



TO: Members of the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee
FROM: Walk Toronto (Steering Committee)
RE: Road Safety Plan PW 14.1
DATE: June 20, 2016

My name is Maureen Coyle. I am on the steering committee of Walk Toronto. I live downtown, and I walk all over this city as my transportation of choice. Walk Toronto members live and work across Toronto.

The Road Safety Plan is the blueprint this city will use for the creation of a public realm built for shared use that will be in place for decades – if not for generations – to come. It is arguably the most important Public Works project of this council term, and likely one of the most significant municipal policies of the 21st Century.

To approach road safety from the perspective of selected improvements and inconsistently applied policy changes, as the plan before this committee does, is a mistake.

There are some very positive proposals contained in this initiative but, because our concerns are so substantial, we are asking this committee to refer this Road Safety Plan back to Transportation Services for redevelopment -- to be re-submitted at the PWIC meeting in September of 2016.

The status quo, however, has meant 19 pedestrians dead on our streets so far this year.

Unless we are prepared to think differently about the design and forms of our public spaces, we will be faced with yet more preventable killing and injury on our roads.

This plan suffers from two major flaws: 1) it was developed without sufficient financial commitment from the City of Toronto, and 2) it was undertaken as if

streets and the use of public spaces have not changed since the paving of roads in the 1880s.

The post-war industrial boom that spurred road design toward ever-faster roads held the belief that the price of greater speed is that a certain number of people will die on our roads. We no longer accept that people have to die on our streets as a price for mobility. We want a broadly implemented design, and consistent policies – including speed reduction – that will keep people safe.

The Road Safety Plan is an opportunity for Toronto to re-imagine its public spaces. The change we are asking for has been achieved elsewhere. I have seen medieval and renaissance streets redesigned for all the travel modalities of modern cities, with separated driving lanes, cycling lanes and pedestrian areas. I have seen streets re-engineered to reflect a city's place as a modern, global city.

The price of not committing to a fully realized redesign of all our roadways is to accept that Toronto has no plans to join the 21st Century. The price of not committing to a fully realized redesign of our streets is an increasing death toll of pedestrians on our sidewalks and intersections. The price last year was 38 pedestrians and a total of 64 road users. What does this committee believe the acceptable cut-off of deaths to be? A 20% reduction?

If you go for the braver choice of eliminating all deaths on our streets, then you will have to commit real funds.

Road deaths have a human cost to families and communities, and an economic cost in resources and productivity. The cost of road-related fatalities in Toronto comes to a minimum of 3 billion dollars every year, yet Toronto has set aside only 28 million over 5 years to prevent deaths. This allocation is insufficient to the task.

We continue to blame the pedestrians and cyclists who are being killed, and not the engineering and the policies that should have kept them safe.

We recognize and celebrate the elements of this plan that are effective, based on clear data from the many jurisdictions that have implemented them:

- a change to the warrant system
- new corner radius design
- new mid-block crossings
- reduced crossing distances
- sidewalk extensions
- increased pedestrian crossing times
- leading pedestrian intervals
- prohibitions on right turns on red lights
- the creation of school zones

These are all welcome changes.

But these measures are planned for only a few, selected intersections across this city over the next 5 years.

Reduction of speeds has been demonstrated everywhere – from Stockholm to Nairobi to New York – to be crucial to any safety policy. However, in this plan, speed reduction is relegated to only specific sections of 34 streets in the whole city, with reductions in posted speeds insufficient to reduce fatalities and serious injuries.

There is no requirement for trucks using the streets to be fitted with side guards to prevent pedestrians from being crushed in the wheels of turning trucks after being knocked off the sidewalks.

Unless there is significant change in the built environment, the education campaign contained in this plan is merely rhetoric that abdicates responsibility for safety by off-loading it onto the pedestrian.

The message from Walk Toronto is succinct: refer this plan of meted-out half-measures back to staff, and adopt a full Vision Zero plan, as has New York, San Francisco, Boston, Chicago, Edmonton, Vancouver, South Africa, and the European Union - among others.

Adopt an uncompromised Vision Zero approach to road safety and then fund it vigorously to end the killings and serious injury.

Charles Mulford Robinson, the man responsible for paving the streets of Toronto in the 1880s, said, "As a man is judged by his linen, a city is judged by its streets."

Toronto **is** judged by our streets. Three pedestrian fatalities in the last 6 days since this plan was released is damning.