



TO: Members of the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee
FROM: Walk Toronto (Steering Committee)
RE: Pedestrian Crossing Protection – Victoria Park Ave. at Conroy Ave./ Donora Drive
PW 12.16
DATE: April 22, 2016

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) , **We urge you to vote in favour of installing traffic signals at the intersection of Victoria Park Ave. and Conroy Ave./ Donora Drive.**
- 2) !If traffic signals are ruled out for this location, then we would recommend the installation of a pedestrian crossover. This is very much a fall-back option, as the safety record of pedestrian crossovers is not as high as that of stoplights, and they are less accessible to some people with disabilities.
- 3) !We also suggest that the traffic engineering warrants (used to determine whether traffic signals or pedestrian crossovers are to be installed) should be reviewed as part of the Road Safety Strategic Plan

TRAFFIC SIGNAL SPACING

The Traffic Operations staff report (Jan. 14, 2016) notes that traffic signals closest to the proposed location for new traffic signals (at Conroy/Donora) are:

- 535 metres to the south, at Crescent Town Road
- 565 metres to the north, at Dawes Road

Adding up the numbers: **on this stretch of Victoria Park Ave., a total of 1.1 kilometres separates the nearest stoplights.** If we translate this into downtown terms. It would be as though there were no stoplights on Yonge St. between Richmond Street and College Street. From the standpoint of pedestrian safety and convenience, such a distance is excessive.

DANGERS OF MID-BLOCK CROSSINGS

This is a residential section of Victoria Park Ave., and it is lined with single family houses. Let us imagine a scenario in which a senior who lives in a house near Conroy Ave. wishes to visit a friend directly across the street. She presently has the option of walking 535 metres south,

crossing safely using the traffic signals at Crescent Town Rd., and then doubling back north another 535 metres to reach her friend's house. **This enormous detour will involve walking more than a kilometre, and will take 10 to 15 minutes.** Alternatively, she could "jay-walk" mid-block and be at her friend's house in less than a minute. If we ourselves were in the senior's position, how many of us would actually tromp that extra kilometre in order to cross at the stoplights? What decision would a child or a person in a wheelchair make?

The media often try to play the "blame-the-victim" game when it comes to pedestrians who are harmed in mid-block crossing collisions. But in many cases, the people we should actually be pointing our fingers at are traffic engineers who oppose the installation of traffic signals (or pedestrian crossovers) at reasonably close intervals on busy arterials.

TRANSIT

The City is trying to encourage residents to use transit rather than drive motor vehicles. One of the reasons that traffic signals or a pedestrian crossover were proposed for the location at Conroy is that the Victoria Park bus 24 stops there. TTC riders using the Conroy stop will benefit from being able to cross Victoria Park Ave. at a stoplight.

PEDESTRIAN CROSSOVER AND TRAFFIC SPEEDS

The staff report notes that "a Pedestrian Crossover is not advisable due to the operating speed of 67 km/h, which exceeds the provincial standard of 60 km/h maximum for such a device." The speed limit on Victoria Park Ave. is 50 km/h, which means that average operating speeds are 17 km/h above the limit. **If the City is to make a choice, surely it should be enforcing speed limits on Victoria Park, rather than tacitly condoning illegal speeding** – which is what Traffic Operations is doing when it upholds this warrant.

PEDESTRIAN CROSSING VOLUMES

High walking numbers are another requirement for a pedestrian crossover. This section of Victoria Park Ave. is so pedestrian-unfriendly that we suspect many local residents prefer to travel on the road using motor vehicles, rather than risk venturing on foot. We suggest that if Victoria Park were to receive traffic calming, more stoplights and other measures that benefit pedestrians, then there would be a self-fulfilling increase in the number of walkers observed during official counts – thereby satisfying the warrant that requires a pedestrian crossing threshold target of 200 per eight-hours. However, if we blindly uphold this warrant while retaining the unsafe status quo, we set up a vicious circle that will be difficult to escape from.

COLLISIONS INVOLVING PEDESTRIANS

Staff refer to police data indicating that in the 2010-2014 period, there have been zero collisions involving pedestrians at the intersection of Conroy and Victoria Park. Collision statistics are used to support staff's position not to install traffic signals. Walk Toronto opposes this for two reasons. Firstly, the absence of collisions may be partly attributed to self-selection, the aforementioned process whereby street users decide to avoid walking on Victoria Park Ave. because of its unsafe pedestrian conditions.

More importantly, relying on collision history as a requirement to install traffic signals means that **pedestrians sometimes have to pay with their blood, or even their lives, in order to get certain basic amenities like additional stoplights put into place.** This is an uncivilized practice. Looking to the future, Walk Toronto supports the Vision Zero approach whereby road safety is increased through preventative measures such as systemic infrastructure improvements – rather than reacting to crashes after the fact, on a one-off basis.

CONCLUSION

Staff have advised to oppose the installation of both traffic signals and a pedestrian crossover, based on warrants and criteria which prioritize motor vehicle traffic flow above pedestrian safety. We believe that this prioritization does not reflect Torontonians' concern for the safety of vulnerable road users,, and we are hoping to see the warrants revised as part of the Road Safety Strategic Plan (which was launched at PWIC a year ago).

If the members of PWIC vote in favour of the installation of traffic signals at Conroy/ Donora, pedestrian advocates will see this as a signal of the committee's commitment to improving pedestrian safety in the City of Toronto.

Michael Black

Member of the Steering Committee, Walk Toronto