



August 31, 2021

Offices of the Mayor and City Councillors
City Hall, 2nd Floor
100 Queen St. W.
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

RE: Street Safety in Midtown & Uptown Toronto

Dear Mayor John Tory and City Councillors,

August 20, 2021 – the day that 18-year-old Miguel Joshua Escanan lost his life at Avenue Road and Bloor Street. He was cycling north on Avenue Road, and where the protected bike lane ends he was struck by a cement truck passing him in the curb lane. According to his mother he wasn't an experienced cyclist but he enjoyed getting out on his bike.

Miguel's death adds to the climbing toll of cyclists and pedestrians who are losing their lives on Toronto's roads, a direct result of a lack of action to create protected bike lanes on major roads and to regulate and ensure safer trucks on city streets.

FoNTRA, on behalf of the named signatories listed, sent a letter two years ago when a pedestrian was struck and killed by a construction truck near Yonge and Eglinton. We are sending a letter once again to urge the City to take concrete action to better protect our most vulnerable road users - pedestrians and cyclists who put their lives at risk each time they step onto the street.

[Councillors Colle, Matlow and Robinson have proposed a number of short-term fixes](#) and [longer-term studies](#), and the City is continuing its [Vision Zero 2.0 initiative](#). In addition to these, to make people safer in the long term, **we ask for three concrete courses of action: build safer streets, increase enforcement, and require safer vehicles.** These have been proven in Toronto and other cities around the world to meaningfully improve safety for people on our streets.

1. Build safer streets.

Our outdated main streets are too wide, encouraging speeding and poor driving, and optimized for vehicle volume instead of safety. We need to modernize our streets, making safety the priority from the start.

Fortunately, we know what improves safety for people: simple tweaks to street design that include

signalized crossings, protected bicycle lanes, narrowed vehicle lanes, improved visibility/sightlines, reduced turn radii, shorter crossing distances, and lit crosswalks.

New York and other cities around the world have [halved the number](#) of street fatalities by building these kinds of safer, complete streets.

Toronto City Council has endorsed a 'Complete Streets' policy for all new planned and road reconstruction. We need to begin implementing this policy, such as by following the recommendations outlined in the [Yonge-Eglinton Secondary Plan](#), including providing "direct and continuous walking and cycling routes" on Major and Primary Streets - which includes Yonge, Eglinton and Mount Pleasant - and providing "additional, fine-grained walking and cycling routes" on Priority Local Streets.

Similar designs are already in Toronto! The Eglinton Connects streetscape redesign was approved in 2014, and includes wider sidewalks, reduced crossing distances, slower speeds, and bicycle lanes.

We request that the City of Toronto:

- a) undertake a study and implementation of a "complete streets" approach to Yonge St and a review of street safety on connecting side streets.**
- b) fully fund and accelerate construction of the approved Eglinton Connects complete street plan.**



Left: Approved design for Eglinton Connects: safe for all users (credit City of Toronto). Right: Existing unsafe design at Yonge & Erskine: no crossings, cars blocking sightlines, no bike lanes, narrow sidewalks (credit Michael Black)

2. Increase enforcement.

Enforcement of basic traffic laws has dramatically decreased over the past 50 years; today there are only two traffic enforcement police in the entire 53 Division, which extends from Bloor to Lawrence. Motorists, including heavy vehicle drivers, regularly drive recklessly and aggressively: speeding, running red lights, driving while distracted, and ignoring vulnerable road users.

The solution is modern approaches to enforcement: automated speeding cameras and red light cameras (as implemented successfully in New York City and in Vancouver), traffic wardens at key hotspots, and increased penalties to law breakers. Drivers of heavy trucks who ignore basic safety regulations should be targeted, and penalties should be increased to align with increased potential harm to vulnerable users.

Revenue from traffic fines should be channeled to municipalities that do the enforcement, not to the province, where it currently goes. These funds would incentivize municipalities to increase enforcement. Provincial support is still required to enable automated enforcement tools like speeding cameras; [this is currently under consultation](#).

We recommend that the City of Toronto:

a) Effective immediately, triple the number of traffic police/traffic wardens enforcing traffic laws.

b) Increased automated enforcement, including more red light cameras, automated speeding cameras, and higher penalties.

c) request the Ontario government to (a) increase fines and (b) permit municipalities to retain the traffic fine revenue currently directed to the provincial government



Speeding Cameras in B.C. (credit Jennifer Gauthier); Traffic Warden in Toronto (blogto.com)

3. Require safer trucks and vehicles.

An [outsized percentage of street fatalities are caused by heavy vehicles and trucks](#); the most dangerous ones, like the cement truck that killed a pedestrian at Yonge & Erskine, have enormous blind spots, poor handling, and negligible safety technology and equipment. Although many safety features are now mandatory for large vehicles in European jurisdictions, truck design in Canada has barely changed in 50 years; the heaviest and most dangerous vehicles are virtually identical to vehicles from the 1960s.

Fortunately, modern technology exists to dramatically improve safety of these vehicles: side guards to prevent people from being sucked under rear wheels, cameras and sensor systems, and high visibility cabs that eliminate blind spots.

Requiring safer trucks can be implemented federally, provincially and municipally. For example, London, UK has banned the least safe heavy trucks from the city, and in coming years will increasingly raise standards so only heavy trucks with moderate or better safety ratings can enter. This video describes what the London system requires: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-P20wdrcAQ&t=2s>. Several cities in the US, including Washington DC, [now require side guards on heavy duty trucks](#). And European vehicle standards [require all vehicles to be designed for pedestrian and cyclist safety](#).

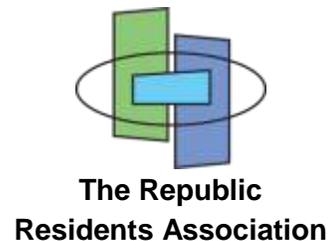
We recommend that the City of Toronto request the Ontario government (in conjunction with the federal government) to mandate safety features designed to protect vulnerable road users to be the required standard for all vehicles



Left: 1970s cement truck. Middle: Typical late 2010s low-visibility truck, soon to be banned in London UK. Right: Modern truck with high-visibility cabin, camera sensor systems, & side guards.

Please let's not let Miguel's death become just another statistic. Let's take this time to not only reflect on his passing but to bring about positive change to the city.

Respectfully submitted by the Federation of North Toronto Residents Associations with the support and assistance of the following organizations (which have endorsed this position statement).



c.c. *Provincial MPPs Jill Andrew, Robin Martin, Kathleen Wynne, Jessica Bell, Michael Coteau, Vincent Ke
Hon. Caroline Mulroney, Minister of Transportation
Steven Del Duca, Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party
Andrea Horwath, Leader of the Opposition
Mike Schreiner, Leader of the Ontario Green Party
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