



Safe streets
Healthy city
Vibrant voice

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June 26, 2019

Subject: Cycle Toronto Submission on Cycling Network Plan Update

Dear Chair Pasternak and members of the Infrastructure and Environment Committee,

My name is Jared Kolb and I am Executive Director of Cycle Toronto, a member-supported not-for-profit organization that works to make Toronto a healthy, safe and vibrant cycling city for all. **We're pleased to provide comment on the Cycling Network Plan Update and have listed several recommendations for improvement in the final section of this letter.**

More than 5% of downtown residents are riding every day with some neighbourhoods as high as 34%. Across the City, the number falls to 2.7% which is still higher than many cities across the country. Road safety for cyclists is also improving, with a 19% decline in the number of people killed or seriously injured while riding a bicycle between 2013 and 2018. The safety improvements are even more pronounced on streets where we've installed protected bike lanes; cyclist collisions decreased 73% on Richmond and Adelaide streets, and 61% after the Bloor St bike lanes were installed.

Later this week, Infrastructure and Environment Committee will consider an update to the 2016 Cycling Network Plan. Rather than a 10 year plan, City staff have proposed a near-term implementation plan (2019-2021) and a long term plan (2022+).

Cycle Toronto is supportive of the rescoping of the plan to better align with the capital planning program of Transportation Services and political cycle of Toronto City Council. It enables Council to realistically plan and commit to upcoming projects in order to achieve implementation. We were critical of the 10 year plan in how it attempted to take the political process out of cycling, which we believe were key contributors to its failure to achieve results.

There are a number of key short term priorities which set the bar for success for this term of Toronto City Council including:

- Extending the Bloor bike lanes to High Park,
- Adding protected bike lanes on Danforth Ave to Dawes Rd as a potential pilot and Victoria Park Ave in full implementation,



- Developing an implementation plan and funding strategy for Eglinton Connects streetscape improvements and
- Completing many other complete streets studies including Warden Ave, Yonge St, Avenue Rd, Mount Pleasant Rd, University Ave

We firmly believe these projects will make Toronto roads safer and enable more people to choose cycling more often.

City staff identify a number of key challenges to implementation of the 10 year cycling network plan. We're supportive of the process improvements adopted by City staff as detailed in the report. We'd also recommend the following changes to enhance implementation

- 1) **Better connections between the Cycling Network Plan and Vision Zero 2.0.** Protected bike lanes not only create safer streets for cyclists but for drivers and pedestrians too. After the Bloor St bike lanes were installed, conflicts between all road users decreased by 44%. 249 km of arterial roads across the City will be reduced from 60 km / hr to 50 km / hr. That's good progress. But when those lanes are narrowed to help reduce travel speeds, it's an ideal time to install safe cycling infrastructure. The inclusion of cycling infrastructure might also help make streets even safer by enabling a further speed reduction down to 40 km / hr.
- 2) **Bike lanes by default when roads are up for reconstruction.** Vision Zero 2.0 has identified that going forward sidewalks will be considered by default when roads are up for reconstruction. We believe that when roads are up for reconstruction, bike lanes should be considered by default as well.
- 3) **Improve the community consultation process** so it is more inclusive and streamlined. We believe that a part of what has opened initiatives like the Thorncliffe / Flemington, Conlins Rd and Northcliffe Blvd cycling connections project up to criticism is the way they were communicated to the community.
 - a) Earlier and deeper outreach and community engagement before proposals are developed.
 - b) Collaboration with supporters of projects, including schools, street safety groups, neighbourhood associations, businesses, etc.
 - c) Longer notice periods for the general public in advance of meetings with appropriate reminders.
 - d) Public drop-in events should be held *after* preliminary community engagement.
- 4) **Create and track more meaningful targets.** City staff faced a number of challenges in implementing the 10 year plan that hindered their ability to execute. While a 10 year implementation target may not be appropriate, we think the plan should be guided by goals. We'd suggest three types of targets:
 - a) Proximity to high quality and connected cycling infrastructure. We are encouraged by the number of people that live within 250m, 500m and



1km of a cycling facility but believe only high quality, provably safe facilities should be included. City staff currently include these targets as tracking mechanisms, and these should be converted into goals for the plan. Getting all Torontonians within close proximity of a high quality cycling facility is an excellent goal and implementation of the short term major corridors will make significant progress towards achieving them.

- b) Kilometres of protected bike lanes, bicycle boulevards and multi-use trails built between 2019-2021. Considering so many projects were not completed between 2016-2018, we must continue to track the success of the new approach by the number of kilometres planned vs actually implemented. Staff have indicated that 120 kms will be built between 2019-2021 and that an additional 70 kms will be studied. This should form the baseline of evaluating the effectiveness of the three year plan.
- c) Mode share. While factors outside the City's control influence how people travel around Toronto, the City has adopted a long range goal in TransformTO that 75% of all trips less than 5 km will be done by walking or cycling by 2050. We'd urge shorter term modal share goals to guide infrastructure investment in the short and mid term. As commented on above, 5% of people downtown and 2.7% of people across Toronto currently travel to work or school by bicycle. With further investment in protected bike lanes, we should aim to double the cycling mode share to 10% and 5.4%, respectively, within 5 years (by 2024).

- 5) **Focus on quality infrastructure.** Data shows that sharrows provide no safety benefit. Sharrows (shared lane markings) on arterial roadways (e.g. College St west of Manning) do not constitute a safe cycling facility and we would encourage their removal from the cycling map and tracking towards progress in the network. We also encourage a higher standard for neighbourhood connections that includes traffic calming and diversion to deliver multiple benefits to local residents. We're encouraged by the new standards for protected bike lanes described in the forthcoming Bikeway Design Guidelines.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jared Kolb, Executive Director
Cycle Toronto

