

16 October, 2017

To: Toronto and East York Community Council  
 From: Murray Campbell  
 Subject: Item TE27:48: Corridor Safety Review Avenue Road

I am writing, as an unaffiliated individual, in connection with the Corridor Safety Review of Avenue Road that was published on Sept. 27, 2017 by the Acting Director, Transportation Services, Toronto and East York District. I wish that this presentation be considered when the Community Council deals with the report at a meeting on Oct. 17 (item TE27.48).

I am not writing from the advantage of technical expertise but I have lived near Avenue Road on Cottingham Street since 1983 and I have driven, cycled and walked it thousands of times. I no longer have the courage to ride a bicycle on the street but for 14 years I walked to work along Avenue Road and it was, daily, a depressing experience of incessant traffic and too-narrow sidewalks. For years, my children crossed the street to attend Cottingham School and there wasn't a day that I didn't fear for their safety as drivers habitually ran red lights.

The "report for action" under consideration proposes "potential strategies for improving pedestrian and motorist safety." It does have some ideas for vehicles but it is woefully short of anything sensible for improving the safety of pedestrians, let alone cyclists.

I don't propose a point-by-point rejoinder on lane widths, pavement markings and left-hand turns. I would say, however, that it's not enough to measure collisions and ways to reduce them. Your responsibility as a Council is to consider ways to make the neighbourhoods adjacent to Avenue Road more amenable to all sorts of activity.

The report does not do that. Rather, it represents a continuation of the vehicle-centric approach that has prevailed since the former Metropolitan Toronto deemed Avenue Road an arterial thoroughfare in the 1950s and widened it dramatically. The vehicle has ruled ever since.

Think of what Avenue Road was and what it is now. The concept of an "avenue road" in the United Kingdom – from which the name derives -- means a thoroughfare that is lined with trees. Indeed, pictures from an earlier era show foliage lining Avenue Road (with streetcars running its length). The trees are mostly gone and the sidewalks trimmed back to the point where it is sometimes difficult for two people to walk abreast. In the winter, the sidewalks do not get cleared promptly and slush from passing cars is sprayed on pedestrians.

From St. Clair Avenue to Davenport Road, Avenue Road is six lanes of largely unencumbered passage. At the top of hill, at Clarendon and Edmund avenues, southbound drivers are offered an unrestricted view of the road below and the psychological impetus to ignore the posted speed limit of 50 km/h is strong. Your own data show that 85 per cent of drivers are travelling over the speed limit. My observation is that just a handful of drivers are at the speed limit as they tear through the intersection at Cottingham Street. Running the red light is endemic for both southbound and northbound vehicles.

In short, Avenue Road has become the *de facto* Spadina Expressway where cars and trucks rule and everyone else is relegated to a lesser category. It is time for the City of Toronto to undo the damage done by the Metro Roads department and put pedestrians and cyclists on equal footing with motorists (as it is moving to do in other parts of the city).

I would suggest the following:

- Remove a lane of traffic in each direction at all hours. In other words, extend to the length of the thoroughfare the buffer planned for the southbound lanes between Lynwood and Balmoral avenues.
- Widen the sidewalks so that four people can pass each other
- Install a grade-separated bicycle lane in each direction
- Install red-light cameras at controlled intersections, particularly at Cottingham Street
- Reduce the time between a pedestrian pushing a button at a crossing and the change of signal

I recognize that these measures will rile the people (and their elected representatives) in the northern parts of the city and beyond its borders who are accustomed to driving to the centre. But, please keep in mind that Toronto cherishes its reputation as a city of neighbourhoods and the unwillingness to temper the impact of automobiles harms neighbourhoods that are worth preserving.

And as you contemplate future policy, I urge you to remember the quotation attributed to former mayor David Crombie that “you are welcome to come downtown but not to bring two tons of metal with you.”

Respectfully submitted,  
Murray Campbell  
191 Cottingham Street  
Toronto M4V 1C4  
416-709-4819