



July 8, 2020

Infrastructure and Environment Committee
City of Toronto

Re: Support for protected bike lanes on Dundas Street East and ActiveTO bike lane expansion on same street, 2020.IE14.12 on July 9, 2020 Infrastructure and Environment Committee

Dear Councillor Colle, Councillor Layton, Councillor McKelvie, Councillor Denzil Minnan-Wong, Councillor Pasternak, and Councillor Peruzza,

We are members of 32 Spokes, a local bike advocacy group in Ward 19. We love biking. We care about safe streets and the safety of our communities. We think separated bike lanes are the right direction for the city to move in.

We support the Dundas Street East protected bike lane installed from Broadview and Sackville as a result of ActiveTO and we ask the committee to support making this permanent. We agree with the recommendations in the update report and **we support making Dundas Street East a fully protected bike lane** from Broadview to Kingston Road. We kindly ask that you support these ideas as well.

During the pandemic, we have seen how the installation of protected bike lanes, such as on Dundas Street East (Sackville to Broadview), University Avenue, Bloor Street East, helps make our public spaces, our roads, safer for everyone including more vulnerable road users. The connections being made to other routes in the city take the guesswork out of navigating our public spaces and make it more convenient for those choosing active transportation modes. These connections with protection make for a far less stressful biking experience especially as people are trying biking for the first time as a result of the pandemic. We see how safer, protected routes encourage more people to bike and this is exactly the direction we should be moving in. This is a win-win for all road users.

We are confident any concerns brought forward from the community can result in the bike lanes remaining as we work towards road design that works for all road users but especially the more vulnerable users.

We are very impressed with how adding a protected bike lane from Sackville to Broadview has completely changed the streetscape for the better especially as it connects with other bike lanes and provides a wider, easier-to-navigate space with clear demarcations as to where certain traffic should be. We ourselves are biking with confidence over the Dundas Street bridge, something that was only previously done with incredible anxiety and stress, or complete avoidance. The conditions before were frankly dangerous and sent a message that people on bikes “do not belong here”. We know that our streets belong to people so the complete opposite message is true and road design should reflect this. We consider ourselves experienced cyclists so we can only imagine how harrowing it was for new cyclists to experience this stretch as it was before. With the new separated, protected bike lane, we now feel secure and at ease travelling through or to our destinations and it’s a joy to bike here. We see families with children biking with confidence as they are now moving around more safely in this area than before. We believe this ease of use is a key feeling to encourage others towards active transportation and so we would love to see this protection applied to the entire Dundas Street East route.

We have included additional comments from some of our members regarding their personal experience in just this small stretch of road (included after signature).

We appreciate the update on improvements to the Dundas Street East bike lanes and support the recommendations for protected bike lanes here. We ask for the committee to support further improvements through protection and to keep the current expansion to Sackville as we feel it has truly changed the streetscape for the better.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Mackey
On behalf of 32 Spokes

Additional comments on Dundas Street East bike lanes from 32 Spokes members

From Carol Olson, 32 Spokes Member and Ward 19 resident:

I was thrilled to ride over the Don Valley in the new protected bike lane on Dundas for the first time recently. I felt safe and really appreciated the width of the lanes. I've always dreaded the break in the network between River and Broadview in both directions and have had a number of close calls there over the years, mostly with cars passing too close and going too fast. There were lots of other people biking on Dundas and it was such a relief to know that we all have that safe crossing now. We need the physical protection here because of the open design of the street. It is key to completing the actual network in this section, and it would be fantastic if the protected lanes could continue to Sherbourne for this reason.

On another recent visit I had a number of conversations with people using the lanes. They all said they really like them, especially how wide they are. Everyone said they felt safer. One woman I spoke to likes the width because she doesn't have to worry about passing other cyclists too close. She said she's a driver too so has mixed feelings. When she asked me how I felt about the lanes, I explained that I liked the clarity when driving, and she agreed with that. Another person I spoke to, who drives as well as a cycles, said he thinks it makes the road safer. He was concerned about traffic in the winter. A couple on their way to the Leslie Street spit appreciated the new connection to their route. One said they felt safer, and the other commented on the problem of drivers passing streetcars on the right and thinks it's great that's no longer an issue. Another person who lives on Sumach commented on the reduction of speeding along Dundas, remembering the young woman who was killed there in June, 2019. He was concerned that the bike lanes might be only temporary, and wanted to see them permanent.

One of my favourite moments was seeing a couple cycling westbound side by side and chatting, with their daughter in a child seat on the man's bike. It was so nice to see that there was enough room for them to ride side by side so comfortably!

Overall, traffic seemed to flow well. I saw a backup of cars a couple of times, but they all seem to easily get through the next light, so the delay didn't seem unreasonable to me. Everything was visibly calmer and more orderly. I got the sense that all road users knew where to be. I felt and observed this especially on the bridge. It seemed to give pedestrians greater confidence negotiating the on-ramp to the DVP too.

From Dave Edwards, 32 Spokes member and Ward 14 resident:

For years the Dundas East bridge over the DVP has been a barrier to safe cycling. Whether I was commuting home from work in the core or heading out from the east end to visit friends, a calculation would have to be made. The most direct route from the east would usually entail using the somewhat safe Dundas bike lane, and then a combination of River and Shuter. However, this would mean I have to make a decision of whether or not I wanted to risk the DVP crossing after the "Bike Lane Ends" sign at Broadview. Traffic here would inevitably pick up speed, drivers would jostle into position to get around streetcars and quickly accelerate to get to the DVP ramp. What little protection the painted lanes provided was replaced by sharrows at the most dangerous point of the trip. Even as a very experienced cyclist I would often just grit my teeth and "hope" I make it across with only a few close calls and no collisions. Crossing the bridge either way would also mean having to navigate the two car dealerships who use Dundas as their own personal parking lots, with cars idling in the right lanes and many vehicles pulling in and out in haphazard fashion. I would rarely use this route at night, and forget doing that crossing in bad weather! The alternative would be to go far out of my way to cross at Gerrard, however that of course meant leaving the Dundas bike lane. I could also add many minutes to my trip and travel all the way to the Martin Goodman Trail, but when I am commuting to and from work, losing that much time was not attractive. Often times, if conditions were not highly favourable I would simply give up on the thought of cycling through that area and either drive or take transit.

The difference in this route since the #ActiveTO bike lane was installed is absolutely striking. The sense of relief I feel when cycling from Broadview to Sackville is immeasurable. This has gone from a harrowing experience on a bike to an absolute pleasure! I see parents riding comfortably with children, young people on their own, and every day people casually riding side by side to their destination. This bike lane invites people to use it. If I were someone newer to cycling and I wanted to avoid transit right now, the DVP crossing would have likely led to me dismissing cycling as an option. Now it actually encourages use! This lane on Dundas needs to be made permanent, and can be improved by extending it even further past Sackville to Parliament and Sherbourne where users can connect with other safe cycling infrastructure. With each of these installations we are inching towards an actual connected network of bike lanes. The more connections we have, the more people will cycle. Our roads are already overly congested, and the TTC cannot accommodate the same type of crowding we saw pre-COVID 19. Making these temporary #ActiveTO bike lanes permanent (and then improving upon them) will benefit all road users.

From Kathleen Mackey, 32 Spokes member, Ward 19 resident

I use the Dundas Street East bike lanes a lot. I always dreaded crossing the Dundas Street East bridge. This route was the best in terms of where I was going, especially with connections on either side (River Street bike lane, etc..) but crossing the bridge was the worst. In my experience, drivers would be impatient with the people turning onto the Don Valley Parkway, or with slow-moving drivers in general, and use the right lane to pass. The sharrows did nothing to suggest drivers should give me enough space to safely pass. The protection here has solved this problem and for the first time in years, I felt safe and at ease crossing the bridge. I am now encouraging my friends and family to bike, especially during the pandemic, and instead of providing the usual warnings, it's a pleasure to be able to say "take the Dundas Street East route all the way—it's protected, safer, and great". I want to thank the city for installing this. It seems like such a small thing, especially for a small stretch, but I can see and feel the huge impact it is having not just on me but others who want to bike. I am so excited to see similar protected infrastructure be installed on the rest of the Dundas Street East route. I used to take that route to work everyday and firmly feel that separation will help make it safer.

From Francis Jeanson, 32 Spokes member, Ward 19 resident:

My wife actually started biking to work because she now feels safer with the Dundas bike lane, and especially the extra wide section near Broadview. We just wish it went all the way to Yonge or even Dufferin.