

## Yonge Street's multi-use path approved amid budget questions

Construction on a new multi-use path for Yonge Street between Bloomington Road and Industrial Parkway South will begin this summer following Council approval last week.

Local lawmakers gave the green light to the Yonge Street Active Transportation Facilities Plan – commonly known as a multi-use path (MUP) – accommodating pedestrians, cyclists and more, along with a contentious budget increase to make it a reality.

Council approved a budget increase of \$2,531,900 for the project, bringing its total cost to \$7,861,100, funded largely through reserves and with a \$2.8 million contribution from the Region of York, which covers half the cost of construction itself.

“The project includes a multi-use path on the west side of Yonge and a sidewalk on the east side,” said the Town following last Tuesday’s Council meeting. “The total budget is now approximately \$7,861,100 funded through development charges, the Growth and New Reserve, and a \$2,800,000 contribution from York Region, which is covering half the cost of the multi-use path.”

In discussions at the Committee level last month, Council members spoke out against the project’s growing budget, but underscored the value of the overall vision and the Region’s contributions as reasons to move forward.

These views were reiterated last week ahead of the final vote. Ward 4 Councillor Michael Thompson said the MUP has been a long-term project that’s been subject to extensive public consultation.

“It’s in some ways disappointing to see that, again, we have a situation where the initial budget cost has ballooned, but staff have provided the additional expectations and the fact they didn’t necessarily anticipate it,” he said. “Fortunately, this time around the Region is offering \$2.8 million. When we approved the Master Plan in 2024, when we approved this initial Capital Project we were going to pay for it all, so it’s a windfall in some ways. I think to date we’ve already spent \$500,000 on the design and moving this project forward. I think that it, in my opinion, is much-needed.”

“The residents down there deserve it. It’s a safety issue. We’ve talked in the past about how residents are walking up and down Yonge Street to access the plaza at Henderson and it’s needed. I’m grateful that staff were able to work with the Region to find and secure some additional money. I’m fully in support of moving forward with it because we committed to it a long time ago and we’ve stuck with it.”

Also voicing the importance of moving forward was Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese. In voicing his support, however, he questioned the timeline of moving forward now when there’s still some uncertainty over Metrolinx’s plans for the Yonge Street rail trestle as they prepare for double-tracking to make all-day two-way GO Train service a reality.

Director of Planning Marco Ramunno said any work related to the bridge is “essentially on hold” and there was no timeframe. Even if there was a time frame, he added, any work would be carried out at the northern boundary of the MUP and impacts would be minimal, he suggested.

“We’re ready to go this summer,” said Ramunno. “Metrolinx is probably a few years off before they move forward with that bridge. Things may change, but they’re not going in there any time soon.”

Replied Councillor Weese: “My purpose for bringing this forward had to do primarily with the questions that I’ve received from others. I wanted to be out on public record – I don’t want anybody to think that I don’t want the MUP on there. It’s absolutely critical for connectivity, for our cycling, and it’s important for a quality community.”

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