

April 9, 2019

Submission to the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee **DI 1.5: On-Street Bikeway Design Guidelines**

Dear Committee Members and Chair:

I'm a professional engineer, with an interest in understanding how things work, and working to make them better. I have deputed to this Committee on two previous occasions, identifying issues and opportunities around making public space safer and more accessible for all.

I have a passion for well designed public spaces that work for ALL users. That, combined with a grandfather who was blind, friends who are blind, a partner with a mobility disorder, and pretty much everybody I graduated with now getting great discounts on TTC -- my interest naturally turned to accessibility issues, and how to fix them.

I would like to now respectfully offer some pedestrian-focused perspectives with the new Cycle Track Guidelines, and a suggestion for your consideration on moving the Guidelines forward with a stronger pedestrian safety focus.

My views on pedestrian safety are very simple, and reflect what has already served us well.

I believe pedestrians of all abilities are safest, and most comfortable, when they have a few simple safeguards to separate them from "faster moving things":

- a cane detectable curb, and a grade separation at roadside, to warn pedestrians that they are about to step into harms way, AND to discourage cyclists from joining them on the sidewalk
- a standard, internationally recognized zebra crossing to guide pedestrians from curb to curb, sidewalk to sidewalk, across all traffic, including bike lanes, and,
- clear, unambiguous street design, signage, traffic lights, and/ or pavement markings to make it very clear how road users are to safely use the roadway; it should be obvious, and passively safe to use this public space, for all road users -- including those with cognitive impairments.

When new cycling infrastructure was being introduced around the city some years back, I noticed that these simple protections were being removed -- or modified with the stated goal of "reducing car/bike interactions" in cycle track designs.

Some of the examples of this that I shared with this Committee on September 28, 2015 were

1. Queen's Quay West, where crosswalks guide pedestrians across transit and vehicle lanes, but NOT across the 20 km/h cycle tracks to the pedestrian area by the waterfront;
2. Also on Queen's Quay West, the standard Stop signs and traffic signals that protect pedestrians from vehicles are generally *replaced with pavement markings that instruct cyclists to Stop, Yield and Watch for Pedestrians* trying to cross the Martin Goodman Trail to get to the pedestrian area. The various messages, and absence of the universally-recognized zebra crosswalk, makes this ambiguous and therefore hazardous.

3. A pedestrian drop-off area on Sherbourne Street at the 410 Sherbourne Medical Clinic, where the cycle track shifts course to force itself between the curb and parking area -- with no indications for cyclists to stop, or even to yield the right of way to pedestrians trying to get to Wheel Trans or private transport.

4. A pilot project on Lower Sherbourne Street, where cycle tracks were raised to sidewalk level, with the curb then providing cyclist protection from vehicles. My observations, as for others, was that this created a situation where: cyclists take to the sidewalk to pass slower cyclists, or to avoid the need to stop for those crossing the bike lane to access transit; and, pedestrians inadvertently wander onto the sidewalk level cycle tracks.

5. Wellesley and Sherbourne Streets, where cycle tracks are locally raised to created an "integrated" transit stop, to facilitate more direct access to buses. While there is textured paving to warn pedestrians of the missing curb/impending bike lane, the fact that pavement markings show only Bike Symbols causes many cyclists to see this as their right of way as opposed to a situation created exclusively for pedestrian safety and convenience. This ambiguity results in pedestrian/cyclist conflicts that I have personally witnessed, and others have reported.

6. Queen's Park West at Hoskin Avenue, where pedestrians entering the Park from Hoskin Avenue step from the sidewalk directly into an unmarked, bidirectional cycling area -- with no indication of how pedestrians are to safely cross this area, save for a very small, poorly located signs imploring cyclists to yield to pedestrians, and the word "SLOW" on one cycle track entrance.

The Committee members shared my concerns, passing a motion to have Staff include these and all other concerns in their then-ongoing Cycle Track Review. And, in October 2015, the Committee passed a similar motion that pedestrian/cycle track safety concerns be addressed in the upcoming Complete Streets Guidelines.

The **good news** is that with extensive input from pedestrian and accessibility advocates, Complete Streets Guidelines DID provide extensive direction on roadway design for pedestrian safety. These included: requirements for a Pedestrian Clearway that is safely and appropriately separated from cycling infrastructure along the length, and at crossings; and, a clear statement that cyclist/pedestrian "mixing areas are to be avoided".

The **bad news** is a much longer list. For example...

1. The new Cycle Track Guidelines DON'T reference Complete Street Guidelines as a Source Document, nor is preserving/improving the current level of pedestrian safety listed as a guiding principle.

Similarly, pedestrian safety impact isn't included in the project post-implementation review phase, other than "public survey". This is a glaring omission. It should be noted that it was only by chance, that the INCREASE in cyclist/pedestrian conflicts on Bloor Street following cycle track implementation was noted by change -- by comparing pre- and post-project video records that captured ALL street movements.

2. Ambiguous cyclist/pedestrian mixing areas similar to Queen's Quay West are allowed in a number of instances (as seen in the Staff presentation package), some of them involving sidewalk level cycle tracks coming two directions AND transferring of cyclists from bidirectional multi-use trails. And all of this happening in an unmarked sidewalk area, where pedestrians and cyclists are supposed to "figure it out".

3. Sidewalk level cycle tracks are permitted, but without clear guidelines as to where this would be appropriate and specifically how separation and pedestrian crossing will be achieved in each instance; and,

4. Stop Lights/Signs for cyclists are in many instances replaced with signage indicating "Cyclists Yield to Pedestrians" -- which wouldn't prevent the hazardous practice of cyclists brushing between pedestrians in crosswalks, or in mixing areas. There are options in other jurisdictions that could improve this, but no indication that has been considered.

Gil Penalosa of 8-80 Cities states the obvious when he says that "If you mix pedestrians and cyclists, pedestrians WILL get injured". NYC records a cyclist/pedestrian collisions, Toronto doesn't – so we have no idea how significant this is. But whatever the current level, increased mixing will ultimately lead to more cyclist/pedestrian conflicts.

Vision Zero also gets it right, requiring that infrastructure designs reduce the potential for road user conflict; and, through clear, simplistic design principles (...my words...), ensure that there remains a high level of inherent road user safety even when road users make mistakes.

And all of this is especially true when the mix includes young and old, and those with vision, hearing, balance, mobility or cognitive challenges -- for whom a startle or brush from a passing cyclist can lead to a tragic fall.

Staff are to be congratulated on creating a very comprehensive, technically exhaustive, 210 page cycling guideline. In fact, it is probably everything a cyclist could ever want.

But I respectfully suggest that what needs to happen now, is a thorough review of this massive document with pedestrian and accessibility advocates. A process that would allow pedestrian safety and comfort issues that I, Walk Toronto and others have identified during the limited Stakeholdering process – but also, allow ALL latent safety issues to be identified, and worked through with guidance from Complete Streets Guidelines.

Respectfully submitted for your consideration.

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