

A photograph showing a long, straight concrete overpass structure for a rail line, stretching across a landscape with trees and buildings in the background. The title 'Davenport Community Rail Overpass' is overlaid in green text on a white banner at the top of the image.

## Davenport Community Rail Overpass

### **Metrolinx Community Rail Overpass Public Roundtable Meeting Summary**

Tuesday May 12, 2015, 7 – 9 pm  
Davenport Perth Community Health Centre  
1900 Davenport Road

This report was prepared by Jane Farrow and Laura Hache as members of the independent meeting facilitation team. It reflects the major points and issues raised by the participants and is not intended as a verbatim report on the meeting. Copies of the slide deck presentations given at the meeting are available for public viewing at the Davenport Community Rail Overpass website ([metrolinx.com/RERDavenport](http://metrolinx.com/RERDavenport)).

### **Meeting Context and Format**

The Public Roundtable meeting was attended by approximately 96 local residents and stakeholders. The meeting served two functions, it was the first public consultation meeting for the Davenport Community Rail Overpass Environmental Assessment process now underway with Metrolinx. It was also a public meeting in support of the Davenport Community Rail Overpass Residents' Reference Panel. All interested members of the public were invited to learn about the project, hear presentations from Metrolinx, and share their thoughts and concerns with fellow community members. Members of the Residents' Reference Panel facilitated the roundtable discussions, which were broken up into two rounds. The first round elicited input about how the overpass will affect the community, and what can be done to improve and mitigate the impacts. The second discussion focused on place-based discussions and analysis, drawing out people's comments and ideas for the 'unlocked' public spaces being created beneath the overpass.

### **Major Themes and Key Points**

- **The Community Desires More Opportunity to Have a Say on the Preferred Option.** Some participants expressed disappointment with the Transit Project and Assessment Process. As a result of the community outreach starting earlier than usual, residents feel frustrated that they don't have enough information about the project and are unclear as to how Metrolinx arrived at preferred option of building an overpass. Many expressed disagreement and regret with Metrolinx's preferred option of going 'over' stating that they felt going 'under' with a tunnel or trench would be less disruptive to the neighbourhood.



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- **Local interests are being overlooked.** Meeting participants expressed the feeling that transportation planners and Metrolinx staff had overlooked their local interests in favour of residents and commuters from the suburbs and regions beyond the City of Toronto.
- **Long-term impacts:** Participants expressed concern for depreciating property values, and the possibility that retail and commercial businesses would leave the area. Many wondered about long-term stewardship of the space and questioned who would be responsible for overseeing the maintenance of any new public spaces as well as the continued vibrancy of the area.
- **A station at Bloor:** Almost all roundtables discussed the importance of including a local station in the plans for this project, reasoning that it will provide a true benefit to the community.
- **Connectivity and opportunities for openness:** Participants expressed strong support for potential opportunities to create public spaces and enhance neighbourhood connectivity, walking and cycling routes. Many thought that this sort of thoughtful, pre-planned connectivity should be a priority for all the designs and plans associated with this project.
- **Community Safety:** Residents expressed concern that a large, concrete overpass would act as a magnet for undesirable behavior and crime. Specifically, residents worried that the overpass would present an opportunity for public drinking, drug use, harassment, vandalism and graffiti. Some solutions were discussed including ensuring the area is well lit, and incorporating public art into the design rather than blank walls which will attract vandalism and tagging.
- **Aesthetically Pleasing:** Many expressed a desire that the overpass itself and the noise walls to be aesthetically pleasing, not only the public spaces underneath.

### Meeting Report

Independent facilitator Peter MacLeod reviewed the agenda and the Reference Panel process, noting that it is “an upstream effort to bring members of the community into the design process at the earliest stages of public engagement.” He explained that the Reference Panel members are tasked with learning about transportation planning and processes, weighing design options and approaches, and proposing values, priorities and detailed recommendations in a final report to Metrolinx that will shape the design and delivery of the Davenport Community Rail Overpass project.

MacLeod encouraged community members to be vocal during this Public Roundtable session, and offer their insights, ideas, concerns and advice on the Davenport Community Rail Overpass project and process.



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A presentation from Elise Croll, Director of Environmental Programs and Assessment at Metrolinx, followed. She began by reminding the room that it is very early in the planning, consultation and assessment process. The benefit of this approach is that community input will be used to shape the project and process more proactively. The downside is that at the moment, Metrolinx doesn't have answers to all the questions that people have about the scale, scope, engineering and mitigation requirements for the project. Croll then gave a presentation featuring many images, infographics and maps to illustrate and contextualize the project. It is available for viewing on the Metrolinx Davenport Community Rail Overpass webpage: [metrolinx.com/RERDavenport](http://metrolinx.com/RERDavenport).

### Small table discussion #1: Issues and Impacts

The first roundtable asked participants to consider how the overpass will affect the community and what can be done to improve or mitigate the impacts?

Comments and concerns expressed included:

- **Short-term impacts:** Noise, dust, vibration, and road closures from prolonged construction. Vibration from construction impacting residents and local businesses.
- **Long-term impacts:** Declining property values in the neighbourhood, unclear responsibility for ongoing stewardship of the 'unlocked' public space, and concern that local businesses will leave the area resulting in a negative economic impact.
- **Health Concerns:** Air pollution and noise pollution that will come from construction and the increased service of diesel trains.
- **Aesthetic considerations:** Visual blight, concerns that the overpass will resemble the Gardiner Expressway and that the noise walls will be unattractive, 'block the view', create additional shade and attract graffiti and tagging that won't be cleaned up or removed.
- **Community Safety:** Concerns about the overpass structure being dark, unsafe and would provide spaces for illicit activity like drinking and drug use.
- **Environmental Concerns:** Concern for wildlife and bird habitat and losing mature trees and greenery.
- **Timeline for Electrification:** Concerns that the transition to electrification will take much longer than is predicted now.
- **Funding:** Residents wanted to know more about the criteria or formula for determining the final budget for community benefits and public art.
- **Community members expressed dissatisfaction with the shortened consultation process (TPAP – Transit Project Assessment Process):**
  - Some participants stated that they felt the public consultation was tokenistic and that there wasn't enough engineering and planning



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information about the criteria used to select Metrolinx's preferred option of going over.

- **Local Impact for Benefits Outside Davenport:** Many residents feel that the suburbs and regional populations around Toronto were being prioritized over the downtown, and that the Province is downloading cost savings on the local community.

### Small table discussion #2: Design Ideas, Zones of Opportunity

The second roundtable discussion invited participants to sit at tables labeled for the "five zones of opportunity": Paton Road, Wallace Avenue, Campbell Park, Dupont Street, and Davenport Road. They were asked to share their ideas and local expertise about what design approaches and ideas could improve and enhance the area. Suggestions included:

- **Community connectivity:** Many participants welcomed the opportunity to create much needed east-west connections, highlighting opportunities at Lappin Ave. and Antler St. in particular.
- **Subway access:** Participants noted that the north/south walking & biking route to the subway at Lansdowne would be improved substantially with a new connection at Paton Road.
- **Cycling infrastructure:** People encouraged the creation of cycling paths and were very supportive of any design innovations that could strengthen connections to and between downtown routes including the West Toronto Railpath.
- **Public Art:** Many people suggested creating partnerships with local arts organizations and artists, inviting them in to be part of the design and creation of vibrant local art projects and programming on the overpass structure, the retaining walls and in the community spaces created.
- **Longevity concerns:** Participants supported the idea of creating a stewardship body composed of community members and stakeholders who program the public space.
- **Aesthetics:** Many participants felt that the overpass design should reflect the local area and should highlight the industrial, labour heritage of the area.
- **Community safety:** Many felt that good lighting was key, that it should strike the right balance of lighting that makes people feel safe but was not overlit and invasive to nearby households.
- **Create more GO stops in the neighbourhood to make the Junction a true transit hub.** Many felt that having additional transit stops would offset concerns of property devaluation and help relieve city and neighbourhood congestion. Most recommended a stop at Bloor and Lansdowne on the

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Barrie line as an important way of giving local residents more options for travelling north, especially to destinations like York University.

- **Electrification:** Many expressed the preference to speed up the timeline for electrification and minimize service increases that involve more diesel trains.
- **Enhance the consultation process:**
  - Provide multi-lingual material to engage all community members.
  - Get an independent, unbiased study that compares the underground options and the overpass option.
  - Make the process more transparent, set up a website for resident and Metrolinx Q&A's [**Note: Available at [metrolinx.com/RERDavenport](http://metrolinx.com/RERDavenport) – ‘Have Your Say’**]
  - Include more visuals to guide the discussion, which will trigger more thoughts and design ideas.

**Zones of Opportunity Input:** The main concerns and recommendations are highlighted for each of the five Zones below. General concerns and ideas (not place-specific) are summarized above.

### Paton Road Summary

Considerations & Concerns	Ideas for Enhancement
Discussions about the Paton Road area highlighted that this area was very dangerous 10-20 years ago, so residents are concerned about public safety and expressed the concern that re-connecting the street could open-up problems again.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design for safety</li> <li>• Preserve old trees and plant new ones, vertical gardens</li> <li>• Create amphitheater style outdoor seating areas</li> <li>• Build or extend a trail from Paton Rd. to connect with the Railpath at the No Frills area</li> <li>• Pedestrian Bridge over CP Rail</li> </ul>

### Wallace Avenue Summary

Considerations & Concerns	Ideas for Enhancement
Discussion included safety concerns for both those on the trains and at ground level. Residents worried noise walls would act as visual barriers and attract graffiti. Residents were also concerned about traffic constraints around Wallace during construction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connectivity to the rest of the City is important, think broader than simple connections like a bike path from Bloor to Davenport</li> <li>• Incorporate a farmers' market</li> <li>• Not sure if green space makes sense with the additional shade</li> <li>• Make connections to the Railpath</li> </ul>

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### Campbell Avenue Summary

Considerations & Concerns	Ideas for Enhancement
<p>Concerns raised at the Campbell Avenue tables included the expected shadows created by the overpass and the effect this will have on neighbouring properties and on the public space being created. Other considerations included concerns about potential removal of mature trees, noise impacts, and who will take responsibility for maintenance. Residents expressed concern that Antler St. won't be opened up 'because Metrolinx doesn't own the land' on the other side of the tracks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create cycling and pedestrian paths at Lappin Ave./Antler St.</li> <li>• Increase connectivity of neighbourhoods and connect east and west traffic</li> <li>• Include dog park, seating areas</li> <li>• Create a GO station at Bloor</li> <li>• Bring local commercial activity: (cafes, studios, food trucks, etc.)</li> </ul>

### Dupont Street Summary

Considerations & Concerns	Ideas for Enhancement
<p>At the Dupont tables, key areas of concern included community safety, and environmental protection. It was also expressed that an overpass may become a barrier between communities, acting as a visual and psychological impediment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the noise walls are clear (Plexiglas) so it does not visually separate communities</li> <li>• Incorporate clean energy, such as windmills, solar panels along the corridor</li> <li>• Use designers, not engineers, "good design, not cheap design"</li> </ul>

### Davenport Road Summary

Considerations & Concerns	Ideas for Enhancement
<p>The two main concerns that were discussed at the Davenport Road tables were community safety, especially concern for the safety of children, as well as aesthetic considerations of the overpass itself.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate Victorian elements of the Foundry Buildings into design</li> <li>• Landscape architecture, plantings and trees that create shade and absorb sound,</li> <li>• Design sound barriers with trees, plantings wisteria and other vines</li> </ul>