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Re: Lake Shore Boulevard Streetcar Service – Follow-up Report

The report before the Commission purports to address questions about the relative merits of

- the existing 501 Queen service with blended services from Neville Loop to Humber and Long Branch Loops,
- separate 501 Queen and 507 Long Branch routes east and west of Humber Loop, and
- a 501 Queen service from Neville to Humber overlaid by a 507 Long Branch service from Long Branch Loop to Dundas West Station.

I appear in support of the Dundas West option.

Splitting the routes at Humber Loop without an overlap will guarantee poor connections for through riders given the frequency of 501 short turns. This was, in fact, the case before the two routes were joined in 1995. Service west of Sunnyside was unreliable, and connections through at Humber Loop could face long delays.

The Dundas West option has the following benefits:

- Service to Lake Shore is provided by a route separated from 501 Queen and its congested, erratic trips through downtown.
- The deliberate overlap with 501 Queen eliminates a major problems with connections at Humber Loop in the old, separate route scheme. Before the routes were joined in 1995, service west of Sunnyside was unreliable, and passengers wishing to make through trips to Lake Shore could face long delays.
- The deliberate overlap with the 504 King service provides supplementary service on Roncesvalles Avenue (once streetcar service there is restored). This part of the 504 suffered unreliable service, especially in off-peak periods, due to short turns at Queen & Roncesvalles. Travel on Roncesvalles, as on Lake Shore, has a strong local component during off-peak periods that will make use of service even if it is not going to King & Bay.
- Conversion of service on Lake Shore from ALRV (75-foot) to CLRV (50-foot) vehicles will release 5 of the larger cars for use on the 504 King route which is notoriously short of capacity.
- A shorter 501 Queen route will eliminate the scheduled 90-minute trips from Neville to Long Branch, the associated stress on operators and the need for lengthy recovery times.

TTC staff's analysis is badly flawed in that it:

- Treats overlapped routes as an extra, unnecessary cost when, in fact, this is a deliberate design to reflect actual, rather than scheduled, operating conditions and to improve service.
- Ignores capacity improvements on 504 King and the operational benefits of a shortened 501 Queen route.
- Fails to address potential ridership gains claiming that they cannot be estimated, even though service quality is at the heart of TTC policy (including the Transit City Bus Plan also on today's agenda), and evaluation of any service change depends on ridership estimates.

The Dundas West option is costed at \$825k/year, an amount that seems quite large. However, the annual cost of operating 501 Queen is about \$26-million¹ and the percentage change would be about 3%. For this cost, the TTC would receive all of the benefits listed above, not just happier customers on Lake Shore.

The report speaks of "equity" in spending of any funds on improved service, but fails to acknowledge that the route amalgamation in 1995 saved the TTC money at the cost of service reliability on Lake Shore. Where was the equity in that decision?

The TTC is operating an express service from Humber Bay to downtown with very low ridership. Even with the premium fare, it requires additional subsidy and was projected to carry very few net new trips on the system. In effect, a premium service is offered as a band-aid rather than dealing with service issues on Lake Shore. This express service is far less equitable, and provides far less benefit per dollar spent than the proposed 507 Dundas West car even before we consider the ridership gains staff cannot estimate.

I strongly recommend that following the restoration of streetcar service on Roncesvalles Avenue, now planned for late 2010, the TTC operate at least a six-month trial of the 507 Dundas West option.

¹ According to the 2008 Service Improvements report, the daily cost of the 501 Queen route is \$87,500. Factoring up by 300 (to allow for weekends) yields a cost of about \$26.25-million per year.