

# Appendix D: Rathburn Road Case Study

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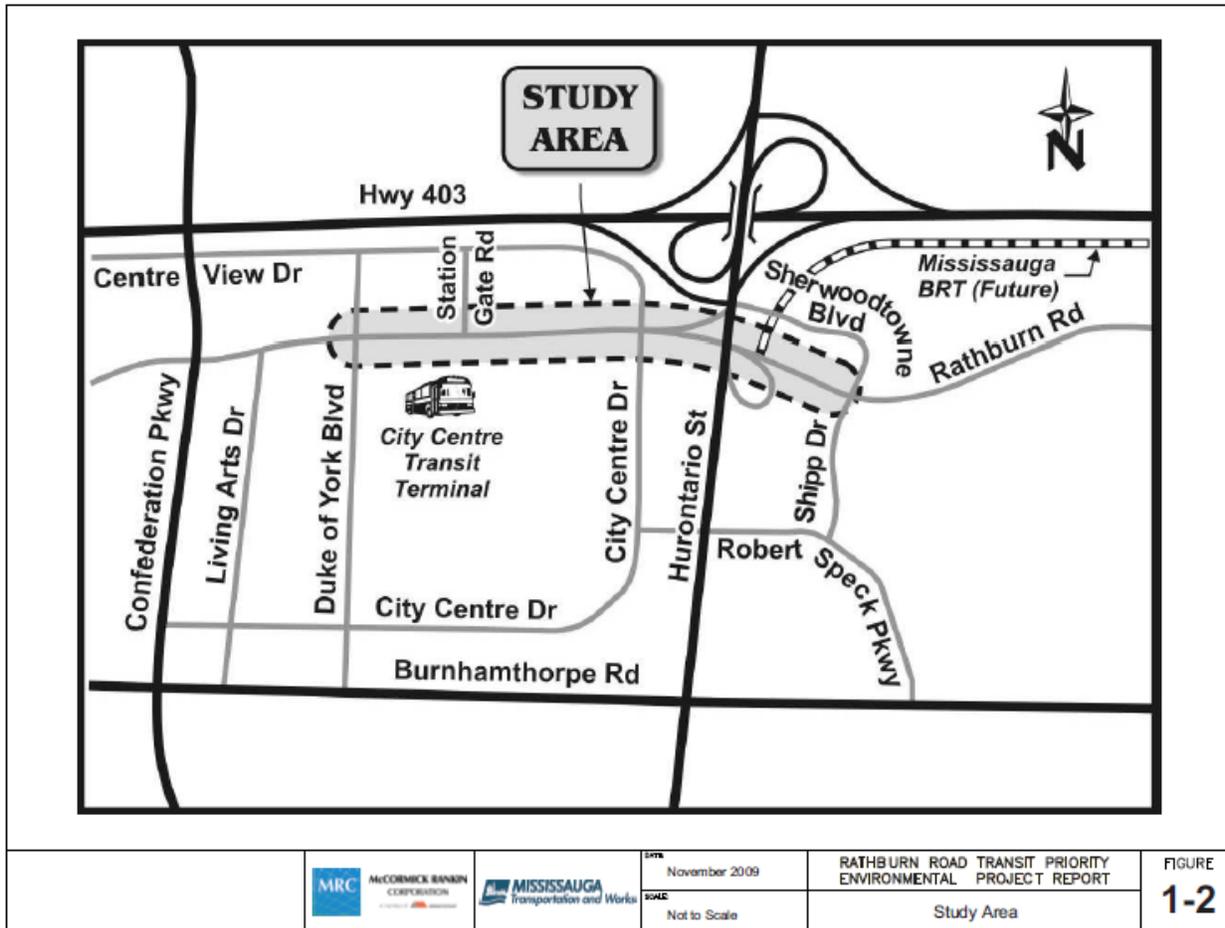
## Introduction

The Rathburn Road Transit Priority Measures Project was an initiative to implement a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor along Rathburn Road in Mississauga, Ontario. A street link in this project was identified in the 2010 Mississauga Cycling Master Plan as requiring cycling facilities, but these facilities were not implemented.

The Rathburn Road project sought to evaluate the potential and preferred design alternatives to provide greater priority for the operation of Mississauga and GO Transit bus vehicles along Rathburn Road between Station Gate Road and the BRT facility just east of Hurontario Street. Mississauga Transit operates 23 bus lines in this corridor, and GO Transit an additional six lines.

The project is noteworthy for its rejection of the implementation of cycling facilities at a gap in the cycling network adjacent to the city’s largest shopping centre.

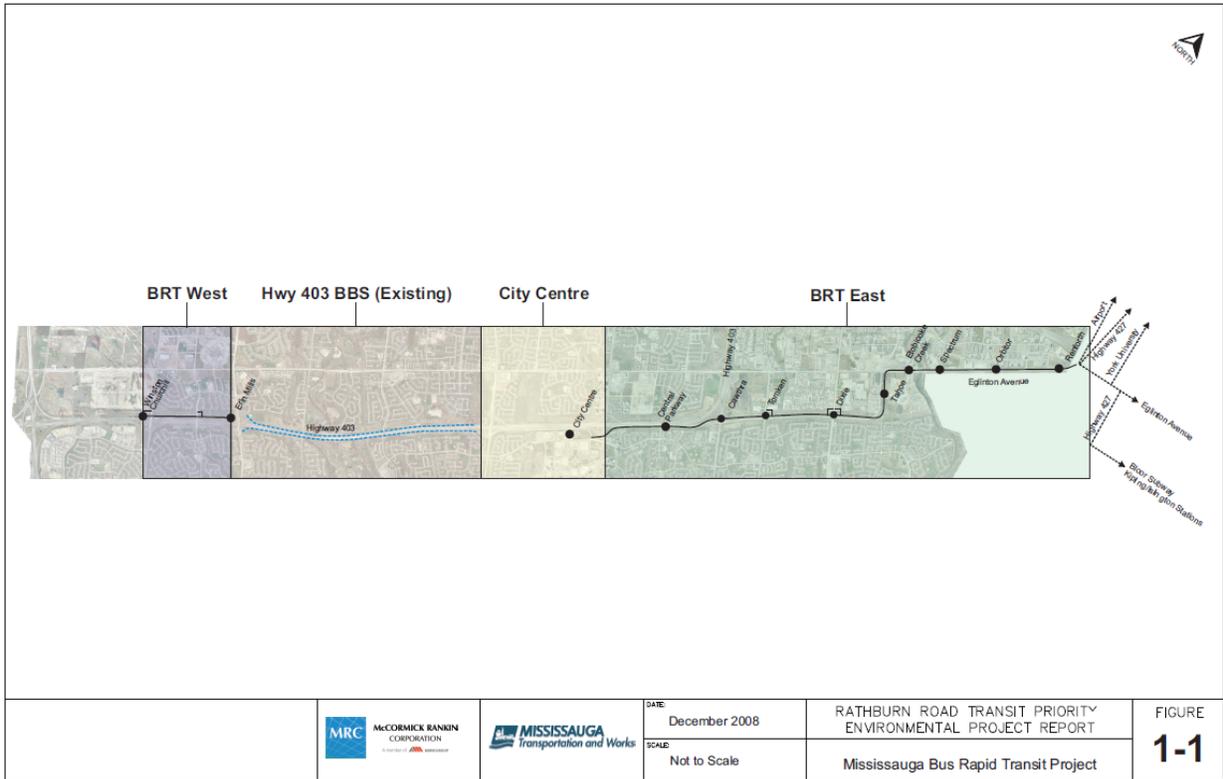
## Study Area



Located on Rathburn Road, a major collector within the City Centre District of Mississauga, this project would connect the Square One Shopping Centre and the Mississauga City Centre Transit Terminal with the surrounding arterial roads.

## Process

The Rathburn Road Transit Priority Measures Project (R RTPMP) is one element of a BRT plan that spans the City of Mississauga. Phase One of Mississauga's BRT plan, which includes the four stops east of City Centre from Central Parkway to Dixie, is slated to open in 2013. This R RTPMP includes priority improvements in the City Centre area, linking existing BRT in the west and on Highway 403 to the east and future phases beyond. These stations and areas in the overall BRT project can be seen in the image below.



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In order to implement the project, the City of Mississauga undertook a Transit Projects Assessment Process (TPAP), which is an expedited transit project approval process set out by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment (MOE). This process allows proponents of transit projects to be exempt from certain requirements under the Environmental Assessment Act by following a set process. In particular, the process allows for an assessment of potential environmental impacts to be completed within six months. <sup>iii</sup>

In considering the alternatives for the study area, the project took direction from a number of planning documents from different levels of government. The Official Plan of the City of Mississauga sets out a goal of increasing public transit usage, particularly in the City Centre. One of the tools to achieve this end is the creation of a BRT 'Transitway' project through the City Centre to serve as a rapid transit link connecting to a network of other rapid transit corridors. The Official Plan, as well as the 'Downtown 21' plan, include goals of making the City Centre a more pedestrian and cyclist-friendly environment. The RRTMP design scope was limited to the existing right of way (ROW). <sup>iv</sup>

Alternative designs did not initially include dedicated cycling facilities, despite the location of the project within a gap in the cycling network and at a highly traveled location. This is shown in Figure 1 below, where mixed-use paths (purple) end immediately east of the City

Centre Transit Terminal (CCTT) (referenced as the Mississauga Transit Bus Terminal), at the project’s eastern terminus. The project area is outlined in red.

Expansion of the ROW was concluded to be logistically and financially infeasible, given the project’s scope and the existing features to the north and south of Rathburn Road. Existing features included utilities, sidewalks, trees, and structures. The project’s design was to convert the two centre travel lanes to exclusive bus lanes. In selecting this option, alternatives considered included curbside reserved lanes and the maintenance of the existing lanes. Curbside dedicated bus lanes were noted to have the additional benefit of potentially being shared with cyclists, but concerns of conflict with turning motorists delaying buses caused this alternative to be discarded.<sup>v</sup>

### BIKEWAY DESCRIPTIONS

**Multi-Use Trail**  
Paved path separate from the road, shared by pedestrians and bicycles

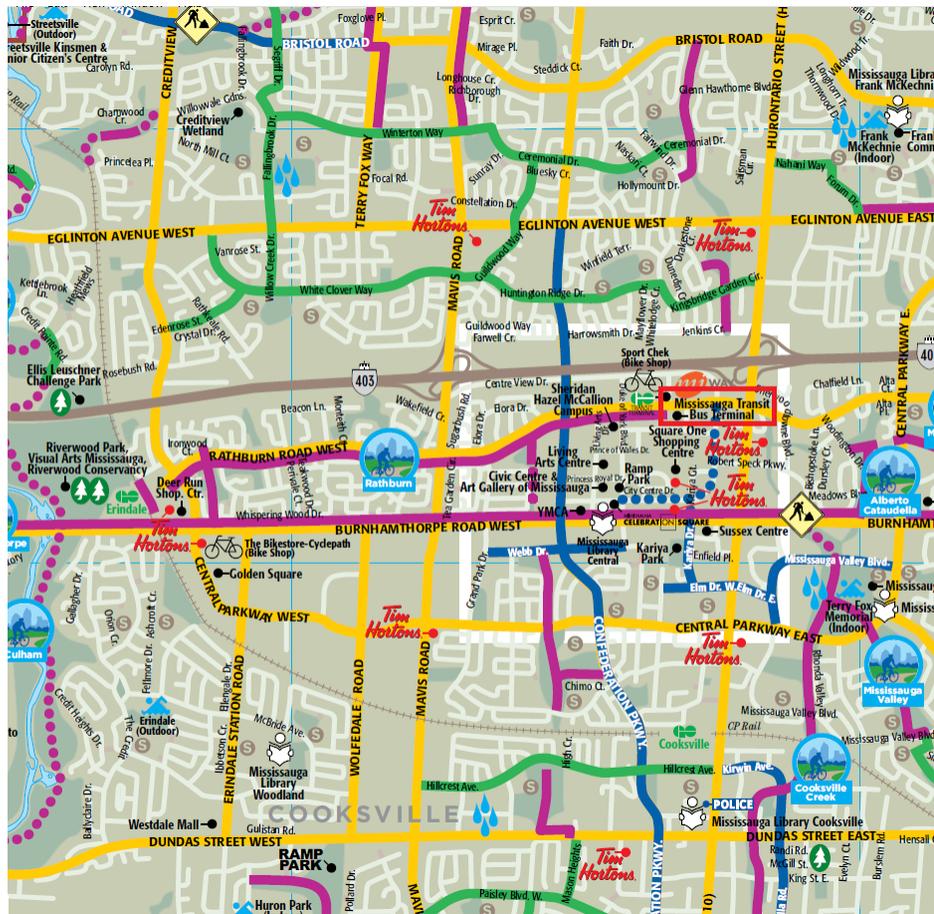
**Multi-Use Trail**  
Unpaved surface/crushed gravel or dirt trail, shared by pedestrians and bicycles

**Signed Bicycle Routes**  
Street signs indicate bike route, cars and bicycles share the road

**Bicycle Lane**  
Special pavement markings on street and signs identify lane reserved

**Sharrow**  
Shared use lanes by motorists and bicycles

**Major Road**



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The TPAP study did not address cycling issues in its report. Use of the existing ROW was evaluated by considering traffic counts modeled in 2006 and 2008 and the study area intersections’ level of service (LOS). Evidence of metrics used to consider bicycle counts and

infrastructure, multimodal safety, or cyclists' perception of the level of stress of the existing ROW was not found. Future projections of traffic volumes indicated a 2% increase of motor vehicle traffic each year for the next 15 years. The application of Travel Demand Management strategies in reducing motor vehicle traffic was also not found to be a part of the process.

The TPAP process required consultation with internal stakeholders and the public, namely property owners within 30 m of the proposed works. Notices were provided to government ministries and involved departments, as well as to the general public. Public consultations on the addendum to the EA in 2008, required due to modifications to the original plan, led to requests to consider adding mixed-use paths and dedicated bicycle facilities. Similarly, active transportation was raised as an issue by the City's Community Services department, who requested that the project team investigate the possibility of 1.5 m bicycle lanes on Rathburn Road (a total of 3 or 4 m for bicycle lanes on both sides of the street). The bicycle lanes were rejected by the investigating team, who concluded that the costs incurred by the displacement of street lighting, trees, and utilities, were beyond the project's budget and scope. The necessary additional width for the street was based on a given minimum lane width, which in this case would be reduced to 3.75 m. In their response to the department, the project team committed to a separate study for an off-street multi-use path in the City Centre, writing that "Consideration will be given, under a separate study, to introduce an off-street multi-use path in the City Centre".<sup>vii</sup> This would link with the existing multi-use path on the south side of Rathburn Road, running east from the City CCTT to Erin Mills.<sup>viii</sup> Evidence of this multi-use path study has not been found.

## Timeline

2007

- Funding for Phase One of BRT announced
- Mississauga BRT Preliminary Design studies

2008

- EA Addendum public consultations
- Mississauga BRT Preliminary Design / Canadian Environmental Assessment study

2009

- Completion of preliminary design, no bike lanes included in plan
- Initiation of Transit Project Assessment Process
- Study of impacts, mitigation, alternatives

2010

- Public and stakeholder consultations
- Community Services Department requests bike lanes be considered
- TPAP completed
- Minister's approval attained

2013

- Bidding for suppliers

## Lessons

The TPAP provides an expedited approval process for public transit projects, which can be beneficial to public transit project efficiency but detrimental to the thoroughness of the project. The TPAP is a proponent-driven self-assessment process that does not require Ministerial approval before proceeding, but rather a waiting period in which the Minister of the Environment has the ability to intervene.<sup>ix</sup> For concerns of active transportation, the TPAP process does not require the proponent to look at the rationale for the project, nor the alternatives to or within the proposed project, but rather only offer an explanation of the impacts of the proposed project. In response to requests from the Community Services department, draft streetscapes with on-street bike lanes were created during the project. The TPAP allowed for the consideration of alternative street designs only when responding to submitted comments. This limited the full evaluation of potential designs, specifically those consistent with municipal and regional policies and plans which prioritize active transportation.

The process of determining project scope can privilege or prevent certain elements from future consideration; that is to say, project scope can allow for active transportation to be externalized. While the guiding principles of the project reference the objectives of a downtown that “includes enhanced pedestrian and cyclist facilities”<sup>x</sup> and the plan emphasizes the importance of pedestrian activity, when pressure came to consider bicycle lanes, staff externalized the issue as requiring a separate study outside of the Rathburn Road project. Were bicycle lanes included within the Rathburn Road ROW reconstruction project, they would have been accounted for within the scope of this project, its funding envelope, and timeline. However, as bicycle lanes were not identified within the initial project scope, the installation of active transportation facilities were externalized from the consideration of the project.

Traffic engineering guidelines play a role in determining what potential street designs are considered. For example, in responding to the request from the Community Services department, the project team determined that implementing a 1.5 m wide on-street bicycle lane on both sides of the street would require a total of 3 to 4 additional metres of pavement. This is predicated on a given minimum lane width, which in this case would be reduced to 3.75 m. Lanes narrower than 3.75 m, designed in some cases to accommodate active transportation facilities and to calm traffic flows, were not considered in this project. The choice of street design details— acceptable lane widths, for example — influence the provision of active transportation infrastructure.

## Contact

### **Bus Rapid Transit Project Office**

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<sup>i</sup> *Rathburn road transit priority measures: Environmental project report (2010)*. Mississauga, ON: City of Mississauga.

<sup>ii</sup> *Rathburn road transit priority measures: Environmental project report (2010)*. Mississauga, ON: City of Mississauga.

<sup>iii</sup> Ministry of the Environment, Environmental Assessment and Approvals Branch. (2009). *Ontario's transit project assessment process*. Toronto, ON: Government of Ontario.

<sup>iv</sup> *Downtown21 master plan*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.mississauga.ca/portal/residents/downtown-21-masterplan>

<sup>v</sup> Rathburn Road Transit Priority Measures Environmental Project Report April 2010

<sup>vi</sup> (2010). *Mississauga cycling master plan*. Mississauga, ON: City of Mississauga.

<sup>vii</sup> *Rathburn road transit priority measures: Environmental project report (2010)*. Mississauga, ON: City of Mississauga (p. 4-2).

<sup>viii</sup> Transportation & Works, Cycling Office. (2013). *Bikeways and trails map*. Mississauga, ON: City of Mississauga.

<sup>ix</sup> Ministry of the Environment, Environmental Assessment and Approvals Branch. (2009). *Ontario's transit project assessment process*. Toronto, ON: Government of Ontario.

<sup>x</sup> *Rathburn road transit priority measures: Environmental project report (2010)*. Mississauga, ON: City of Mississauga (p. 2-4).