

Date: November 23, 2020
To: Budget Committee
Re: BU19.3 - 2021 Rate Supported Budgets - Toronto Parking Authority

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the Toronto Parking Authority (TPA) proposed 2021 budget.

I would like to start by thanking Councillors, and the Toronto Parking Authority board and staff, for continuing the expansion of the Bike Share program in 2020.

There is a rapidly growing demand for safe, affordable, healthy and convenient mobility options in our city - especially during the pandemic - and City staff have done great work this past year in responding to this need by expanding protected bike lanes and Bike Share infrastructure.

Bike Share is indeed an amazing success, with over 2.4 million rides in 2019! And ridership is expected to grow by another 12% in 2020 and 20% in 2021, thanks in part to the addition of 1,850 new bicycles and 160 stations in 2020.

The expansion of the Bike Share program is consistent with the City's goal of reducing GHG emissions and improving health by shifting transportation away from private vehicle use, as articulated by:

- The [TransformTO](#) Climate Plan goal of having 75% of short trips walked or cycled by 2050
- The City's 2019 [Climate Emergency Declaration](#) calls for an acceleration of initiatives to reduce > transportation emissions to achieve net-zero emissions within the next 20-30 years. >
- The recent Toronto Office of Recovery and Rebuild [report](#) recommendation (#68) to "accelerate progress towards a modern, green and less car dependent City."

However, despite the recent expansion of Bike Share, TEA is concerned that TPA's proposed 2021 budget hinders, rather than advances, the City's commitment to building a zero-carbon city in two important ways.

First, there is a lack of support in the proposed budget for the continued expansion of Bike Share in 2021 and beyond:

- Ridership on Bike Share is expected to grow 20% in 2021 - but there is no capital investment planned for 2021, or in any of the years between 2023 and 2030, to continue the expansion of Bike Share infrastructure to meet this growing need;
- On the operating side, the budget proposes to reduce Bike Share staff salary spending by 21% in 2021 - even as it projects a growth in ridership;
- And the budget also calls for a reduction in spending on "non-essential services", which raises concern about impacts on the level and quality of Bike Share services.

Second, the proposed budget's emphasis on encouraging driving and expanding parking spaces is inconsistent with the City's goal of encouraging active transportation and public transit use, and shifting transportation away from private vehicles.

The pandemic has led to fundamental changes in mobility patterns - in part related to the rise of virtual work - which many observers believe will continue even after the pandemic ends.

Cities around the world are reconsidering the vast amount of valuable space that is allocated to parked cars. Cities are replacing parking lots with community gardens, mini-parks, restaurant spaces, affordable housing, pedestrian zones, and other socially, environmentally and economically beneficial uses.

Here in Toronto, ActiveTO, CurbTO, and CafeTO have been huge successes - with positive impacts on health, local business and climate sustainability. Yet TPA frames these positive initiatives as "challenges and risks" - because they have taken away parking spaces.

TPA's main goal seems to be to get people back in cars, and cars back in parking lots - rather than on improving mobility, health, economic vibrancy and sustainability. For example, TPA calls for:

- freezing parking rates to lure drivers back;
- purchasing additional parking spaces off main streets;
- spending \$157M on parking facility expansion over the next 10 years (compared to only \$1M on > expanding BikeShare). >

Council-approved reports and motions - [TransformTO](#), the [TORR report](#), the [Climate Emergency Declaration](#) - speak of the need to apply a climate lens to City spending decisions to make sure that these decisions reduce climate risk, improve equity, and align with transition to a net-zero city. So it is shocking that there is not a single reference to climate change - or the need to rapidly reduce transportation emissions - in TPA's 2021 budget materials. (TAP does mention investment in greening initiatives - but it is unclear what these are or what proportion of spending is allocated to them).

A new book came out this fall called *The Good Ancestor*. In it, Roman Krznaric writes about the tyranny of short-term thinking in many of today's institutions - and the urgent need to embrace longer-term thinking that takes into account the interests and needs of future generations, if we are to leave them a liveable planet.

We urge Council to direct TPA to move beyond short-term thinking about ways to lure drivers back into parking spaces to expand revenues, and instead to reflect on and identify ways to better use its vast parking real estate to advance Toronto's more far-reaching commitment to building a healthy, resilient and equitable zero-carbon city for today's residents - and tomorrow's.