

King Edward truck-tunnel study expected soon



[Matthew Pearson, Ottawa Citizen](#)

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Trucks travel along King Edward Avenue toward the interprovincial bridge. Wayne Hiebert / The Ottawa Citizen

A long-awaited study on the feasibility of building a truck tunnel beneath King Edward Avenue is expected in weeks, but a permanent fix for one of Ottawa's worst traffic headaches could still be years away.

Engineering consulting firm Parsons was hired in August 2014 to conduct the study, which is now in the hands of city transportation planners, according to Rideau-Vanier Coun. Mathieu Fleury.

He hasn't seen the Parsons report but says he's been briefed by staff, who are preparing their own report for the transportation committee. It's expected to be released this spring.

The city and province split the cost of the \$750,000 study, which Fleury said considers a series of options for a tunnel to link the Macdonald-Cartier Bridge and Highway 417 through an area roughly bounded by the Rideau Canal to the west, the Vanier Parkway to the east and southern connection points at the Nicholas, Lees or Vanier Parkway ramps.

Tunnel length, ramp length and land acquisition were some of the aspects considered for each of the options. "There's a whole lot of factors that were looked at to come up with three to five options that are feasible with broad costing," Fleury said.

Exactly how much the project could cost remains unclear, he said. Part of the reason is because the price would change based on how the tunnel is configured, how many lanes are required, and whether it will be restricted to just inter-provincial truck traffic or open to all road users who want to get through downtown without stopping.

When the tunnel study was first announced, Ottawa-Vanier MPP Madeleine Meilleur suggested that if the results of the study were positive, the province would come on board with some funding.

"We'll cross that bridge when we get to it, but as you know we have a large budget in infrastructure for the next 10 years, and Ottawa will be able to ask for funds," she said at the time.

DOWNTOWN TRUCK TUNNEL STUDY AREA

- Potential tunnel entrance
- Possible tunnel routes
- Surface route



DENNIS LEUNG / OTTAWA CITIZEN

The most preliminary thinking imagines either a tunnel that begins where Highway 417 meets King Edward and goes underneath King Edward north to the Macdonald-Cartier Bridge, or a couple of more westerly variations that let trucks stay on the surface on the long Nicholas Street

ramp but put them in a tunnel starting at Laurier Avenue and proceeding more or less under the ByWard Market.

Mayor Jim Watson has suggested the tunnel could be paid for over time by charging tolls but that's a decision to come much later, assuming the feasibility study concludes it can be built.

The city believes it's the province's responsibility to connect Highway 417 with an inter-provincial crossing but is a willing partner because its residents are the ones who feel the pain of truck traffic on downtown streets, Fleury said.

Before shovels ever come close to breaking ground, an environmental assessment, including public consultation, would have to occur — and that could take another 18 months.

Still, Fleury says he wants to keep the process moving and make sure the feasibility study doesn't end up gathering dust on a shelf.

“We can study it all we want. What the community wants is a solution,” he said. “As long as there is progress, as long as we're seeing that there's light at the end of a tunnel and a tunnel is coming, we're going to stay with it.”