

Thursday, May 14, 2020

Mayor John Tory  
City Councillors  
Toronto City Hall  
100 Queen St. W.  
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Mayor Tory and City Councillors,

***Re: ActiveTO and temporary bikeways to address community transportation needs***

We support the mayor's recent announcement about temporary bikeways to serve as a "default" for the city's transit system given the social distancing imperative of COVID-19. Many cities around the world have already provided alternatives to transit by installing temporary bikeways, ranging from dozens to hundreds of kilometres, to allow essential workers to reach workplaces, and other residents to obtain daily necessities. We urge Toronto to do the same.

**Our key recommendations:**

- **immediate installation of cross-town Bloor-Danforth and Yonge St. 'spine' bikeways -- approx 40 km;**
- **installation of 60 km of additional bikeways on urgent basis (after expedited engagement of neighbourhood leaders) to mirror the busiest TTC surface routes;**
- **Implementation of lower speed limits on roads with new bikeways, especially to protect vulnerable and novice riders.**

A vital starting point for the *ActiveTO* plan is the installation of bikeway 'spines' for a cycling network to provide an alternative to subway lines. These spine routes on Bloor-Danforth (from Etobicoke to Scarborough) and Yonge St. (from Steeles to the waterfront), would entail about 40 km of *new* bikeways. A cross-town Bloor-Danforth bikeway, for instance, would connect to existing north-south bike lanes, including on Woodbine, Greenwood, Jones, Sherbourne, St. George, Shaw, Royal York, and Renforth, as well as bike trails along the Humber and Don Rivers. Cycling facilities on these two routes have been the subject of a number of city studies.

In addition, the city's existing bike infrastructure can be quickly augmented by extending heavily used bike lanes, including, for example, a westerly extension of the College bike lane and extensions in both directions along Queen St. for the Richmond-Adelaide bike lanes.

We propose, as an equally important first step, the immediate engagement of community leaders in the city's dense population clusters, especially Neighbourhood Improvement Areas, for input about the most effective location for 60 km of new bikeways in serving the

transportation needs of essential workers and other residents. In many neighbourhoods, residents rely overwhelmingly on the TTC, especially in commuting to downtown destinations.

The installation of the second phase of bikeways will be guided by local input and a timeline measured in weeks to address the pressing need. We expect that these bikeways will be aligned with the busiest and most crowded bus routes, including Jane, Weston, Dufferin, Bayview, Victoria Park, Don Mills/Overlea and Finch. (Ongoing LRT construction on Eglinton Ave. provides a particular challenge to be solved by considering parallel arterial roads.) Careful monitoring of the new bikeways, supported by the feedback and observations of local residents, will inform necessary adjustments.

In a city with a 5,600 km road network, 100 km of temporary bikeways to complement the city's existing facilities can be considered a reasonable start. In fact, 100 km is consistent with new infrastructure the city planned to have in place by this year pursuant to its comprehensive 2016 Bike Plan. We anticipate that the new bikeways will complement a system of high-volume walking routes in the city's densely populated downtown.

To optimize the value of new bikeways will generally require installation on arterial roads, consistent with the findings of city cycling studies that people commuting by bike typically use the same arterial roads as motorists because such roads provide the most direct routes to common destinations. This is especially important for bicyclists who rely on the physical exertion of pedalling. The new bikeways must be geared for transportation.

Temporary bikeways provide an inexpensive means of testing which routes (and design features) offer the greatest benefit for the longer-term pandemic recovery. We note that the 'major corridor studies' for Bloor-Danforth and Yonge, that were to be undertaken under the 2016 Bike Plan, can now be economically piloted as temporary lanes. An expanded system of bikeways will simultaneously allow the city to advance goals and policies relating to the health benefits of active transportation, Complete Streets, and urgent reductions to carbon emissions -- along with objectives for greater transportation affordability and equity.

New bikeways, if properly implemented, will be used by many residents who may have little cycling experience on city roads. For this reason, we suggest that the city consider offering instruction programs in cycling skills at convenient times and locations, as well as online. Affordable bicycle repair services and new bicycle parking facilities should also be made available at a variety of popular destinations.

Roads adjacent to bikeways must have reduced speed limits, consistent with the city's Vision Zero 2.0 road safety plan, the presence of newer riders, and the increase in illegal activity such as stunt driving. The reduced speeds will be especially important at intersections, which are particularly dangerous points of interaction. The bikeways may themselves have a limited speed to protect new or vulnerable riders. Properly designed bikeways will also provide an option for residents who rely on mobility devices, such as power-assisted wheelchairs, electric-assist bicycles, and cargo bikes.

We look forward to your response. We would be pleased to 'meet' with your staff as soon as possible to discuss next steps.

*Sincerely,*

*Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services*

*ARC (Advocacy for Respect for Cyclists)*

*Avenue Road Safety Coalition (ARSC)*

*Bells on Bloor*

*Bells on Danforth*

*Bloordale Community Improvement Assoc.*

*Bloor West Village Residents' Assoc.*

*Corktown Residents' and Business Assoc.*

*CultureLink Settlement and Community Services*

*Cycle Don Valley Midtown*

*Cycle Toronto Midtown*

*Cycle Toronto*

*David Suzuki Foundation*

*Doctors for Safe Cycling*

*Eglinton Park Residents' Assoc.*

*Etobicoke South Cycling Committee*

*Federation of North Toronto Residents' Associations (FoNTRA)*

*Friends and Families for Safe Streets*

*Friends of Berczy Park*

*Friends of St James Park*

*Friends of the West Toronto Railpath*

*Gil Penalosa & Associates*

*Green 11 and Green 13*

*Green Neighbours 21 and 24*

*Ken Greenberg, Greenberg Consultants*

*HOOF&CYCLE*

*Jamii Esplanade*

*Junction Triangle Rail Committee*

*Lytton Park Residents' Organization*

*Parkdale High Park Bikes*

*Parkdale High Park 4 Climate Action*

*Parkdale Residents' Association*

*Rev. Dr. Cheri DiNovo CM (Trinity St. Paul's)*

*Roncy Reduces*

*SLNA Waste Reduction Group*

*South Eglinton Ratepayers' and Residents' Assoc. (SERRA)*

*South Riverdale Community Health Centre*

*St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Assoc.*  
*St. Lawrence Reduces*  
*TTC Riders*  
*The Reading Line*  
*Toronto Centre Cyclists*  
*Toronto Environmental Alliance (TEA)*  
*Toronto Public Space Committee*  
*32 Spokes*  
*Velo Canada Bikes*  
*Walk Toronto*  
*West Bend Community Assoc.*  
*West Don Lands Committee*  
*Women's Cycling Network*  
*Ward 14 Bikes*  
*York Quay Neighbourhood Assoc. (YQNA)*

cc. Dr. Eileen de Villa, Toronto Medical Officer of Health  
Chris Murray, City Manager  
Barbara Gray, General Manager, Transportation Services  
Saad Rafi and Dr. David Mowat, Office of Recovery and Rebuild  
Jacquelyn Hayward, Transportation Infrastructure Management  
Becky Katz, Manager, Cycling and Pedestrian Projects Unit

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:**

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