

Ensuring universal accessibility

Brief submitted to the STM during the public consultation process
“Le projet Vendôme, mission accessibilité!”

by the
Concertation Interquartier



About the CIQ

The Concertation Interquartiers (CIQ) is an inter-neighbourhood coalition of organizations, institutions, and community groups concerned with the impact of the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC) at the Glen Campus on its surrounding communities. The CIQ's mission is to work with the MUHC to optimize the positive and minimize the negative effects to our neighbourhoods of the mega-hospital at our borders.

Introduction

The members of the *Concertation Interquartier* (CIQ) are pleased to submit for the *Société de Transport de Montréal's* consideration our recommendations regarding the construction of a universally accessible pedestrian tunnel connecting the McGill University Health Centre to the Vendome intermodal station. We have advocated for this project for many years and we welcome this opportunity to contribute to the public dialogue on its construction.

The Vendome station is the main intermodal transportation hub serving the MUHC hospital as well as residents of the NDG neighbourhood and the City of Westmount, and yet there is currently no pedestrian link between the hospital and the transit system that meets the minimum standards for *universal accessibility*. Many thousands of seniors, families with small children, and people with mobility issues use the Vendome station to access the MUHC and are obliged to navigate a long tunnel with multiple staircases or walk long distances on steep, narrow sidewalks to get to the hospital.

We are very supportive of the proposal to create a universally-accessible pedestrian link between Vendome and the MUHC. However, we urge the STM, as well as the AMT, the MTQ, and the Borough of Côtés-des-Neiges/Notre-Dame-de-Grace to work together to ensure safe and accessible use of this the hub throughout all phases of construction of the new pedestrian link and in its completed design, and to minimize the impacts of this project on the neighbourhood. The following document presents specific recommendations to that effect.

A commitment to Universal Accessibility

The CIQ applauds both the STM & AMT's commitment to ensuring safe and accessible use of their services, which includes the physical environment in and around stations like Vendome. Indeed, both agencies seem to agree on similar guiding principles in their approach to making their services

accessible, as described in a statement from the STM's corporate policy on universal accessibility: "To plan, design and implement all of its activities and disseminate its programs and activities by ensuring that all applicable elements of universal accessibility are integrated into its processes". This is an important commitment given that 200,000 residents of the Island of Montreal have some type of mobility impairment (Vision 20/20 Report, The future of Montreal Transit, AMT). Both agencies also agree to collaborate with the partners and actors involved with the public transportation network. Furthermore, the AMT's own policy on accessibility includes a commitment to collaborate with best practice initiatives that will improve accessibility.

It is imperative that this commitment to universal accessibility be applied in and around the Vendome station during all phases of construction of the 2nd entrance.

Our Recommendations for Mitigation Measures during Construction

To ensure universal access to the MUHC during all phases of the project, and to limit the impact on local residents and commuters during construction, we would like to make the following 8 recommendations:

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. We recommend a thorough evaluation of the accessibility of the Vendome metro as well as the tunnel leading to the hospital and ask that the present entrance, the new entrance and all mitigating measures in place during construction comply with the standards of best practice for universally accessible public spaces.**
- 2. We recommend that financial assistance be requested from the MTQ for mitigation measures.**

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

3. Currently, nine bus routes equipped with low-floor buses stop at Metro Vendome. These buses transport people with mobility issues to the MUHC 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. During the construction period, it will be very difficult and potentially dangerous for passengers with mobility issues to walk to the MUHC via de Maisonneuve Blvd. To ensure their safety:

We recommend that the STM create a universally accessible bus link between the Vendôme Metro and the MUHC.

4. The proposed development plan indicates that all available parking spaces on De Maisonneuve blvd. will be eliminated to allow for the rerouting of buses and to ensure safety on the south side of the street. However, many users with mobility issues will be coming to the area by taxi or private vehicles. Therefore:

We recommend that there be clearly designated “DROP OFF” areas for taxis and private vehicles on the north side of De Maisonneuve immediately adjacent to the Vendome metro.

5. The plan for trucking on the south side of the project was unclear in the public presentation recently given by the STM, and it seemed that the plan was to have trucks exit the site via St-Jacques in Saint-Henri. This is unacceptable due to the high volume of traffic connected to the Turcot Project, as well as frequent road closures in this area. Therefore:

We recommend that trucks working on the MUHC side of the tunnel not be routed through Saint-Henri.

6. A pedestrian wanting to get to the hospital from outside of the Vendome metro can walk west along the south side of De Maisonneuve to Decarie Blvd. and continue south on Decarie. The slope, as seen in the pictures below, is extremely steep and dangerous as it leads into a busy intersection. During the winter, the wind tunnel effect at this intersection causes ice to form quickly on the sidewalk, making the slope more treacherous still. There are currently no physical supports to help pedestrians (including pregnant women, parents with strollers and small children, seniors, and people with mobility impairments) to navigate the hill and the sidewalk. To ensure their safety:

We recommend that this pedestrian corridor be evaluated for safety and accessibility and that a handrail be installed from 5252 De Maisonneuve Blvd. west to Decarie Blvd. and south on Decarie Blvd. to the overpass as a mitigating measure until the evaluation is completed.



7. Citizens, community and advocacy groups have not been given adequate information in a timely fashion that allows for an informed opinion or an adequate response to the development plan for the project. The information provided during the recent public information session lacked important details about the design. For example, the dimensions proposed for the new tunnel were not presented. There needs to be further consultation with residents in the surrounding area, especially regarding appropriate mitigation measures during all phases of the project.

We recommend that the STM establish a *Comité de Bon Voisinage* comprised of residents, merchants, and community groups from NDG, St-Henri, and Westmount for the duration of the project. The committee would meet regularly with the STM and its associated partners, during the construction period to:

- a. discuss next steps in the project**
- b. listen to residents' concerns**
- c. deal with problems as they arise.**

8. We are concerned that the construction of a new Provigo grocery store at Claremont and De Maisonneuve will create an unmanageable amount of traffic, noise and pollution in the area around the Vendome station.

The construction of the Turcot interchange has already created a difficult situation in this area. Public transit mitigation measures implemented by the STM during the reconstruction of the interchange have already increased bus traffic around the station. Road closures in the area will continue to affect residents in St. Henri, Westmount and NDG for the next several years. The Environmental Impact Study for the Turcot project identifies increased noise and airborne dust levels as the most marked residual impacts on local residents associated with the reconstruction project. (Page 71, 5.4, Turcot reconstruction project, Environmental Impact study, Dussau).

In the plans for the construction of the second entrance to the metro, Claremont and St. Catherine streets will become corridors for trucks entering and leaving the site. The movement of 10-30 trucks per hour and the increased air and noise pollution levels associated with all phases of the project will impact local residents and users of the intermodal transportation hub for at least two years. We believe that the area has been saturated with the demands of the construction of the Glen site and the ongoing reconstruction of the Turcot exchange. Residents and commuters will now have to deal with the residual impacts of the construction of the second metro entrance as well. To prevent further disruption in this area:

We recommend that the borough impose a moratorium on the development of the parcel of land owned by Provigo that sits on the South East side corner of Claremont and De Maisonneuve until construction of the second entrance to the metro is completed and further consultation with residents occurs.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. We recommend a thorough evaluation of the accessibility of the Vendome metro as well as the tunnel leading to the hospital and ask that the built environment and mitigating measures during construction comply with the standards of best practice for universally accessible public spaces.**
- 2. We recommend that financial mitigation measures be requested from the MTQ for the foregoing proposals.**
- 3. We recommend that the STM create a universally accessible bus link between the Vendome Metro and the MUHC. Currently, nine bus routes, equipped with low-floor buses and carrying passengers with mobility impairments, stop 24/7, at Metro Vendome.**
- 4. We recommend that there be clearly designated “DROP OFF” areas for taxis and private vehicles on the north side of De Maisonneuve immediately adjacent to the Vendome metro.**
- 5. We recommend that trucks working on the MUHC side of the tunnel not be routed through Saint-Henri.**
- 6. We recommend that this pedestrian corridor be evaluated for safety and accessibility and a handrail should be installed from 5252 de Maisonneuve Blvd. west to Decarie Blvd. and south on Decarie Blvd. to the overpass as a mitigating measure until the evaluation is completed.**
- 7. We recommend that the STM set up a Comité de Bon Vosinage for the duration of the project. The committee, comprised of residents/merchants from NDG, St-Henri and Westmount would meet regularly with the STM and its associated partners, during the construction period to:**
 - a. discuss next steps in the project**
 - b. listen to residents’ concerns**
 - c. deal with problems as they arise**

- 8. We recommend that the borough put a moratorium on the development of the parcel of land owned by Provigo that sits on the South East side corner of Claremont and De Maisonneuve until the construction of the second entrance to the metro is completed and further consultation with residents occurs.**

List of CIQ members and other organizations submitting the memoire

- NDG Community Council
- Solidarité St. Henri
- Westmount Municipal Association
- Contactivity Centre
- CIUSSS du centre ouest de l'île de Montréal
- Coordination territoriale Santé publique et développement des communautés locales du CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'île-de-Montréal
- RESO