



MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE

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TO: Transportation Committee

DESTINATAIRE : Comité des transports

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FILE NUMBER: ACS2023-PWD-TRF-0001

SUBJECT: **WELLINGTON STREET TEMPORARY ROAD CLOSURE**

OBJET : **FERMETURE TEMPORAIRE DE LA RUE WELLINGTON**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide Members of Council with an update on the Wellington Street Temporary Road closure. Wellington Street has been closed to traffic since late January 2022 as a result of the illegal occupation of the street in January and February 2022.

At the February 23, 2022 Council meeting, Council approved the following motion as it relates to the temporary closure of Wellington Street:

The Director of Traffic Services be instructed to report back to Transportation

Committee on the feasibility and cost of implementing a temporary closure of Wellington Street between east of Bank and west of Elgin Street until the end of 2022 (subject to review at the first Transportation Committee meeting in the new Term of Council), in consultation with federal officials, OC Transpo, STO, Ottawa Police Services, Ottawa Fire and Paramedic services and that the current closure of Wellington St by the Ottawa Police Service not be re-opened until such a time that this report is brought forward to Transportation Committee.

Wellington Street Closure

As per the approved motion, Traffic Services maintained the closure of Wellington Street between Bank Street and Elgin Street immediately following the end of the January-February Freedom Convoy to preserve the integrity of the space. This temporary closure is still in place.

Only eastbound authorized vehicles such as the House of Commons and Senate Shuttle buses, Parliamentary Protective Services, City of Ottawa vehicles, NCC maintenance vehicles, solid waste vehicles and emergency services vehicles are permitted to access this closed-off section. The road closure was designed and implemented meeting requirements under the *Highway Traffic Act (HTA)* and aligning with Ontario Traffic Manual (OTM) guidelines. Planters and concrete barriers were implemented to define the physical boundaries of the road closure which provide increased protection to authorized road users while allowing emergency and protective services vehicles access to the area in the event of an emergency. The measures also serve to block large vehicular traffic from entering the space and to assist policing partners with security management efforts along the roadway. Please refer to Document 1 – Map Wellington Street Closure for closure boundaries.

The closure led to a shift in vehicular and pedestrian activity within the closed-off section of Wellington Street due to the lower levels of traffic. As a result, the traffic signals on Wellington at Metcalfe and at O'Connor were removed and replaced with stop signs to adapt to the change. This allowed for better compliance between the eastbound authorized vehicle only lane and the north/south pedestrian crossings at these intersections.

Key stakeholders affected by the Wellington Street closure include but are not limited to the federal government (Senate, House of Commons, Parliament) various business owners and local area infrastructure maintenance providers. Stakeholders have been

engaged over the duration of the closure, and minor modifications of the closure have been undertaken to ensure the measures implemented allow them to continue performing critical operations and service delivery.

The estimated total cost to date of the Wellington Street closure, which includes the implementation of an “Authorized Vehicles Only Lane”, a cycle lane on Wellington Street, revisions to the design of various intersections, and the removal of the two traffic signals is approximately \$55,000. This cost includes the installation of materials including critical signage, concrete barriers and planters and pavement markings.

Observed Impacts of closure to traffic in the Downtown Core

Pre-Covid, Wellington Street in front of Parliament Hill carried approximately 19,500 daily motorists. As a result of the closure, these motorists have had to find new routes to get across this section of the city. Overall, the closure of Wellington Street has not caused a total failure of the Transportation Network in the area mainly due to the lower traffic and pedestrian volumes. The fact that traffic volumes in 2022 were well below pre-covid traffic volumes helped mitigate serious congestion issues. As well, with the temporary opening of the westbound left turn movement at Booth Street and Sir John A. MacDonald Parkway, as a result of the Chaudière Bridge south road closure and lane reduction on Wellington Street at Lyon Street, has assisted in diverting some traffic that would have in the past travelled on Wellington Street. However, Traffic Services staff have observed impacts from the road closure as described below.

Queen Street in the westbound direction, a two-lane major Transit corridor that serves the O Train Stations, has become the de facto detour for traffic displaced from Wellington Street westbound, while Slater Street carries the traffic that would normally have used Wellington Street eastbound. In order to alleviate congestion and optimize traffic flow along detour routes, various adjustments to traffic signal timings were implemented at key intersections in the area.

During the early days of the Wellington Street closure, traffic volumes were already significantly reduced due to pandemic restrictions. As such, impacts of the closure on surrounding roadways were negligible at that time. Over the past six months, there has been an increase in traffic returning to the downtown core as a result of pandemic restrictions being lifted, particularly during PM peak hours. While this increase in traffic to the area can currently be managed through signal timing adjustments and other measures, it has the potential to cause congestion and delay for all roadway users in

the future as workers continue to return to the downtown core.

Detoured traffic travelling on alternate routes in the area has led to more vehicles making right or left turns at intersections. The increase in right or left turning traffic has the potential to lead to greater conflict and safety hazards between turning vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians in crosswalks.

As a result of increased traffic volumes on alternate routes, unplanned incidents, such as fire, police or ambulance vehicles blocking lanes along the detour roads to attend calls, have caused increased congestion and delay in these areas, especially during peak periods.

As noted above, the current closure has not had a significant negative impact to the transportation network. However, it should be noted that there are major construction projects planned to continue in 2023 in the core that could further negatively impact traffic. Staff anticipate that construction-related activities along and in the vicinity of the Albert Street and Slater Street corridors in the coming years will significantly affect the movement of transit, traffic, and goods in the downtown core, as lane reductions and detours are implemented to accommodate construction activities.

Wellington Street Transportation Study

While the previous discussion has focused on the current transportation impacts of the temporary closure of Wellington Street, this assessment does not provide an indication of how the downtown road network will perform in the future, as traffic volumes eventually recover from the pandemic and new development adds additional traffic pressures. A Transportation Working Group has been established, comprised of representatives from Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), the National Capital Commission (NCC), and the City of Ottawa, to direct and oversee a transportation study of Wellington Street. The study will examine the traffic impacts and mitigation strategies associated with potential changes to the function of Wellington Street, which arise from the need to enhance security of the Parliamentary Precinct.

As part of the study, travel forecasts will be developed and an analysis of traffic operations will be undertaken to assess the implications of any potential permanent closure of Wellington Street to general traffic. The analysis will consider how traffic will divert under this possible scenario and the corresponding safety and operational impacts to other streets and intersections within the downtown area. The study will also

consider the impacts to active transportation, transit, goods movement, emergency services, and on-street parking / loading zones. In developing the travel forecasts, the effects of changing work patterns and other planned infrastructure projects will be considered.

The study will be conducted in phases, with the first phase focusing on the closure of Wellington Street in the area roughly corresponding to the current vehicle access control area, between Bank Street and Elgin Street southbound. Extension of the closure limits will be examined in the second phase of the study, based on security and other requirements. Please refer to Document 2 - Wellington Street Transportation Study Road Closure Options for further details).

Parsons Corporation is being retained to conduct the study under the City's Standing Offer for Traffic and Transportation Planning. The study is being managed by the City of Ottawa, with funding from Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC).

Results of the study will enable Staff to make recommendations regarding the future function of Wellington Street for consideration by Transportation Committee and Council. It is currently anticipated that a report to Transportation Committee will be brought forward in late 2023 or early 2024.

With the return to the office of federal public service, city staff will work to mitigate ongoing issues with the current temporary closure of Wellington Street, if directed by Council. A final recommendation on the future operation of Wellington Street will be provided with the tabling of the report to Transportation Committee and Council later this year or in early 2024. This report will provide information on the outcome of the traffic study being completed in 2023 along with recommendations on the future operation of Wellington Street.

Should you have any questions concerning the road closure, I can be reached by e-mail Philippe.Landry@ottawa.ca or by telephone at 613-580-2424, extension 23185.

Respectfully,

Philippe Landry, P.Eng.
Director, Traffic Services

CC: Extended Senior Leadership Team
Public Works Departmental Leadership Team
Planning, Real Estate and Economic Development Department Leadership Team
Director, Public Information and Media Relations
Manager, Council and Committee Services
Coordinator, Transportation Committee
Traffic Services Service Area Leadership Team

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1 – Wellington Street Closure

Document 2 – Wellington Street Transportation Study Road Closure Options