

# Toronto plays hardball on York subway extension

Posted: January 05, 2009, 6:31 PM by Rob Roberts



HALL MONITOR



ALLISON HANES

Toronto's executive committee today attached a series of non-negotiable conditions to its support for extending the Yonge subway line north into York Region that will effectively double the project's pricetag to about \$5-billion.

City councillors demanded an overhaul of the Bloor-Yonge subway station, to boost its capacity; a new rail yard; and TTC control over construction and operation of the new subway, without having to foot the bill for the additional cost.

“They’re reasonable conditions,” Toronto Mayor David Miller said. “The province needs to know that costs are not just the \$2.4-billion cost of the line, there are all these ancillary costs that are part of the project... The work that needs to be done for this project is somewhere in the range of \$4- to \$5 billion.”

The plan to extend the Yonge subway by just over six kilometres north from Finch Station and adding six new stations – Cummer/Drewery, Steeles, Clark, Royal Orchard, Longbridge/Langstaff and Richmond Hill Centre – is a priority for York Region, where four of the new stops will be located, and is backed by the province.

But it does not top the city’s agenda, which focuses on Transit City – a network of eight new dedicated streetcar lines that can be built much faster and more cheaply than new subways.

Councillor Michael Walker (St. Paul’s) said the city and the TTC need to think regionally when it comes to transit. “We are resisting because of turf warfare in my opinion,” he said. “What I sense is that with these conditions, there’s a big enough poison pill that this won’t happen.”

The city’s laundry list of projects are aimed at easing potential congestion from the new riders of the already-overcrowded line, while the new rail storage yard would facilitate the efficient dispatch of the trains.

Mr. Miller said the province has already committed the necessary funds for the TTC’s new automated signaling system, which will allow the new longer trains it has on order to run much more frequently and at higher speeds to increase capacity.

While council is very much in favour of building public transit and getting commuters out of their cars, Councillor Howard Moscoe (Eglinton Lawrence) said he is concerned about the TTC “holding the bag” from the increased operational costs of bringing in a glut of riders from York Region.

“It’s absolutely necessary for us to say these are the conditions because we’ll have to live with the consequences,” he said.

Councillor Mike Del Grande (Scarborough Agincourt) said perhaps the city should tack on more conditions, like adding more tracks to allow for express trains, which will protect the interest of Toronto riders and prolong the life of the massive investment into the future.

“If we build this, the 905 people... will come,” Mr. Del Grande said. “Then you’ve got our citizens of Toronto who get on at Sheppard, get on at Finch, get on at Lawrence and they can’t get on the train. Now we’ve aggravated the people of Toronto further because they can’t get on their own train.”

Today’s decision must be approved by the full city council.