



Date: October 17, 2017
To: Public Works and Infrastructure Committee (PWIC), City of Toronto
Cc: Councillor Jon Burnside (Ward 26)
Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam (Ward 27)
Executive Assistant Tom Davidson (Ward 28)
Councillor Mary Fragedakis (Ward 29)
Geoff Cape, CEO, Evergreen
From: Walk Toronto (Steering Committee)
Re: 2017.PW24.5, Speed Limit on Bayview Avenue from Pottery Road (Northerly Intersection) to River Street Ramp

Walk Toronto is a grassroots, volunteer pedestrian advocacy group that works to improve walking conditions and pedestrian safety in Toronto.

RECOMMENDATION

Walk Toronto opposes the recommendation to raise the speed limit to 60 km/hr from 50 km/hr on Bayview Avenue between the northerly intersection of Pottery Road and the River Street ramp. Instead, we recommend that the City take measures to foster and enforce a 50 km/hr operating speed (using a combination of engineering, including road markings and design; signage; education; technology; police enforcement; etc.). Maintaining the lower speed limit is in accordance with the City’s adopted Vision Zero Road Safety Plan to advance the safety of all road users, especially vulnerable road users.

RATIONALE AND COMMENTS

Walk Toronto acknowledges there is a substantial difference between the posted speed limit and motor vehicle operating speeds on Bayview Avenue, as described in the background report. Rather than acceding to the speeding vehicles, however, the City should make changes to induce a 50 km/hr operating speed, through engineering, education, technology, and enforcement.

Below, we highlight some of our reasoning for maintaining the 50 k/hr speed limit, noting concerns related to both pedestrians and cyclists.

First, we observe that the background report says that “[s]taff conducted speed studies from August 15-16, 2017” and further on describes:

Road Environment

As part of the field investigation, staff also noted the following characteristics from a road environment perspective:

- Presence of dedicated off-road pedestrian and cyclist facility in the form of a multi-use trail protected by steel beam guiderail crash barrier along most of the section;
- Absence of sidewalks on either side of the road;
- Absence of vulnerable road users on the roadway;
- Lack of public transit stops;
- Lack of development and adjacent land use throughout is primarily parkland and ravine.

We would like to ask whether this “field investigation” occurred on the same *weekday* dates as the speed studies (Aug 15-16, 2017, as noted above). If so, a field investigation should again be done on *weekend* dates in the *early summer* (e.g., June), when more Toronto residents are walking or cycling (especially to Evergreen Brick Works or Todmorden Mills, and in the surrounding area) and when more residents are likely to be in town rather than away on vacation.

Second, with respect to the protected multi-use trail, we would point out that the roadway between the northerly intersection of Pottery Road and the southerly intersection of Pottery Road has no protection installed for pedestrians or cyclists. The same is true for the roadway section between Rosedale Valley Road and the River Street ramp. Pedestrians or cyclists travelling on the paved shoulder or in a traffic lane are at greater risk at higher road speeds.

Between the southerly intersection of Pottery Road and Rosedale Valley Road, there is the option for pedestrians and cyclists to use the protected, two-way, multi-use trail on the east side of Bayview Avenue. But not all pedestrians and cyclists may choose to use this trail.

We have seen pedestrians – including families with children – walking along the road shoulder from the southerly intersection of Pottery Road to Evergreen Brick Works, and *not* using the multi-use trail. From a pedestrian standpoint, this route can make sense: there is a more northerly entrance to Evergreen Brick Works, and by travelling along the west side of the roadway, one does not have to travel as far to enter the Brick Works. Cyclists may also choose to ride in the southbound traffic lane, rather than ride in the multi-use trail, to access this north entrance.

We can also attest to seeing cyclists, travelling south along Bayview Avenue, continue to use the southbound traffic lane rather than make a left turn to get into the multi-use trail. Again, this can make sense: a cyclist may arrive at the southerly intersection Pottery Road at a green light, and choose to continue straight ahead, especially if their final destination is south of Rosedale Valley Road or is on the west side of the roadway.

Moreover, the multi-use trail is signed to indicate that it does *not* receive winter maintenance. So it is likely that commuting cyclists, in particular, will need to use the Bayview Avenue traffic lanes at certain times of the year. People may also choose to use not to use the multi-use at night, because it is unlit; unlit trails pose safety concerns, especially for women.

If vulnerable road users do use the multi-use trail to reach Evergreen Brick Works, the wait at the traffic control signals (traffic lights) to cross Bayview Avenue can be very uncomfortable, and potentially

dangerous. Waiting at the gap of the guiderail crash barrier, one may end up positioned closer to high-speed, passing motor vehicles than is ideal, in order not to block the two-way multi-use trail. There is no additional waiting space at that location. Those travelling with strollers or bikes need to make an even greater effort not to block the trail. With many families bringing young children to the Brick Works site, and parents/caregivers needing to keep track of young children as they use that traffic crossing (esp. when they are on their bikes), keeping the speed limit lower near the traffic lights is advisable.

We are also concerned that motorists, once they are permitted to travel at 60 km/hr, will not adequately slow down south of the River Street ramp, as they enter into “the Narrows” and subsequently into the Canary District – areas with reduced speed limits. A lower and more consistent speed limit avoids drivers suddenly breaking or simply not obeying the lowered speed limit.

Finally, construction on nearby trails and parallel routes may drive up short- or even long-term use of Bayview Avenue by various road users. This could have a bearing on safety, especially if the speed limit is raised to 60 km/hr.

If the City decides to raise the speed limit, despite our opposition and comments, we strongly recommend that measures first be taken to address the concerns detailed above, including, but not limited to, monitoring and assessing problem areas for improvements (e.g., at traffic lights, in areas where vulnerable road users are using the paved shoulders or riding in the traffic lanes), adding more signage to slow motorists down as they approach areas with lower speeds (e.g., Canary District), activation of the traffic control signals at Front Street and Bayview Avenue, coordination with construction projects that could increase traffic on Bayview Avenue, snow-clearing and lighting options for the multi-use trail, and increased enforcement.

CONCLUSION

Bayview Avenue should be a safe travel route for all road users, especially vulnerable road users. Evergreen Brick Works and Todmorden Mills are significant destinations, attracting Toronto residents and visitors who arrive by foot, bicycle, stroller, wheelchair, transit, and motor vehicle. The Canary District and Corktown Common have developed into a residential area, as well as a destination. Walkers, hikers, and joggers connect to Bayview Avenue. The roadway is used by cyclists as a commuter route. The City of Toronto, Evergreen, and other partners have been working to create the Don River Valley Park (“superpark”), spanning from Evergreen Brick Works south to the mouth of Lake Ontario; the benefits to people of being exposed to green space is well documented, and a 60 km/hr highway through a park seems inappropriate. Bayview Avenue connects these elements, and others, and maintaining 50 km/hr as a maximum speed will help keep it a safer travel route for all road users and aid the City in its path to Vision Zero.

Vivien Leong and Adam Cohoon
on behalf of Walk Toronto (Steering Committee)