



To: Mayor Tory and members of Toronto Council
From: Walk Toronto (Steering Committee)
Date: Nov. 8, 2020
Re: IE25.24 — Revisiting Strategy to Maintain Public Walkways in a State of Good Repair

Walk Toronto is a grassroots pedestrian advocacy group that works with various levels of government, community groups and citizens to improve walking conditions and safety in Toronto.

WALK TORONTO'S SUPPORT FOR IEC RECOMMENDATIONS

Walk Toronto urges Council to support the decision of the Infrastructure and Environment Committee to request a staff report which updates current levels of service for walkways, and develops a framework for a City-wide strategy for their maintenance.

RATIONALE

The suburban street network inside of the arterial road grid tends to be discontinuous and maze-like, with curving residential streets that take 'spaghetti' patterns. The intent of planners was to prevent non-local motorists from infiltrating residential neighbourhoods and endangering pedestrians (such as children playing on their local street).

In order to provide people on foot with direct routes to destinations such as local schools and parks, public walkways were strategically installed. They reduce walking time, keep pedestrians away from dangerous traffic and, in effect, cut through the spaghetti. Walkways sometimes are referred to as park cut-throughs, mid-block connections, or pedestrian shortcuts. Regardless of the term used, the aim is to make neighbourhoods porous and to encourage walking and cycling — activities that have increased because of the pandemic. We agree with Councillor Perruzza that maintenance of public walkways is essential for active transportation to work properly. Bringing walkway levels of service to higher standards may not be glamorous — but it is a task that is much, much cheaper than maintaining expressways or subway lines.

PREVIOUS STAFF REPORT

We note that the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, issued a report on Sept. 21, 2017, "Management of Cut-throughs in City Parks" which dealt specifically with cut-throughs to parks. The present request to staff for an update is in the context of the pandemic, and includes all public walkways, not just park cut-throughs. The expanded scope means that one point that was emphasized in the 2017 report is especially germane. Ownership and operational responsibility for public walkways is shared between various city departments and agencies: Transportation Services, PFR, TRCA, Toronto Water, and different school boards. Consequently, developing a framework for a City-wide strategy for the maintenance of public walkways is a

complicated endeavour. The development of a proper framework is essential if we want the work to get done on schedule and to consistent standards.

SYNERGIES WITH OTHER PROGRAMS

Direct, properly-signed, accessible pedestrian walkways that enhance walkability are important for the success of many initiatives currently underway in Toronto, such as:

- Walking to school programs
- Pandemic-related winter maintenance service level improvements
- Toronto Seniors Strategy
- Commitment to meeting AODA accessibility targets
- Vision Zero/ Road Safety Plan
- Toronto 360 Wayfinding Strategy
- Crime Prevention through Environmental Design

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