the centre for
active transportation

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June 27, 2019

Infrastructure and Environment Committee

Re: Item 2019.IE6.8, Vision Zero 2.0 – Road Safety Plan Update

Dear Chair Pasternak and Members of the Infrastructure and Environment Committee:

I am the Director of The Centre for Active Transportation (TCAT), a project of the registered charity Clean Air Partnership. TCAT's mission is to advance knowledge and evidence to build support for safe and inclusive streets for walking and cycling.

TCAT has been a strong supporter of Toronto's Vision Zero Road Safety Plan since it was adopted in 2016 and is a member of the City's Vision Zero working group. We are grateful for the dedication of City staff and Council alike who are committed to work toward the goal of eliminating serious injury and fatalities on Toronto's roads. I would like to thank City staff for their excellent work in the production of the Vision Zero 2.0 Road Safety Plan Update.

Yet none of us should be satisfied with the pace that we are moving to stop the carnage on our streets. Just yesterday a woman walking across a Toronto street lost her life, taking the death toll to 25 people killed by cars on Toronto's streets so far this year, the majority of which are people walking or cycling. Also yesterday an 11-year-old boy riding his bike was struck and taken to the hospital with life-threatening injuries. Each and every day on the streets of Toronto there are violent and preventable injuries and deaths as a result of traffic collisions. We know how to build streets that save lives and prevent serious injuries. We need to get on with doing what we know we need to do.

Every four years, since 2006, TCAT, in partnership with dozens of other road safety partners, develops a survey of council and mayoral candidates prior to Toronto's municipal elections. In 2018, TCAT's election survey, called #BuildTheVisionTO, was focused on accelerating Toronto's Vision Zero Road Safety Plan. We asked candidates to commit to 15 priorities for building streets where people of all ages and abilities can get around actively, sustainably and safely.

Over half of the candidates who were subsequently elected completed our survey and demonstrated overwhelming support for the priorities we identified, many of which are reflected in the updated Vision Zero 2.0 Plan Update, including lowering speed limits,

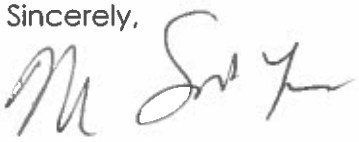
improving road design, building a connected grid of bike lanes in every ward, building sidewalks on every street, installing controlled crossings at all TTC stops, streamlining the traffic calming process, and increasing the use of automated traffic enforcement safety cameras.

While we support all of the recommendations put forward by the General Manager, Transportation Services, and the General Manager, Solid Waste Management Services, we would like to highlight the following:

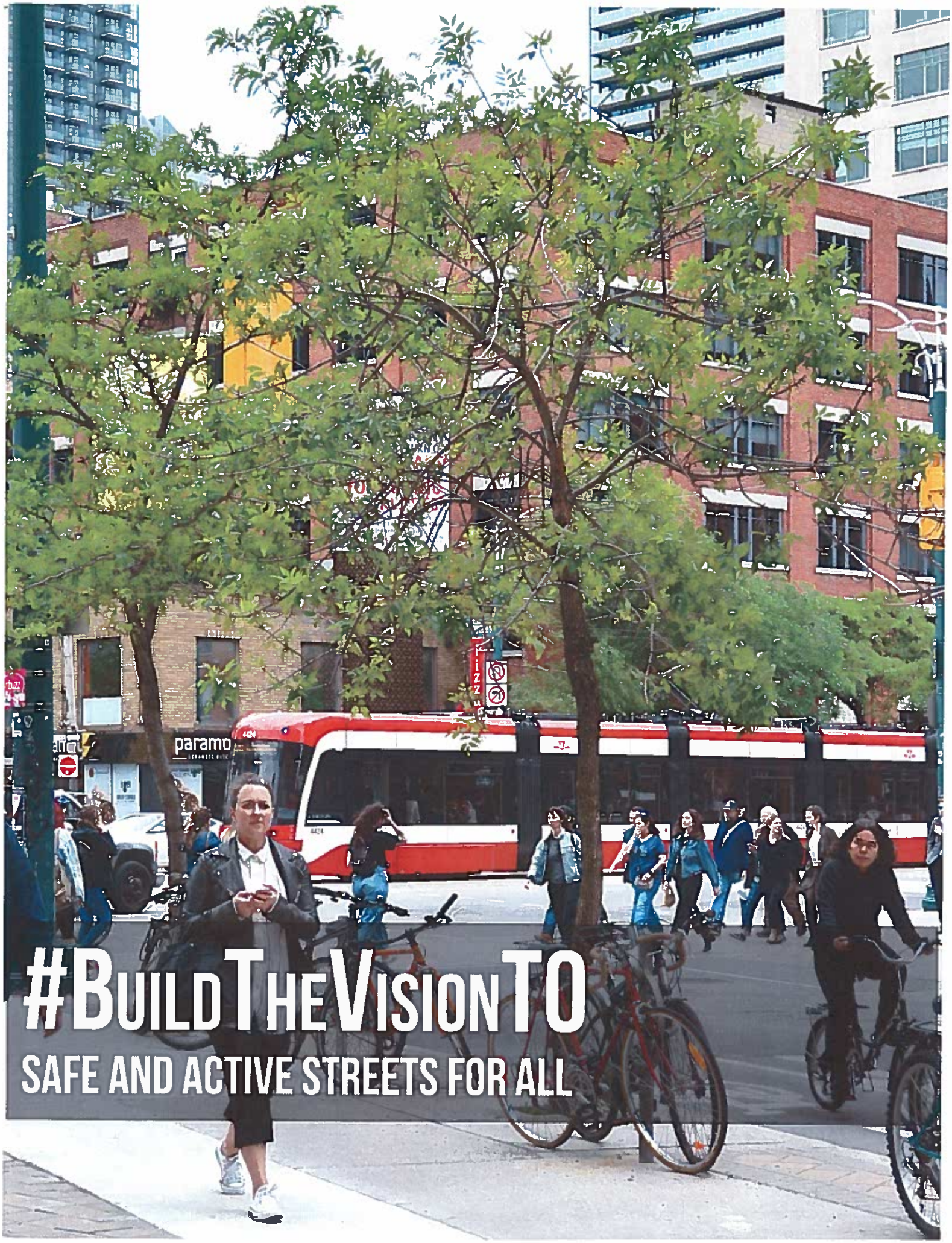
1. The proposed speed management strategy is multi-faceted, which is important and the overall approach makes good sense. While we recognize the rationale behind only reducing speed limits in certain areas to start, we strongly encourage the City to consider this as a phased approach and to move toward widespread adoption of a default speed for arterials of 40 km/hr and 30 km/hr for local roads. As the staff report indicates, the impact of speed on collision outcome is dramatic. At 50 km/hr a person hit by a car has an 85% likelihood of being killed, compared to a 30% chance if the driver is operating their car at 40 km/hr or 10% at 30 km/hr.
2. Road design improvements are one of the most effective ways to reduce speed. While we acknowledge that permanent road design changes can't happen overnight, this plan update proposes a program for implementing interim geometric modifications in advance of planned permanent modifications through the use of paint, bollards and other temporary features. This is an extremely important strategy that should be prioritized for improving the safety of people walking and cycling. Cost-effective and easy to install, these temporary features will not only save lives sooner but they provide a fantastic way to try out a design before it's made permanent as in the very successful pilot bike lane projects on Bloor, Richmond and Adelaide.
3. We fully support delegating authority to staff to install missing sidewalks during reconstruction. This is an important step to expedite this basic infrastructure required to keep pedestrians safe. Sidewalks are an essential piece of the City's transportation infrastructure that save lives.
4. The installation of pedestrian and bicycle head-start signals (aka leading pedestrian and bicycle intervals) are a welcome and important improvement. We note in the jurisdictional review of Vision Zero cities that Toronto is in the minority for not already implementing this important safety measure for bikes.
5. The introduction of safety features added to large vehicles in the City's fleet, such as side guards and sensors, is most welcome and long overdue. These life-saving solutions have existed for many years and have been implemented successfully in other jurisdictions. Collisions involving heavy trucks lead to many fatalities and serious injuries of pedestrians and cyclists. From 2007 to 2017 there were 243 serious collisions involving trucks in Toronto, leaving 61 dead, the majority pedestrians and cyclists. In the UK cycling fatalities resulting from collisions with the side of trucks were reduced by 61% after the introduction of side guards.
6. We support focusing on solutions to reduce collisions when pedestrians are crossing the street mid-block. However, we do not support the elimination of TTC stops. We support the recommendation put forward by Walk Toronto that the number of TTC stops should not be reduced and that TTC stops should have a controlled crossing in the immediate vicinity. In January 2018, a 21-year-old student was killed trying to cross from a TTC bus stop on Steels Ave. E., 300 metres away from the closest signalized intersection, with no sidewalk. Inaccessible bus stops far from crossings and with no adjacent sidewalks are not uncommon in several parts of the city, including near schools. Every TTC stop needs a safe way for people to cross the street.

Overall, we believe the City's Vision Zero 2.0 Plan Update and its set of more extensive, more proactive and more targeted initiatives is on the right track and will result in safer streets. We hope the Committee will adopt the recommendations within the Plan Update, and that City Council will do everything it can to move forward more quickly and boldly in order to achieve no loss of life as a result of traffic collisions.

Sincerely,



Nancy Smith Lea
Director, The Centre for Active Transportation
Clean Air Partnership



#BUILD THE VISION TO

SAFE AND ACTIVE STREETS FOR ALL

#BUILDTHEVISIONTO

SAFE AND ACTIVE STREETS FOR ALL

Toronto's population is growing and changing, and it's time our streets did too. We have never had more people walking, cycling, and using transit in our city than we have today.

Our streets account for over 25% of Toronto's public space. Like our parks and plazas, our streets belong to all of us. For too long they have been measured using one priority - the movement of cars. To build a prosperous, healthy and equitable city we need to break free of this thinking and build safe and active streets that work for everyone.

Streets have many roles to play in our city. They are conduits for the movement of people and goods, they are the lifeblood of thriving local businesses, they are places for physical activity and social engagement, but most of all they need to be safe and accessible places for Torontonians of all ages and abilities.

Unfortunately, when it comes to safety, our streets are failing. Toronto's streets are "in crisis," a description used by our Mayor and many other civic leaders.

In July 2016, Toronto City Council approved the Vision Zero Road Safety Plan, a five-year plan to eliminate traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries on Toronto's streets. While a laudable goal, Vision Zero is nowhere close to being achieved.

In 2017, the first year of implementation of the Vision Zero Road Safety Plan, 40 vulnerable road users (people on foot and bicycle) died on our streets, only four fewer than the 44 that were killed in 2016. This year (2018) Toronto has seen a surge in deaths of vulnerable road users. The City is on pace to have one of its deadliest years ever.

Each and every one of these deaths was preventable. We know the proven solutions now. We know how to build streets that are safe and accessible - streets that can save lives.

We need the next term of Council to step up and take immediate action.

We have identified 15 priority actions within 7 themes to improve road safety, increase physical activity, and get Toronto moving to build safe and active streets for all.

tcat toronto centre for active transportation

Clean Air Partnership

880 cities

Cycle Toronto

Friends and Families for Safe Streets

walk toronto

Front image: Richmond Street West at Spadina Avenue
Photo Credit: Jiya Benni

Moving At Human Speed

01 Implement a city-wide default speed limit of 30 km/h on all residential streets and 40 km/h on all arterial and collector roads

Speed kills: A pedestrian struck by a vehicle travelling 50 km/h is five times more likely to die than if they are hit at 30 km/h. Bill 65, the Safer School Zones Act, passed in 2017, enables municipalities to create Community Safety Zones with blanket default speeds lower than the current default of 50 km/h. Implementing lower city-wide default speed limits is a critical component in preventing traffic fatalities. In June 2018, the Public Works & Infrastructure Committee adopted a staff report to designate all K-8 schools as Community Safety Zones. While an important first step, every Torontonian is at risk on streets across the city where excessive motor vehicle speed is permitted. Implementing lower city-wide default speed limits is a critical component in preventing traffic fatalities. We need to move Toronto closer to a city-wide speed limit of 30 km/h on all streets other than expressways.

A neighbourhood street with a speed limit of 30 km/h
Photo Credit: Katie Wittmann

02 Streamline the traffic calming process in Toronto

Traffic calming is the deliberate slowing of traffic on residential streets by making physical changes such as adding speed humps or narrowing lanes. Traffic calming has been proven to slow traffic and reduce collisions, yet the process in Toronto is time-consuming and confusing. In May 2018, City Council delegated to Community Councils the authority to waive onerous petition and polling requirements, but there remain many barriers to implementation, including restrictive technical warrants and a complaints-driven process. Toronto needs to continue to reform and streamline its traffic calming process.

A traffic calmed street with curb extensions
Photo Credit: Katie Wittmann

03 Implement traffic calming in all elementary school zones by 2022

Pedestrian injuries are one of the leading causes of injury related deaths for children. In June 2018, the Public Works & Infrastructure Committee adopted a staff report to designate safety zones around all elementary schools. Fines will be increased, the zones will be eligible for safety cameras (pending provincial approval), and traffic calming will be considered site-by-site. While an important first step, signage has little effect on driver behaviour. Speed humps, bulb-outs, raised crosswalks, and narrowing lanes have been proven to reduce collision rates and save lives. We need to build these solutions starting now to make the entire city safe for walking to school.

Children using a crosswalk on the way to school
Photo Credit: Katie Wittmann

SIDEWALKS FOR EVERYONE

04 BUILD SIDEWALKS ON EVERY STREET BEING RECONSTRUCTED

Sidewalks are an essential piece of the City's transportation infrastructure, providing accessibility and safety for all, including children, seniors, and people with disabilities. But nearly 25% of all local streets in Toronto don't have a sidewalk and many more only have a sidewalk on one side of the street. Where sidewalks are missing, people have no alternative but to walk on the roadway or on unimproved road shoulders. The City's road classification criteria recommends a sidewalk on at least one side of all local roads. Road reconstruction presents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to add a missing sidewalk and is the most cost-effective and efficient approach to doing so. The City's Disability, Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee endorsed this approach for accessibility, safety and walkability reasons. But local councillors frequently oppose adding sidewalks and this results in decisions that deviate from City policy. Every street in Toronto needs a sidewalk.

Children walking on a street without sidewalks
Photo Credit: City of Toronto

05 ENSURE SIDEWALKS HAVE A MINIMUM 2.1 METRE PEDESTRIAN CLEARWAY ON ALL ARTERIAL AND COLLECTOR ROADS

Sidewalks that are sufficiently wide allow people to walk as their primary means of transportation, in turn reducing vehicular congestion. But many of Toronto's sidewalks are too narrow for the large volume of people that use them. Sidewalks should be open and inviting to all, regardless of age or ability. Sidewalks must accommodate people that are moving at different speeds, that are stationary, as well as people who use different kinds of mobility devices. Toronto's Complete Streets guidelines set a minimum clear space on sidewalks of 2.1 metres to provide a safe, universally accessible path. This minimum width allows one person to pass two people walking together, and space for two wheelchairs to pass. Wider, unobstructed sidewalks benefit everyone.

A senior navigating a crowded sidewalk with wheelchair
Photo Credit: 8 80 Cities

BUILD THE GRID: A VIBRANT CYCLING CITY FOR ALL

06 BUILD PROTECTED BIKE LANES ON MAIN STREETS, INCLUDING THE MAJOR CORRIDORS IN THE CYCLING NETWORK PLAN

According to a 2018 Nanos poll, 11 percent of people in Toronto ride a bike every day and two-thirds of Torontonians would ride more if there was more and better infrastructure in their community. City Council adopted a city-wide 10 Year Cycling Network Plan in 2016 and it will be updated in early 2019. While the Plan included Bloor Street, Yonge Street, and Danforth Avenue as critical elements to connect the network, studies for Danforth, and Yonge St, and other major corridors were put on hold and subsequently removed from the implementation plan by Council. Torontonians across the city need a network of safe, protected bike lanes.

Protected bike lanes on Adelaide St. W.
Photo Credit: John Greenfield

07 BUILD SAFE, CONNECTED ROUTES IN EVERY WARD

In addition to main streets, Toronto's diverse neighbourhoods need safe cycling infrastructure that connects them to schools, shopping, and other destinations. Close to half of trips made in Toronto are under 5 kilometres, making them ideal for cycling if safe, connected routes are in place. Torontonians need safe cycling infrastructure across the entire city, connected to places they need to go, as identified in the 10-Year Cycling Network Plan and Vision Zero Road Safety Plan.

Traffic calming on Yukon Street bikeway in Vancouver
Photo Credit: Dylan Passmore

08 ACCELERATE THE CYCLING NETWORK PLAN TO BE BUILT IN THE NEXT FOUR YEARS

An Angus Reid Forum poll shows that 86% of Torontonians support a safe cycling network. The City is currently studying the cost of accelerating the Cycling Network Plan to be built by 2022 i.e installing 335 kilometres of on-street protected bike lanes and 190 kilometres of bike boulevards in six years. For comparison, New York City installed 643 kms (400 miles) of bike lanes in six years. We estimate that a $25 million annual capital budget could make the 2022 target a reality. This could be achieved from 2019 forward with the City Council-approved commitment of $16 million per year plus $8 million already committed to Toronto by the Province. Speeding up implementation of the Cycling Network Plan will save lives and prevent life-altering injuries.

10 Year Cycling Network Plan
Source: City of Toronto

Crossing With Confidence

09 Increase the use of automated traffic enforcement safety cameras

Red light cameras, first introduced in Toronto in 2000, have been reported by the City of Toronto to reduce instances of crashes and injury by up to 60% in the intersections where they've been implemented. Toronto's Vision Zero Road Safety Plan increases the number of safety cameras at red lights from 77 to 153 by 2021. The goal of the plan, as adopted by Council, is to "reduce the number of road fatalities and serious injuries **to zero** as part of the five-year Road Safety Plan." Accelerating the implementation of automated safety cameras would save lives.

Cars blocking the crosswalk at Yonge and Dundas
Photo Credit: Jiya Benni

10 Prioritize the safety of vulnerable road users by outlawing motor vehicle right turns on red

Drivers who make a right turn on a red light without coming to a complete stop first, as established in the Highway Traffic Act, create a particularly dangerous environment for vulnerable road users, especially people with visual impairments, children and seniors. As drivers look left for a gap in traffic, they are more likely to strike a pedestrian or bicyclist crossing on their right. The third most common type of collision is when a motor vehicle turns right while the pedestrian was crossing with the right of way at intersection: 13% of pedestrian injuries or fatalities were the result of right-turning vehicles. Other large cities in North America such as New York, Montreal and Mexico City have implemented a city-wide ban on right turns on red. Prohibiting turning right on red in Toronto would make intersections safer for pedestrians.

A senior crossing the street using a mobility device
Photo Credit: 8 80 Cities

11 Implement controlled crossings at all bus and streetcar stops

In some parts of Toronto, the distance between traffic signals is 1 km or more. Many important destinations, such as transit stops, are midway between traffic lights requiring a detour of 15 minutes or more on foot to access a safe crossing point. In January 2018, a 21-year-old student was killed at such a location as she was trying to cross from a TTC bus stop on Steeles Ave. E., 300 metres away from the closest signalized intersection, with no sidewalk. Inaccessible bus stops far from crossings and with no adjacent sidewalks are not uncommon in several parts of the city, including near schools. Every TTC stop needs a safe way for people to cross the street.

A TTC stop with no safe crossing on Steeles Avenue.
Source: Google Maps

COMPLETE STREETS THE DEFAULT

12 CREATE AN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY FOR TORONTO'S COMPLETE STREETS GUIDELINES

In August 2014, Toronto City Council adopted a Complete Streets policy within its amended Official Plan and in January 2017, Toronto's Complete Streets Guidelines were released. These guidelines are an excellent resource to ensure that the needs of all road users of all ages and abilities are reflected in street design. However, the City does not have dedicated staff responsible for developing an implementation plan. Toronto needs a Complete Streets implementation strategy, including training for staff and contractors involved in this new approach to street design

Richmond Street West at Spadina Avenue
Photo Credit: Jiya Benni

13 SUPPORT THE TRANSFORM YONGE OPTION FOR YONGE STREET BETWEEN SHEPPARD AND FINCH AVENUES

The population density between Finch and Sheppard Avenues has become comparable to Toronto's downtown core, resulting in high volumes of people moving by all modes. North York Centre continues to grow and requires a multi-modal Complete Street that will accommodate increasing numbers of pedestrians and cyclists, yet still allow for the efficient movement of vehicles. In the Reimagining Yonge environmental assessment study, City staff recommended the "Transform Yonge" option that would reduce six vehicular lanes to four, install bike lanes, and increase sidewalk widths. In March 2018, City Council deferred consideration of the Reimagining Yonge staff report to a later date. By adopting the "Transform Yonge" option, Council would make Yonge Street safer and more accessible for vulnerable road users and provide active transportation options that will help generate significant health, economic and other benefits.

A rendering of Yonge Street as proposed in Transform Yonge with wider sidewalks and reduced number of vehicular lanes
Photo Credit: City of Toronto

Zero Traffic Deaths

14 Match New York City's per-capita funding for Toronto's Road Safety Plan

The City of Toronto has committed $80.3 million over five years, or $6 per capita per year, to its Vision Zero Road Safety Plan (2016-2021). New York City has committed $1.3 billion over four years (2017-2021) to its Vision Zero capital budget, or $38 per capita per year. In 2017, New York experienced its fourth consecutive year of declining traffic fatalities (the fewest number of lives lost since 1910) while Toronto's number of deaths is on the rise. Toronto needs to move more quickly to implement the Vision Zero Road Safety Plan.

A vigil for victims of road violence in Toronto
Photo Credit: Jun Nogami

Streets For People

15 Support and fund a monthly Open Streets Toronto program from May to September in 2019 and beyond

Open Streets are programs that temporarily open streets to people by closing them to cars for people to walk, bike and be physically active. Since 2014, Open Streets Toronto has collaborated with the City of Toronto, community organizations and sponsors, to deliver a grassroots program, which opens a 6 km stretch of Yonge and Bloor Streets to people for 2-3 Sunday mornings per year. The most successful international examples have significant funding from their City governments and are regularly occurring programs. The City of Toronto has contributed only about 8% of the total program budget in 2017 (the cost of one open street is $150,000). A regularly occurring Open Streets program, with sustainable funding from the City would provide economic, health, and environmental benefits on an underused asset - our streets.

Open Streets program in Toronto
Photo Credit: 8 80 Cities