

JOHN STREET REVAMP

EA options

Plans to improve one of Toronto's most entertaining streets are starting to take shape. As part of the environmental assessment underway for the John Street corridor improvements, six alternatives have been identified and one stands out as "the most balanced approach."

"The objective in identifying the alternatives was not to focus on the design of the street as much as the fundamental configuration of the street. What kind of street, fundamentally, are we going to create here," **The Planning Partnership** partner **Harold Madi** told *NRU*.

The north-south running John Street is the centrepiece of the city's entertainment district and has been identified as a "cultural corridor" by the city. It varies in look and feel all along the street from Stephanie Street at the north end, which hugs the south end of Grange Park, to Front Street where it meets the familiar CBC building, Rogers Centre and CN Tower.

"Given that John Street is not a uniform street from one end to the other, it starts out as a two-lane at the top and transitions to a four-lane at the bottom, we wanted to come up with alternatives in cross-sections that would be as applicable to the whole corridor as possible," Madi added.

The first alternative, which is to do nothing, has been evaluated by consultants and determined not to achieve the objectives of improving the pedestrian realm, streetscaping and urban design in line with the goals set out in the entertainment district master plan.

The master plan, which informs the study was also led by The Planning Partnership and was approved by the **Entertainment District Business Improvement Area** board of directors in spring 2009. The BIA, along with the city is funding the EA but no funding has been allocated for implementation. (*See NRU-Toronto edition July 25, 2008.*)

The second alternative in the EA is a narrowed shared street for cars and cyclists with an expanded pedestrian realm and a self-regulated right-of-way. The third alternative is a conversion of the street to a "pedestrian mall" where vehicles are not permitted, cyclists must dismount and pedestrians can use the entire surface between buildings.

The fourth alternative is an expanded pedestrian realm and a two-way street that is widened to accommodate shared space for cars and cyclists. The fifth alternative keeps the pedestrian realm as is and reduces the width of a two-way street dedicated to cars to make room for dedicated bicycle lanes on both sides of the street.

The sixth alternative, and the most costly, is widening John Street for cars, providing more space for pedestrians and dedicated bicycle lanes but it has to be done by acquiring land and moving or demolishing buildings. Due to the

heritage nature of many buildings in the district, it also proves to be the most unrealistic alternative, but one to at least consider, said Madi.

The team has been receiving feedback since the alternatives were presented at the first public meeting held last month. The second and fourth alternatives met the criteria best but the fourth alternative was evaluated as "the most balanced approach."

Toronto Cyclists Union is concerned that only two of the six alternatives suggest dedicated bicycle lanes—neither of which were selected as the preferred alternative. A "call to action" was put out to members to get involved and convince officials that bicycle lanes should be included in the plan.

"John Street is a crucial connector from the Beverly/St. George north-south bike lane over to the connection that takes you down to the water on Simcoe Street," said cyclists union communications director **Yvonne Bambrick**.

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• Yvonne Bambrick

"It's got a natural flow to it...so we want to make sure that is considered because we have so few dedicated bike routes and we've got a disconnected bike network."

The cyclists union is in favour of John Street improvements and the focus on the pedestrian realm but believes the city can find a better alternative that includes cycling infrastructure.

"We don't have to compromise one user over another," Bambrick said. We can expand the sidewalks, we can narrow the driving lanes for cars and include bike lanes so why shouldn't we do that?"

Another public meeting is expected to take place in the fall to present design options for the preferred alternative. **NRU**

For project details and a comment form visit:

<http://www.toronto.ca/involved/projects/john/index.htm>



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