



RNAO comments on Reimagining Yonge

Submission to the Infrastructure and
Environment Committee on Item 2020.IE18.1

December 1, 2020



Introduction

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) is the professional association representing Registered Nurses (RN), Nurse Practitioners (NP), and nursing students, in all roles and sectors across Ontario. Since 1925, RNAO has advocated for healthy public policy, promoted excellence in nursing practice, increased nurses' contributions to shaping the health system, and influenced decisions that affect nurses and the public they serve.

RNAO and its 46,000 members welcome the opportunity to provide feedback to the Infrastructure and Environment Committee on the REimagining Yonge Environmental Assessment Study. RNAO is pleased to support Transform Yonge as the option that creates greater connectivity and facilitates walking and biking best.¹ As health professionals we focus this submission on the health benefits of strongly supporting active transportation.

First, many Torontonians are so busy that they struggle to find the time to fit in enough exercise, and when they have the option to safely get around on foot or on bikes, they can get that necessary activity. The research shows many health benefits from increased physical activity due to active transportation, including reduced risk of:^{2 3 4 5 6 7 8}

- High blood pressure, heart disease and stroke
- Obesity
- Type 2 diabetes
- Various cancers
- Osteoporosis
- Depression

In addition, getting people out of their cars by providing other options helps to reduce air pollution, which consequently lowers the risk of:^{9 10}

- Cancer
- Neurological damage
- Cardiovascular disease
- Respiratory disease
- Reproductive and immune system damage.

Furthermore, effecting better separation of cars and vulnerable road users helps reduce the number of injuries they suffer.¹¹

Finally, allowing people to travel more readily and to connect with each other in setting more conducive to interaction is better socially, and that in turn is good for overall health.¹²

RNAO urges the Committee to accept the recommendation of Toronto Public Health to support the Transform Yonge option. Toronto must seize upon opportunities like this to convert roadways to complete streets that are designed to meet needs of all users.¹³

¹ As noted by Toronto Public Health. (2020). *REimagining Yonge Proposal: Detailed Briefing Note: Health Considerations*. <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2020/ie/bgrd/backgroundfile-158621.pdf>.

² Mueller, N., Rojas-Rueda, D., Cole-Hunter, T. de nazelle, A., Dons, E. Gerike, R., et al. (2015). Health impact assessment of active transportation: a systematic review. *Preventive Medicine* 76:103-114. April. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275219139_Health_impact_assessment_of_active_transportation_A_systematic_review/link/5e5fcda24585152ce808e121/download.

³ Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment. (2017). *A National Active Transportation Strategy can Reduce Chronic Diseases & Health Care Costs*. <https://cape.ca/a-national-active-transportation-strategy-can-reduce-chronic-diseases-health-care-costs/>.

⁴ Toronto Public Health. (2012). *Road to Health: Improving Walking and Cycling in Toronto*. April. <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2012/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-46520.pdf>.

⁵ Alberta Centre for Active Living. (2017). *Benefits of Active Transportation*. https://www.centre4activeliving.ca/media/filer_public/07/77/077713ef-e097-4bc5-8278-1fb455d26630/2017-active-transportation-factsheet.pdf.

⁶ Mammen, G., Faulkner, G. (2013). Physical Activity and the Prevention of Depression A Systematic Review of Prospective Studies. November. *American journal of preventive medicine* 45(5):649-57. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258058583_Physical_Activity_and_the_Prevention_of_Depression_A_Systematic_Review_of_Prospective_Studies.

⁷ Ranjbar, E., Memari, A.H., Hafizi, S., Shayestehfar, M. Mirfazeli, F.S., and Eshghi, M.A. (2015). Depression and Exercise: A Clinical Review and Management Guideline. *Asian Journal of Sports Medicine*. 6(2): e24055. <https://sites.kowsarpub.com/asjasm/articles/21607.html>.

⁸ <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2014/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-69323.pdf>.

⁹ US Environmental Protection Agency. (2018). Research on Health Effects, Exposure, & Risk from Mobile Source Pollution. March 14. <https://www.epa.gov/mobile-source-pollution/research-health-effects-exposure-risk-mobile-source-pollution#:~:text=Motor%20vehicle%20emissions%20contribute%20to,and%20For%20immune%20system%20damage>.

¹⁰ Mowat, D., Gardner, C., McKeown, D., Tran, N. (2014). *Improving Health by Design in the Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area*. May. <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2014/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-69323.pdf>.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Toronto. (2020). *Complete Streets Overview*. <https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/streets-parking-transportation/enhancing-our-streets-and-public-realm/complete-streets/overview/>.