Yonge Street was first initiated by Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe in 1796. Although the road—as we know it today—was commissioned as a military road, local historians indicate that the route was travelled centuries before by First Nations people.

In the early years, individuals who utilized Yonge Street were often reliant on their own strength to travel the route, often portaging, walking or snowshoeing with their belongings to their destination. As oxen and horses became more accessible, historians express that travellers started to rely on these animals as a way to transport them to their final destination.

Research suggests that with the influx of travellers, so did the need for transportation options. Established in 1849, H. B. Williams’ Omnibus Bus Lines provided the first known public transit alternative [horse-drawn carriages] within York/Toronto. Within a decade, however, the first street railway system—with radial services to outlying towns—was established on the same route and became a more popular option.

History has shown us that at the beginning of World War I, horses were becoming a less favourable choice for commerce. Around this time, motorized vehicles brought about unprecedented economic improvements for retailers and consumers alike.

With the onset of motorized vehicles, historians illustrate that Canadians wanted to improve both the quality and safety of their local roads. To improve their mode of transportation, locals started laying planks of wood—similar to a boardwalk—to create a more even surface to travel on.

More than 200 years later, the demand for safe, efficient and reliable public transit remains strong along the significant arterial route that is Yonge Street.
Temporary lane closures for road work, construction and moving heavy equipment can be disruptive. But before we can build a new street with dedicated rapid transit lanes, wider sidewalks and beautiful plantings, utility companies need to move underground utilities.

Over the course of this project, crews will be relocating storm and sanitary sewers, water mains, gas mains, hydro poles and lines, and telecommunications equipment.

The time we spend replacing and updating our infrastructure is an investment in our communities. A complete street with rapid transit will serve generations to come.

Do you wonder why we sometimes return to the same area to work, even though it seems like we’re finished?

The world of utilities is very complex and requires highly specialized crews. Just like renovating your kitchen, only one type of contractor can be in any one work zone at a time, and in a particular order. Each specialized crew excavates the ground, works on their utility and restores the site. This process can be repeated numerous times for every utility that is needed along Yonge Street. This means crews could return to the same spot many times to perform different work.

For more information about the world of utilities, visit youtube.com/vivanext.

Pedestrian safety

Pedestrian safety and ensuring there is access to businesses are some of our top priorities. When sidewalks have been temporarily re-routed, there will be signs showing pedestrians where they can safely access sidewalks. Signs and temporary sidewalks will make it easy to locate and access your favourite stores and other businesses during construction. For your own safety, please follow detour signs and cross at signalized intersections. When transit stops are temporarily relocated, signs will be posted describing the new location and the easiest way to get there. Once completed, well-marked crossings, combined with audible signals, will help make it easier and safer for pedestrians to cross at signalized intersections.
investing in infrastructure: night and weekend work

So how do we get these projects done when people still need to use the roads?

VivaNext rapid transit projects are carefully planned to manage construction and maintain traffic flow as much as possible. There is a balance on every construction project between the need to get work done on schedule, the need to keep traffic moving, and the construction disruption to adjacent homes and businesses.

On occasion, night and weekend work is scheduled on busy roads to avoid traffic congestion during the higher-traffic daytime hours.

We understand that sitting in traffic can make commutes longer. On the other hand, when work is done at night we know the noise and lights can make it difficult for those living nearby. Our crews work diligently to complete overnight work quickly so that it’s over as soon as possible. They also try to minimize the amount of noise and light they create while they’re working overnight, while still maintaining a safe work environment for crews.

community engagement

One of the ways we keep you informed, especially during construction season, is through local events and festivals. Join us this summer at a variety of community events to get information, ask questions, share your feedback and stay connected. In case you miss us, the best way to stay informed about Yonge Street construction activities is to sign up for email notifications at vivaNext.com/subscribe.
As construction begins, thank you for continuing to support local shops and businesses along Yonge Street. If you haven’t visited us yet, come and check out what we have. Businesses are open throughout construction, and offer a wide variety of products and services. We value your support, and our staff are ready to help find what you need. After all, we’re your neighbours too—Shop Yonge!