

**Bloor - St Clair Noise Walls
Community Advisory Committee Meeting #2**

Thursday May 2, 2013
St Josaphat's Church
6:30 to 8:30 pm

DRAFT MEETING REPORT

*This draft report was prepared by Jane Farrow and Suzannah Kinsella as the independent notetaker and facilitator of the meeting. It reflects the key points raised and is not intended to serve as a verbatim transcript. This draft report is subject to the review of the participants at the meeting. If you have any questions, comments or suggested edits, please contact the local CAC Liaison by **Tuesday May 21, 2013** at which point the record will be finalized.*
CAC Liaison: Kelly Thornton Kelly.thornton@gotransit.com 416-604-9582

Meeting Overview This was the second meeting of the Bloor – St Clair Noise Wall Community Advisory Committee (CAC). The purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for CAC members to:

- brief the landscape architect and GO Transit on their views on the 2015 and Full Build Service walls,
- note concerns and issues the design needs to consider,
- and find opportunities to integrate the wall into the neighbourhood.

KEY POINTS

1. Concerns and issues about the wall designs in all the locations were compiled and prioritized – in all cases, greening & landscaping, sunlight & shadow and reduction of noise were identified as the most important issues.
2. This neighbourhood has a significant stretch of the West Toronto Railpath which has become a vital and valued green space that functions as a public park, drawing together locals, commuters and visitors throughout the year and all day long. Protecting greenery, sunlight and gathering spots on this linear green space is a key concern for all.
3. The neighbourhood has some proposed noise walls in semi-industrial areas adjacent to residential streets. Some thought that these places might be suitable for reduced landscaping and greening treatments. Others felt that these places were a key opportunity to create spaces and places that would improve the industrial feel and connectivity of these areas.

4. It is important that GO Transit understands that participation of CAC members in the noise wall design process cannot be taken as support for or consent that the full service noise walls be built in the neighbourhood.
5. CAC members are engaging in this process in good faith, according to the Terms of Reference GO Transit has set out. They sought assurances that the decision on whether the walls get built or not be made upon the conclusion of this process, as promised, and not before or during.

Welcome and Agenda Review

Suzannah Kinsella opened the meeting by reviewing the proposed agenda and went over the Action Items from the last meeting which had been sent out by email prior to the meeting. They included the Request to Qualify and Quote for the landscape architect and guided walks along the rail corridor. Participants signed the Terms of Reference.

The Landscape Architect was present and introduced to participants. Neno Kovacevic is an Associate with the IBI Group, a large international firm that has experience building large infrastructure projects including noise walls on transit corridors. The Toronto office has approximately 25 staff and has recently completed some nearby projects such as the CN Tower Plaza and a retaining wall in Liberty Village abutting Western Battery Road. Mr. Kovacevic said that he is looking forward to working with participants on a collaborative design that vets ideas thoroughly, thinks out all options and achieves the key objective of reducing noise. He is the lead landscape architect on all eight CAC's along the GTS corridor. Mr Kovacevic lives nearby and enjoys the neighbourhood for its local amenities, schools, shops and connectivity.

Points of Clarification and CAC Process

Friends of West Toronto Railpath met at city hall in the last week of April, with a large group of stakeholders. It was reported that most people at the meeting were against the building of the full service noise walls. The 2015 walls were what most people were prepared to accept. This was raised by the CAC participant as a point of information for GO Transit, Landscape Architect and others CAC members to bear in mind as the process of design and community consultation continues.

In the event that the CAC does not reach consensus on the noise wall design, as outlined in the Terms of Reference, participants are anxious to have the decision making process articulated clearly by GO Transit. Questions were asked regarding whether there would be voting, and how the votes could be weighted, if at all. Some CAC members were under the impression that other CAC's were told that votes would be weighted in favour of residents who lived closest to the tracks.

GO Transit stated that if there is no consensus, there would be a prioritization of concerns and issues. GO Transit said that they do not have the intention of using a system of weighting votes as part of this process and that this may have been an misunderstanding or misperception of what was stated at another meeting. Another CAC member who had been at the other CAC meeting in question concurred that this was not an accurate representation of what had been discussed there.

The facilitator asked that GO Transit come to the June meeting with an update on the decision making process.

CAC Advice & Concerns on Noise Wall Function and Form

The Bloor to St Clair section of the GTS corridor was broken down into three sections for comment and discussion.

1. Dupont St. – St Clair Ave. W.
2. Dundas St. West: Dupont St. to Bloor St. W.
3. West Toronto Railpath: Cariboo to Bloor

Track-side photo montages and Google maps of noise wall locations (2015 and Full Build) displayed. Where available, photos in both summer and winter were used to show the variations in greenery, light and conditions at grade. Using post-it notes, CAC members each posted their top three concerns on each section of the proposed walls e.g. graffiti, greening, noise bounce, etc.

The Landscape Architect and facilitator Suzannah Kinsella worked with CAC members to brainstorm ideas regarding the objectives, form and function of the noise walls for each section. All the comments were then reviewed as a group and people were encouraged to discuss and add any additional detail to their concerns and observations.

It was noted that the reduction of noise is a key priority for all the walls. Members were instructed to still note it down where they wanted to. The input received from CAC members is listed below and is listed by noise wall sections.

Section 1 Dupont to St Clair

The northernmost section of this area's noise walls has the least amount of public facing walls. Some felt that there is an opportunity to create spaces and places that would improve the industrial feel of these areas, while others felt that the greening and landscaping budget was better spent in more public areas. Members agreed that, if given budget restrictions, the Dundas West and Railpath sections were higher priorities for landscaping.

- Greening, Noise Reduction and Graffiti prevention and abatement were identified as the key concerns in this area.

- Other concerns included: Aesthetics for the parks, blocking views of industrial buildings, integration of the walls from the perspective of neighbourhood safety, providing seating areas, public art – including graffiti as art, a learning display area, creating public and green spaces.
- It was noted that public areas such as this are not improved by making it less green or shaded, and that there is an opportunity here to make it better by doing something creative and green.
- Some concern was voiced about making the walls look nice for people on the train but others felt that in the context of limited financial resources this is a lower priority.

Section 2 – Dundas West to Dupont St

In this section of the GTS corridor the track bed is elevated from the Dundas St. West roadway, which allows the train noise to travel outward further than in other places. To accomplish the Ministry of Environment mandated noise reduction levels a wall must be built here that is 5 metres high, measured from the track bed. Many participants noted that this area adjacent to the tracks, along Dundas St. West, is already very loud with traffic noise. It is hoped that the noise wall can be designed with a specific awareness of the challenges in this zone, in particular, the possibility of noise that ‘bounces’ or reflects back into the community from both car traffic and trains.

Key concerns were:

- Greening and landscaping – including the preservation of the trees and Railside garden, which has been tended to by the community for 15 years.
- Noise reduction – of both trains and cars along Dundas St. W., where noise ‘bouncing’ and reflecting into the community could prove particularly challenging.
- Light – the noise wall at this location is likely to be taller than most because it will start at the elevated track bed and go up 5 more metres. Given this, there would be significant impact on shade and sun patterns. CAC members asked if the walls could be shorter in this case. To function as noise walls, GO Transit said walls had to be the height of the trains i.e. 5 metres. They also thought that transparent wall materials might be an option to help preserve sunlight and views of the city.
- Safety – Many people noted the unsafe pedestrian infrastructure on the east side of Dundas St. West, running alongside the GO corridor and embankment. According to several CAC participants, a pedestrian was killed on this narrow stretch of sidewalk a couple of years ago. Participants hope that conditions can improve as part of negotiations with the City of Toronto on track and corridor grading, maintenance and construction.

Where removals of mature trees (30 cms or more), on Metrolinx property, are necessary for noise wall construction, replacement trees will be planted at a ratio of three new trees for every one mature tree removed. Residents are encouraged to come forward and suggest planting sites, on public or privately owned property – contact CAC Liaison Kelly Thornton of GO Transit for more details.

GO Transit stated that it would report back to the CAC about the number of mature trees removed from the corridor done under the supervision of City of Toronto arborists and forestry plans.

The Landscape Architect and GO Transit explained that some of the existing greenery can be preserved, such as some mature trees on the public side of the fencing, because the walls will be constructed using modular metal/concrete supports at either end – they will not require deep footings to be dug into a trench along the full length of the wall.

Cedar hedges might be able to be accommodated along the length of the noise wall, if soil depths and conditions permit. Some smaller tree varieties might also work, ie. pears, service berries, and other shrubs.

GO Transit is not in a position to cede embankment space to the city to widen this area for sidewalks or public plantings due to the new tracks being laid in the corridor. The wall will be built at the GO Transit property line.

Section 3: West Toronto Railpath - Cariboo Ave to Bloor St West

The West Toronto Railpath runs along this section of the proposed noise walls. It is a particularly sensitive area given the important role this area serves as a walking and cycling route, public space and functional linear parkland. There is also an existing landscape plan in place that has not matured, so the landscaping of the walls in this area would have to take this into account.

Key concerns include:

- Greening, plantings and landscaping
- Sunlight, view corridors, sightlines, winter light, shade in the summer
- Noise reduction
- Public realm maintenance, seating, display space & signage

Certain places on this stretch of the Railpath, like Wallace and Perth or at Ruskin and Ernest by the pedestrian bridge, functions as a community meeting place that knit people together. Local events have included a yoga camp, movie nights, political rallies, a market and fun-runs.

Participants are concerned that a noise wall will make it an unfriendly place to gather - the shadow the wall casts in the afternoon for instance will make it colder and darker place and therefore not as attractive a space to hang out, linger and connect with neighbours.

General Maintenance Concerns

Maintenance of the wall is a significant concern to all. It was noted that graffiti is already a serious problem on the Railpath and the walls are likely to bring more of this. Litter gathering

along the walls or in the landscaping was also mentioned as a potential problem that shouldn't become the community's responsibility to clean up.

GO Transit noted that everything on the wall is their responsibility for maintenance, such as plantings and vines – litter or plantings beside the walls will require maintenance and that is the subject of negotiations with the City of Toronto that are ongoing.

GO Transit said that they would be responsible for cleaning any transparent acrylic panels on the noise walls.

Questions were raised regarding possible damage done to the Railpath during the construction of noise walls - GO Transit is committed to returning the Railpath to its original condition after the construction phase.

Participants noted that the removal of greenery on the corridor has resulted in a dramatic decrease of birds who do not seem to have come back this year.

Wind tunneling was also noted as a possible negative impact of the walls.

Expectations and the Design Process

Sunlight, noise, transparency, wall heights, greenery, landscaping and community gardens are of key importance to the CAC members. The Landscape Architect is committed to working alongside the CAC and addressing these concerns in the designs. The landscape firm will draw up sketches of possible noise wall treatments, greening and landscaping showing some options and precedents that can be discussed further, modified and explored in greater detail.

Discussion ensued about the cost of the walls and the various options, with some asking if all the wall ideas discussed would be financially feasible. People also asked if the full service walls weren't built, if there would be more money available to landscape and augment the design of the 2015 walls. GO Transit says that at this point all design and greening options are available for consideration. There is no set allotment of money for one CAC or section of the wall.

Where there are no walls planned, such as the stretch of corridor between Ruskin and Wallace, CAC participants inquired about how the fence will look and whether there could be landscaping options available in this area.

GO Transit will provide photo samples of clear view fencing but also note that there will be a noise wall in this area when the private developer who owns the land erects buildings there.

A CAC member also asked for a version of the drawings showing only the 2015 walls. GO Transit said they would consider this request and respond before the June meeting.

Action Points

1. The Landscape Architect (IBI) will prepare sketches of noise wall treatments and present these at the June meeting.
2. GO Transit will provide information on landscaping options and clear-view fencing.
3. GO Transit will respond to the request for a version of the sketches to show only 2015 walls.
4. GO Transit stated that it would report back to the CAC about the number of mature trees removed from the corridor.
5. GO Transit will provide an update on the decision making process for full build service walls.

ATTACHMENT A: Attendance

The following Bloor St. W. to St. Clair Ave. W. CAC Members were present:

Scott Dobson, representative of Friends of West Toronto Railpath
Desmond McComish, representative of West Bend Community Association
Kevin Putnam (sub for Richard Mongiat), representative of Junction Triangle Rail Committee
Joey Schwartz, representative of West Bend Community Association
Slava Zelenin (sub for Elka Weinstein), representative of Dundas Mews (Townhomes)

Tariq Asmi
Ruth Caspell
Tina Earl
Toni Earl
Jennifer Francisco
Peter Goddard
Janet Kimber
William Martinen
Chad Mounteny
Claire Naranjo-Vargas
Tim Noronha
Teresa Pavlin
Daffyd Roderick
John Suline

Stephanie Nakitsas, on behalf of MP Andrew Cash
Paul Ferreira, on behalf of MP Michael Sullivan
Gerard DiTolio, on behalf of MPP Cheri DiNovo
Tenzin Tekan, on behalf of MP Peggy Nash

Regrets:

Lynnette Postuma

Not present:

Christopher Bembridge

Stewart Clark

Brian Holmes

Francis LeBouthillier

Greg Majster

Kevin McCarthy

Ian Parsonage

Sarah Smithies

ShafiSafina Soobrattie

MPP Laura Albanese

CounCouncillor Ana Bailao

CounCouncillor Francis Nunziata

CounCouncillor Cesar Palacio

CounCouncillor Gord Perks

MPP Jonah Schein, MPP

Membership Update: Patrick Pritchard, Vicki McGregor, Barb Mcquoid and Karen Jones resigned from the committee.

ATTACHMENT B: Meeting Agenda

Georgetown South Project

Noise Wall Community Advisory Committee Meeting #2

May 2013

6:30 – 8:30 pm

PROPOSED AGENDA

6.30- Welcome & Agenda Review

6.35pm

6.35- Actions from Previous Meeting

6.45pm

6.45- Landscape Architect: Credentials & Role

6.50pm

6.50- Noise Wall Briefing Session

8.20pm

- Review track-side photo montages of the noise wall locations
- Each member shares top 3 concerns for each area (see below)
- What's missing /other considerations

Area 1: West Toronto Railpath: Bloor-Dundas

Area 2: Bloor – Dundas: west side

Area 3: Sorauren Park & Neighbourhood

Area 4: No Frills Lansdowne Ave

8.20pm Facilitator Summarizes Key Concerns

8.25pm Purpose of Next Meeting: June

8.30pm Adjourn