



June 9, 2020

To: Infrastructure and Environment Committee

Re: IE13.3, Authority to Enter Into a Project Delivery Agreement with Waterfront Toronto for the Design of Lake Shore Boulevard East, Don River to Logan

Dear Committee Members,

With regard to the proposed new bridge over the Don River for Lake Shore Boulevard East, Walk Toronto calls on Waterfront Toronto and the City of Toronto to take a completely new approach to building vehicular bridges, one that treats pedestrians as equally important users of bridges.

Traditionally in Toronto, bridges intended for vehicles have treated pedestrians as an afterthought. Sidewalks are narrow and not separated from traffic. The result is that crossing the bridge is an unpleasant ordeal for those on foot. In the winter, after snowfalls, bridges are often almost impassable because snow from the road is plowed onto the sidewalk, leaving barely any space for walking.

As a result, rather than being a connector for walking routes, vehicular bridges are obstacles for those who want to travel on foot. In particular, they are completely inadequate in terms of accessibility for those who use mobility devices or who suffer visual impairments. As well, the potential benefit of beautiful views from bridges for those travelling on foot remains unrealized as there is not enough space to linger, and the unpleasant environment discourages stopping.

Rebuilding the Lake Shore East bridge provides an opportunity to launch a completely different approach to bridge-building where pedestrians are treated as equal to vehicles as users of the bridge. In this approach, the pedestrian travelling space will be comfortably wide, for example, 3 metres wide. It will be separated from vehicular traffic by a solid buffer. There will be lookout points and benches where pedestrians can stop, linger, and enjoy the view. Rather than an obstacle, the bridge will become a connector and a destination in itself.

While the location of the current bridge sees very little pedestrian traffic, that will change. Major new developments will be happening all around this bridge, in the East Harbour and Port Lands areas, which will bring substantial new populations of workers and residents. As well, the Gardiner East connection to the Don Valley Parkway will be moved, creating more space for pedestrians and buildings along the northern side of the Keating Channel, which this bridge will lead to. Finally, the bridge will provide views both up the Don Valley and towards the new mouth of the Don currently being built into the Port Lands, both of which will be destination views.

This new bridge will also, of course, be an opportunity to provide more and safer space for cyclists, too. However, space for cyclists should be in addition to, not instead of, wider spaces for pedestrians.



This is the perfect opportunity to radically re-think the way we approach bridge-building in Toronto. From now on, even bridges intended for motor vehicles should also, equally, be bridges intended to attract and encourage walking.

Dylan Reid

On behalf of Walk Toronto