



Gardiner Expressway Environmental Assessment and Integrated Urban Design Study

Backgrounder: Draft Terms of Reference

Developed using input collected over months of public consultation, the draft Terms of Reference define critical elements of the Gardiner Expressway and Lakeshore Boulevard Reconfiguration Environmental Assessment (EA) and integrated urban design study, including the project goals, alternatives for consideration, assessment and evaluation process and consultation plan.

The draft Terms of Reference will be tabled with the City's Executive Committee on June 2 and City Council on July 6/7. Following these reviews and authorization by City Council, they will be submitted to the Ontario Ministry of Environment for final approval in September. Pending the result of the 12-week approval process, the environmental assessment could commence as early as January 2010 and be completed by the end of 2011.

Project Goals

The following five project goals were developed using Waterfront Toronto's guiding principles, the City of Toronto's Official Plan and Central Waterfront Secondary Plan, and with public and stakeholder input:

1. *Revitalize the Waterfront* – A public realm that provides adequate access to open space, landscape, land and air, and contributes to the revitalization of the waterfront needs to be created.
2. *Reconnect the City with the Lake* – Any reconfiguration of the Gardiner Expressway will need to include welcoming and accessible routes to the waterfront, breaking down the physical and psychological barriers that exist today.
3. *Balance Modes of Travel* – Any new configuration of the Gardiner Expressway will need to maintain an effective local and regional transportation system, including commuters and freight, and minimize the impacts by balancing alternative travel modes, including transit, cycling and walking within the system.
4. *Achieve Sustainability* – This project should advance the City's and Waterfront Toronto's commitments to green, healthy and energy efficient development, and employ sustainable design solutions that can improve environmental quality and biodiversity and minimize public health risks.

5. *Create Value* – The future shape of the Gardiner Expressway should act as a catalyst for good development and contribute to an integrated, vibrant and successful waterfront. Any change, whether rehabilitation, enhancement or replacement, will require investment. That investment should maximize opportunities for revitalization, net economic and environmental benefits, rather than simply preserving the single purpose Gardiner Expressway.

Alternatives to be Considered

In contrast to some EA studies, which limit the number of alternatives to be considered, under the draft Terms of Reference the Gardiner EA will bring the following broad but defined range of options forward for study:

Alternative 1: “Do Nothing” (maintain the elevated expressway) – The EA Act requires consideration of maintaining the status quo, which will serve as a base against which to compare all other alternatives.

Alternative 2: Improve (the existing elevated expressway) – The “Improve” alternative would retain the elevated expressway function, but with modifications to its configuration, as well as to Lake Shore Boulevard underneath.

Alternative 3: Replace (with a new expressway) – The “Replace” alternative would eliminate the existing elevated expressway structure, but the expressway function would be retained through construction of a limited access expressway, either buried in a tunnel or reconstructed above ground.

Alternative 4: Remove (the elevated expressway) – The “Remove” alternative would eliminate the expressway function and replace it with a lower-capacity, lower-speed roadway.

Assessment and Evaluation Process

Under the draft Terms of Reference, this study will go beyond typical EA processes which only focus on the road-related infrastructure components of the project. In the Gardiner study, the alternatives will be evaluated in terms of their ability to address transportation considerations and city building opportunities along with environmental and economic considerations. Four major themes or “evaluation lenses” have been established to provide structure to the assessment of alternatives:

1. *Transportation and Infrastructure* – focuses on accommodating the movement of people and goods, and addresses the potential effects on other infrastructure and issues relating to project constructability.
2. *Urban Design* – focuses on the creation of opportunities for improved urban form and improved or new public realm/open space.
3. *Environment* – focuses on the mitigation of negative effects on the social, cultural and natural environments and enhancement opportunities for the natural environment.
4. *Economic* – focuses on achieving a balance of project costs with project financial benefits that could include increased land values and benefits to the economy.

Step 1 – Develop Evaluation Criteria

The assessment and evaluation of alternatives will be based on a set of evaluation criteria that consider both qualitative and quantitative data. The criteria will be developed during the first phase of the EA study with input from a comprehensive consultation process. Input from stakeholders will also be incorporated into a process to help determine the relative importance of the criteria.

Step 2 – Assess Potential Effects and Benefits

The potential effects of the alternatives (solutions and designs) will be identified on both the existing environment as well as expected future conditions of the study area as reflected in current plans and proposals. Both short-term construction effects and long-term operations effects will be considered.

Step 3 – Evaluate Alternatives and Select the Preferred Alternative

Once the potential effects for each alternative are identified, the alternatives will then be compared to one another to determine, on balance, which alternative has the most advantages and least disadvantages.

Consultation Plan

Waterfront Toronto and the City of Toronto recognize the importance of engaging stakeholders and the public by providing multiple and ongoing opportunities for input and feedback throughout the EA process. The consultation program laid out in the draft Terms of Reference is designed to be as inclusive as possible and to hear the full range of opinions, viewpoints and perspectives. Public comments, and the responses given, will be documented in a database by the independent facilitation team. Summary reports of public comments will be available for review and feedback following consultation events.

The consultation plan includes the following elements:

Public Forums –provide opportunities for the public to give feedback and comments on study components, results, and ideas as they develop over the course of the study. The format will include: panel displays, presentations and small table discussions on key questions.

First Nations –will be contacted at the outset to determine their interest in participating during the EA. Individual meetings will be offered and interested First Nations will be contacted and asked for feedback during each round of public forums.

Stakeholder Workshops/Face-to-Face Meetings –will be convened to seek input from stakeholders on key issues and opportunities during the process. The Project Team will attend meetings when invited by specific organizations, as appropriate.

Stakeholder Advisory Committee – will be established at the outset of the EA, and will provide an ongoing forum for feedback, guidance and advice at key points during the process.

Technical Advisory Committee – consisting of government and agency representatives, it has been established to provide input at various milestones during the EA. It includes participation from various City of Toronto departments, TTC, Go Transit, Metrolinx and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

Web-Enabled Consultations –gardinerconsultation.ca was established in the Terms of References phase and will continue to be utilized throughout the EA process. It will feature e-consultations that mirror face-to-face consultations at public forums, final published background reports, individual study reports and public notices.

Media contact:

Michelle Noble, Waterfront Toronto, 647-288-8048