



To: Mayor Tory and Members of Toronto Council
From: Walk Toronto Steering Committee
Date: July 27, 2020
Re: IE14.17 - Mobility Greenway

SUMMARY

Walk Toronto supports the recommendations of the Infrastructure and Environment Committee in respect to the Mobility Greenway proposal for parts of Finch Ave. W., Jane St., Kipling Ave., and Albion Rd. This initiative serves the traditional needs of pedestrians in several neighbourhood improvement areas, and will also help Toronto come to terms with two critical challenges that grip the city: recovery and rebuild from COVID-19, and Black Lives Matter. The Mobility Greenway has the potential to serve as a new model which addresses the needs of Toronto's suburbs in innovative and imaginative ways that go far beyond the status quo.

PEDESTRIAN ISSUES

At present, cycling and e-scooter use are commonplace on the sidewalks of the four streets for which the Mobility Greenway is proposed to be built. Compared to staff's standard designs for the LRT-related reconstruction of Finch Ave., the generous width and cutting edge design of the greenway should more successfully draw bicycles and e-scooters away from sidewalks, increasing safety for pedestrians. The greenway's robust separation of the sidewalk from vehicular travel lanes will also be extremely effective in preventing incursions by vehicles onto the sidewalk.

We are pleased that the Mobility Greenway is intended to be used by a broad range of non-vehicular devices. These include wheelchairs, the users of which may choose to travel on the sidewalk (best for those wheeling at moderate speeds) or the greenway lane (an exciting option for power wheelchair users who want to go at full speed).

COVID-19

Current COVID-19 case levels are extremely high in the northwest part of Toronto. This is not acceptable. So far, most of the mobility initiatives undertaken by ActiveTO have not been concentrated in the areas most strongly affected by COVID-19, and the Mobility Greenway gives planners an opportunity to remedy that situation. The Finch segment is subject to the timeframe of the LRT construction, but we should be planning in the long-term since the

predictions of epidemiologists are uncertain. COVID-19 may not be definitively eliminated in the next year or two; instead, it could become part of the permanent disease landscape, much like influenza. In any case, COVID-19 is likely to be followed by other pandemics and epidemics in the future. **Road design that promotes adequate physical distancing should therefore be a new requirement, and we feel that the expansive greenway prototype will accomplish this with greater success than other types of facilities.**

Research is showing that air quality and pollution levels affect the virulence of COVID-19 infections. The greenway design incorporates generous plantings, greenery and swales, which will help to clean the air breathed by active transportation users. Local air quality is also improved because one of the goals of the Mobility Greenway is to stimulate the delivery of goods by zero-emission wheeled devices rather than by heavily polluting trucks (which are especially numerous on Finch Ave.).

We are confident that the Mobility Greenway proposal is conducive to fulfilling the strategies and recommendations related to the Toronto's Recovery and Rebuild efforts and guiding policies.

BLACK LIVES MATTER

The greenway is centred in an area that has one of Toronto's highest concentrations of people of colour. According to the 2016 census, visible minorities comprise 74% of the total population of Ward 7, Humber River-Black Creek (compared to 51% for all Toronto). 22.8% of the residents are Black (compared to 8.9% for all Toronto). Driving rates are amongst the lowest in Toronto's suburbs. Many residents rely on transit or walking, and must travel a long distance to get to retail stores.

The Mobility Greenway proposal to incubate small businesses that use electric-assist wheeled devices on the greenway to make local deliveries of goods will stimulate entrepreneurship in several neighbourhood improvement areas. This micro-delivery model will also greatly benefit pedestrians who may not be able to afford a car, or have no desire to own one. Many are presently transporting unwieldy loads by hand or in bundle-buggies from stores to their residence. **In short, the Mobility Greenway will promote both economic and transportation equity in an environmentally responsible manner.**

Yours truly,

Michael Black
On behalf of the Walk Toronto steering committee