

The Toronto Walking Strategy

Date:	April 20, 2009
To:	Public Works and Infrastructure Committee
From:	General Manager, Transportation Services
Wards:	All Wards
Reference Number:	P:2009\ClusterB\tra\tim\pw09006tim

SUMMARY

The purpose of this staff report is to present the accompanying report, the Toronto Walking Strategy, which contains 46 actions for making Toronto a great walking city. The aim of the Walking Strategy is to build a physical and cultural environment that supports and encourages walking, including vibrant streets, parks, public squares and neighbourhoods where people will choose to walk more often. By envisioning a city where high-quality walking environments are seamlessly integrated with public transit, cycling and other sustainable modes of travel, the Strategy sets out a plan that will produce tangible environmental, health and social benefits for residents and visitors to Toronto.

Implementing the Toronto Walking Strategy will require ongoing coordination between several City Divisions and Agencies. The Public Realm Section within the Transportation Services Division will lead an inter-divisional Walking Strategy Team to coordinate and monitor implementation of the Walking Strategy. The Team will produce annual Walking Strategy progress reports that will identify both progress made and resources required to implement Walking Strategy projects, to be considered during the annual budget review process. This report recommends six “New Steps” for implementing the Walking Strategy, focussing on some of the immediate new priorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Transportation Services recommends that City Council:

1. adopt, in principle, the Toronto Walking Strategy actions contained in Appendix 1 to this report as an integrated approach for making Toronto a great walking city;

2. direct the General Manager, Transportation Services to establish an inter-divisional Walking Strategy Team to be fully responsible for implementing the Walking Strategy actions, with representation by the following City divisions and agencies: City Planning; Public Health; Parks; Forestry and Recreation; Toronto Transit Commission; Economic Development, Culture and Tourism; Municipal Licensing and Standards; Toronto Parking Authority; Toronto Region Conservation Authority; Toronto Police Service; and Toronto Hydro;
3. direct the General Manager, Transportation Services, in consultation with the inter-divisional Walking Strategy Team, to develop a detailed multi-year work plan to implement the actions recommended as part of the Toronto Walking Strategy, and report back to Council on short-term priorities as part of the 2010 budget review process;
4. direct the General Manager, Transportation Services to produce annual Walking Strategy progress reports to document achievements and identify future priorities;
5. direct the General Manager, Transportation Services to undertake the following Toronto Walking Strategy new actions to begin implementation of the Toronto Walking Strategy immediately:
 - a. organize an annual Walking / Public Realm Forum, beginning in the Fall 2009, to engage City staff and Council, external stakeholders and Toronto residents in an ongoing dialogue about actions to make Toronto a great walking city;
 - b. launch a high-profile communications and engagement strategy to support the City's public realm initiatives and to encourage all Torontonians to walk as a part of everyday life;
 - c. develop a program for creating walking routes and neighbourhood walking maps to encourage residents and visitors to get out and explore the city on foot, starting with 5 new featured routes by 2010;
 - d. develop pilot projects to install and evaluate different measures and design options to improve the pedestrian environment including: the relocation of bicycle parking racks from narrow sidewalks/boulevards to alternative locations, and implement 10 locations in 2009 and 2010; and the introduction of "No Right Turn on Red" restrictions at strategic intersections beginning with 10 locations in 2010;"
 - e. work with Ryerson University and the University of Toronto to design and implement two pedestrian street projects by 2010;

- f. develop and implement two public realm improvement plans per year in Tower Renewal and Priority Neighbourhoods, beginning in 2010, to create more walkable communities; and
6. the appropriate City officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Implementation Points

The Toronto Walking Strategy contains 46 actions for making Toronto a great walking city. The intent of the Walking Strategy is to implement these actions, for the most part, through existing processes and programs, including: the development review process, the annual capital works programs and various community-focussed programs. The Transportation Services Division will lead an inter-divisional Walking Strategy Team that will develop a multi-year work plan, establish annual priorities, coordinate implementation and produce annual progress reports, in consultation with the Toronto Pedestrian Committee and external partners.

Financial Impact

Most of the actions recommended by the Walking Strategy can be implemented within existing capital and operating budgets and divisional programs and processes. However, some actions need to be further developed and assessed in terms of their financial impact and funding requirements. These financial impacts, including the identification of any potential funding partnerships, will be addressed in any future reports required for the approval of these specific actions.

Implementing the Toronto Walking Strategy will require ongoing coordination between several City Divisions and Agencies. The General Manager, Transportation Services will produce annual Walking Strategy progress reports that will identify resources required to implement Walking Strategy projects, to be considered during the annual budget review process.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on May 23, 24 and 25, 2007, City Council directed the Deputy City Manager to establish a Public Realm organizational unit that, among other responsibilities, will have strategic responsibility and accountability for planning, design, implementation and management of sidewalk spaces to achieve a beautiful, functional and safe pedestrian realm. The Walking Strategy establishes a strategic framework for this component of the Public Realm Section.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/cc/decisions/2007-05-23-cc08-dd.pdf>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

In 2002, City Council adopted the Toronto Pedestrian Charter, which reflects the principle that the quality of our walking environment is a key indicator of the City's health and vitality.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2002/agendas/council/cc020521/plt6rpt/cl005.pdf>

The Toronto Walking Strategy builds on the principles of the Toronto Pedestrian Charter and the International Charter for Walking. The Walking Strategy also builds on the policies of the City's Official Plan. In translating Toronto's Official Plan policies into action, the City has adopted specific action plans for both public transit and cycling, such as the TTC Ridership Growth Strategy, the Transit City Plan and the Toronto Bike Plan. The Walking Strategy is a corresponding action plan for pedestrians and provides a long-term, comprehensive set of actions for achieving the Official Plan's objectives for walking and the public realm.

The actions recommended by the Walking Strategy are based on months of discussion with the public, external organizations and City divisions and agencies. An inter-divisional coordinating committee was formed to oversee development of the Walking Strategy and to ensure consistency with existing City policies, procedures and guidelines. This group was led by Transportation Services and included representation by the following City divisions and agencies: City Planning, Public Health, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Toronto Transit Commission, Toronto Environment Office and Economic Development, Culture and Tourism.

In addition, Transportation Services conducted a Walking Survey of 1,000 Toronto residents in 2007 to gather information on the attitudes and concerns of Torontonians towards walking in their communities and their priorities for action. The Walking Survey results informed the development of the Walking Strategy.

COMMENTS

Walking Conditions in Toronto's Neighbourhoods

The City's most walkable neighbourhoods are located in the older parts of the City, which is characterized by a compact, mixed land-use, and a fine grain of streets and transit. However, even in these neighbourhoods, there is much more that can be done to give pedestrians a higher priority and to raise the quality of urban design in the public realm. In these older pedestrian-rich neighbourhoods, it has been particularly challenging on many streets to provide wide and clear walkways along with ample space for landscaping and trees, street furniture, utilities, boulevard cafes and retail/marketing zones.

Toronto's "post-war suburbs" pose a very different set of challenges to improving the City's walkability. Built on segregated land-use patterns, these neighbourhoods often have longer distances between home and work, school, shopping, recreation and other

services. These increased distances have substantially contributed to automobile dependence. One measure of this is that only 36% of children and youth walk to school today, a figure which has declined steadily from 80% thirty years ago. The decrease in walk-to-school trips is part of a much larger societal trend towards decreasing levels of physical activity across all age groups. Lack of physical activity is a contributing factor to higher occurrences of obesity, heart disease, diabetes and other chronic health problems.

The Walking Strategy addresses the challenges and opportunities presented by Toronto's diverse neighbourhoods, from the core of the City to the middle and its outer edges.

Vision - Bringing Torontonians To Their Feet

Toronto has a rich pedestrian tradition. The Walking Strategy envisions a Toronto where citizens and visitors participate in a culture of walking. This is a Toronto where streets, parks, public spaces and neighbourhoods are accessible, secure, vibrant and enjoyable so that people choose to walk more often and where walking is complemented by public transit, cycling and other sustainable modes of travel.

A walkable city enables people of all ages, abilities and economic means to move safely and comfortably through their communities. Improving conditions for walking will provide far reaching benefits including better integration of pedestrian infrastructure with other sustainable modes of transportation, better air quality from reduced transportation emissions, healthier lifestyles, improved access to local goods, and enhanced opportunities for social interaction and recreation. Making Toronto a more walkable city will contribute towards achieving the emission reduction targets of Toronto's Climate Change, Clean Air and Sustainable Energy Action Plan and the City's "Call to Action on Physical Activity."

Three Guiding Principles

The Toronto Walking Strategy actions are based on the following guiding principles:

Universal Accessibility - all public and private places and spaces should be barrier-free;

Safety - the safety of pedestrians takes precedence over other modes of transportation and;

Design Excellence - high-quality design creates a positive experience for everyone.

Walking Strategy Actions - Building on a Strong Foundation

Toronto has many existing guidelines, programs and projects that focus on improving the pedestrian environment. These initiatives are the responsibility of many different City divisions, agencies, boards and commissions. The Walking Strategy's 46 actions are a mixture of these existing City programs and projects, some of which are well developed and some that need to be expanded or improved, and new actions to create a more beautiful, vibrant and walkable city. The Walking Strategy links all of these actions, new

and existing, into one integrated city-wide strategy in order to increase collaboration and coordination across all the relevant City divisions, agencies, boards and commissions.

The Toronto Walking Strategy's actions are strategically grouped into the following six “action areas”:

- (1) Leadership and Support for Walking
- (2) Promoting a Culture of Walking
- (3) Integrating Networks for Walking
- (4) Designing Streets for Pedestrians
- (5) Creating Spaces and Places for People
- (6) Focus on Priority and Tower Renewal neighbourhoods

The complete list of Walking Strategy Actions is contained in Appendix 1.

Next Steps - From Strategy to Action

The Transportation Services Division will lead an inter-divisional Walking Strategy Team that will develop a multi-year work plan, establish annual priorities, coordinate implementation and produce annual progress reports, in consultation with the Toronto Pedestrian Committee and external partners. Many of the Strategy's actions will be implemented through existing processes and programs including the City's development review process, the annual capital work programs, various community-focused programs and the work of BIAs.

In order to begin work immediately on the Walking Strategy's new actions, Transportation Services is recommending the following initiatives, one from each of the six action areas, be authorized by the adoption of this report.

- (1) organize an annual Walking / Public Realm Forum, beginning in the Fall 2009, to engage City staff and Council, external stakeholders and Toronto residents in an ongoing dialogue about actions to make Toronto a great walking city;
- (2) launch a high-profile communications and engagement strategy to support the City's public realm initiatives and to encourage all Torontonians to walk as a part of everyday life;
- (3) develop a program for creating walking routes and neighbourhood walking maps to encourage residents and visitors to get out and explore the city on foot, starting with 5 new featured routes by 2010;
- (4) develop pilot projects to install and evaluate different measures and design options to improve the pedestrian environment including: the relocation of bicycle parking racks from narrow sidewalks/boulevards to alternative locations, and implement 10 locations in 2009 and 2010; and the introduction of “No Right Turn on Red” restrictions at strategic intersections beginning with 10 locations in 2010;”

- (5) work with Ryerson University and the University of Toronto to design and implement two pedestrian street projects by 2010; and
- (6) develop and implement two public realm improvement plans per year in Tower Renewal and Priority Neighbourhoods, beginning in 2010, to create more walkable communities.

CONCLUSION

Toronto has a strong foundation on which to create a comprehensive Walking Strategy. The City's Official Plan provides an excellent policy framework for achieving a more intense, mixed use pattern of development which will increase opportunities for better pedestrian, transit and cycling conditions. To translate the Official Plan policies into action the City has adopted action plans for transit and cycling: the TTC Ridership Growth Strategy, Transit City Plan and the Toronto Bike Plan. The Toronto Walking Strategy provides the long term comprehensive blueprint for action that is needed to achieve the Official Plan objectives for walking and the public realm.

CONTACT

Daniel Egan, Manager
Pedestrian and Cycling Infrastructure
Transportation Services
Tel: 416-392-9065
Fax: 416-392-4808
Email: degan@toronto.ca

Jennifer Hyland, Transportation Planner
Pedestrian and Cycling Infrastructure
Transportation Services
Tel: 416-392-0193
Fax: 416-392-4808
Email: jhyland@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Gary Welsh, P.Eng.
General Manager

JH/DE/nb

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1: Toronto Walking Strategy Actions
Attachment: The Toronto Walking Strategy

APPENDIX 1

TORONTO WALKING STRATEGY ACTIONS

1. LEADERSHIP AND SUPPORT FOR WALKING

Create an Accountable Team

- 1-1 Establish the Public Realm Section within the Transportation Services Division as the lead staff group to coordinate and monitor implementation of the Walking Strategy.
- 1-2 Establish an inter-divisional and inter-agency Walking Strategy Team chaired by the Director of the Public Realm Section to ensure city-wide coordination of Strategy projects. The Walking Strategy Team will include representatives from: Transportation Services, City Planning, Public Health, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Economic Development, Municipal Licensing and Standards, the Toronto Transit Commission, the Toronto Environment Office, the Toronto Parking Authority, the Toronto Conservation Authority, Toronto Police Services and Toronto Hydro.
- 1-3 Maintain ongoing consultation with the Toronto Pedestrian Committee and community partners to ensure a collaborative approach in the delivery of the Walking Strategy.
- 1-4 Produce annual Walking Strategy progress reports which will record achievements and identify future priorities and resources.
- 1-5 Organize an annual Walking / Public Realm Forum, beginning in the fall 2009, to engage City staff and Council, external stakeholders and Toronto residents in an ongoing dialogue about actions to make Toronto a great walking city.

Develop Tools to Guide Decision Making

- 1-6 Initiate a comprehensive data collection and analysis program to inform investment decisions and to monitor the progress of the Walking Strategy.
- 1-7 Maintain and build partnerships with international leaders in pedestrian policy, design, planning and programming and seek out opportunities to participate and contribute to research on innovative pedestrian initiatives.
- 1-8 Create a “walkability audit” tool that enables site-specific assessments of pedestrian needs and assists in determining investment priorities and evaluating the design of new developments, streetscapes and public spaces.
- 1-9 Initiate a “walkability study” to assess neighbourhood walking conditions in order to inform community revitalization studies, transportation plans, secondary plan studies, environmental assessments and other initiatives.

Lead by Example

- 1-10 Conduct an audit of City-owned buildings and properties with a view to improving the pedestrian environment and initiating walking programs to promote a culture of walking among City staff.

2. PROMOTING A CULTURE OF WALKING

Promote and Celebrate Walking:

- 2-1 Organize an annual, city-wide Walking Festival in partnership with City divisions, external agencies and community walking groups.
- 2-2 Create and maintain a Walking Website that provides access to information on all City walking policies, programs and services and encourages Toronto residents and visitors to walk more often.
- 2-3 Recognize and reward projects that achieve significant improvements to Toronto's walking environment by incorporating pedestrian-related criteria into existing award programs including the Urban Design Awards and the Green Toronto Awards.

Encourage Walking to Work, School and Everywhere:

- 2-4 Launch a high profile communications and engagement strategy to support the City's public realm initiatives and to encourage all Torontonians to walk as part of everyday life.
- 2-5 Promote and expand the community-based *Walk Into Health* program which includes: promotional campaigns in Toronto's neighbourhoods and parks, a pedometer lending program and organized neighbourhood walking groups.
- 2-6 Promote and expand the Active and Safe Routes to School program and other school-focused walking programs including school travel planning.
- 2-7 Create a toolkit for employers to support the design and delivery of walking programs in the workplace.
- 2-8 Administer a program through Live Green Toronto to assist individuals, resident groups and community organizations who wish to initiate walkability projects in their neighbourhoods.

3. INTEGRATING NETWORKS FOR WALKING

Improve the sidewalk network throughout Toronto:

- 3-1 Construct new sidewalks - during road reconstruction and resurfacing, or when applicable, through the development review process - on both sides of the street in all areas where they are missing.
- 3-2 Review current practices and policies for constructing new sidewalks where they are missing on existing local streets.

- 3-3 Assess opportunities to narrow pavements, widen sidewalks and enhance landscaping as part of all road reconstruction projects and in such a way that is consistent with the Vibrant Streets Guidelines and the Streetscape Manual.

Improving links between major public transit routes and adjacent neighbourhoods:

- 3-4 Develop criteria for high-quality pedestrian environments in and around new public transit stations and stops and identify improvements for existing transit stations and stops.

Provide a signage and information system to support walking:

- 3-5 Develop a pedestrian way-finding system with pedestrian-scale signage that indicates walking routes and that allows residents and visitors to easily find their way on foot.
- 3-6 Develop neighbourhood walking maps that feature accessible walking routes, connecting streets, public walkways, parks and open spaces, walking links through private property, transit nodes and key local destinations.
- 3-7 Develop and promote featured walking routes throughout the City by building upon the Discovery Walks project.
- 3-8 Encourage and support the development of a computer based pedestrian trip planner to assist residents and visitors to plan their walking routes.

Develop a multi-year plan to improve and implement new walking routes:

- 3-9 Develop a computer database of all public pedestrian walkways, paths, sidewalks and connections on public and private lands in order to map existing routes and to collect information for the development of future connections across barriers such as railway, hydro and highway corridors.
- 3-10 Develop guidelines for pedestrian trails access, including trail-road crossings, and use these guidelines to evaluate and identify improvements to existing walking routes.

Expanding Toronto's underground walking network:

- 3-11 Produce a master plan for the underground PATH system and continue to expand PATH connections through the development review process and as part of other city-building projects.

4. DESIGNING STREETS FOR PEDESTRIANS

Transform streets into attractive destinations:

- 4-1 Implement the Coordinated Street Furniture Program which will place approximately 25,600 pieces of street furniture on Toronto's streets over the next 20 years, including 1,300 new benches by 2013.
- 4-2 Transform the look of Toronto streets by aggressively applying the Vibrant Streets Guidelines so that all new street furniture enhances the walking experience.
- 4-3 Document sidewalk zones on city streets, based on the Vibrant Streets Guidelines, to guide a multi-year program to reorganize and de-clutter sidewalks and boulevards to achieve optimal pedestrian clearways.
- 4-4 Evaluate current street lighting policies and develop a policy and implementation strategy for pedestrian-scale lighting.
- 4-5 Evaluate innovative streetscape enhancements to support healthier street trees and landscaping, decorative paving materials and high-quality design features.
- 4-6 Develop a pilot project to install and evaluate different design options for relocating bicycle parking racks from narrow sidewalks/boulevards to alternative locations, and implement 10 locations in 2009 and 2010.

Adopt an approach that gives greater priority to pedestrians:

- 4-7 Develop pedestrian priority areas in locations with significant pedestrian activity (such as campuses, transit hubs, major intersections and cultural centres) where investment will focus on pedestrian features like special pavement treatments, pedestrian priority intersection designs and other amenities.
- 4-8 Adopt a best practices approach for intersections and pedestrian crossings with a goal to continuously improve the safety and comfort of road crossings for pedestrians.
- 4-9 Complete a program review of winter maintenance services with the goal of improving pedestrian safety and comfort during winter conditions.
- 4-10 Develop a program to implement "No Right Turn on Red" restrictions at strategic intersections to provide safer crossing conditions for pedestrians, beginning with 10 intersections in 2010.

Give priority to the needs of pedestrians in all planning decisions:

- 4-11 Develop a reference manual of pedestrian-related design standards and guidelines to be consistently applied in appropriate studies and processes including development review, Avenue Studies, Environmental Assessments, Community Improvement Plans, Transit Projects and Transportation Impact Studies.
- 4-12 Revise the Guidelines for Transportation Impact Studies — currently required as part of the development review process for large new developments — to include a more comprehensive study of the impact of proposed developments on pedestrian activity.

- 4-13 Prepare updated Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Guidelines to establish citywide standards for TDM initiatives in new developments. The TDM Guidelines will include provisions for detailed information on pedestrian access to and within the site, pedestrian amenities and enhanced pedestrian connections with the surrounding neighbourhood.

5. CREATING SPACES AND PLACES FOR PEOPLE

Design Gathering Places for Pedestrians

- 5-1 Develop, implement and evaluate a variety of pedestrian street design options including full-time and occasional pedestrian streets.
- 5-2 Investigate innovative street designs such as shared-streets, where appropriate, so that neighbourhood streets can serve as important community places while providing local transportation access.
- 5-3 Support regular, community-led pedestrian street events by developing a “how-to” guide and promotional materials.

Support a beautiful public realm

- 5-4 Continue to work with all of Toronto's communities to design and implement small and large-scale neighbourhood beautification projects.
- 5-5 Develop design standards for attractive and functional transit waiting areas to provide a positive and enjoyable experience for transit customers.
- 5-6 Build public squares and plazas at key intersections in Toronto through the development review process, public-private partnerships and by converting under-utilized sections of roadways and public space.
- 5-7 Review the current boulevard parking permit program and investigate opportunities for transforming paved boulevards to attractive public spaces.

6. FOCUS ON PRIORITY AND TOWER RENEWAL NEIGHBOURHOODS

- 6-1 Demonstrate small-scale pedestrian projects within the Priority and Tower Renewal neighbourhoods and develop a case study approach that may be used in other Toronto neighbourhoods.
- 6-2 Undertake pilot projects to improve walkability in the Priority and Tower Renewal neighbourhoods by conducting a community-based survey and audit of neighbourhood walking conditions followed by the implementation of a range of pedestrian infrastructure improvements, services and programs.
- 6-3 Develop a framework and funding approach for additional community-focused pedestrian studies and improvements with a focus on the Tower Renewal and Priority Neighbourhoods.