

CultureLink's Bike to School Project
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To:

Mayor of Toronto John Tory
Deputy Mayors
City Councillors

Cc:

Trustees and Director of Education, Toronto District School Board
Trustees and Director of Education, Toronto Catholic District School Board
Membres du Conseil et Directeur de l'éducation, Conseil scolaire Viamonde
Membres du Conseil et Directeur de l'éducation, Conseil scolaire catholique Monavenir

Dear Mayor Tory, Deputy Mayors and City Councillors,

CultureLink's Bike to School Project urges you to vote yes on Item CC21.20 Cycling Network Plan Installations: Bloor West Bikeway Extension & ActiveTO Projects.

The protected cycling infrastructure projects in this item are essential for the safety of Toronto students, schools and families.

Active school travel—biking, walking and rolling to school—can have amazing benefits for school communities. It creates healthier students. It reduces pollution in the air we breathe. It breeds awareness of the global climate crisis in the citizens and leaders of tomorrow. It makes school zones safer and communities healthier.

However, we have a severe problem: over the last generation, the incidence of students biking, walking and rolling to school has fallen sharply, while the rate of students being driven to school by car has increased. This has contributed to a terrible deficit in physical activity among our children. It has made our school zones congested, polluted and dangerous. It has burdened school administrators with managing traffic, taking time and capacity away from our children's education.

There is a solution to this problem. We can increase active school travel among our students, but only if we commit to a comprehensive approach, including education, engineering and programming.

The most important aspect of any solution is redesigning the streets near our schools to be safer and the most important streets to redesign are the most dangerous ones: major arterials.

The historic vote tomorrow presents you—the decision-makers of our city—the opportunity to make several major arterial streets safer, thereby improving the lives of tens of thousands of students. Along the Bloor St W corridor, 27 schools sit within a few blocks of that major arterial, schools to which 14,000 students travel twice a day, every weekday. Along Danforth Ave, your impact will be even greater: 33 schools and 19,000 students. Keep in mind that it is illegal in the City of Toronto for anyone age 14 and older to bike on the sidewalk, forcing our high school students to ride on dangerous thoroughfares without protected space for active transportation.

Please vote yes on item CC21.20 tomorrow. Please take this first step. Please make the lives of tens of thousands of Toronto students, schools and families safer, healthier and greener.

Then please think about the hundreds of thousands of other Toronto students, schools and families, whose lives and experiences are not being addressed by the projects in item CC21.20, people who live in places like York, Midtown, central North York, east Scarborough and north, central and south Etobicoke. Please think about how these children will have to continue to navigate dangerous major arterial roads every day, twice a day. Then please begin planning safe routes to school for them, safe routes that should have been included in this agenda item, streets like:

- Yonge St
- Kipling Ave or Martin Grove Ave
- Lawrence Ave
- Keele St or Jane St
- Don Mills Rd
- Victoria Park Ave and/or Warden Ave
- Sheppard Ave
- Kingston Rd

All of these routes were included in the Bike Plan you passed last fall. Then please fast track their design, approval and implementation.

Let's take this unprecedented step toward making Toronto neighbourhoods safe for our youngest citizens to reap the benefits of biking, walking and rolling for transportation. Then let's keep working to bring these benefits to all our neighbourhoods and all our children.

Sincerely,

Sam Perry (he/him)

Project Worker, Bike to School Project, Sustainable Communities

CultureLink Settlement and Community Services

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***CultureLink Settlement and Community Services** has more than 30 years' experience developing and delivering services to meet the needs of diverse communities, and is an official partner of Toronto's public and Catholic school boards. Our team of more than 70 staff members, speaking more than 30 languages, is dedicated, knowledgeable, and multicultural. Our Bike to School Project works directly with students, teachers and parents to nurture a bike culture in schools across Toronto. Since 2013 our cycling education programming has reached over 45,000 students and our annual Bike to School Week event has engaged over 130,000.*