



Date: December 3, 2017
To: Mayor John Tory and Councillors, City of Toronto
Cc: City Clerk, City of Toronto
Geoff Cape, CEO, Evergreen
From: Walk Toronto (Steering Committee)
Re: 2017.PW24.5, Speed Limit on Bayview Avenue from Pottery Road (Northerly Intersection) to River Street Ramp

Walk Toronto is a grassroots, volunteer pedestrian advocacy group that works to improve walking conditions and pedestrian safety in Toronto.

Further to Walk Toronto’s submission to the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee (PWIC) dated October 17, 2017 (available online as [communication file PW.New.PW24.5.6](#)), we would like to reaffirm our opposition to the PWIC recommendation to raise the speed limit to 60 km/hr from 50 km/hr on Bayview Avenue between Pottery Road (whether the northerly or southerly intersection) and the River Street ramp.

In addition to our earlier comments, we wish to highlight the following:

- On the 4.3 km originally recommended in the City staff report for the speed limit increase, the estimated time savings for a driver travelling at a posted speed limit of 60 km/hr – rather than 50 km/hr – would be just 51.6 seconds. PWIC recommended that the speed limit increase apply to a reduced 2.9 km stretch, which translates into an even smaller **estimated time savings of just 34.8 seconds**. (Both calculations are based on the driver *not* being required to stop at any of the traffic lights along the road segment.)
- The speed limit reduction to 50 km/hr was enacted as part of **Toronto’s Vision Zero Road Safety Plan**. Signs were posted only recently, in June 2017, meaning **the lowered speed limit was in effect for merely 3 months** before City staff produced a report proposing a reversal. Such a short period during the summer has not allowed the City adequate time in which to assess various seasonal factors associated with the usage of Bayview Avenue. For instance, one of the justifications for the speed limit increase is that pedestrians and cyclists may use the parallel multi-use trail. The trail is not maintained in the winter. However, the main roadway is plowed, and this is where we may expect to see active transportation users when snow and ice has accumulated on the trail. People also tend to avoid the off-road part of the trail at night, a factor that becomes more significant outside of the summer months, when daylight is shorter.
Meanwhile, in 2016, City Council approved a [Functional Planning Study for the potential reconfiguration of the Bayview Avenue Extension](#), but this work has yet to be done.
- The area from Evergreen Brick Works south to Corktown Common is part of the proposed the [Don River Valley Park](#). In October 2016, Mayor John Tory, city staff, Evergreen, private donors and others heralded the completion of the “first mile” of the Lower Don Master Plan and the campaign to create this “super park” (see [news release here](#)).
- The south portion of Bayview Avenue is identified as one of the 12 “Great Streets” in [TOCore’s proposed Downtown Plan](#) (see Map 5). Pedestrian and public realm improvements are to be prioritized on these Great Streets.
- Use of operating speed, and more specifically “85th percentile speed,” to set speed limits may have the unintended effect of ever higher operating speeds, and ever reduced safety. The **National Transportation Safety Board** (U.S.), in its July 2017 report [Reducing Speeding-Related Crashes Involving Passenger Vehicles](#), states, “In general, there is not strong evidence that the

85th percentile speed within a given traffic flow equates to the speed with the lowest crash involvement rate for all road types” (page x). The report challenges use of the 85th percentile speed; discusses the relationships between design speed, operating speed and speed limits; and identifies how setting higher speed limits along one road segment can have a *spillover effect*, with motor vehicles continuing to speed along adjacent road segments. We refer you, in particular, to the report’s **Executive Summary** and section **3.1 Speed Limits**.

Vivien Leong, Adam Cohoon and Michael Black
on behalf of Walk Toronto (Steering Committee)



Clockwise, from top left:

- (1) *View north on Bayview Avenue, at Pottery Road (south) intersection:* People are walking along the west shoulder of Bayview Avenue, and others cross Bayview during a break in traffic before they reach the intersection crosswalk. The west shoulder provides a more direct and closer access to the north entrance to the Evergreen Brick Works site; the crosswalk markings, located only on the north side of this intersection, require that people divert from their intended destination and travel farther.
- (2) *View south on Bayview Avenue, from Pottery Road (south) intersection:* People are cycling southbound along the west shoulder, heading towards people walking northbound in the same shoulder, right next to which are motor vehicles. The posted 50 km/hr speed limit would be raised back up to 60 km/hr under the PWIC recommendation.
- (3) *At the Evergreen Brick Works site entrance:* Don River Valley Park signage, suggesting that we “imagine the possible.” Increasing the speed limit on the street that runs through the entire length of the super park will make it more difficult to realize the full potential of one of the largest bodies of green space in the vicinity of our parkland-deficient downtown.
- (4) *View north on Bayview Avenue, at Evergreen Brick Works main (south) entrance:* Adults and children, on bikes and in bike trailers, wait in the multi-use trail on the east side of Bayview to cross at the traffic lights. While this multi-use trail has a guiderail crash barrier outside of the intersection, the trail does not receive winter maintenance and is not lit at night (a section of the trail diverges from the roadway and therefore will not receive illumination from the roadway lighting).



Date: October 17, 2017
To: Public Works and Infrastructure Committee (PWIC), City of Toronto
Cc: Councillor Jon Burnside (Ward 26)
Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam (Ward 27)
Executive Assistant Tom Davidson (Ward 28)
Councillor Mary Fragedakis (Ward 29)
Geoff Cape, CEO, Evergreen
From: Walk Toronto (Steering Committee)
Re: 2017.PW24.5, Speed Limit on Bayview Avenue from Pottery Road (Northerly Intersection) to River Street Ramp

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RECOMMENDATION

Walk Toronto opposes the recommendation to raise the speed limit to 60 km/hr from 50 km/hr on Bayview Avenue between the northerly intersection of Pottery Road and the River Street ramp. Instead, we recommend that the City take measures to foster and enforce a 50 km/hr operating speed (using a combination of engineering, including road markings and design; signage; education; technology; police enforcement; etc.). Maintaining the lower speed limit is in accordance with the City's adopted Vision Zero Road Safety Plan to advance the safety of all road users, especially vulnerable road users.

RATIONALE AND COMMENTS

Walk Toronto acknowledges there is a substantial difference between the posted speed limit and motor vehicle operating speeds on Bayview Avenue, as described in the background report. Rather than acceding to the speeding vehicles, however, the City should make changes to induce a 50 km/hr operating speed, through engineering, education, technology, and enforcement.

Below, we highlight some of our reasoning for maintaining the 50 k/hr speed limit, noting concerns related to both pedestrians and cyclists.

First, we observe that the background report says that “[s]taff conducted speed studies from August 15-16, 2017” and further on describes:

Road Environment

As part of the field investigation, staff also noted the following characteristics from a road environment perspective:

- Presence of dedicated off-road pedestrian and cyclist facility in the form of a multi-use trail protected by steel beam guiderail crash barrier along most of the section;
- Absence of sidewalks on either side of the road;
- Absence of vulnerable road users on the roadway;
- Lack of public transit stops;
- Lack of development and adjacent land use throughout is primarily parkland and ravine.

We would like to ask whether this “field investigation” occurred on the same *weekday* dates as the speed studies (Aug 15-16, 2017, as noted above). If so, a field investigation should again be done on *weekend* dates in the *early summer* (e.g., June), when more Toronto residents are walking or cycling (especially to Evergreen Brick Works or Todmorden Mills, and in the surrounding area) and when more residents are likely to be in town rather than away on vacation.

Second, with respect to the protected multi-use trail, we would point out that the roadway between the northerly intersection of Pottery Road and the southerly intersection of Pottery Road has no protection installed for pedestrians or cyclists. The same is true for the roadway section between Rosedale Valley Road and the River Street ramp. Pedestrians or cyclists travelling on the paved shoulder or in a traffic lane are at greater risk at higher road speeds.

Between the southerly intersection of Pottery Road and Rosedale Valley Road, there is the option for pedestrians and cyclists to use the protected, two-way, multi-use trail on the east side of Bayview Avenue. But not all pedestrians and cyclists may choose to use this trail.

We have seen pedestrians – including families with children – walking along the road shoulder from the southerly intersection of Pottery Road to Evergreen Brick Works, and *not* using the multi-use trail. From a pedestrian standpoint, this route can make sense: there is a more northerly entrance to Evergreen Brick Works, and by travelling along the west side of the roadway, one does not have to travel as far to enter the Brick Works. Cyclists may also choose to ride in the southbound traffic lane, rather than ride in the multi-use trail, to access this north entrance.

We can also attest to seeing cyclists, travelling south along Bayview Avenue, continue to use the southbound traffic lane rather than make a left turn to get into the multi-use trail. Again, this can make sense: a cyclist may arrive at the southerly intersection Pottery Road at a green light, and choose to continue straight ahead, especially if their final destination is south of Rosedale Valley Road or is on the west side of the roadway.

Moreover, the multi-use trail is signed to indicate that it does *not* receive winter maintenance. So it is likely that commuting cyclists, in particular, will need to use the Bayview Avenue traffic lanes at certain times of the year. People may also choose to use not to use the multi-use at night, because it is unlit; unlit trails pose safety concerns, especially for women.

If vulnerable road users do use the multi-use trail to reach Evergreen Brick Works, the wait at the traffic control signals (traffic lights) to cross Bayview Avenue can be very uncomfortable, and potentially

dangerous. Waiting at the gap of the guiderail crash barrier, one may end up positioned closer to high-speed, passing motor vehicles than is ideal, in order not to block the two-way multi-use trail. There is no additional waiting space at that location. Those travelling with strollers or bikes need to make an even greater effort not to block the trail. With many families bringing young children to the Brick Works site, and parents/caregivers needing to keep track of young children as they use that traffic crossing (esp. when they are on their bikes), keeping the speed limit lower near the traffic lights is advisable.

We are also concerned that motorists, once they are permitted to travel at 60 km/hr, will not adequately slow down south of the River Street ramp, as they enter into “the Narrows” and subsequently into the Canary District – areas with reduced speed limits. A lower and more consistent speed limit avoids drivers suddenly breaking or simply not obeying the lowered speed limit.

Finally, construction on nearby trails and parallel routes may drive up short- or even long-term use of Bayview Avenue by various road users. This could have a bearing on safety, especially if the speed limit is raised to 60 km/hr.

If the City decides to raise the speed limit, despite our opposition and comments, we strongly recommend that measures first be taken to address the concerns detailed above, including, but not limited to, monitoring and assessing problem areas for improvements (e.g., at traffic lights, in areas where vulnerable road users are using the paved shoulders or riding in the traffic lanes), adding more signage to slow motorists down as they approach areas with lower speeds (e.g., Canary District), activation of the traffic control signals at Front Street and Bayview Avenue, coordination with construction projects that could increase traffic on Bayview Avenue, snow-clearing and lighting options for the multi-use trail, and increased enforcement.

CONCLUSION

Bayview Avenue should be a safe travel route for all road users, especially vulnerable road users. Evergreen Brick Works and Todmorden Mills are significant destinations, attracting Toronto residents and visitors who arrive by foot, bicycle, stroller, wheelchair, transit, and motor vehicle. The Canary District and Corktown Common have developed into a residential area, as well as a destination. Walkers, hikers, and joggers connect to Bayview Avenue. The roadway is used by cyclists as a commuter route. The City of Toronto, Evergreen, and other partners have been working to create the Don River Valley Park (“superpark”), spanning from Evergreen Brick Works south to the mouth of Lake Ontario; the benefits to people of being exposed to green space is well documented, and a 60 km/hr highway through a park seems inappropriate. Bayview Avenue connects these elements, and others, and maintaining 50 km/hr as a maximum speed will help keep it a safer travel route for all road users and aid the City in its path to Vision Zero.

Vivien Leong and Adam Cohoon
on behalf of Walk Toronto (Steering Committee)