

February 3, 2021

Budget Committee
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen St. W., 10th floor, West Tower
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Submitted via e-mail:
buc@toronto.ca

Dear Chair Crawford, Vice Chair Bradford, and members of the Budget Committee:

Re: CAA recommendations for Toronto's 2021 budget

On behalf of the Canadian Automobile Association (CAA), I am pleased to submit comments for the City of Toronto's upcoming 2021 budget. CAA is committed to voicing the concerns for our 2.5 million Ontario Members—including one in 10 Toronto households—and being an advocacy leader on issues relating to road safety, infrastructure, and transportation.

We recognize the importance of continued Covid-related funding from the federal and provincial governments, to meet the \$856 million Covid-19 gap presented by Staff on January 14, 2021, without putting at current capital projects at risk. CAA believes that current capital projects, particularly those related to roads and infrastructure's state of good repair, are of utmost importance to prepare Toronto—the economic engine of Ontario and Canada—for a roaring recovery in due course. CAA applauds the City's efforts to date in negotiating with federal and provincial counterparts, and we are ready to support the City's efforts in this endeavour any way we can.

Infrastructure Funding

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, funding for roadway improvements need to be consistent to ensure safe roads. This infrastructure comprises the arteries used every day to keep essential workers, goods and services flowing. As people are encouraged to stay home and telework during the pandemic, the City should take advantage of reduced traffic flows as an opportunity for road repair work. Toronto, along with the rest of the province, will eventually return to a new normal. Until then, we should maintain the upkeep of this asset, so that it is ready for economic recovery.

We understand that the City, as a creature of the province, is limited in its ways of raising revenue. Besides requesting Covid-related financial assistance from the province, we understand that the topic of road tolls had been discussed at City Council in October 2020. CAA has concerns about this method of revenue generation: our member survey conducted in fall 2020 indicated that CAA's membership is not in support of road tolls. Toronto's citizens and businesses already have enough additional financial responsibilities and burdens stemming from the pandemic. This user fee could hinder the City's economic recovery, as many workers in the GTHA use the Don Valley Parkway and the Gardiner Expressway to get to and from Toronto, or to traverse the GTHA, as part of their daily commute. Without another robust and reliable transportation option (e.g. transit or cycling), it would not be equitable to require a user fee of workers who have no option but to drive to get to their workplace. For example, only 56% of people and employment are within prescribed access to a cycling route, according the City's November 2020 Environmental, Social & Governance Performance Report.

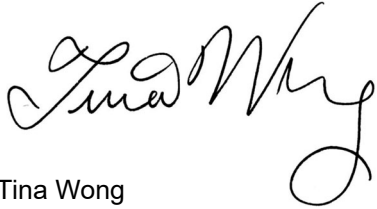
Transit, Cycling and Micromobility

Societal changes due to climate change and population growth have been spurring the need for alternate mobility options prior to 2020. The pandemic has merely accelerated these changes, with the normalization of telework and the increased need for physical distancing. Consequently, the City has experienced a drastic fall in TTC ridership, an increased need for cycling infrastructure (highlighted by the popularity of ActiveTO during summer and fall 2020) and the advent of micromobility options such as e-scooters. While it is important for these alternate mobility options to be properly understood and incorporated into Toronto's built environment, CAA emphasizes that these changes must be made with thorough research, modelling and data-driven decision making, to prevent unintended consequences for motor vehicle traffic, freight and goods movement, and congestion.

Road safety remains an important focus for CAA. At a time when school zone and pedestrian awareness has been heightened, we continue to highlight the responsibilities of motorists using our roads. We produce educational resources for all road users, regardless of their chosen mode of transportation. CAA is ready to partner with the City of Toronto, to maximize investments in changing behaviours that minimize injuries and fatalities on Toronto's roads each day.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback for the upcoming City budget. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide further information or be of assistance. CAA looks forward to the continued collaboration with the City of Toronto, to enhance quality of life for our Members and Torontonians alike.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tina Wong', with a stylized, flowing script.

Tina Wong
Government Relations Specialist
CAA South Central Ontario (CAA SCO)
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cc: City Clerk's Office (clerk@toronto.ca)