

Backgrounder

Gardiner Expressway East / Lake Shore Boulevard Reconfiguration Environmental Assessment and Integrated Urban Design Study (EA)

What is an Environmental Assessment?

An Environmental Assessment, or EA, is a decision-making process used to promote good environmental planning by assessing the potential impacts of certain activities or projects on the environment before construction takes place. In Ontario, environmental impacts can include ecological, social, cultural or economic changes. The EA for the Gardiner Expressway is an “Individual” Environmental Assessment. This process is more detailed than other EAs (referred to as “streamlined” or “class” EAs) and is usually done for very large projects. This process is defined by the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act.

The Gardiner Expressway East / Lake Shore Boulevard Reconfiguration Environmental Assessment and Integrated Urban Design Study (EA)

The Gardiner Expressway East / Lake Shore Boulevard Reconfiguration Environmental Assessment and Integrated Urban Design Study (EA) is a joint initiative of Waterfront Toronto and the City of Toronto. The study is looking at the 2.4-kilometre elevated section of the Gardiner Expressway East and Lake Shore Boulevard East, from approximately Lower Jarvis Street to just east of the Don Valley Parkway (DVP) at Logan Avenue. The study area represents 13 per cent of the total 18km length of the expressway, which stretches from Highway 427 in the west to the Don Valley Parkway in the east.



Note: Certain disciplines will conduct investigations at a city or regional level. These areas are not defined here.

What is the Purpose of the EA?

The study is designed to objectively evaluate and recommend the best option for dealing with this particular section of the Gardiner Expressway, in the context of the goals outlined in the EA’s Terms of Reference, passed by Toronto City Council and the provincial Ministry of the Environment in 2009. This EA will provide the information necessary for City Council to make an informed decision on the future of this section of the expressway.

This study is intended to identify a plan of action that can be fully coordinated with other City initiatives and with Waterfront Toronto's revitalization efforts. The decision on the Gardiner Expressway East and Lake Shore Boulevard corridor is an important one that will influence development in the waterfront and surrounding areas for many years, given the anticipated population and employment growth in downtown Toronto.

What do we know about the Gardiner Expressway East now?

We know that the Gardiner Expressway East is in need of major structural repairs that require a significant capital investment, particularly in the 2.4-kilometre section being studied. Like a lot of infrastructure in Canada, the expressway needs ongoing maintenance and repair. The effects of weather, salt and the impacts of thousands of vehicles on its surface every day have taken their toll.

The section of the Gardiner East that is under study currently carries about three per cent of the trips into downtown Toronto during the morning peak hours. By comparison, the Western section of Gardiner carries four per cent of these trips, and all other roads carry 21 per cent. The TTC carries 49 per cent of these trips, GO Transit carries 19 per cent and about four per cent of these trips are on foot or bicycle.

The City's contracted engineering consultant provided survey results for the segment of the Gardiner Expressway east of Jarvis Street to the Don Roadway. These results confirm an earlier assessment that the Gardiner deck area east of Jarvis Street requires rehabilitation. In spring of 2013, City Council authorized the completion of interim repairs on the eastern portion of the Gardiner, deferring the scheduled full deck replacement until the EA is completed.

How was the evaluation done?

The project team and experts in transportation planning, civil engineering, environmental planning, urban design, architecture and economics carried out extensive analysis of the four alternatives through four evaluation lenses: Urban Design, Transportation & Infrastructure, Environment, and Economics. In doing its evaluation, the project team looked at each option's ability to meet specific criteria and measurements, and looked at each option's advantages and disadvantages to determine which option best meets the overall goals of the EA. There was no weighting between the different evaluation lenses and specific criteria.

While the EA has included a comprehensive study of both regional and local traffic impacts, the overall approach of the study has been to assess the future of the Gardiner East in the overall context of creating a better city. The Urban Design Study is a central guiding component of the Environmental Assessment and will ensure that the review process places an emphasis on quality of place.

Who has participated?

Comprehensive and robust public consultation has been a significant component of The Gardiner Expressway East / Lake Shore Boulevard Reconfiguration Environmental Assessment and Integrated Urban Design Study (EA) to ensure that the public and stakeholders could share their views and provide advice and guidance to the project team. In addition to a series of public meetings, live webcasts, workshops and online engagement opportunities, www.gardinereast.ca was created to provide a one-window project portal to provide comprehensive project information and to advise the public of opportunities to participate in consultation events.

In addition, a stakeholder advisory committee made up of organizations with interests in the area has been involved in meetings throughout the EA process and two advisory committees were also

established to review the economic impacts of the movement of goods and services in the area as a result of potential options being considered in the EA.

What happens now?

The project team will consolidate feedback from this round of consultation. A report from City Staff will go to the on May 13, 2015.