



Walk Toronto Comments Regarding Lawrence Park EA - 2017.PW21.3

From: Walk Toronto steering committee
To: Chair Robinson and members of the Toronto Public Works
and Infrastructure Committee
Date: May 9, 2017

INTRODUCTION

Many members of Walk Toronto's steering committee would prefer to see sidewalks built on both sides of all streets within the Lawrence Park study area (a practice which is the norm in the better parts of Rosedale and Forest Hill, for instance). However, we are sensitive to the opinions of some local residents in Lawrence Park, and we are willing to **recommend a compromise that adheres to the standard City of Toronto policy for reconstructing roads**: we suggest that the 25 local streets in the study area have a sidewalk built on just one side, while the collector road (Mildenhall) would receive sidewalks on both sides. The decision taken in the staff report (May 1, 2017) to opt for a sidewalk on one side of just 5 streets out of 26 works out to coverage of just 19%. We consider this to be woefully inadequate, and inconsistent with safety initiatives launched recently by the City of Toronto and the Province of Ontario.

ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES

Virtually all of the construction activity planned by the Lawrence Park Environmental Assessment will take place on land owned by the City of Toronto. In fact, the City-owned public road allowance includes far more than the road itself. On average, about half of the area of front yards in Lawrence Park – as well as the street trees growing on this right-of-way – are owned by the citizens of Toronto. As far as we are aware, no privately owned trees are under threat of removal.

One of the main justifications for creating road allowances is to keep the City's options open in case it wants to upgrade the infrastructure of the metropolis' water and transportation networks. The latter is in a state of crisis, and its problems constantly hit the headlines. In making decisions that affect the future of the road allowance, it is clear that **significant weighting should be given to supporting the transportation policies of the owner (the City of Toronto) because the safety, health and mobility of the people of Toronto are at stake.**

The residents whose property abuts the public road allowance naturally have views on the future of their neighbourhood, which lies at the geographic heart of the fourth largest metropolis in North America. However, in an Environmental Assessment, local residents' opinions regarding the aesthetic look of land they do not hold title to should not be allowed to override important and carefully worked out policies of the owner, the City of Toronto. It begs the question why our municipality expends so much effort formulating progressive policies and programs if we are willing to allow wealthy residents the opportunity to circumvent them. While politically expedient, in the long term the City's short-sighted and narrow view will prove costly to the citizens of Lawrence Park and the city as a whole.

The following is a discussion of some of the more important relevant policy initiatives that have been launched or updated in the last few years.

OFFICIAL PLAN

When reconstructing roads which have a life expectancy of several generations, one must plan for the needs of the future. The crucial document that sets out the way our municipal government intends Toronto to develop over the coming years is contained in the *Official Plan* (June, 2015). A key principle is that our goal must be the good of the city as a whole.

“There is no such thing as an isolated or purely local decision. Each of us make choices every day about where to live, work, play, shop and how to travel. They seem like small choices, but together and over time the consequences of these choices can affect everyone's quality of life.” (s. 1-1)

One of the consequences of driving a vehicle on a single occupant basis is that such behaviour can cause excessive pollution, traffic congestion and road fatalities anywhere in the metropolis. This shouldn't be news to anybody. The staff report uncritically receives feedback that Lawrence Park residents are car reliant without making the kind of commitment to alternatives that are recommended in the Official Plan.-----

“In a mature city like Toronto, the emphasis has to be on using the available road space more efficiently to move people instead of vehicles and on looking at how the demand for vehicle travel can be reduced in the first place. Reducing car dependency means being creative and flexible about how we manage urban growth. We have to plan in "next generation" terms to make walking, cycling, and transit increasingly attractive alternatives to using the car and to move towards a more sustainable transportation system.” (s. 2-4)

The word “rural” is not found in the Official Plan. It does not indulge in fantasies, and makes the assumption that Toronto is a big city. This is what it has to say about how walking should be treated in our metropolis:

“An urban environment and infrastructure will be created that encourages and supports pedestrian movement throughout the City, for people of all ages and abilities, by:

- a) ensuring safe, universally accessible, direct, comfortable, attractive and convenient pedestrian conditions, including walking routes to workplaces, schools, recreation areas, transit and other important community destinations;
- b) maximizing connections within the street network, as well as to other public or private pedestrian walkways, such as those found within parks, open spaces, between buildings, or above and below grade;
- c) prioritizing the inclusion of sidewalks, dedicated crossings where warranted and adequate sidewalk width in the design of all streets (s. 2-14)

The Toronto City Planning Department has over 300 staff members, some of them experts in fields such as transportation planning. When an EA consultation receives opinions from lay residents, they should be carefully evaluated within the overall context of the planning put together by professionals and approved by Toronto Council. This was not done.

RECORD NUMBER OF PEDESTRIAN DEATHS IN 2016

According to the Toronto Star (Jan. 6, 2017) 43 pedestrians were killed by drivers in Toronto in the year 2016. This was the highest death toll since 2005, the oldest year on record. Because the Lawrence Park EA public consultations were conducted prior to the year-end of 2016, this carnage would not have been included in the public feedback. But the reaction amongst politicians was unequivocal. “Public works chair Councillor Jaye Robinson (Ward 25, Don Valley West) called the numbers “alarming.”

The staff report fails to take account of the record number of pedestrian road fatalities in Toronto in the year 2016.

VISION ZERO

Many local residents in Lawrence Park have indicated from the beginning of the EA that pedestrian safety is a major concern. It is notable that the progress of the EA was paralleled by the completely unrelated Kids At Play lawn sign campaign, which has heightened the concern for child pedestrian safety on roads throughout the Midtown area. However the Kids at Play campaign didn't stop the slaughter of pedestrians – which culminated in 2016's record death toll.

Councillor Robinson responded by launching a major road safety initiative. The full details may be found in the report, *Vision Zero – Toronto's Road Safety Campaign*. Its release was early 2017 – again, too late to be incorporated into the staff report.

“Achieving Vision Zero is an aggressive, but critical goal; an acknowledgement that even one serious injury or traffic death is one too many. It is a goal that the city as a whole stands behind. It’s a partnership between city departments, other public agencies, community groups, and each of us as individuals.” (p. 56)

It is clear that Vision Zero is a gamechanger. It erects objectives that environmental assessments must take into account. It is no longer acceptable to apologetically embrace trade-offs between public health and vehicular mobility. Likewise, the notion that was bandied about during the Lawrence Park public consultations that a balance should be found between pedestrian safety and a preference for the rural aesthetics of roads with shoulders instead of sidewalks – Councillor Robinson’s Vision Zero plan basically throws all this out the window.

“Through Toronto’s Vision Zero Road Safety Plan, we commit to working together to eliminate traffic deaths and make our streets safe for everyone in the City, no matter where you live and how you choose to travel.” (p. 10)

16 new/ enhanced safety measures that increase pedestrian safety are highlighted, and form cornerstones of the plan. Building sidewalks is one of them.

“The existing Missing Links Sidewalk Program will be enhanced with a policy to install sidewalks in areas that have no sidewalks or sidewalks on only one side of the road during road reconstruction. Connected and continuous sidewalks provide a safer and more accessible walking environment.” (p. 28)

According to Barbara Gray, General Manager of Transportation Services, “in 2017, you will see changes in neighbourhoods across the city including . . . filling in missing sidewalk links” (p. 10)

PROVINCIAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Province of Ontario also advises drastic action surprisingly similar to some of the measures proposed by Toronto’s Vision Zero. In 2012, the Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario released its “Pedestrian Death Review”, which came out with specific recommendations (p. 40) to reduce the number of pedestrian fatalities on Ontario’s roads.

“Municipalities, in developing their complete streets approach to pedestrians, should consider strategies to prevent collisions occurring where pedestrians are walking along the road. Some of these strategies might include:

- Adding sidewalks in existing communities
- Building communities with continuous and connected sidewalks along both sides of the street
- Ensuring that sidewalks continue through driveways which are prohibited from being blocked”

The staff report utterly fails to take provincial recommendations into account.

COMPLETE STREETS

Toronto Complete Streets Guidelines (Edition 1, Volume 1, 2017) was referred by PWIC to staff at its April, 2017 meeting. The provisions relating to sidewalks are unlikely to change as they are similar to the Complete Streets model used by other cities. To put it another way, the aversion to sidewalks and the lack of sensitivity to the needs of vulnerable road users displayed by the EA does NOT conform to the Complete Streets model.

“The pedestrian network—which includes sidewalks, crossings, and public spaces— is core to the city’s transportation network. Space should be allocated to protect pedestrians, encourage walking, and support placemaking—all of which enhances Toronto’s economic and social vitality.” (Pp. 73)

“1. **Accessibility and Mobility.** A top priority is to provide accessible sidewalks and facilities for all users regardless of physical abilities or age. Ensure clear, direct, unobstructed continuous paths of a suitable context-sensitive width to serve existing and anticipated pedestrian flows. Minimize or remove clutter.

“2. **Provide a Network of Continuous Sidewalks.** Places that support walking are healthier, more vibrant, and resilient. Create a network of continuous sidewalks with dedicated space for pedestrians safely separated from cyclists and motorized vehicles.”

“5. **Design for Comfort.** Provide sidewalks of adequate width for the context. Design sidewalks and boulevards for uses all year long. Street trees offer shade and relief from sun, rain, wind and snow. Carefully arrange street elements to support pedestrian activities, and to provide a safe buffer between pedestrians and moving traffic.” (Pp. 75)

Note that sidewalks are deemed “a top priority” and that street trees are cited as an element that supports pedestrians, separating them from moving traffic. The conclusion that we might draw is that sidewalks and trees complement each other on a Complete Street.

“Streets should reflect the existing and planned function, scale and character of the neighbourhoods and communities that surround them, responding and respecting the local context and character, as well as their civic role in the city.” (p. 7).

One of the implications of this principle is that the reconstruction of streets in the study area should respond to the needs of actual and potential sidewalk users who live in the neighbourhood or are travelling in it.

SIDEWALK USERS, PART 1: WORKERS

Annual incomes in Lawrence Park are amongst the highest in Canada. In gathering the public’s opinions regarding sidewalks, the EA public consultation gave undue influence to adult

property-owners within the study area – most of whom do not regularly use the sidewalks on a regular basis. This fact compromises the objectivity of EA. Instead, the focus should have been on actual and potential sidewalk users.

Affluent property-owners in Lawrence Park often hire people to perform many of the tasks that residents in less wealthy neighbourhoods take care of themselves. Examples include:

- Caregivers and nannies
- Cleaners and employees of maids services
- Professional dog-walkers
- Student tutors

In addition, Lawrence Park residents are served by:

- Mail carriers
- People who deliver newspaper and flyers

With the exception of live-in domestic staff, these workers generally do not reside in Lawrence Park because they cannot afford local housing costs. In fact, many workers cannot afford an automobile, meaning that they will be relying on transit and walking along local roads. Aside from getting to their job on foot, in many cases, they will be also be doing work that actually requires them to be walking within Lawrence Park. For instance, one often sees nannies on local roads taking their charges to nearby parks or schools.

Many of Lawrence Park's domestic workers are in subservient relationships with the property-owners who employ them. It is not right to allow the road safety of the former to be subject to the vagaries of the latter's opinions. **Road safety decisions can be matters of life and death and should be decided on the basis of developments in legislation, peer-reviewed, evidence-based research, government programs, etc.**

As for consultations, it is extremely important to gather input from workers who use the area's sidewalks. One of the major languages spoken on the sidewalks of Lawrence Park is Tagalog. Surveys could have been done by City staff on local sidewalks using someone who speaks Tagalog, in order to open up communication with many of nannies employed in the neighbourhood. Likewise, the opinion poll sponsored by the LPRA seems to have included very few domestic workers, and its results are skewed as a result.

The prevailing attitude amongst caregivers seems to be that they feel bound to ask their employer for consent to speak, and are nervous about interacting with government staff and consultants. The most significant input from caregivers was a form letter asking for sidewalks that 17 signed.

SIDEWALK USERS, PART 2: YOUTHS

The study area is surrounded by five schools and one satellite university campus. School boards are encouraging our youth to walk to school; providing them with safe pedestrian infrastructure is essential to this effort. In the words of Active and Safe Routes to School: "In transport and land-use

planning, the needs of children and youth should receive as much priority as the needs of people of other ages and the requirements of business."

If we resign ourselves to building additional sidewalks on only the five streets proposed by the EA, then safe pedestrian connections to certain parks will still not be available (e.g., Toronto French School to Wanless Park).



SIDEWALK USERS, PART 3: SENIORS

Sidewalks are essential for seniors who lose their ability to drive, and turn to walking to cover the 'first and last mile'. In the winter, the slip and fall risk for the elderly is lower on well-maintained sidewalks than by the side of snow windrows.

The EA doesn't account for recently released results of the 2016 census, which makes clear the need to accommodate the increased numbers of people over the age of 65.

"For the first time in history, the percentage of seniors in the population (16.9 per cent) now exceeds the share of children (16.6 per cent), new census data reveals. 'This gap will continue to increase in the future, so basically we can say that there is no coming back. It's long-lasting change,' said Laurent Martel, director of the demography division at Statistics Canada."
(*Toronto Star*, May 3, 2017)

SIDEWALK USERS PART, 4: PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Rough walking/ rolling surfaces are problematic for both the visually impaired and mobility device users. Sidewalks are ideal for them, while road shoulders and side ditches can be perilous. Guide dogs and white cane users rely on curb edge detection for orientation, which is provided by sidewalks – but not by road shoulders.

The eastern border of the study area is defined by Bayview Avenue. On the other side of Bayview is an extraordinary cluster of institutions that deal with various disabilities and rehabilitation:

- Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, which houses:
 - Canada's largest trauma centre
 - Canada's largest veterans' care facility
 - Canada's largest maternity hospital
 - Sunnybrook Centre for Independent Living
 - St. John's Rehab Hospital
- The national headquarters of the CNIB
- The Lyndhurst Centre and the Rumsey Centre, which are both part of the Toronto Rehabilitation Institute (Canada's largest rehab hospital)
- The Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital (Canada's largest children's rehab hospital)

It is important for rehab patients who are being re-integrated into the outside world to venture outside the confines of the hospital. For instance, someone learning how to use a wheelchair should be able to wheel into the nearby residential neighbourhood along safe sidewalks – not ditches.

SIDEWALK SAFETY & PUBLIC HEALTH BENEFITS

An important function of sidewalks is that they clearly demarcate a pedestrian zone that is highly visible to motorists.

“Sidewalks are essential in neighbourhoods. Even with speeds of 15-20 mph, children, senior adults and people with disabilities have no safe place to walk, when sidewalks are omitted. ... Sidewalks are not inducements to reduce speeds, since they remove pedestrians from street space. However, by collecting higher volumes of pedestrians, they remind motorists that neighbourhoods are places for people. Thus, they help curtail higher end speeds.” (Walkable Communities Designing for Pedestrians" Southeast Michigan Council of Governments. By Walkable Communities Inc., High Springs, Florida. 1998. P. 65-666)

The fundamental study that is a benchmark for sidewalk safety research was published by the Federal Highway Administration (Knoblauch, R.L., Tustin, B.H., Smith, S.A., Pietrucha, M.T.. Investigation of Exposure-Based Pedestrian Accident Areas: Crosswalks, Sidewalks, Local Streets, and Major

Arterials. Washington, DC, 1987). It identified the presence of sidewalks as an extremely effective countermeasure:

“The likelihood of a pedestrian crash along roadways with no sidewalks is three times greater than than the likelihood of a crash with the presence of sidewalks.” (p. 176)

At the Lawrence Park public consultation meeting in 2016, a few participants indulged in subjective conjectures as to the safety value of sidewalks. Walk Toronto supports evidence-based decision-making and we feel that a literature review of academic and government studies would be advantageous for the accurate evaluation of sidewalk safety by EAs. We therefore recommend that Toronto Public Health undertake such a literature review.

Fatal traffic collisions can be dramatic and attract media attention. However, long-term degenerative diseases that are attributable to lack of exercise can exact a greater death toll. Toronto Public Health has done a certain amount of work examining the role of sidewalks in promoting fitness. We feel that an update would make an ideal complement to sidewalk safety study. If their findings come out strongly in favour of the benefits of sidewalks, this should be reflected by an adjustment in the EA’s weightings.

TREES: IMPROPER EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Trees have a life cycle: they live and die. Professional arborists talk about “managing” the urban forest, a neutral term that can involve both preserving trees and culling them selectively. In fact, the removal of trees can achieve positive benefits if replanting is undertaken correctly.

- Optimal **diversification** of tree species in an urban forest can be established through culling. Benefits include:
 - The reduction of invasive tree species
 - The opportunity to replant with native tree species
 - The removal of unsalvageable trees struggling with insect infestations that will die in any case (whether or not road reconstruction takes place)
 - The introduction tree species that are more resistant to infestations by destructive insects
 - Reducing the dominance in the urban forest of any one tree species in order to avoid future massive die-offs similar to invasions by the emerald ash borer or Dutch elm disease
- **Generational balance** (trees of varying size and age) can be achieved when trees are replaced
 - This ensures the health of the tree canopy decade after decade; and
 - avoids a pervasive decline in tree health when trees planted at the same time grow old
- The **sightlines** of road users can be blocked by street trees growing in problematic locations (especially near intersection corners). The resulting decrease in visibility can cause collisions.
 - Sidewalk construction can give the City the opportunity to replace obstructive trees with ones set further back, improving sightlines and safety.

A meaningful evaluation of the impacts of sewer/road re-development would also have:

- Taken into account that the urban forest is a system with connections between various biotic and abiotic elements – trees, soils, groundwater, surface water, ground cover, people, bird and mammals
- Assessed the project's impact on the overall Lawrence Park forest canopy (including the numerous trees thriving on private property and public space not affected by the project, such as parks)
- Evaluated trees as part of the renewable assets within Toronto's green infrastructure.
- The tree-by-tree tabulation exercise that was applied is outdated, narrow and simplistic.
- Analyzed negative and positive impacts within various timeframes - short, medium, long term and looked at mitigating efforts to be applied within each timeframe.
- Compared the costs and number of trees forecast for removal versus the opportunities, benefits and costs of replanting

The negative consequences of tree removal are reflected in the evaluation, but the beneficial consequences of culling trees are not taken into account. From the arborists' point of view, evaluation methodology that treats tree losses like body counts during a war is highly irregular and unprofessional. A new evaluation should therefore be undertaken, ensuring that **points are also allocated for the positive impacts on the tree canopy due to culling and intelligent replanting – not just the negative impacts**. Admittedly, there may be trees sacrificed during construction but in the longer term, the tree population could not only recover but be enhanced. Indeed, this project should be considered as an opportunity to rejuvenate Lawrence Park's overall tree canopy.

TREE LOSS MITIGATION METHODS

Staff have proposed using various methods to mitigate the loss or threat to street trees including a reduction of street widths to 7.2 metres, redirecting the narrowed roadway around certain mature trees that must be saved, "bending" sidewalks to achieve the same purpose, locating sidewalks on the side of the road that has fewer mature trees, and protecting trees that are remaining in place from risk of damage due to the disruptions of nearby construction activity..

Because the City will be replacing all removed trees with new trees, there will be no long-term loss in the number of trees in the neighbourhood. A planting scheme is to be implemented in the early years of the project that would allow for replacement trees to become well established by the time that construction requires the elimination of specific, targeted trees. This will give replacement trees a head start, even though it will not eliminate the difference in maturity between them and the trees they are replacing. As any parent knows, watching young ones go through an unruly adolescence can be something that we have to put up with if we are to achieve generational balance.

Walk Toronto approves of all of these methods, but we acknowledge that they might not be as effective as we would wish on certain streets. We are mystified that one of the most powerful tree removal mitigators has not been considered: converting two-way roads into one-way. Making a street with plentiful mature, at-risk street trees one-way could allow roadway width to be narrowed by 60 cm., which may be enough to reduce many tree losses due to sidewalk construction.

The road networks in neighbourhoods such as the Annex rely extensively on one-way streets for traffic-calming. If motorists in Lawrence Park feel that the preservation of trees is such a priority, then they ought to be willing to accept the minor inconveniences that one-way conversion would cause. This would be a minor burden on them compared to what pedestrians currently face in the winter.

OPINION OF ARBORISTS AND TREE-LOVERS

A growing number of organizations concerned with the urban forest could capably assist the City and residents with arborist matters within the study area. Such organizations include Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation, Trees Ontario, Green Infrastructure Ontario Coalition, LEAF, Evergreen, Ontario Urban Forest Council, University of Toronto Faculty of Forestry and the David Suzuki Foundation. A wide number of players within the corporate and philanthropic sectors are also engaging in and financing urban forestry initiatives. Examples include TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, and the Ontario Trillium Foundation

We also note that when “Save the Trees” signs were blanketing lawns in the study area, none of the above groups appeared to have joined in the alarm raised by tree-loving residents. From this observation **we surmise that in the opinion of professional arborists, claims as to the threat of catastrophic damage to Lawrence Park’s tree canopy have been greatly exaggerated and, indeed, sensationalized.**

TREE REMOVAL COUNTS

The numbers provided in the staff report of trees that must be removed are incomplete and inaccurate. We suggest that staff revise them for the following reasons:

1. Projected tree losses should be adjusted downwards on those streets where it is feasible and effective to convert the street to one-way
2. The staff report fails to break down the number of tree removals into two categories:
 - a. Number of tree removals necessitated by water work and road reconstruction, regardless of whether sidewalks are installed
 - b. Number of tree removals solely necessitated by sidewalk construction that otherwise would be preserved.

As a result, **we haven’t been provided with accurate projections of tree loss numbers specifically due to sidewalk building.** It is important that the possible negative impacts of tree removal due to stormwater/ sewer re-development not be blamed on efforts to improve sidewalk safety and accessibility. This is a glaring omission, and no reasonable, evidence-based decision on building sidewalks in Lawrence Park should be made until this omission is rectified.

3. Another serious gap exists in the tree removal numbers provided by the staff report, which focuses on the 5 streets for which sidewalks are proposed. This recommendation constitutes a

deviation from official City of Toronto policy – which requires sidewalks on all 26 streets in the study area. If Council is being asked to endorse this policy deviation, it is essential to make available the relevant tree removal numbers which would make an accurate comparison possible. Walk Toronto therefore recommends that staff provide two sub-sets of numbers for tree removals in the above-noted category 2b (“tree removals solely necessitated by sidewalk reconstruction that would otherwise be preserved”):

- a. Official policy: for both sides of Mildenhall, and one side of the other 25 streets in the study area
- b. Staff recommendation: for the sections of those 5 streets on which the staff report proposes the building of sidewalks

HISTORY OF LAWRENCE PARK

The “Save Toronto’s Tree Canopy” notice anonymously placed in the May 21, 2016 issue of the *Toronto Star* makes ludicrous claims that the City intends to “cut down 353 mature old growth trees”. Those of us who are familiar with the scientific definition of old growth will wince – but this sort of underhanded tactic was no doubt effective in influencing public opinion, and perhaps the results of the EA as well.

In reality, the land that homes in the study area was built on was farmland in the 19th century.

“In the 1920s and ‘30s ... the whole of what is now Lawrence Park east of St. Ives was scrubland, not the fair farm field described by Cannon Judd in 1900 but fields that had gone to waste over a period of years, mostly overgrown with hawthorn bushes.” (Don Ritchie. *North Toronto*, Stoddart, 1992, p. 90-91).

Old photographs reveal the presence of isolated mature trees – yet this is hardly matches the description of the “old growth” forest referred to in the *Toronto Star* notice. Below is a photo of 50 Dawlish Ave., ca.1911. Although located to the west of the study area, it gives an idea of what the sidewalks and tree coverage looked like a century ago. Oddly, the scene is similar to contemporary subdivision construction.



Most of the street trees that are currently the subject of dispute were planted when the study areas houses' were built (the majority after 1945). Their full foliage is the result of expert care, not longevity.

Wilfrid Dinnick, the developer of Lawrence Park, spent liberally on tree planting. He was also an ardent believer in the importance of sidewalks, many of which were installed before the dirt roadways in Lawrence Park were paved. It was his hope that the City of Toronto would annex the study area in order that amenities such as sidewalks could be extended as far as Bayview. However, bankruptcy put an end to those plans. **Now, a century later, the EA puts us in a situation where we can fulfill the original intentions of Wilfrid Dinnick to provide all of Lawrence Park with safe walking infrastructure.**

TRANSPORTATION NETWORK CONSIDERATIONS

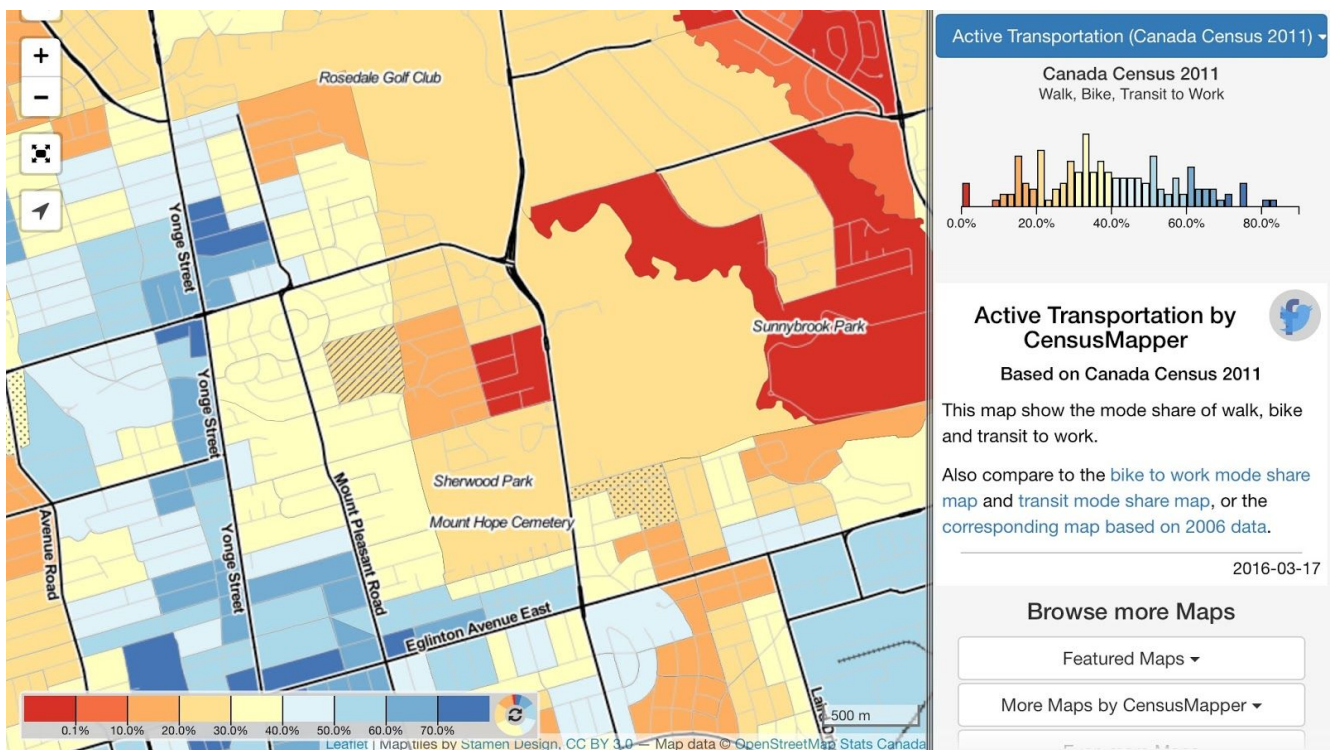
Sceptics sometime ask why Walk Toronto should be so concerned about walking safety in the study area when no pedestrian fatalities have occurred recently.

The self-selection process results in people who like to walk being more apt to establish their home in a walkable neighbourhood that has sidewalks and good transit connections. This causes walking rates to go up in that area. On the other hand, diehard drivers who rarely use sidewalks tend to be happy living in area without them. As a result, walking rates go down in that neighbourhood. Where there are few pedestrians, there are few collisions involving pedestrians.

Another reason is that lack of safety creates a vicious circle. Some parents will not let their children walk to school because lack of sidewalks and heavy traffic make walking unsafe. So they drive their kids instead, worsening traffic and increasing the danger of walking. Taken to an extreme, few people venture into dangerous environments – but that doesn't mean the areas are safe. An analogy is that almost no people get killed going over Niagara Falls in a barrel.

It should also be emphasized that what matters are not just fatalities that happen within the study area, but deaths that occur outside of it which are caused by Lawrence Park residents. The rationale is that if the motorist had taken the advice of the Official Plan to heart and used sustainable transportation, it is unlikely that any blood would have been spilled. When pedestrians “bump into each other” the results tend to be less catastrophic than car collisions.

These explanations are borne out by Census data. The map below indicates in blue high levels of active transportation use (i.e., walking, transit, cycling). At the other extreme, dark red indicates high reliance on vehicles. The dark red square in the middle of the map lies at the heart of the EA study area. It is obvious that if Toronto wants to solve its road congestion problem, increase the fitness of our youth, and reduce air pollution, then red squares such as the one in Lawrence Park are going to have to be turned blue.



It is a mistake to take an extremely narrow view of transportation, and analyse it only at the local level. The transportation choices that Lawrence Park residents make have effects throughout the city.

The worst thing we can do is passively accept the status quo, decline to accept any responsibility for making Toronto’s transportation system more sustainable, and agree to make changes solely in the circumstance that fatalities occur close to home. In effect, **that would amount to allowing infrastructure improvements for pedestrians only after a human life had been sacrificed. This is a demand that civilized societies do not make.**

THE FUTURE: AUTOMATED VEHICLES

It would be sheer folly to let an aesthetic preference for rural-style road shoulders prevent the installation of a network of sidewalks that will help reduce congestion in the Toronto of 2017 – and may well be essential to support the smooth functioning of new transportation technologies that will be introduced over the next few decades.

The City of Toronto presently has no official policy regarding automated vehicles. In the media, some optimists have predicted that sidewalks may no longer be necessary when the highest level of vehicle automation has been reached. The opposite is far more likely to be true in cities that receive as much snow as Toronto.

Significant snowfall on residential side streets that are provided with sidewalks usually results in plows creating large snow windrows that provide protective separation between pedestrians and motorists. On residential streets that lack sidewalks, the story is far different. Windrows will accumulate on the shoulders, where pedestrians would walk in fair weather. This forces them to venture closer to the middle of the road, and their course may be particularly erratic if children or dogs are part of a group. Because windrows constrict road width, AVs could have difficulty passing, and may be compelled to proceed at pedestrian speed until a suitable passing opportunity arises.

The difficulty of these events will be compounded if pedestrians are making sudden evasive maneuvers around patches of snow, white and black ice, rutting, puddles, etc. These pavement conditions – which can challenge AV technology on roads that are not populated with people on foot – are especially difficult for driverless vehicles if we factor in pedestrians and their erratic walking patterns.

THE FUTURE: BUS RAPID TRANSIT

The results of the 2016 census indicate that one of the fastest growing areas of Toronto is the Bayview Village neighbourhood, to the east of already highly dense North York Centre condo cluster. The study area is located between these two dense nodes and a third: Yonge and Eglinton. Even though the population of the study area is growing much more slowly, densification occurring elsewhere will exert increasing burdens on Bayview Ave. and Mt. Pleasant Rd., the north/south 'lifelines' which Lawrence Park drivers depend on.

Congestion will likely increase on these two roads – not to speak of the overburdened Yonge subway line – to a point where the Mt. Pleasant express bus will have to be upgraded to a lower-tier bus rapid transit service. The Bayview bus could follow suit. As a result, Lawrence Park drivers may find it faster to commute to the Financial District by bus rather than drive. This would be the equivalent of New Yorkers taking an express Madison Ave. bus to the office. It is a natural consequence of a medium-size city maturing into a major metropolis. **Providing sidewalks in order for residents to reach rapid transit stops is part of that maturation.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The EA report should be referred back to staff
2. The evaluation of factors in the decision whether or not to adhere to official City of Toronto policy for installing sidewalks as part of street reconstructions should take into account all relevant, recent City of Toronto and Province of Ontario planning, health and safety initiatives
3. The weighting assigned to pedestrian safety should be adjusted to a value at least equal that given to the greenspace criterion
4. Initiate a new series of separate consultations that include workers, children and people with disabilities
5. Request staff at Toronto Public health to conduct a literature review of studies on the impacts that the presence or absence of sidewalks have on:
 - a. long-term public health
 - b. pedestrian safety
 - c. whether any difference exists in safety levels between winter and fair weather conditionsUse the results to revise the EA's weighting of safety and public health factors
6. Allocate evaluation points for the positive impacts on the tree canopy due to culling and replanting – not just the negative impacts entailed by tree removal
7. Tree removal counts should be broken down into two categories:
 - a. Number necessitated by water work and road reconstruction, regardless of whether sidewalks are installed
 - b. Number solely necessitated by sidewalk construction that otherwise would be preserved.
8. Staff should model overall transportation patterns in the midtown, and assign a weighting value to the positive or negative effects of sidewalk construction.