



BIA CONSTRUCTION TOOL KIT: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE EGLINTON CROSSTOWN



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INTRODUCTION

Long-term major public infrastructure projects can create significant disruption to small local businesses that are within or near the construction zone. Many of the impacts associated with major construction are unavoidable and early understanding and preparation for the inevitable should be integrated into the planning process for both those managing the project and the business plans of those that will be directly or indirectly impacted by it. At the same time, based on our experience, there are also many avoidable impacts that are difficult to resolve once decisions on how to proceed are taken – with contracts signed and permits granted, there is little flexibility available to alter or fix issues after they emerge.

Our advice to local BIA's and local businesses that are to be affected by a long-term public infrastructure project is to get involved early and take advantage of the tools and mitigation strategies that can be available before the hoarding and fencing are erected and heavy machinery gets parked outside business storefronts.

In our circumstance, the City of Toronto, Metrolinx and its various contractors have no doubt learned much about managing their operations in relation to the impacts they have had on small businesses along Eglinton – unfortunately, much of what they have learned has come at the expense of small business owners after the impacts have become known.

The Crosstown

The Eglinton Crosstown Light Rail Transit (LRT) Project is a multi-billion-dollar initiative that will introduce 19kms of new rapid transit with 25 stations, both above and below ground cutting east-west across the geographic middle of the City of Toronto. This massive undertaking is funded by the Province of Ontario and is being managed by Metrolinx - the Transit Agency it established to build the modern transit network that the Toronto region desperately needs as governments struggle to make the infrastructure investments necessary to keep pace with the regions' explosive growth.

Construction of The Crosstown has been ongoing for about 5-6 years on different sections of Eglinton Avenue and the level of disruption varies along its route - some activities are clearly more intrusive, mostly at the station locations where significant activity definitely impacts local businesses for years at a time; while in other areas direct construction impacts may last anywhere from weeks to months to years but on a more intermittent basis.

Business Improvement Area's

Business Improvement Areas are governed by a volunteer Board of Management who work together to beautify and animate their neighbourhoods. They operate on a fixed budget of business levy fees and since most of them are small business owners, they have limited time and resources to pursue activities beyond their narrow mandate. These storekeepers, restaurateurs, and florists are focused on their businesses - simply trying to make a living in an ever-competitive environment while working with their neighbours to improve the local community. Their traditional responsibilities don't include interpreting the physical impacts associated with long-term infrastructure construction.

The Eglinton Way BIA

The Eglinton Way BIA represents about 200 businesses along a 950m stretch of Eglinton Avenue in mid-town Toronto between Chaplin Crescent and Oriole Parkway. The street is mostly made up of 2 and 3 storey buildings characterized by main street retail and associated business services with a mix of commercial and residential uses in the upper floor(s). The affluent neighbourhoods to the north and south of the avenue are primarily low-density residential uses. The businesses along this stretch of arterial road have had to endure 5 years of disruption due to the construction of a major transit project that still has two to three to go before it is finished.



OUR EXPERIENCE



OUR EXPERIENCE

The following is a description of the experience that The Eglinton Way has had in trying to lessen the impacts associated with this long, multi-year public construction project. It is our intent to help better prepare businesses that may face a similar situation in the future and provide some lessons for them and the public agencies and private contractors that plan and implement similar projects; so that they cause less pain by better anticipating business-related impacts by mitigating disruption to the maximum extent possible before it happens.

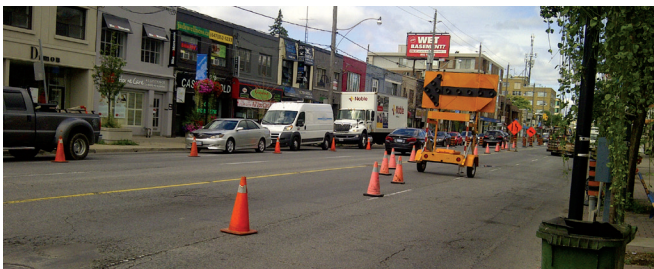
Businesses located on a long stretch of Eglinton Avenue in mid-Toronto have been inundated with construction-related impacts for up to six years with two or three more to go. Hundreds of local small businesses have been stuck right in the middle of a massive public infrastructure project and the disruption they have experienced is unprecedented, generally undocumented and disproportionate because this group alone experience financial losses as a consequence of this city-building initiative. In telling about our experience, we hope to help future infrastructure planners, government regulators, BIA's and local business owners to be better prepared and avoid the unnecessary impacts that plagued the early years of our experience.

Most main street businesses depend on what the street provides and what they in turn add to it to make it a better place to conduct their activities. Local businesses chose to locate on Eglinton Avenue in midtown Toronto because it was accessible to motorists, pedestrians, large numbers of transit users and because it was relatively easy to find parking; do deliveries and drop-offs; and in general, provided great visibility and exposure to a large population of potential customers.

When a massive public infrastructure project like The Crosstown comes along, the street cannot provide many of the amenities that made it attractive in the first place and BIA's and local business owners encounter a completely new and challenging experience. Moreover, the perception of construction due to traffic reports and media commentary often characterize the street conditions as much worse than they actually are and perpetuate the image of gridlock and lead to people avoiding the area entirely.

For the past six years or so, much of Eglinton Avenue is a place where:

- Lane and turn restrictions have stifled traffic flow and restricted access to valued parking spaces thereby frustrating drivers and business customers and essentially turning a vibrant arterial road into a place for motorists and cyclists to avoid.
- Sidewalk fences, barriers and their ongoing reconfigurations confound pedestrians trying to find their way, walk to a shop or restaurant or avoid the dirt, dust and noises associated with construction activity.



- Noisy machinery, excavations, bore-hole drilling, utility relocations and tunnel-boring vibrations are much more than a temporary nuisance on Eglinton – for a few years straight they were roving in nature, unpredictable about start and end dates and therefore negatively impacting the overall business environment.
- In specific instances, some stores are blocked by machinery, hoarding or idling trucks for weeks, months or even years at a time drastically reducing visibility and access to their businesses



For the past six years, our BIA and others on Eglinton Avenue have spent less time and effort pursuing our mandate of street beautification projects and seasonal events, and instead spent considerable effort trying to understand the impacts associated with different construction activities to appreciate the ramifications associated with notices that talk about utility relocates, de-watering, bore-hole drilling and the justification for often vacant staging areas that consume parking spaces that are normally used by customers. Although many of the issues that plagued the early years of our experience generating lessons learned by project managers, the pain was felt before those lessons could generate a more informed management of the project. In other words, learning on the fly should not happen again and this is our overriding message to those that follow in similar situations.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

As project planners work to refine the route and/or locations of the project being planned, the Environmental Assessment Report is the signature study for anticipating impacts and proposing mitigation strategies. In reviewing the original Environmental Assessment for The Crosstown, very specific requirements and indicators for mitigation are reviewed in detail for a range of environmental, socio-economic, cultural and transportation categories.

As stated in the report (p.287), “The Transit Projects Regulation requires the proponent to prepare an environmental project report that contains the following information, among other requirements:

- The proponent’s assessment and evaluation of the impacts that the preferred method of carrying out the transit project and other methods might have on the environment, and the proponent’s criteria for assessment and evaluation of those impacts.
- A description of any measures proposed by the proponent for mitigating and negative impacts that the preferred method of carrying out the transit project might have on the environment
- If mitigation measures are proposed under paragraph 7, a description of the means the proponent proposes to use to monitor or verify their effectiveness”

The environmental factors that may be affected by project facilities/activities were identified using an interactions matrix . . . The environmental effects of the undertaking can be classified under three categories

1. Footprint Impacts – These are existing environmental features located within the study area that will potentially be displaced or lost through the introduction of the LRT facility
2. Construction Impacts – These are potential short-term disruption effects resulting from the construction of the LRT facility; and
3. Operation and Maintenance Impacts – These are potential long-term disruption effects resulting from the operation and maintenance of the LRT facility

The level of interaction indicated on the matrix for each environmental factor is then classified as “none”, “weak”, “moderate” and “strong”

In reviewing the report for The Crosstown and looking at the “Interaction Matrix” – it appears that few impacts are anticipated or simply subject to later consideration at a later planning stage.

Environmental Factors / Facilities/Activities		Natural Environment				Emissions				Socio-Economic			Culture		Transportation								
		Terrain and Soils	Groundwater	Surface Water	Communities/Ecosystems	Population/Species	Electromagnetic Interference	Air Pollution	Noise	Vibration	Stray Current	Parks and Open Space	Utilities	Business Operations	Land Use	Property	Archaeology	Cultural Heritage	Traffic Operations	Transit Service	Cyclists	Pedestrians	Navigation
Footprint Impacts	LRT Runningway			S								S											
	New Bridge Over Highway 401			S																			S
	Bridge/Culvert Improvements			S	S	S																	
	Intersection Improvements			S	S	S						S											
	Road Improvements			S	S	S						S											
	Stations	S	S			S						S		S	S								
	Stops			W								S		S	S								
	Traction Power Substation			W		S						S			S			S					
	Emergency Exit Buildings			W		S						S		S	S			S					
	Ventilation Shafts			W		S						S			S			S					
	Portals	S	S			S						S											
	Work Yards			S	S	S						S											
Tunnel	S	S									S												
Bus Terminals			S		S									S									
Construction Impacts	Tunnelling/Work Yards	S	S	W				W	W		S	S											
	Cut and Cover Construction	S	S	W				S	S	S		S						S	S	S	S		
	Surface Excavation	S	S	S				S	S	S													
	Clearing and Grubbing			S	S	S		S	S	S													
	Utility Relocation											S						W				W	
	Roadwork							S	S	S			M					S					
	Building Demolition							W	W	W			W				S					W	
	Soil Removal and Disposal	S		W								S						S					
	Dewatering		S	W		M						S											
	Reinforcement of Existing Buildings	W								S													
	Erosion and Sedimentation Control	S		S				W				S											
Heavy Equipment Operations and					M		W	S	S		S												
Maintenance	Maintenance																						
	Traffic Management																	S	S	S	S		
	Material Import/Stockpiling							W			S							S					
	Trackwork							W	W					S				S					
	Concrete Forming			S		M																	
	Operations and Maintenance Impacts	LRT Operations					M		M	W	M								S	S	M		
Track and Structure Maintenance																		M	M				
Stormwater Management				S	W	W																	
Bus Operations								M	M	M										M			
Station Maintenance																				M	W		
Stop Maintenance																				M	W		
Testing of Emergency Equipment									S														
Snow Removal						W												W					

In the matrix above, few impacts are contemplated on businesses for activities like tunneling/works yards, surface excavation, utility relocation, dewatering, heavy equipment operations and several other activities that proved to be very impactful on businesses on Eglinton. The increased traffic from construction trucks passing through the neighbourhood also increases the traffic strain on secondary routes that are adjacent to the BIA. While the authors of this report may have recognized that this analysis was insufficient and subject to further study, it is telling that business impacts appear to be something to be considered more fully at a later date; which seems to be the case since mitigation plan did advise that the “City/TTC will form a ‘Construction Liaison Group’ in active construction zones during construction to provide quick access to construction related information, specifically schedule and timing information for local business owners and residents.

The Construction Liaison Groups will be made up of City/TTC and Contractors staff who will meet regularly on site. Business owners and residents directly impacted by the current/future construction activity will be invited and encouraged to attend these meetings where the day to day issues affecting their home/business will be discussed and resolved. Issues such as business deliveries, local parking and garbage pick-up will often be topics of concern. Further, construction schedule and activity timing is also a prime topic. Besides the Construction Liaison Group, the City and TTC will undertake prior to each phase of construction, a comprehensive public awareness campaign. Keeping the area up to date and well informed in advance of construction can dramatically reduce the inevitable disruption brought about by this project. “ P. 288, Eglinton Crosstown EA

We do not know if there was an effort to reach out to BIA's beyond invites to a couple of Open House meetings but there was no Liaison Group established that involved local businesses or BIA's. We did not participate in any discussions about potential impacts until they were imminent or already underway. This could be a result of the fact that the TTC initiated this effort before being replaced by Metrolinx as the project started, but the point remains the same. Once Metrolinx geared up, established their community relations' efforts, the construction plans, contracts and their internal roll out was already in

place and their outreach efforts simply stated that disruption was coming to places along Eglinton with very little content or description of anticipated impacts beyond boxes and traffic flow arrows. Although these notices have improved substantially over the years, the early years contained advisories that were short on detail, presented little about what to expect except some lines and blocked-out areas on a map and quite often, included incorrect start and end dates. They also came as one-offs with no indication that once a particular project ended several more were in the pipeline – therefore precluding any clear picture about disruption that could be expected in the weeks, months and years ahead. This haphazard set of circumstances also hamstrung Metrolinx from satisfactorily addressing issues as they arose – either because the communications people were not fully briefed on the details of what was coming, or because their hands were tied when dealing with contractors that had already approved contracts, permits and plans of action in place.

Some examples will help illustrate the scale of issues:

In 2014-15 there was a plethora of individual projects ongoing along The Eglinton Way at various times and their coordination and an understanding of their local impacts was wanting. In one instance, there were two major projects that involved the installation of headwalls at three locations along The Eglinton Way, this involved significant activity on the street, lane closures, heavy machinery, fencing, the installation of grout lines in the roadway to two temporary grout plants located at either end of our stretch of Eglinton. These projects take 6-8 months to complete under normal conditions and represented a significant intrusion. The BIA was first advised that the project would commence in July 2014, then it was to start in late spring 2015, then on a Friday in early January, notice was given that it was to start the following week and very little information about impacts was provided in person or in notices that were distributed. These projects included long lane closures, conga lines of idling trucks on standby in front of businesses further blocking storefronts and customer parking as well as the closure of side streets. At the Avenue Road location a lane was blocked for months before actual construction began and all the lane closures remained in effect when the Ministry of Environment shut the project down for three months. During this extended down time, repeated requests by the BIA and store owners to open up lanes that permit parking in areas downstream of the actual construction were denied- presumably because contractors had permits and they weren't going to spend time opening up the road to other users even when they did not need it.

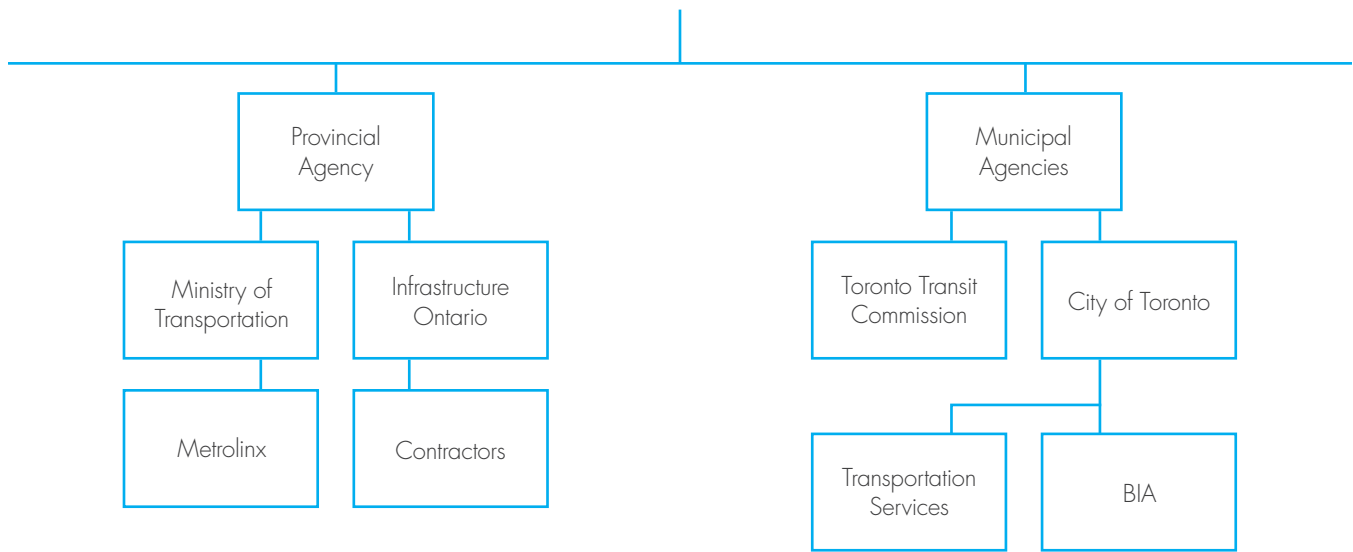


In another instance during the construction of the headwalls at Chaplin, the contractor had a permit to block a lane for an extensive section of Eglinton that was clearly beyond what was needed to stage the 3-4 trucks needed on hand. When store owners and residents complained that they had no other way to make deliveries of supplies, groceries or customer parking the contractor waived them away – keeping the lane to staging 8-9 massive idling trucks for hours on end, or leave the lane empty. When the BIA complained to Metrolinx they were unable to help because permits and contracts were issued long ago. When the BIA made it an issue with elected officials and others, the excessive number of trucks were instead replaced by the personal vehicles of the construction workers.



We recite these issues to point out the necessity of anticipating these types of issues and maintaining the flexibility to address them – despite an aggressive complaint campaign by the BIA, the issue was only resolved when the project was finished, not because anyone could do anything about it.

EGLINTON CROSSTOWN



Agency	Level	Jurisdiction	Point of Contact
Ministry of Transportation	Provincial	Metrolinx	Members of Provincial Parliament
Metrolinx	Provincial Transit Agency	Regional Transportation Planner	Community Relations
City of Toronto	Municipal government	City street permits	311 and Municipal Councillors
Toronto Transit Authority	Municipal Transit Agency	Operator	Customer Service

The chart above is a high level overview of a few of the agencies involved the Eglinton Crosstown project and their areas of jurisdiction. The challenge with the Eglinton Crosstown LRT has been a clear source of information regarding specific construction issues at any given time.

From the outset of the project, business owner complaints and concerns were passed back and forth between the different levels of government and agencies involved without any clear lines of accountability for the project.

Example:

During the transition between tunneling and station contractors, Metrolinx communicated to the BIA that construction would be intensifying along the street nearest the construction zone as permanent construction zones would be established for the remainder of the project. The construction plans were created by the contractor and submitted to the City of Toronto by Metrolinx for permitting.

There was a two-tiered community backlash in light of the construction plans presented by Metrolinx at a community open house. The first were deputations made by our Board and BIA members nearest to the construction zone expressing their concerns about the size of the proposed staging area and its potential impacts to business. The Board members asked for detailed plans of what would be staged in the construction zone and when these plans were received, the questioned the necessity of having certain equipment on the street. The other half was local community members and residents expressing their concerns to the Councillors about road blockages and impacts to the neighbourhood park. After several iterations of the construction zone plans were presented and discussed through joint meetings between all agencies involved, the station site plans were changed. Many of the trees were protected and the staging area was condensed to block fewer businesses behind fences .



RECOMMENDATIONS



PLANNING IN ADVANCE TO PROTECT LOCAL BUSINESSES

When major construction is being planned and approved by the City of Toronto, there are numerous requirements associated with operations in the Right-of-Way that are designed to protect local interests, property, traffic flows and pedestrian safety. In fact, during the past few years the City has become more proactive in constraining construction activities - presumably because of the large number of major construction zones that are currently in action – mostly in the central core as new condominium and office buildings are under development. Presently, Construction Staging reports have become a regular staple on Community Council agendas and include a host of restrictions and edicts that are to be followed as a condition of construction permits.

For example, a recent decision of the Toronto and East York Community Council directed the applicant among other things to:

- Post a 24-hour monitored construction hotline number on the hoarding in a prescribed and visible location.
- Provide and install public art, including mural artwork on every elevation of the hoarding with adequate night-time illumination
- Sweep the construction site daily and nightly and to pressure wash the site and adjacent sidewalks and roadways weekly, or more frequently as needed
- Directed the applicant to ensure that existing sidewalks and proposed pedestrian walkways have proper lighting to ensure safety at all times of day and night
- Directed the applicant to install appropriate signage and converging mirrors to ensure that pedestrians, cyclists and motorists' safety is considered at all times
- Directed the applicant to establish a construction management working group that meets monthly and invite local stakeholders including Transportation Services, Municipal Licensing Standards, Toronto Buildings, adjacent neighbours, local resident groups and local BIAs

Six years into construction along Eglinton, we have never seen such a report nor received anywhere near this level of consideration, unless it came well after complaints and lobbying efforts were pursued on a case-by-case basis. We advise future BIA's and local businesses to ensure that these steps are taken in advance of any construction activity taking place in their community. In these instances, the City is simply adding these costs to private developers – whether such measures get included in public RFPs, contracts and as permit conditions for publicly-funded projects may not get included if stakeholders and project planners don't advocate for them when initial plans and budgets are being established.

Despite these efforts, it is not evident that these directives fully contemplate or anticipate the years of continuous construction associated with major infrastructure projects like The Crosstown and they are not sufficient to address issues that are only evident after the fact or emerge as cumulative impacts roll on as one activity compounds and/or follows in succession. For example, approving the drilling of boreholes that impacts the street for a couple of weeks with associated parking or lane closures and detours is a common activity that comes with a standard management plan. But what happens when the borehole drilling, is followed by utility relocates, followed by dewatering activities, followed by invasive headwall construction, followed by sewer lining and a litany of other invasive activities? These activities in an of themselves are intrusive, in combination they can present very real financial impacts on local businesses for extended periods that were not fully anticipated or appreciated because of their unprecedented nature.

We would advise those that follow us to request the opportunity to have input into the development of these staging plans as part of the ROW permit process early on in the project planning. Contractors and City officials cannot be expected to intimately know or understand your section of the street, their planning is probably based more on maps, drawings and Google Earth images punctuated by brief site visits, but that does not alert them to the sensitivities that could be very important to local businesses. It is important that contractors take the time to understand local traffic patterns and business needs. For example, alternative staging sites, or questions about whether a lane needs to block 4 stores instead of 5 or how many metres of sidewalk or parking spaces need to be closed may not be active considerations for those focused on getting the construction job done. Therefore, we recommend that local stakeholder input is key to developing plans and their implications before plans are submitted that permit on-street construction-related activities.

1. Data Collection

Preconstruction information collection on the number on foot traffic counts and traffic patterns in the area as well as consultation with the local business and residential communities can work to better inform construction site management and traffic plans. Public and private agencies are collecting data in new ways and this information can be utilized for construction planning. For instance, pedestrian and vehicular data summaries can provide information on daily pedestrian volumes, peak period information, and variations in activity.

Information on key intersections in local BIA's and highly frequented areas at certain times of the day are important considerations that were not proactively addressed during construction of the LRT but have value for future construction projects. Foot traffic counts prior to construction can inform BIA's about patterns of activity in their neighbourhood prior to construction and enable goals to be established during and after construction to help businesses set hours and better understand their customers.

In 2017, Toronto City Council Economic Development Committee put forward a report on supporting main street business which included mitigation plans for Eglinton as well as Economic Scans of the affected BIA's. These scans are highly valuable resources for BIA's in understanding neighbourhood demographics and strengths and weaknesses and could have been produced earlier on before the construction. Moreover, they are neighbourhood specific and speak to the economic and demographic diversity along the Crosstown LRT corridor.

2. Early Engagement

Local businesses and BIA's are advised to get involved early in the process to impress upon project planners that consideration about impacts on their operations is embedded in their thinking from the very beginning. We know that there are prescriptive measures in place for environmental, heritage and cultural impacts during the Environmental Assessment process, a similar approach should be instituted for local business impacts and not simply left to transportation engineers to determine all operations at the street level during construction. Commitments to mitigation measures need to be integrated into contracts and/or government budgets need to be established that will enable issues to be resolved and allow project managers the flexibility they will need to get along with their neighbours for the good of the project and the local community. Managing complaints and inventing mitigation strategies after the fact creates tension, slows progress and can sour relations between those impacted and those advancing the project. For this reason, we recommend that those mitigation strategies are part of the RFP process for contractors and are a serious consideration when permit conditions are being approved inside City Hall.

3. Traffic Management, Access and Parking

A key consideration for future transit construction should be to finalize methods of staging and traffic management plans, through workshops and consultations, with residents, businesses, and BIA's during all construction phases.

Prior to construction, project planners will be creating traffic management and parking plans. Many of these activities will be pre-determined, essential and inflexible to outside influence because of the nature of the project, transportation safety rules etc. However, some local input into the actual locations and size of construction zones, staging areas and how they are ultimately managed could prove significant when dealing with on-site impacts on local businesses. Local knowledge about how the street operates could prove very beneficial to project planners and local businesses before they are approved.

In our experience, parking and access for customers and deliveries can be critical to the success of many businesses. Limiting the number of parking spaces lost is a very important consideration to local businesses that may not be on the radar of contractors looking for the most efficient way to manage their activities – resolving these kinds of competing interests will be more successful if local businesses are engaged before plans and permits are determined. Access for pedestrians and cyclists means access to customers – safe and intuitive wayfaring through the construction zones can limit the loss of customers frustrated by the disruptive environment.

4. Parking Plans

Local businesses are dependent on the availability of the parking for their customers. When construction equipment blocks parking, it deters customers from visiting neighbourhoods. It is important that contractors make the utmost effort to avoid taking parking spots that hinder access and visibility to potential customers. Furthermore, it is important that construction personnel are not parking in customer spaces and that there are alternative arrangements made for these individuals.

A proactive parking plan will involve multiple stakeholders including City of Toronto and Toronto Parking authority, local Councillors and residents' associations to work with contractors and businesses on reducing parking regulations during construction and working to maximize any available space in a neighbourhood to create parking spaces.

For instance, in 2014 in preparation for the upcoming construction several business owners created an inventory of all available parking and opportunity areas for relaxing neighbourhood Side Street parking regulations from 1 to 3 hour. In addition, they identified areas where the City would relax peak parking restrictions. For instance, permitting parking on the north side of Avenue road between 7am – 4pm and on the south side between 4pm – 6pm. Although a parking management plan was instituted, it was significantly delayed until well after construction had begun – early planning and engagement with all affected stakeholders is imperative to make any parking offset plan work because it creates changing conditions for both business and local residents that must share limited space.

In 2018, Mayor John Tory also introduced a parking discount for Eglinton Avenue in Toronto. All on-street spaces within 200 meters of Eglinton were applicable for \$6.00 off parking per day with the Eglinton Crosstown coupon code. While the parking discount has been well received in some neighbourhoods, the coupon code is only available on the Green P application and has also increased demand for parking spaces in some neighbourhoods leading to the perception of less parking availability.

5. Streetscape Appearance Plan

Street beautification is a central activity for BIA's and is challenging to manage while construction trucks and equipment are occupying the neighbourhood. Construction plans that take into consideration the importance of attractive streetscapes and maintaining neighbourhood cleanliness are important to the business atmosphere during construction. Measures such as regular street sweeping and power washing on the part of the contractor, work towards keep sidewalks clean and create a welcoming pedestrian atmosphere during construction. Moreover, working with Astral Media to install temporary bus shelters during construction and with BIA's to manage their street furniture elements are important considerations that are easily overlooked. BIA Street furniture was removed during construction and more proactive planning for its relocation or storage could have taken place before these important assets were fenced-in, removed or damaged. For instance, documenting construction items that would need to be removed and providing a storage plan. Rather, individual BIA's were left fulfilling these tasks.

Another key concern for neighbourhood streetscape maintenance is snow removal and garbage pick-up. There is occasionally a lack of coordination between City and Metrolinx/contractor zones and lack of clear understanding of what actors are responsible for different areas. As a result, snow clean up and street maintenance becomes complaint-based and garbage pick-up zones and schedules are ambiguous to business owners. An active streetscape maintenance plan that clearly defines City and construction zone boundaries for snow removal and garbage pick-up is an important first step; the second aspect is clearly communicating with the businesses the areas of responsibility and the plans for ensuring accessibility and walkability. Assigning contractors this responsibility early on before project plans are finalized can allow these organizations to take them into consideration in advance and plan for local dynamics such as space constraints and varying dependencies on snow or garbage removal.

During construction, The Eglinton Way BIA made an effort over and above the regular street maintenance to ensure a clean and vibrant street environment during construction. These extra efforts included hiring a street sweeper for the neighbourhood and revisiting the summer and winter landscaping contracts. The hanging baskets and planters during construction are important to businesses in the construction zone as these landscaping features help animate the street during construction. Moreover, as mentioned, when construction of the station sites began individual BIA's documented their street furniture and worked with the City of Toronto BIA office and transportation services to move these elements within the BIA wherever possible.

6. Marketing and Events Plan

Both marketing and event plans need clear measures of success and steps for reaching those targets. For instance, a BIA might be seeking to maintain pedestrian foot traffic during construction or reach new audiences, whatever the goal, it is going to take creativity and extraordinary effort to achieve them. In our experience, the perception of construction on Eglinton has been our greatest challenge.

Rush hour traffic reports and the idea of construction lead to changes in behaviour where people avoid the corridor entirely while in reality, the construction only significantly affects certain areas of a BIA neighbourhood at certain times, and the rest is still accessible. Each BIA neighbourhood should have their own multi-platform marketing plan that communicates to their audiences how the neighbourhood can be accessed and that businesses are still open. These communication plans can be merged with existing neighbourhood branding.

For instance, in 2015 The Eglinton Way launched a new signature event that embraced the construction challenges: The Eglinton Way Scavenger Hunt. An important theme incorporated into the day was exploring the neighbourhood and visiting a business that visitors may not have been familiar with and gave them a reason to visit the stores. Visitors received a list of items and tasks that they need to find along The Eglinton Way street boundaries in both businesses and public areas.

In October 2017, Councillor Josh Colle and Jon Burnside put forward a motion for supporting businesses on Eglinton including an “Open for Business” campaign, joint ventures with food delivery platforms, culture hot spots, nuit blanche events and more. Each of these initiatives, included waiving permit fees for BIA festivals and street ART mural opportunities, add to neighbourhood vibrancy during construction and could have been included in the initial planning phases before construction began on Eglinton.

One of the key areas of focus for The Eglinton Way neighbourhood has been building our neighbourhood’s digital presence during construction. The Eglinton Way BIA launched a new website in 2017 that included an up-to-date BIA Member Directory, Board member, and leasing information. The BIA website and social media are an important communication tools with our communities. Our partnership with Digital Main Street has been instrumental in this process as over 40 BIA members have worked with the Digital Services Squad to improve their digital presence and connect with their customers through email, website, and social media technology.

7. Accountability and Access to Decision Makers

One of the foremost challenges of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT has been the lack of accountability and clearly outlined responsibility for different elements of the projects. While later contractors have taken greater responsibility for managing construction impacts, these roles were not clearly outlined from the outset of the project. While there are merits to public-private partnerships and multi-level government projects, it is important to have one central agency who is responsible for the project and responsive to concerns as they arise. In addition, there needs to be clear avenues to appeal decisions made at the local level when there are serious disagreements between businesses and project managers. Ideally, sharing local knowledge and communicating concerns directly to construction personnel will ensure issues are managed in advance and as promptly as possible. Coordination between agencies, as is the status quo, is costly to business and neighbourhoods as impacts such a noise, vibrations, and equipment limit their accessibility and visibility.



CONCLUSION



CONCLUSION

Major transit planning and implementation are complex processes. Throughout the construction of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, transit planners have developed clearer communication plans and contractors have become more mindful of impacts to business. The standards for construction zone impacts have changed and become more accommodating to small business on Eglinton.

This document is intended to continue this trend and move forward to continue to reduce the toll to small business during construction. The Boards of Management members and BIA Members on Eglinton have had to go above and beyond the traditional purview of business and take it on themselves to understand construction processes and engage with Councillors, City Staff, Metrolinx and their contractors over the last few years. This has disrupted the time these individuals can contribute to their businesses during a precarious time in retail and change in main street activity across the City.

Moving forward, it is important to recognize the role that small business have in their community and to provide the opportunity for Toronto's main street entrepreneurs to be successful during construction by providing access, visibility, and parking during construction. Furthermore, businesses and BIA's can be further supported during construction by providing additional consideration for streetscape appearance and marketing and events plans. Disruption is sometimes a necessary part of transit being built in the City, however small business success should not come at the expense of transit in the City.