

TORONTO URBAN RENEWAL NETWORK

August 28, 2007

To: Councillor Bill Saundercook (co-chair), Dylan Reid (co-chair) and all members of the Pedestrian Committee

RE: SOUTH KINGSWAY - THE QUEENSWAY INTERCHANGE PEDESTRIAN ISSUES

The Toronto Urban Renewal Network (TURN) is a community organization representing pedestrians, cyclists, transit users and motorists concerned with discrepancies between City of Toronto transportation plans and their implementation.

We are writing today to request that the Toronto Pedestrian Committee (TPC) review the existing problems and potential opportunities to improve pedestrian conditions at the intersection of South Kingsway and The Queensway in Swansea (Ward 13). We request that this be done at the TPC's September 12, 2007 meeting.

BACKGROUND

The original industrial site at the south east corner of South Kingsway – Queensway is presently being redeveloped as residential (three condominium towers consisting of approximately 78 stories and approximately 200 townhouses). When the development is completed approximately 2,000 new inhabitants will reside in Swansea.

In light of this new land use, the City of Toronto's Transportation Services Division (TSD) studied the intersection with a plan to re-configure it as part of the broader \$10 million re-construction of The Queensway. As part of an \$80,000 Class B Environmental Assessment (EA), the City identified safety and access concerns of the current configuration with respect to pedestrians, cyclists, transit users and motorists (see Attachment 1). The City acknowledged that the interchange currently favours the movement of motor vehicles over the safety and access of other users.

For pedestrians, the City's report stated that:

- transit platforms are not universally accessible and there exist too many uncontrolled crossings when accessing the transit platforms;
- north/south pedestrians must cross numerous uncontrolled ramps;
- the walkway on the east side of South Kingsway is not continuous to the new residential development to the south, pedestrians traveling from the east to the west side of South Kingsway must cross at an uncontrolled location; and
- the current pedestrian route for crossing the Queensway is inconvenient and there exists potential security concerns traveling under the Queensway structure.

TSD studied the redevelopment and identified a preferred proposal which addressed many pedestrian safety issues (see Attachment 2). The proposal was not brought before the Planning and Growth Committee but, as a result of lobbying of one area rate payers group, the EA was stopped by the local councilor, Bill Saundercook. Consequently, TSD has been directed to reconstruct the existing highway style ramps and intersection in its current 1950's style configuration. Although a new crossing signal and transit stop will be placed somewhere to the west of Southport Road and to the east of the South Kingsway bridge, the intersection will remain dangerous to pedestrians at all other conflict points outlined in the City's study. As well, plans to connect the new Queensway sidewalks (that currently ends at Windermere) to the section under the Queensway Bridge and at the Humber Bridge are now very unsure.

REASONS FOR PEDESTRIAN COMMITTEE INVOLVEMENT

This issue should be reviewed by the Pedestrian Committee for the following reasons:

1. Pedestrian stakeholders in the area were not fully informed and represented prior to the decision to abandon the reconfiguration plan

- There was no input from the TPC at the public consultations.
- There was very little representation from the residents of the new residential development which borders the interchange. Partly because the project is only 40% completed and 30% occupied and partly because the current residents were completely unaware of the City's proposal and the subsequent abandonment of the proposal
- The developer, Cresford Developments, was unaware the development had been shelved.
- The condominium board was unaware of the proposal.

2. Repaving the existing structure without substantial changes disregards the Toronto Pedestrian Charter which exists:

- to outline the rights that pedestrians can expect from the city
- to establish principles to guide development of city policies
- to identify features in urban environments and infrastructure to encourage and support walking.

Most importantly the charter was intended to serve as a reminder for decision makers that walking is the most sustainable form of travel, which has enormous social, environmental and economic benefits for the city.

3. Repaving the existing structure without substantial changes is inconsistent with the City's Official Plan which includes:

- implementing policies and practices to create an urban environment which supports walking
- creating safe, direct, comfortable, attractive, and convenient pedestrian conditions
- developing the city's transportation network to provide present and future access to vehicles, pedestrians and bicycles
- creating safe and comfortable bicycle environments

4. Reconstructing the existing structure without substantial changes disregards other relevant plans that promote a clean, green and inclusive city:

- "Shifting Gears" Bike Plan
- Transit City Plan
- Climate Change, Clean Air and Sustainable Energy Plan

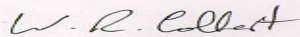
RECOMMENDED ACTION

The objectives of the TPC, as set out in its Terms of Reference, include providing City council and staff with pedestrian oriented input on the design of public space to promote walking. To ensure that the interests of pedestrians are served in Swansea, TURN recommends that the TPC makes a motion to reopen the South Kingsway – Queensway file, provide input and refer it to the City's Planning and Growth Committee. We would be happy to make a presentation to the committee at your upcoming meeting.

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On behalf of the Toronto Urban Renewal Network , thank you for adding this item to your September 12th agenda. Please contact me at 416-766-5805 if you require further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored rectangular background. The signature reads "W. Randy Colbert" in a cursive script.

W. Randy Colbert

Toronto Urban Renewal Network

RC:smb

Attachments

cc: