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SOCIETY OF
ARCHITECTS

Public Works and Infrastructure Committee
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario, M5H 2N2

February 20, 2018

RE: REimagining Yonge Street

Dear Members of the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee,

We are members of the volunteer Executive Board of the Toronto Society of Architects (TSA), an organization that was established in 1887. The TSA has a tradition of playing an advocacy role in the city, ensuring that architecture and urban design are key considerations in public discussions and in processes that have an impact on our built environment. It is with this mandate in mind that we are writing to you regarding the REimagining Yonge Street initiative (a study of Yonge Street between Sheppard Avenue and Finch Avenue).

We understand that the two options under consideration are “Transform Yonge” (OPTION 1), an option that would reduce the roadway from six to four lanes and “Enhance Yonge and Transform Beecroft” (OPTION 2), an option that maintains the six lane roadway. Making the right choice here is critical. “This is the only chance to get it right” as members of the City of Toronto Design Review Panel stated in their recent review of the initiative while clearly supporting OPTION 1. The choice is nothing less than a referendum on what kind of city we want to build in the future.

We strongly support The City of Toronto Transportation Services endorsement of OPTION 1. This is the only option that recognizes that Yonge Street has the potential to be a vibrant urban place, a focus for the dense mixed use community as opposed to the re-creation of a six lane roadway dividing the community.



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The Transportation Services report identifies, among others, the following issues where OPTION 1 far outperforms OPTION 2.

1. Money

The preliminary capital cost estimate for OPTION 1 is \$51.1 million. The preliminary capital cost estimate for OPTION 2 is \$71.0 million.

Furthermore, looking forward, OPTION 1 will encourage high quality employment opportunities by creating a civic realm with wider sidewalks and extensive tree planting that gives opportunities for restaurant patios and outdoor cafes, the types of places that currently make the downtown such a desirable place to live and work and play. OPTION 2 by maintaining the six lane roadway prevents the creation of these necessary community amenities.

2. Time

OPTION 1 has an estimated construction time of two years while OPTION 2 would extend construction time up to four years, impacting transportation operations over a longer period and delaying the introduction of cycling routes.

3. Safety

OPTION 1 would significantly improve pedestrian safety with wider sidewalks and shorter east/west crossing distances on Yonge Street. The current City Council approved Vision Zero Road Safety Plan identified Yonge Street from Sheppard Avenue to Steeles Avenue as a priority safety concern due to the number of pedestrians and cyclists killed or seriously injured on this stretch of road. OPTION 2, by maintaining the six lane roadway and narrow sidewalks does little to address these safety concerns.

4. Movement

OPTION 1 focuses on providing multi-modal travel for transit users, pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicle drivers whereas OPTION 2 focuses on the movement of motor vehicles. Projections from a travel study show a decreasing rate of motor vehicle use (21% reduction between 1995 and 2010) and increasing use of transit and active modes of transportation (walking, cycling). Also detailed modeling studies show that OPTION 1 would only add one



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minute to the motor vehicle commute time from Sheppard to Finch compared to the current situation.

In summary, North York Centre is a vibrant, very dense mixed use community currently split by a six lane roadway whose use during rush hour is primarily (74%) by vehicles originating in York Region. OPTION 1 would serve to enhance, increase and beautify the public realm while providing multi-modal transportation options. It offers improved safety, health, economic and environmental outcomes. The “Transform Yonge” option is about making a complete street with a sense of place rather than re-creating a six lane roadway that will forever prevent that from happening.

Respectfully,

Maria Denegri
Chair
Toronto Society of Architects

Megan Torza
Vice-Chair
Toronto Society of Architects

David Sisam
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