

Toronto's new mayor announces measures to reduce gridlock

Last week, Toronto's newly elected mayor John Tory announced a 6-pronged strategy intended to help relieve some of the city's traffic congestion headaches. The six measures are as follows:

- **Aggressive Towing Policy**
 - As of January 1, vehicles illegally parked on major routes during rush hours will be towed. There will be "zero tolerance" according to Tory. It remains to be seen if the city will engage heavy tow vehicles to remove heavy commercial vehicles.
- **Traffic Light Timing**
 - Tory says he intends to test new light-timing technology and apply light-timing to 350 traffic lights across the city. Tory wants technology that will sense traffic flow and make adjustments in real-time.
- **Lane Closures**
 - The city will make it more costly the private developers to close traffic lanes and will introduce more stringent criteria for restricting traffic lanes.
- **Traffic Cameras**
 - The city will add 40 more cameras in 2015 to monitor traffic and communicate with Toronto police, and add another 60 in 2016. Tory is even looking at a media partnership where airborne traffic reporters would send video pictures to the city's traffic management centre.
- **Nighttime Road Repairs**
 - Road construction and repair hours will be extended from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. on public-sector construction projects to advance completion dates.
- **Co-ordination of Road Closures**
 - The mayor will personally participate in the city's road closing co-ordination committee for the next six months in order to improve the process and prevent simultaneous closures on major parallel (alternate) routes.

OMCA has had a number of conversations with Mr. Tory and his staff about this issue already. They did reach out and call us the day of the announcement so they are at least aware of our concerns. Their message has been that they understand legitimate business pressures – not only for coaches but for trucks, couriers etc.; that they want to work with us to find practical solutions, such as designated stopping areas, better enforcement of cars parking in coach areas, curb bays at key points, one-way streets etc. They are committed to getting traffic moving in the downtown area; enforcement is going to be a key part of that and there will be zero tolerance for anyone found unnecessarily blocking lanes.

Given that policy fixes will take some time, and enforcement is starting in January, it's fair to say we expect there may be problems in downtown Toronto in 2015 with more tickets, and less ability to have those tickets withdrawn. Tour and coach operators should be doubly careful about stopping and definitely about parking, in the downtown Toronto area. Drivers should be

made aware of this new aggressive stance by the City. OMCA will continue to work with the new mayor and his team to find workable solutions to how we can all share the limited transportation space in Toronto.