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May 6, 2010

Lake Shore Boulevard Streetcar Service

Recommendations:

I recommend that:

- The TTC approve a six-month trial of a Long Branch to Dundas West service (option 2 in Report 7(a)) to commence concurrently with the reintroduction of streetcar service on Roncesvalles Avenue.
- Service on this route should be at headways at least as good as the current scheduled 501 Queen service to Long Branch with a maximum headway no greater than 15 minutes.
- If the TTC implements a "10 minute network" for major surface routes, this should include the Long Branch service.

Report 7(a) examines two options for revised service on Lake Shore. One, the return to a route split at Humber Loop, is a non-starter because it:

- Recreates the unsatisfactory transfer location between Queen and Long Branch services, and
- Introduces an almost-certain problem in connectivity given the frequency of short-turning of Queen cars east of their terminal point.

The other option, a service to Dundas West Station overlapping with the Queen and King streetcar routes is rejected because

> "it would, overall, reduce TTC ridership and not meet minimum financial standards".

This statement is misleading on several counts, but to understand this, I must outline the purpose of the proposed route configuration.

Service on Lake Shore is subject to constant disruption due to problems east of Roncesvalles on the Queen line. Headways westbound vary substantially and gaps of over 20 minutes are commonplace. Moreover, the length of the route causes operators to take long layovers at Long Branch, and their departure times eastbound are irregular. Service west of Kipling is even worse because of short-turns at that location.

Service west of Roncesvalles on the Queen route is subject to short turns at several locations including Shaw, Roncesvalles, Humber Loop and Kipling Loop. A substantial amount of service does not reach its intended destination. However, according to a TTC report and routine observation on the line, there is a great deal of local traffic (over half outside of peak periods) that is "local" to Lake Shore Boulevard and is not dependent on a through trip to downtown. However, service quality is compromised to provide that one-seat ride.

Service on Roncesvalles, provided by the King car (currently suspended for construction), is also subject to gaps caused by short turns westbound at Dufferin and at Queen/Roncesvalles.

The proposed service to Dundas West is intended to:

- Allow the Long Branch route to operate in relatively uncongested areas and, thereby, provide reliable service.
- Provide an overlap with the Queen route so that, even if Queen cars are short turned, there will be a connection at Roncesvalles for passengers from the Queen car as well as the King car.
- Provide a connection north to the subway and, in the process, supplement service on Roncesvalles.

Report 7(a) states clearly that this arrangement would be an improvement for passengers in many respects.

However, the report also states that if the change were implemented on a no-cost basis, headways on the Long Branch route would have to be widened and this would produce negative effects and ridership loss. However, the report is also clear that the TTC faces **either** a ridership loss due to widened headways **or** a financial cost to keep headways at current levels with the overlapped routes. Contrary to the report, these are separate effects and the report is misleading by implying that both of them would occur.

Without question, there is a cost to running more cars than at present, but this cost produces many benefits that are not quantified in the report.

- Five ALRV streetcars are released for use on the King line which is chronically short of capacity. This is the equivalent of adding 2.5 CLRVs' worth of capacity in the peak period at no net cost. The value of this capacity is not considered.
- More reliable service will generate better ridership on the routes involved. Indeed, in the *Budget Update* also on today's agenda, it is the quality of service which is hailed as the saviour of TTC ridership in the face of a fare increase.
- Operators will no longer have a 90-to-120 minute one-way trip across the city on the Neville to Long Branch service. This will benefit operators by eliminating the longest trip in the TTC system.

Using the TTC's own vehicle monitoring data from the CIS system, I have conducted a detailed analysis of service on Lake Shore, and this can be seen on my website. What stands out quite clearly is that the range of headways on Lake Shore very greatly exceed the TTC's "on time" standard of plus-or-minus three minutes. When a car scheduled to show up every 12 minutes takes well over 20 to appear, or when two cars show up running nose-to-tail, this is not "on time" service by any standard.

I urge strongly that the TTC reject the staff recommendation. The TTC should implement a trial operation of the Dundas West Station service, and the trial should be long enough that changes in travel patterns and ridership have a chance to become established.

Sample charts attached to deputation (extracts from the online article at http://stevemunro.ca/?p=3668)

Headways at Lakeshore Humber Westbound

The first chart shows the distribution of headways leaving Humber Loop westbound to Lake Shore Boulevard on weekdays from October 1 to 9. This was with the standard Queen car schedule as the Dufferin/Broadview split operation had not yet started.

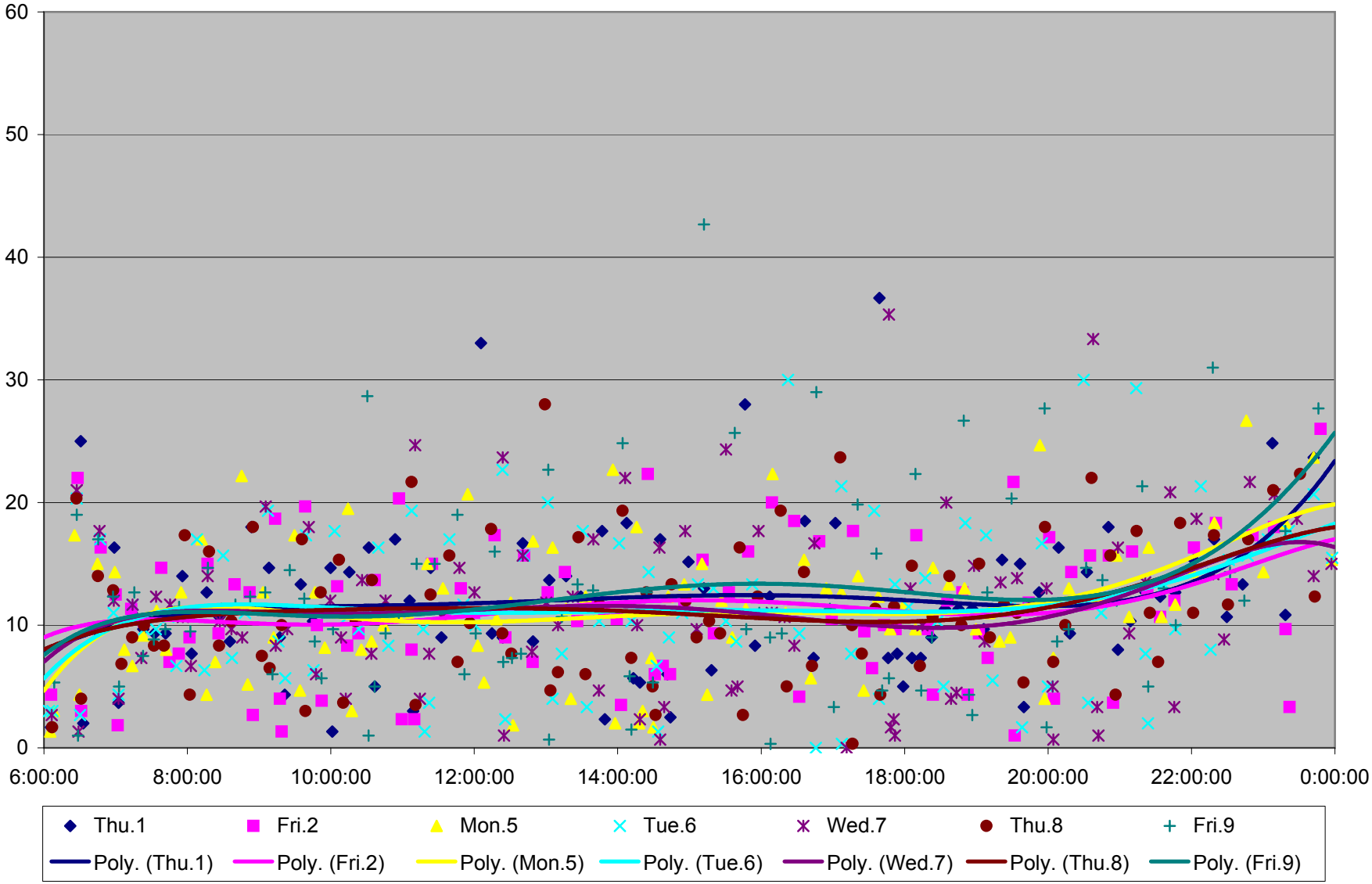
Each day has its own type of data point, and trend lines are plotted through the data. These trend lines tend to sit at roughly the scheduled headway, but the actual data are widely scattered showing that the actual conditions experienced by riders are much worse than the advertised service.

The second chart shows the same view, but for Sundays and Holidays (Thanksgiving). Again, there is a wide scatter in the values showing that gaps of 15 minutes or more are quite common even on Sunday.

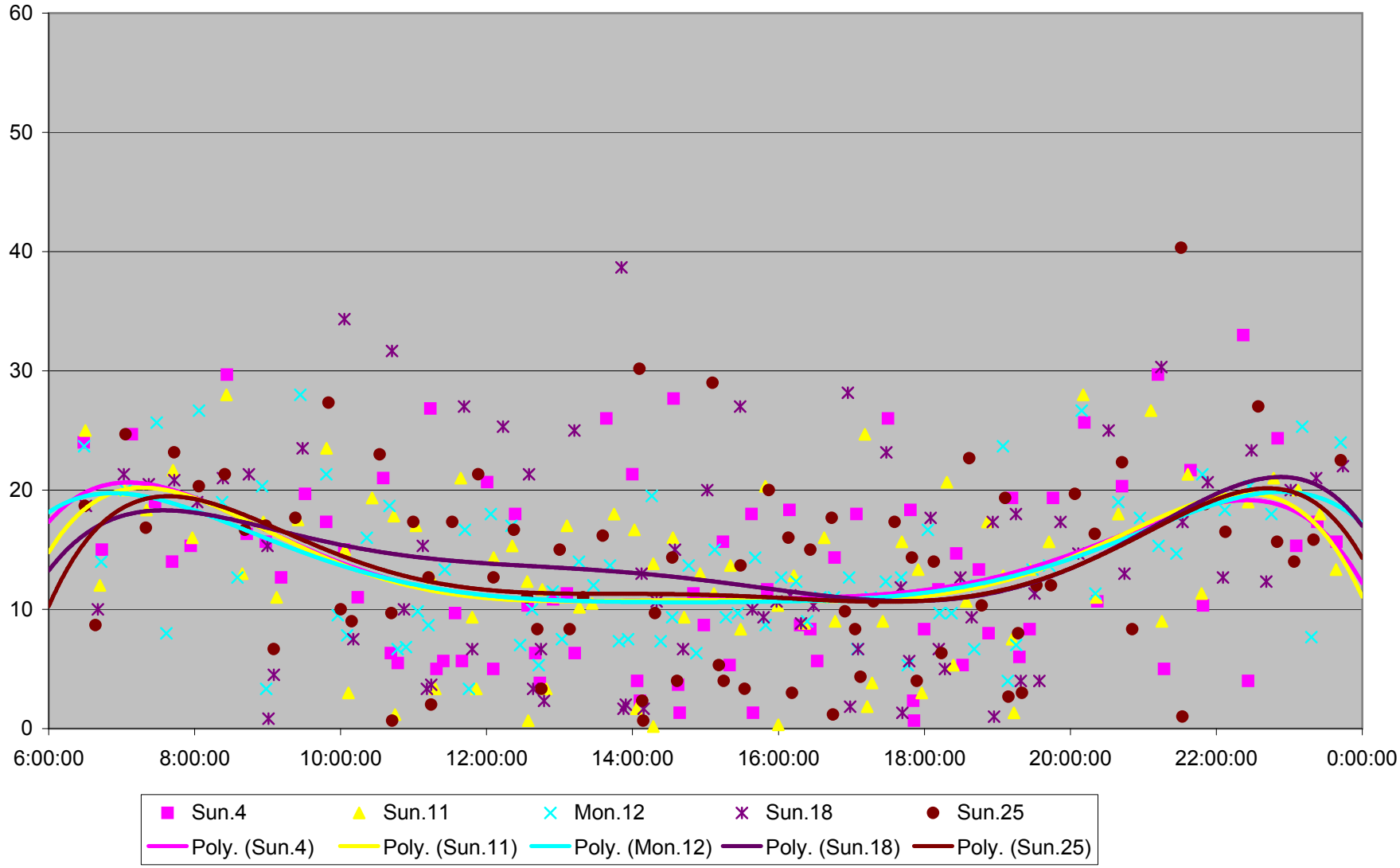
The third chart shows data for the entire month for the period from 5 to 7 pm (the pm peak). Each colour band represents the count of cars passing on a specific headway during that two-hour period on the day in question. The cream band represents the range from 10-15 minutes, and everything above this band is well beyond the scheduled headway. (Note that on Saturday October 31 there was an accident that blocked service during this period, and only one car was recorded west of Humber Loop.)

The fourth chart shows the same data as the third one, but on a percentage basis. Using the cream band as the upper bound for acceptable service, it is clear that from 30-40% of the service during the peak period operates on headways well above this range.

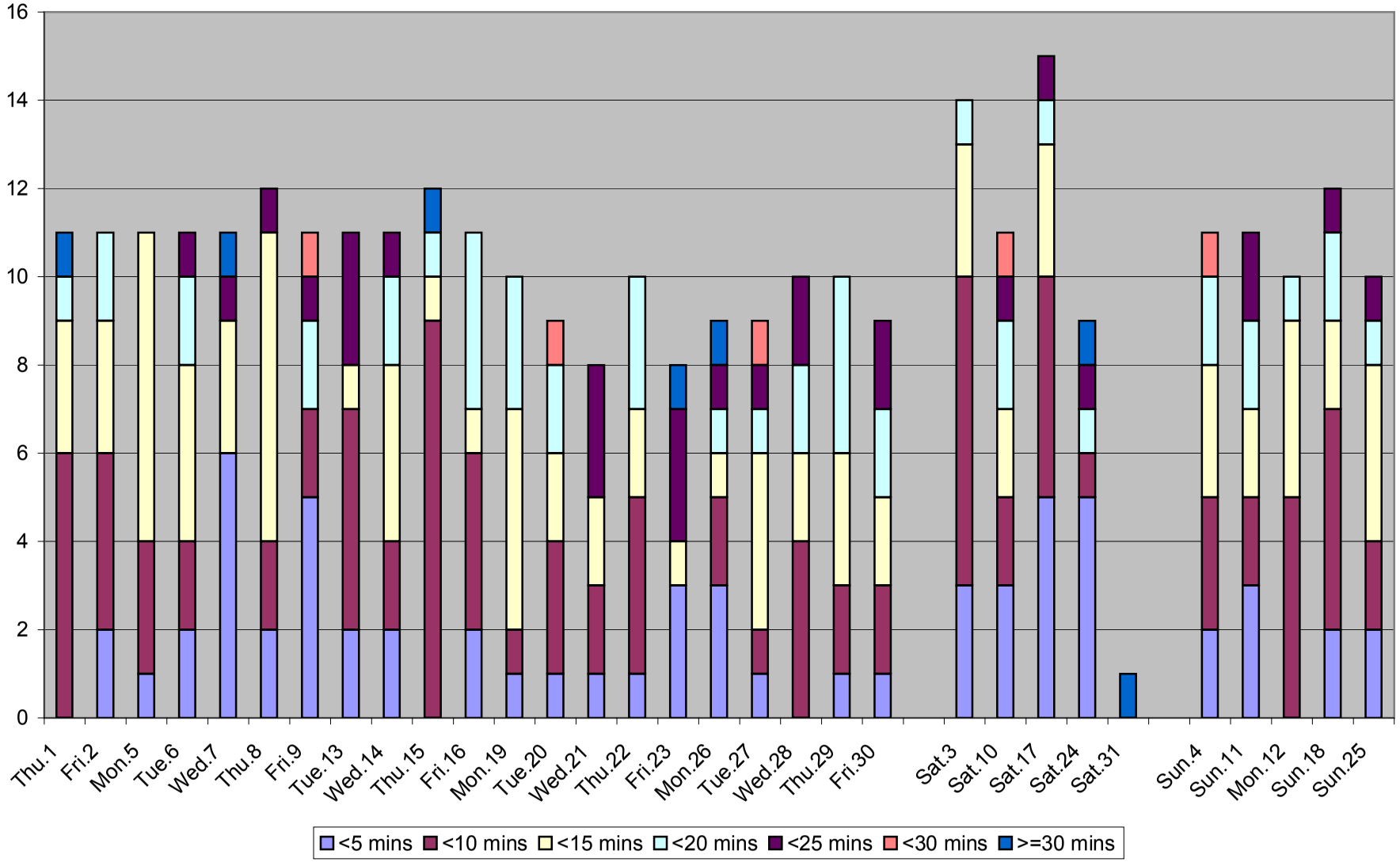
501 Queen Headways at Lakeshore Humber Westbound October 2009



501 Queen Headways at Lakeshore Humber Westbound October 2009



Headways Westbound From Humber Loop October 2009 1700-1859 (Counts)



Headways Westbound From Humber Loop October 2009 1700-1859 (Percent)