



June 22, 2020

Executive Committee
10th floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON
M5H 2N2

RE : EX14.10 - Open Data - Cycling and Infrastructure Programs - Bike Share Ridership

Mayor Tory & Members of the Executive Committee :

More than two-years ago, on January 31, 2018 – Toronto City Council adopted **Toronto’s Open Data Master Plan** ([EX30.12](#)) – it was an impressive 35-page document of commitments to greater innovation and transparency at the City of Toronto. At that time, community stakeholders highlighted some of the key bureaucratic-concerns that your own city IT staff had detailed in their report –

- Open Data is not an official program which compromises permanency, continuity, and consistent access to funds (pg.21).
- Publishing open data is not a requirement and the City’s Open Data Policy does not include “Open by Default” (pg.21).
- The City needs to remove organizational cultural barriers to open data (pg.24).
- Open data is not a priority at all levels of the organization (pg.24).

Reading the frankly [farcical letter](#) submitted by Robin Oliphant, Acting President, Toronto Parking Authority on [January 28, 2020](#) about the myriad reasons why they apparently can’t release timely Open Data on BikeShareTO trip details only appears to highlight the TPA’s continued dysfunction on any attempt to bring meaningful Open Data and transparency to their day-to-day operations.

Last year’s July 2019 expansion of BikeShareTO add a total of 1,250 new bicycles, 105 stations and new 2,292 docking points to the Bike Share Toronto network. Based on the TPA’s own plan to Trip-Level Open Data --- none of the hundreds of thousands of new trips generated by those city budget expenditures in mid-2019 will be available able as Open Data until **January 2021**.

This year’s approved 2020 expansion of BikeShareTO ([PA13.1](#)) will add 1,850 new bicycles, 160 stations and 3,615 docking points – and expand into new wards of the City. The TPA’s current data-release process would mean that trip-level data from your 2020 expansion would not be available as Open Data until **early in 2022**. In a time of post-COVID recovery and ActiveTO – an 18+ month delay in Bike Share trip-data being made public is entirely unacceptable.

The City is rightfully spending millions to expand and enable the growing BikeShareTO network – and enable active-transportation across Toronto. The City is also more than 2-years into it’s Open Data

Master Plan (2018-2022). It is long past time for Council to connect these two City commitments together in a meaningful way.

Let me also be clear, this problem does not rest upon your CTO or his Open Data team – as Toronto City Council has given them never provided them with any tools or enforcement-methods to ensure that the City’s dozens of departments, boards, agencies and commission actually comply with the stated intent of your Open Data Master Plan. The Open Data team have no carrot, they have no stick – and can be essentially told to “go away” by City agency like the TPA.

The responsibility for sharing this BikeShareTO data in a timely and recurring process rests solely upon the leadership of the Toronto Parking Authority. Anonymized Trip-Level Open Data details from BikeShareTO are not Nuclear Launch-Codes, and the “but privacy” excuses from Toronto Parking Authority are the usual bafflegab designed to scare-off Councillors who are asking for any kind of Open Data from TPA.

This kind of trip-level data is released on a regular basis by CitiBikeNYC ([Link](#)) and Vancouver’s MOBI ([Link](#)) bikeshare program – and trip-level data for BikeShareTO was released in a more timely-process when BIXI ran the program in Toronto during it’s early days (pre-2014). Providing this data-extraction and cleanse process for BikeShareTO trip-level data is literally a task for a technically-competent summer student, and there is no reason why TPA should not be able to meet the NYC and Vancouver examples by Q4 of 2020.

We would encourage the Mayor and Executive Committee to give clear direction to TPA to meet those NYC and Vancouver standards for trip-level data and history on a short time-frame, and also consider giving your CTO and Open Data team some actionable enforcement and compliance powers upon all City divisions and ABCs – so that your 2018 Open Data Master Plan becomes and actionable policy-standard at Toronto City Hall.

As active members of Toronto’s Open Data and City Tech community, we thank you in advance for your assistance in ensuring that the City of Toronto “walks the talk” on it’s Smart-City and Innovation commitments in this term of Council.

With Thanks,



Mark J. Richardson
Chief Technology Officer
Rich Analytics