take in the beauty. We have heard from the community that protecting and preserving these parks, and ensuring continued access to them during construction, is a high priority.

This is why we are coordinating with the City of Toronto to build the elevated guideway and elevated stations to straddle the boulevard as close as possible to Eglinton Avenue West and the existing bridge, in accordance with city requirements. Access to the parks, including cyclist and pedestrian access, will be maintained throughout construction. No infrastructure will be built in the programmed areas of the parks such as the baseball diamonds, soccer fields and cricket pitches, allowing the community to continue using these important spaces throughout construction and beyond.

Space within Pearen Park will be required for construction staging, but we will ensure whatever space is used is kept to a minimum and will be fully restored once construction is complete.

We know that trees will need to be removed to safely build and operate the Eglinton Crosstown West Extension, which would be the case no matter how the line is built. We are working to make sure that we will keep the number to a minimum, and we will plant more than we remove. On average, our commitment is to plant at least three new trees for every single tree removed, ensuring that we do not reduce tree cover.

In keeping with our environmental assessment and related mitigation plans, we incorporate robust plans for vegetation, landscape restoration and species' habitats into our project agreements with our construction companies. This ensures any land needed for construction is carefully restored and beautified once construction is complete.

In addition to this, Metrolinx has an agreement with TRCA to plant additional trees near the route as early as we can. Advance planting of 400 trees began last fall, with more plantings scheduled for later this year. By planting trees now, they will have many years to grow before the Eglinton Crosstown West Extension even opens, which will help preserve and strengthen tree cover in the community.

Whenever we need to remove trees, we ensure our plans are carefully studied by a qualified arborist and reviewed by our municipal partners and local conservation authorities. There will be opportunities for the community to participate in plans for restoration - we will share more information on these opportunities in the very near

future. Metrolinx will continue to work with the TCRA and the City of Toronto on new planting initiatives.

Lowering noise levels and disruption both during construction and once the new line is in operation

We also know there are questions about noise associated with the elevated guideway, both during construction and once the line is in operation, and how we will keep the area quiet and peaceful.

In our project agreements with contractors, we require them to continuously monitor noise and vibration during construction to make sure they stay under the required noise limits and to find ways to reduce noise wherever possible. We are also focussed on speeding up construction and making construction timelines as efficient as possible by building incentives in our contracts for work finished ahead of schedule. We know construction can be disruptive and we're doing everything we can to minimize inconveniences.

For noise and vibration due to service operations, we will adopt technologies that reduce sounds of passing trains and keep noise levels to a minimum.

Noise and vibration from electrified transit is mostly caused by wheel-on-rail contact. We can address that impact at the track level through the design of the project by using the following:

- Continuously welded rail - eliminates joints that cause clacking
- Resiliently supported rail ties - pads between the rail and track bed that absorb vibration and reduce noise
- High-grade rail fasteners and rail dampers - compress track parts to absorb vibration and reduce noise
- Regular wheel maintenance - addresses flattened wheels and other structural wear and tear that can cause a thumping sound

The project phone line (416-202-8001) is monitored 24 hours a day if there are questions or concerns about noise and vibration during construction. You can also reach us by email (EglintonWest@metrolinx.com) or on Twitter ([@EglintonWestEXT](https://twitter.com/EglintonWestEXT)).

Consulting with and supporting communities

Community engagement is central to the success of transit projects. Since we released our first business case for the Eglinton Crosstown West Extension in 2020, we have held public open houses - the first in April of 2020 and 12 virtual events in the last year - and many targeted discussions in nearly 40 meetings with community

leaders, community groups and individual community members to explain our proposed plans and to gather important local insights as we advance designs.

The feedback you give us is critical in shaping our plans and is being reflected in decisions about the location of Kipling-Eglinton Station, the location and maintenance of access roads to the parks both during and after construction, locations of the temporary multi-use paths and cycle tracks, tunnelling methodology for the connection with Mount Dennis Station, as well as community priorities for the public spaces around the elevated guideway.

Our approach to community engagement and consultation has also included delivery of thousands of project notices and flyers to residents and businesses, conducting surveys and polls, and several pop-up events to provide information about project benefits and upcoming construction, and gather feedback from the community. The feedback we collect is shared with the planning and design teams and incorporated into plans where possible.

Late last year, we launched an online survey to gather feedback from the community on the location of the future Kipling-Eglinton station. The feedback collected from this survey helped move forward the community's preferred hybrid option for consultation and design work.

This past March, we released an online survey asking community members to share their thoughts on potential design options for the elevated section and the spaces below and around it. More than 700 people from the community provided their feedback. The survey asked participants to rank the importance of design principles, and to share their thoughts on how to enhance the area around the portals and underneath the elevated section, as well as guardrails and lighting. This valuable feedback will be used to prepare detailed designs. We will be offering even more opportunities for community members to share feedback on design elements as we advance plans, and we will have more in-person events in the coming months. We will maintain our engagements with the community as the design progresses so as to ensure the right combination of technologies are used for this project.

We are also looking forward to opening a community office near Scarlett and Eglinton in the near future. Once the office opens, staff will be available to answer questions, provide updates, and support residents, businesses and other organizations through construction.

Community benefits

Metrolinx follows a four-pillared approach to deliver community benefits and supports, mitigate disruption, and make contributions to the communities affected by

construction. The four pillars are employment opportunities, local business supports, public realm improvements, and community improvement.

We work with our contractors to promote apprenticeship training and workforce development and provide opportunities for historically disadvantaged groups through the delivery for transit projects.

We also develop relationships with local businesses through discussions and collaborations with business improvement area (BIA) boards and through Metrolinx-led Construction Liaison Committees (CLCs). We provide many services for local businesses during construction, including developing “shop local” campaigns, providing signage and hoarding to market businesses, and ensuring that businesses remain accessible through regular cleaning, up-keep and work site configuration.

We are committed to working closely with communities to identify and implement improvements to the public spaces surrounding our projects, whether it is through design excellence or improvement after construction to ensure neighbourhoods are in similar or better shape than before construction.

Moving forward

Our commitment is to continue to work closely with residents, businesses and local organizations on how we deliver the Eglinton Crosstown West Extension.

We understand how connected people feel to the places they live, work and play. Our community engagements will be an ongoing process, and we will keep an open, two-way dialogue going so that we can continuously strengthen and improve our plans.

We remain very excited about the many benefits the Eglinton Crosstown West Extension will bring, and we look forward to working together to make the vision of a more connected, integrated city a reality.

Kind regards,



Phil Verster
President and CEO
Metrolinx