

South Kingsway-Queensway ramps to remain

Councillors unanimously support minor modifications that could be completed in November

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Minor modifications of The Queensway and South Kingsway interchange will enhance the safety of transit users, cyclists and pedestrians, say city staff and an area councillor.

Etobicoke York community council voted unanimously Monday to resurface three existing ramps, realign the northeast ramp and add a pedestrian-activated traffic signal at The Queensway, and to install stop signs to improve safety.

The decision follows as many as 10 public meetings in four years on the issue, said Ward 13 (Parkdale-High Park) Councillor Bill Saundercook.

"I support this compromise. People are not going to give up their cars overnight," said Saundercook, a father of five who described himself as a pedestrian, cyclist and driver. He is also chair of the city's pedestrian committee.

"It offers some improvements to continue to make it a much more friendly place to bring pedestrians and cyclists to it."

Saundercook said he did not support an earlier city staff-preferred link road option, "overwhelmingly opposed" a year ago by area residents who attended a public meeting on the option. Those residents preferred the option approved this week to retain the 1950s-era connecting ramps.

"The link road without (traffic) lights is a killing field," said William Roberts, a lifelong South Kingsway resident and member of Swansea Area Ratepayers' Association, which endorsed the plan for minor modifications of the ramps.

"Given the reality that South Kingsway connects to the Gardiner (Expressway) and the elevation of South Kingsway and the Gardiner, I can't see any other solution."

Peter Jarvis, a civil engineer, agreed.

"The link road was dismissed as dangerous to drivers, pedestrians and cyclists," he said. "The city's compromise is the best there is and it will save \$2 million and the city does need to save money."

Under the approved plan, the northwest, southwest and southeast quadrants will be resurfaced, their connections at The Queensway adjusted, complete with stop controls, including stop signs and traffic signals.

The northeast quadrant will be realigned to eliminate the existing 'slip lane,' which city staff said will reduce vehicle speed westbound to right-turning vehicles, and enhance the safety of pedestrians and cyclists.

That quadrant will also align with relocated streetcar islands.

An existing streetcar stop - accessible only by stairs from the South Kingsway bridge - will be relocated to the east, island widened and fitted with guard rails similar to those built at Windermere Avenue. Installation of traffic lights at the stop is also being recommended.

Sidewalks on both sides of The Queensway will become continuous under the plan.

About 20 people appeared at community council, some residents mostly in favour of the compromise plan, the others cyclists as well as representatives of Toronto Urban Renewal Network (TURN).

John Niedra, director of transportation services for west district, said 13 cyclist-related concerns were heard during an

environmental assessment process.

"The eastbound direction is a potentially weak condition, but it will be controlled with a stop sign," he said.

Fred Sztabinski, co-chair of the city's cycling advisory committee, who also sits on the city's pedestrian committee, urged councillors to "take the opportunity to really improve the interchange long-term."

Marty Collier, a TURN representative who doesn't live in the area, criticized the plan and urged councillors to support the link road.

Collier called for more public input and argued the matter should go before the city's works and infrastructure committee, not community council.

Niedra explained the matter was delegated to community council's authority last year.

The construction contract could be awarded by month's end, with construction to begin next month, Niedra said. Niedra added he is hopeful bike lanes will be approved in time to be completed with the project sometime in November.