

February 25, 2016

Dela Ting
10th floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario, M5H 2N2

PW11.7.17

Dear Members of the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee (PWIC),

RE: February 29, 2016 PWIC Agenda

On behalf of the Cycle Toronto Ward 14 Advocacy Group, I am writing in support of the motions pertaining to the Waterfront Trail and building a Minimum Grid. These motions satisfy two of our group's main priorities, which are providing safe cycling on the Waterfront and addressing the chronic lack of funding for cycling infrastructure.

PW11.6 (Waterfront Trail)

While the Waterfront Trail provides a safe route for cyclists to access key waterfront destinations from Mimico to the Beaches, there is one significant gap in the west end which needs to be addressed. From Norris Crescent to First Street, cyclists have to use high volume Lake Shore Boulevard in order to continue riding the Waterfront Trail, which can be very uncomfortable for many cyclists (myself included) to ride. The proposed bi-directional cycle track on this stretch of Lake Shore with high quality separation per a December public consultation I attended will considerably improve the safety of recreational cyclists all the way to Mississauga, as well as provide south Etobicoke residents a safe way to commute to downtown by bicycle.

PW11.7 (Building a Minimum Grid)

One of the main reasons why the 2001 Bike Plan came up short is the lack of funding and operating capacity. I was first made aware of this issue during the 2014 budget process in which the analyst notes cited the \$8 to 9 million in annual funding would build only 80 kilometres of on-street bike lanes over ten years, compared to 500 kilometres called for in the 2001 plan. While I acknowledge the City has made progress with its trail network, on-street bike lanes linking residences to workplaces are needed to increase cycle modal share, free up much needed transit capacity, and reduce the number of cars on our roads.

During the 2014 election, a majority of councillors - including Councillor Gord Perks in my ward and half of current PWIC members - supported Cycle Toronto's Minimum Grid pledge to build 100 kilometres (or 200 lane kilometres) of cycle tracks and 100 kilometres (or 200 lane kilometres) of bicycle boulevards by 2018. The 2016 budget increase to \$14.25 million and added operating capacity is a step in the right direction, but a January 2016 briefing report from the City's Cycling Unit stating at least \$50 million would be needed to build the Minimum Grid is proof more needs to be done.¹ Last year, Cycle Toronto made a budget ask of \$20 million per year in order to follow through on this pledge, which has also been supported by the Board of Health.

Unfortunately, the funding scenarios the Cycling Unit was asked to study do not factor in this \$20 million per year ask or the recent briefing report. If the City of Toronto is to ensure the new bike plan does not come up short like the 2001 plan, it is essential that PWIC and city council support this motion to have the Cycling Unit study higher annual funding levels such as \$20 million and \$25 million. It is also critical that the Cycling Unit be provided with the necessary operating capacity to ensure the budget gets fully utilized & projects built as soon as possible.

¹ <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2016/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-89433.pdf>

Last, but not least, the motion to have higher funding levels studied – and hopefully followed through when the new bike plan comes to PWIC and city council for a vote – is consistent with Councillor Robinson’s work on a Road Safety Plan based on Vision Zero. Expanding cycling infrastructure, along with its added safety benefits, would encourage Toronto residents to cycle more and even improve the safety of pedestrians and drivers. An example of cycling infrastructure which Toronto should adopt as soon as possible and would improve pedestrian and driver safety is the Dutch style protected intersection. The four traffic islands would help ensure cyclists and drivers maintain eye contact when crossing the intersection, while the ability to add pedestrian islands can help reduce pedestrian crossing times; all within the existing intersection rights of way.²

Conclusion

In conclusion, I urge you to support these motions to complete the missing gap in the Waterfront Trail and honour your pledge to build the Minimum Grid by 2018, which complements the push for a road safety plan based on Vision Zero. I thank you for taking the time to consider these thoughts and feel free to contact me if you wish to discuss them further.

Sincerely yours,



Robert Zaichkowski, CPA, CMA
Co-Captain, Cycle Toronto Ward 14 Advocacy Group

CC: Cycle Toronto, Councillor Gord Perks

² For more information on protected intersections, I wrote a blog post in December 2015 with the help of George Liu from the Toronto Cycling Think & Do Tank, which can be found at <http://twowheelpoli.blogspot.com/2015/12/twelve-days-of-bicycles-eight-curbs.html>.