



## STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

### Road Closures for the Toronto International Film Festival: Effects on Transit Service

<b>Date:</b>	July 29, 2015
<b>To:</b>	TTC Board
<b>From:</b>	Chief Executive Officer

#### Summary

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Organizers of the 2015 Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) have advised the TTC that, again this year, they are asking that King Street be closed, between University Avenue and Spadina Avenue, for four days, for the celebration and promotion of the festival. Similar closures have taken place in previous years and, regardless of the various approaches tried by the TTC to retain and provide a quality service under such circumstances, the reliability, speed, and overall quality of service on the 504 King route were seriously affected. For this reason, TTC staff do not support the closure of King Street, even though we understand the importance of the festival itself to the economy and international reputation of Toronto.

If King Street, between University and Spadina Avenues, is closed for the 2015 TIFF (September 10 to 13, 2015) then, in order to avoid the same detrimental effects on the 504 King streetcar service as has occurred in previous years, the route will be split to operate as two geographically-separated halves – one between Broadview Station and York Street, and the other between Dundas West Station and Bathurst Street. This would remove streetcar service from a section of King Street, between York and Bathurst Streets. While this change in service would cause significant inconvenience for TTC customers destined for this area, the overall inconvenience would be much less than the unreliable and slow service for all users of the route due to the road closure.

#### Recommendations

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##### It is recommended that the Board:

1. Note that TTC staff recognize the importance of TIFF to Toronto's economy and international reputation, but do not support the requested closure of King Street, between University and Spadina Avenues, because of the significant negative effects it causes to the 504 King streetcar and other services -- such as the

- 501 Queen streetcar which are affected by the traffic and congestion spillover effects of the closure;
2. Note that, in the event that the requested closure of this section of King Street is approved then, from September 10 to 13, 2015, in order to minimize the effects of the closure on the reliability, speed, and quality of service of the 504 King streetcar route, that route will be temporarily split into two separated halves, with streetcars from the west turning back at King and Bathurst Streets, and streetcars from the east turning back at King and York Streets; and
  3. Forward this report for information to Councillor Joe Cressy, the Transportation Services Department, and to the City's Division of Economic Development, Culture, and Tourism.

## **Financial Summary**

These recommendations will have no financial impact on the TTC's operating budget.

## **Accessibility/Equity Matters**

The TTC's streetcar services are not yet accessible. The introduction of new low-floor streetcars will make these services accessible. All streetcar routes will be accessible by 2019.

If the TTC is required to implement this diversion in the interests of overall service quality, streetcar access to the area would be less convenient and more challenging for all people, including people who have visual or physical disabilities. People would have to walk or otherwise negotiate their way to the site of the celebrations by means of an extended walk from the stops at King and Bathurst, King and York Streets, or King and Spadina (via the 510 Spadina streetcar).

## **Decision History**

Approval is being sought again this year to close King Street to all vehicular traffic between University and Spadina Avenues, in support of the celebration and promotion of the Toronto International Film Festival 2015. TTC staff have previously stated that they are opposed to this closure because it results in significantly-degraded service quality on the 504 King and 501 Queen streetcar routes – two of the busiest routes in the entire TTC system. Service on the 510 Spadina route is also negatively affected by the spillover effects of the road closures.

## **Issue Background**

For this year's TIFF, it has again been proposed to close King Street between University Avenue and Spadina Avenue. If approved, this year's closure would be in effect from Thursday, September 10 to Sunday, September 13, 2015. Similar closures have taken place in previous years. In some years, access for streetcars was maintained through the site of the closure for some of the event days. When the 504 King route was operated through the event site, congestion on King Street, just outside the celebration site, caused significant delays to the route. More recently, streetcars on the 504 King

route have been diverted away from King Street to Queen Street during the four-day period of Thursday to Sunday. This diversion of the 504 King route via Queen Street produced no better results, because the increased traffic on Queen Street resulting from the closure of King Street significantly increased transit travel times and made service unreliable on both the 504 King and 501 Queen routes. In both cases -- operation through the site, and operation around the site -- service reliability on the 504 King route was seriously affected. Both streetcar routes -- the 504 King and 501 Queen -- are very busy and, together, they carry over 100,000 customer-trips per weekday. The provision of significantly-degraded service on these two busy routes, as a result of local on-street TIFF celebrations, has negative effects on our customers and is not acceptable to the TTC.

## Comments

In order to operate a more-reliable service in the event of the proposed road closure, the 504 King streetcar route would be split into two geographically-separated route sections -- Broadview Station to York Street, and Dundas West Station to Bathurst Street. Streetcars operating from Broadview Station would loop on-street via west on King Street, south on Church Street, west on Wellington Street, north on York Street, and would then head back east on King Street. Streetcars on this east service would continue to serve King Station and St Andrew Station. Streetcars operating from Dundas West Station would travel east on King Street, then north on Bathurst Street to Wolseley Loop, just north of Queen Street. Streetcars would return south on Bathurst Street and west on King Street. The streetcars on this west service would connect with the 501 Queen and 511 Bathurst routes at Queen and Bathurst Streets. These temporary changes would result in a gap in the streetcar service along King Street between York and Bathurst Streets. The routing changes are shown on the map below.

### 504 King Routing During Possible TIFF Street Closure



Service on King Street, between Bathurst Street and York Street, would not be provided in order to remove streetcars from the area of congestion around the road closure, and to avoid operating the service on diversion over a very-busy Queen Street.

## Conclusion

Splitting a major downtown streetcar route like the 504 King route -- even on a temporary basis -- would cause significant inconvenience to TTC customers. However, TTC staff believe that this course of action would be preferable and better for customers,

than operating a diverted, slow, and unreliable service via a heavily-congested Queen Street.

## **Contact**

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