



Friends of the Don East

Working to Protect and Restore the Don Watershed

May 6, 2004

A TRANSPORTATION PLAN WITH VISION

The second draft Don Valley Transportation Corridor Master Plan, presented at a series of public meetings in April, successfully integrates transportation planning with strategic environmental protection. It also responds to concerns raised by the previous City Council, Friends of the Don East, Don Mills Residents Inc, and other community organizations in rejecting a 2002 proposal to expand the car-carrying capacity of the DVP.

Instead, the Plan proposes increased mass transit and improved traffic flows while incorporating a vision that includes reduced air emissions and limits on the environmental impact of moving millions of people through and around the Don Valley.

Key aspects of the Plan include:

- Increased use of GO Transit's Richmond Hill/Toronto line, with enhanced parking access at Oriole and Old Cummer stations and a new station at either Wynford Drive and Eglinton or on Don Mills Road north of the Donway;
- A series of proposals for new or improved TTC bus service, including increased bus service on Don Mills Road, advanced signals for buses, a dedicated bus lane on the DVP, and the prospect of a Bus Rapid Transit line, or BRT, with routes via Flemingdon Park and Thorncliffe Park to the Castle Frank subway station;
- The possible construction of a two-lane, bus-only extension to Redway Road to carry some of the above increases in bus traffic. This is an amendment to a previously controversial proposal, and;
- A series of traffic management upgrades to eliminate local bottlenecks and that might include smart stop light systems, metered access, improved signage on traffic conditions and alternate routes, new parking measures, and an increase in lanes reserved for high occupancy vehicles.

This plan has mostly got it right. It sends a strong message about the need for improved management of population growth and smart transportation, based on expanding the capacity of the TTC, Go Transit, and high occupancy vehicle lanes. And it makes a real effort to incorporate the environmental protection of the Don Valley itself, one of the most important environmental features of our community

The Master Plan is still under development, and needs to be fleshed out in detail before the City can make final choices. Next steps are for staff to incorporate input from the public meetings into a report to Council, and for Council to decide which recommendations deserve more study. This in turn will trigger more detailed studies, and more public meetings.

Friends of the Don East (FODE) believes key issues for the future, if these plan elements move forward, will include:

- The potential impact of constructing a GO station near Eglinton and Wynford Drive in or near a relatively unspoiled area of the East Don valley;
- Whether the proposed bus lane on the DVP shoulders can be accommodated without extensive increases to the existing embankments, with impacts on the Valley and the Don River;
- What impact the proposed two-lane, bus-only extension to Redway Road would have on Crothers Woods. This is a designated Environmentally Significant Area already under severe stress. More diesel particulates, airborne salt in the winter, and year-round road run-off would add to this stress. FODE is already on record as being very concerned about the impact of mountain biking on the Woods, and wants a comprehensive plan to protect the Woods rather than have them wither from a thousand cuts, and;
- Concerns about local health impacts, such as increased bus exhaust along Don Mills Road and near the Castle Frank subway station.

FODE congratulates the City on the vision contained in the Master Plan and looks forward to participating in its evolution in order to help ensure the best possible protection of the Don River, the valley, the nearby environment, and neighborhood health.

Prepared by a public consultation response team consisting of Brendan Flanagan and Andrew McCammon, and approved by the Board.

For any further information, please contact Andrew McCammon, Chair, as below.