



To: Mayor Tory and members of Toronto Council
From: Cycle Toronto Midtown
Date: Nov. 8, 2020
Re: IE25.22 — Improving Cycling and Pedestrian Safety on the York Beltline Trail and Kay Gardner Beltline Trail

TIMEFRAME

The Beltline is the principal trail system in Toronto's midtown, functioning as a linear park for the area's burgeoning population. Cycle Toronto Midtown has been advocating for improvements to the Beltline since 2011. We are grateful for the City's implementation of many of the improvements that we have suggested over the years. However, there is much work left to be done. The present motion is timely because of four circumstances that are currently increasing the need for upgraded green space in the midtown area:

- 1) During the pandemic, cycling outdoors provides exercise, exposure to sunlight and fresh air for midtown residents who are reluctant to use indoor gyms. Riding in a linear park improves both mental and physical health, allowing people to lead a less confined lifestyle during the Covid-19 period.
- 2) The upcoming opening of the Crosstown LRT line presents new opportunities to connect the Beltline to rapid transit.
- 3) Actual or proposed condo development along the LRT route is creating a need for better parkland provisioning for residents in the Eglinton Ave. corridor, as well as providing Section 37 and 42 funding to help pay for improvements and linkages.
- 4) Better connections will also benefit racialized neighbourhoods close to the Beltline such as Little Jamaica and Lawrence Heights, which are the focus of various improvement initiatives.

GENERAL IMPROVEMENTS

The motion lists the key improvements that should be studied. We shall elaborate on a few issues:

- Our preferred connection between the York and Gardner trail segments would be a cyclist/pedestrian bridge that spans the Allen Rd. and eliminates the necessity for trail users to use on-street connections.
- Wayfinding should include connections to the various parts of the Beltline, as well as other trails, important streets, transit connections and points of interest.

- It is especially important to update signage where the trail crosses streets, and where it intersects other off-road routes (such as the northwest entrance to Mt. Pleasant Cemetery).
- Better drainage is needed on the two bridges over Dufferin St. and Yonge St. On the regular trail paths, a combination of methods to improve storm water runoff should be looked at, including raising the trail grade, crowning the top, adding more porous materials to the surfacing, installing swales, and (if budget allows in some cases) storm drains.
- Adding public art would benefit dreary locations such as the Allen Road sound barrier wall and the section near the Davisville TTC Service Yard.
- Lighting more sections of the trail would enhance evening usability in the evenings. We suggest the sections near Walter Saunders Memorial Park (York) as well as parallel to Frobisher Ave. (Gardner).
- More trail furniture should be added, particularly benches, bike parking, and waste disposal bins.

KAY GARDNER SEGMENT

While the focus of the the present request for improvements tends to be on the western part of the Beltline, we think it is worthwhile to mention that certain problems further east on the Kay Gardner Trail also need addressing:

- The crossing at Lascelles Blvd. requires safety improvements that include a painted, possibly raised crosswalk, an additional streetlamp on the west side, and better signage.
- Although we are grateful for the installation of the refuge island at the crossing at Oriole Parkway, we feel that increased trail user volumes may justify replacing the refuge island with synchronized traffic signals. If this is not possible, then a widening of the refuge island might be achieved by shifting of the location of the bus lane (on the west side). We also suggest that the refuge island should be protected by amber flashing lights, plus bollards or concrete abutments.

CONCLUSION

Cycle Toronto Midtown urges Council to support the request that staff prepare a report on cycling and user-safety improvements to both the York and the Kay Gardner segments of the Beltline Trail. We are grateful to Councillor Colle for his efforts in initiating this round of improvements. Looking forward, we hope that we will have the opportunity to provide further input to staff, Councillor Colle, and his colleagues who are responsible for other parts of the trail.

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Michael Black

Piotr Sepski

James Young

Members: Cycle Toronto Midtown