

City Centre Coalition: Response to TMP 2013

www.ccc-ottawa.ca email: info.ccc.ottawa@gmail.com

The City Centre Coalition (CCC) is composed of representatives from several downtown Ottawa community associations as well as a students' association and a safe cycling group. We are focused on transportation planning issues in Ottawa and advocate for greater expansions of walking, cycling, and transit as the most effective solutions to growing transportation needs.

We have met and networked amongst our member groups and would like to provide the following comments to the 2013 TMP final draft. These ideas are representative of common themes that repeat across the downtown community groups network.

Summarized these concerns are focused on the following topics:

1. Interprovincial Transit Improvements
2. Interprovincial Truck Route Effects Mitigation
3. A Too Un-ambitious Cycling Plan
4. Greater Recognition of Pedestrian Needs and Safety
5. More Transparency into Infrastructure Investment Prioritization

1. More focus needed on improved Interprovincial Transit.

The central communities disproportionately bear the burden of very high volumes interprovincial flows of commuter cars, STO buses, and interprovincial heavy trucks travelling through our communities.

The TMP as currently drafted conveys the impression that none of these issues are on the priority list of the City of Ottawa for mitigation anywhere in the 18 yr time window of this TMP.

Improved interprovincial transit can contribute to a reduction in the pressure to commute by car through our communities in both interprovincial directions as well as a reduction in the heavy volume of STO buses on Rideau and Wellington streets.

The 2013 TMP has very ambitious plans for transit to reduce pressures in the east-west and south of Ottawa directions but very little to address the pressures to/from the north. Gatineau represents a stress on the NCR's transportation network from ~350,000 residents and so little is proposed to address this compared to for example the stress placed on the network from ~150,000 residents in Orleans.

The recently released Interprovincial Transit Strategy describes numerous initiatives in the short, medium, and longer term which could be taken to improve interprovincial transit. The TMP should provide more direction regarding how the City of Ottawa will take steps towards the realization of this strategy including a timeline of contemplated changes to the interprovincial transit system.

2. More focus needed on reduction of the impact of Interprovincial Truck Movements on the downtown.

Past TMPs have been written to state that relief of the interprovincial truck problems on the downtown would be addressed upon the completion of an east end interprovincial bridge. Now that this project has been indefinitely postponed again, the City should explore other options to reduce the impact of trucks on Waller, Rideau, and King Edward both short term and longer term. The plan does mention the potential exploration of a potential downtown tunnel but this is clearly a long term proposition. In the shorter term the City should make a promise to review the current downtown truck routes to bring the network more in conformity with the City's own policies to provide a diversity of routes in order to reduce the impact on any one community and to seek to avoid routes which are heavily populated.

3. Extending the Affordability Envelope to include a more Ambitious Cycling Plan

All of the downtown communities represented in the CCC have individually noted that the current cycling plan proposes a fairly conservative roll out plan for the cycling network over the next 18 years that still leaves considerable gaps in what planning staff have called the UNC (Ultimate Cycling Network) even by 2031.

The current TMP stands out as a bold and visionary document for investing in the future of transit in Ottawa. It relies on accelerated borrowing of money in order to more quickly roll out a more ambitious program than envisioned in previous TMPs. This is considered in the plan as a once per lifetime game changing investment in the City's future.

Our communities would like to see a similarly ambitious approach to making Cycling a more important component of Ottawa's transportation system.

This is all the more reasonable a request when one considers that this 'Game changing Cycling Plan' requires considerably less investment than what is contemplated for transit and could also be positioned as a once per lifetime bold initiative.

We do not understand why the 'Affordability Envelope' allows for the borrowing of City's own funds of 1.5B\$ for Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the transit roll-out yet does not consider that such accelerated borrowing is an option for cycling investment.

The TMP's background document on Transit explores the options for improved Transit to Orleans which seems to indicate that the 500m\$ investment to bring LRT to Orleans would result in the incremental capture of approximately 2000 more morning peak period transit riders. That represents an investment of 250,000\$ to capture each incremental rider.

In comparison, the plan envisions increasing the peak period cyclists by 18,000 (from today's 12,000 to 25,000) by 2031 yet any investment beyond 70m\$ before 2031 is

deemed to be 'unaffordable'. We can afford to invest over 200,000\$ to attract incremental riders to transit but we cannot afford to invest any more than 3,900\$ to attract incremental cyclists?

Given that the majority of these new cyclists are most likely to be in the inner areas of the City and (for example) Orleans commuters are outside the Greenbelt this dichotomy of the level of investment in the various areas of the City appears to lend more evidence to the oft repeated claim that the downtown is subsidizing life in the remote suburbs.

4. Pedestrian Conditions/Safety

For the downtown communities walking will continue to be an ever increasing part of everyday life as well as a major mode of travel during the peak period. One of our major concerns is to increase the safety of walking in our areas. Although the City is running a pedestrian safety evaluation program we would like to see more focus on expanding the scope and weight of this program in triggering changes that make walking safer.

The Ontario's Coroner report on pedestrian safety makes the point that vehicular speeds are one of the biggest factors in pedestrian safety. To that end we would like the City to make a commitment to explore the possibility of lowering speed limits to less than the current 50 km/h in particular areas of the city where walking is most common. We need to reset the expectation of drivers that they cannot expect to move at the same speed as wide suburban arterials in the heavily pedestrianized downtown core (at any time of the day). This should be part of an overall initiative to communicate the pre-eminence of active transportation modes in certain defined areas of the city. The Study process should evaluate what area this pedestrian priority zone should encompass and the process to be used to change public attitudes to the relative priorities between walking and the automobile in this zone.

Some examples of other changes that could be part of assisting to induce this mindset change include:

- creation of a pedestrian priority zone with associated signage and reduced speed limits
- better sidewalk snow clearing operations in this zone
- higher requirements on keeping satisfactory sidewalks in operation during construction projects

5. Transportation Infrastructure Investment Process:

Visibility into Decision Making Process

The background documents to the TMP do not provide adequate visibility to the public of how the City has prioritized certain infrastructure investments over others. This applies to transit, road, and cycling projects.

Transit: The City has not provided what metrics were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the various options for transit investments. The only exception was the brief analysis to differentiate between the options for transit to Orleans. Yet even these only provided visibility into additional riders in the morning peak. We do not know how these options performed against other metrics such as operational costs/rider, time savings per rider, or overall aggregate time savings across the full morning peak to name just a few.

Roads: Although a chart was provided evaluating potential roads investments against 5 different criteria in a points based system, we are not provided any visibility into how these points were assigned to individual projects or how these roads projects performed against quantifiable value metrics.

Cycling: Similarly, although the current plan provides much needed detail into the total list of cycling projects and a basic assignment into 3 different priority levels, the public is given no details on what criteria were used to assign these priorities or how each project scored against quantifiable metrics

Critical Reflections on Changes from Past Plans

As can be expected, the list of prioritized projects can change from plan to plan. These changes present a learning opportunity and each plan should have a section which provides some explanation of the changes from the previous plan along with a discussion of the reasons behind the changes. This process adds credibility to the current plan and planning process.

The CCC notes in particular how 2 different 100m\$+ road projects (the AVTC phases 2 + 3 and Prince of Wales Drive widening) have both been delayed by 15yrs (effectively dropped?) compared to the 2008 TMP. Changes of this magnitude require some explanation. In fact the 2013 Roads Background Document devotes a whole chapter to explaining why the AVTC will still be needed 'someday' yet somehow overlooks the glaring need to explain why the projection for the necessity of this road was 'out' by more than 15 years in the 2008 plan, and this despite the fact that the 2013 plan explains that there are only minor changes to the population and employment projections of 2008.

John Verbaas

Chair: City Centre Coalition

www.ccc-ottawa.ca

PARTICIPANTS IN CITY CENTRE COALITION:

Action Sandy Hill
Centretown Citizens Community Association
Dalhousie Community Association
Hintonburg Community Association
Westboro Community Association

Island Park Community Association
Old Ottawa East Community Association
Glebe Community Association
Dow's Lake Residents' Association
Old Ottawa South Community Association
Carleton University Students' Association
Citizens for Safe Cycling

