February 20, 2015

RE: 2015.PW2.4 - Lower Yonge Precinct - Transportation Master Plan

Dear Public Works and Infrastructure Committee,

The Lower Yonge Master Plan proposes excellent principles. However, “sharrows”, as outlined in Alternative 4 should not be considered cycling infrastructure. Instead, the plans for the Harbour St. Extension and Cooper St. should anticipate the new Toronto Complete Streets guidelines and include protected cycling infrastructure. Complete streets have higher people-moving capacity, are safer for all road users, improve street vibrancy, and are specifically more usable by children and seniors.

The attached 3-page letter outlines missed opportunities in the Plan’s proposal, summarizes current transportation patterns in Ward 28, and suggests recommendations for the Public Works & Infrastructure Committee.

We write you, as concerned citizens, to ask that the Lower Yonge Transportation Master Plan meet its stated principles. The Lower Yonge Precinct should meet the transportation needs of vulnerable citizens (such as children, seniors, and the poor), support safer, friendlier, and smoother travel, and be an example of holistic streetscape design excellence.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

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1 http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.PW2.4
1) TMP Principles vs. Proposal

The principles outlined in the Master Plan are excellent, and achievable. They include:

- “Encouraging use of sustainable transportation, such as walking, cycling, & transit”
- “Encouraging vibrant, mixed-use development” (p.7)
- "Prioritizes the ability to comfortably walk, cycle or take transit within the study area"
- "... ample space and options for pedestrian and cyclist movement" (Attachment 5)

The report states that the proposed Alternative 4:

- "provided significant improvements to both regional and local transportation infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists" (p.7)
- "Improved pedestrian, transit and bicycle options" (p.24)

Alternative 4 does mention ‘facilitating’ a multi-use path between the rail corridors and the Gardiner expressway. However, it only proposes the following on-street cycling design features:

- 7-1. A striped bike lane within the new Cooper/Church connection tunnel
- 7-4. Sharrows to demarcate bike/vehicle lane sharing on Freeland Street, Cooper Street, New Street and Harbour Street

These simply do not satisfy the TMP principles. Far from providing safety, sharrows and intermittent painted lines discourage cycling, because they are neither comfortable nor safe (see Appendix B). On most roads the TMP provides no safe space for cycling movement, and will create an unpredictable, unsafe road environment for all users.

2) Context: Ward 28 today and in 2075

Most Ward 28 residents don’t regularly drive (see Appendix A). Data from the Transportation Tomorrow Survey in 2006 & 2011 retrieved by the University of Toronto (2014) found:

- 50% of households in Ward 28 do not own a car.
- In morning rush hour, 76% of people get around by walking, public transit & cycling.
- Same for commuters - just 24% of people drive to Ward 28.
- 6% of Ward 28 residents use bicycles as their primary transport.
- From 2006 - 2011 cycling mode share in Ward 28 grew by 74%.
Despite cars moving only ¼ of people in Ward 28, and cycling popularity increasing at 12% per year, the TMP traffic analysis was performed for motor vehicles only, and roads were designed for car traffic to wait no more than 30s on average per intersection. Travel times of walking and cycling were not considered, nor effects of reducing car mode share by providing high-quality alternatives. This is a myopic approach to traffic analysis and planning in downtown Toronto, in 2015.

Highrise development in Ward 28 continues at breakneck pace. Given car congestion today, increased density can't be supported by cars. Cars are the least space-effective way to move people. At typical 1.1 person occupancy, a car lane can move just 1000 people/h. Road space used for walking, transit or cycling provides a minimum of 10 times more congestion-free people-moving capacity.

The proposed road right-of-way, for example on the Harbour St. extension, uses 15.2m of right-of-way for motor vehicle traffic, 11.3 for pedestrian traffic/leisure, and does not accommodate cycling traffic. Sharrows provide no safety benefit and do not encourage parents, children, or seniors to choose active transportation (see Appendix B).

Curb line decisions made today will lock-in the street layout for at least the next 60 years. The TMP proposal does not balance the needs of Ward 28 today, let alone in 2075.

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3) Recommendations:

Please consider these recommendations. The Lower Yonge Precinct is a once-in-a-century opportunity to design modern complete streets that are higher-capacity, healthier, and safer.

Attachment 1 - EA Schedule (p.11)

- Item 18 - Delete.
- Item 7 - Add “with separated cycling infrastructure”
- Item 8 - Change “4 lanes no parking” to “two separated cycle tracks, 3 motor vehicle lanes with turn lane”

Attachment 7 - Recommended Plan (p.34)

- Item 1 - Change “striped bike lane” to "separated cycle track". If constructing a new underpass for Cooper / Church St., the marginal cost for the safety benefit is minor.
- Item 4 - Delete and replace with: “Add separated cycling infrastructure on Harbour Street and Cooper Street, with a refuge-island crossing at Lakeshore W.”
Complete Harbour Street (midblock)

Conceptual layout for Harbour St. Two parking rows are not required.
Appendix A: Ward 28 Transportation Choices:

Data from the University of Toronto Transportation Tomorrow Survey 2011, for Ward 28:

- 50% of households own 0 cars
- 76% of residents’ morning rush-hour travel is non-car
- 76% of morning rush hour trips to this ward are non-car

Data from the Transportation Tomorrow Survey 2006 and 2011 retrieved from the Data Management Group (DMG) by University of Toronto and The Toronto Cycling Think and Do Tank (2014):

- 2006 Ward 28, cycling as primary transport mode: 3.3%
- 2011 Ward 28, cycling as primary transport mode: 5.8%
- Growth in cycling mode share: 73.7% / 5 years
Appendix B: Safety of sharrows vs. infrastructure

Based on collision and survey data from Vancouver and Toronto:

- On roads with parking, Sharrows or painted lanes provide *no statistically significant safety benefit*
- Cycle tracks are *significantly* safer, 10x lower odds of injury

Source:

http://cyclingincities.spph.ubc.ca/injuries/the-bice-study/