



Safe streets  
Healthy city  
Vibrant voice

EX17.1.9

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October 21, 2020

Executive Committee  
12th floor, West Tower, City Hall  
100 Queen Street West  
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

**RE: EX17.1 -- The Role of Active Transportation in Toronto's COVID-19 Recovery and Rebuild**

Dear Mayor Tory and Members of the Executive Committee,

On April 29, [Cycle Toronto wrote an open letter](#) to the Toronto Office of Recovery and Rebuild (TORR) stressing that active transportation will be essential to the economic and social recovery of Toronto. We are encouraged that after engaging with numerous stakeholders, TORR has made several recommendations emphasizing the need for much more safe cycling infrastructure.

**We implore the Executive Committee to support the recommendations in this report, especially around transit and active transportation:**

Recommendation #59: **Accelerate or make permanent** crisis response and restart initiatives such as **improved cycling infrastructure and weekend recreational street closures**.

Recommendation #67: Develop a Winter City Plan to **pursue winter solutions for ActiveTO to increase resilience on a year-round basis**.

Recommendation #68: **Build upon and accelerate a network of connected complete communities, including complete streets – for all uses, all ages, all abilities** – as both a preventive health measure and to ensure equitable access, including building on and accelerating the additional cycling routes opened in the pandemic.

**Further we urge the City of Toronto to prioritize as part of the 2021 budget process allocating resources and building capacity to plan, implement, expand, and make permanent the ActiveTO, CafeTO, and RapidTO programs.**

ActiveTO, CafeTO, and RapidTO have been major successes as the city grappled with the pandemic, and the expansion of the cycling network plan in particular is a historic first step to building a more equitable cycling network. We echo stakeholders in the report that “the next major ActiveTO announcement should be about measures in the inner suburbs that experience the greatest long-term stresses of inequality and racism, and that have been the hardest hit by the impacts of COVID-19.”

Following TORR’s recommendations will create an active transportation strategy in the short-term that builds Toronto’s resiliency in the long-term and allow us to:

- 1. Support essential workers and trips to essential businesses** with active transportation corridors along or adjacent to essential destinations such as hospitals, grocery stores, pharmacies, manufacturing, etc.
- 2. Enable sufficient access to outdoor space:** keep parks and public spaces open and provide alternate routes where needed for active transportation and exercise to support physical and mental health.
- 3. Accelerate economic recovery and connect communities** by ensuring that active transportation is part of Toronto’s 2021 economic and social recovery plans. Make it safe and easy for people to walk and cycle to support local businesses particularly on main streets to develop complete communities, or the “15-minute city” where residents can obtain by cycling or walking within a 15-minute travel radius the goods and services they need in their neighbourhood.

Cycling projects have high social, health, and economic benefits. Every \$1 million spent on bicycle infrastructure projects can create 11 jobs – 46% more than car-only projects.<sup>1</sup> Increasing cycling rates will alleviate congestion on our roadway and transit systems. Decreasing vehicle reliance will keep our air cleaner and will keep more people out of our hospitals. Cycling can bring essential workers to their jobs, can bring customers into stores, and will improve our society’s physical and mental health.

### **Now is the time to move forward.**

For too long, Toronto has struggled to build sufficient infrastructure for active transportation. It is time for Toronto to learn from past challenges and position itself for a speedy recovery and a prosperous future.

As the pandemic has continued, many residents, businesses, and community organizers have been vocal about what matters to them. Many continue to express concerns about crowded

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<sup>1</sup> Heidi Garrett-Peltier, [Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure: a National Study of Employment Impacts](#), Amherst: University of Massachusetts, Political Economy Research Institute, 2011.



buses and fear for their safety if people begin choosing to drive rather than take public transit. Yet there are still many barriers to cycling: price and availability make it challenging for everyone, particularly low-income residents, to access and purchase a bicycle. As well, many residents face barriers, particularly racism, that prevent whole participation in the public sphere. Building a more equitable city means ensuring that residents can get around safely, whether that means being safe from harassment, safe from dangerous road conditions, and feeling safe enough to walk or cycle.

Every page of the report makes clear that Toronto cannot revert to the status quo when the pandemic is over. We must create an equitable economy that supports the health of our city and planet. Torontonians deserve a sustainable future that leaves no one behind. We are committed to working with you and others to ensure the COVID-19 recovery includes a sufficiently ambitious active transportation plan for Toronto.

Sincerely,



Michael Longfield

Interim Executive Director  
Cycle Toronto

*Cycle Toronto is a non-profit organization representing 3,000 members that is advocating for Toronto to become a safe, healthy, and vibrant cycling city.*

Cc: Chris Murray, City Manager, City of Toronto  
Barbara Gray, General Manager, City of Toronto Transportation Services  
Mayor John Tory, City of Toronto

