



Email: advocacy@ffsafestreeets.ca

March 22, 2021

Infrastructure and Environment Committee

(submitted electronically)

RE: **IE20.12**: ActiveTO - Lessons Learned from 2020 and Next Steps for 2021

Dear Councillors McKelvie, Layton, Colle, Peruzza, Pasternak and Minnan-Wong,

Friends and Families for Safe Streets is a group comprised of Torontonians whose loved ones were senselessly killed on Toronto's deadly streets, or who survived serious injury in a preventable collision. We advocate for lifesaving Vision Zero safety improvements for Vulnerable Road Users – the human beings outside of cars. While it is too late for us, we advocate to save other Torontonians from the horrific and preventable crashes that blew our lives apart.

RE: Lakeshore West Opening

We wish to express our strong disappointment that city staff would recommend doing away with the most successful and widely-used portion of ActiveTO, the Lakeshore West opening.

City staff are worried about driving convenience if they open Lakeshore West to people, because there is a nearby road construction project. That means that people in cars might face two inconveniences, and might spend more time driving somewhere.

It goes entirely against Toronto's commitment to Vision Zero to value car commuting convenience over the human health and safety offered by the Lakeshore West opening. If some of the 18,000 daily users of Lakeshore West try to walk, run and roll on other streets, it is certain that many of them will be harmed by reckless drivers. After all, our city promised us safe streets and an end to death and severe injury by this year, 2021, but our city has failed its vulnerable road users with a glacial pace of change and a political allergy to the bold changes that really save lives. So when more people are harmed by road violence because they are deprived of space that's safe from the threat of drivers, it is obvious city staff have not at all considered the delays that will be inflicted on innocent victims forced to use unsafe roads – planning funerals, recovering

in hospitals, lifelong physical and mental health treatment, shuttling to and from appointments, living in depression, anxiety, PTSD, fear, and pain.

Of course everyone wants to travel efficiently, but let us tell you about the time delays that victims of road violence experience, because in a supposed Vision Zero city, this is a calculation that CANNOT be ignored.

You've likely already heard our spokesperson Jess Spieker's story: a reckless driver inflicted on her a broken spine, severe soft tissue damage and a brain injury in 2015. She has to spend at least an hour per day on physiotherapy exercises at home to maintain some mobility and chronic pain reduction. Added to that is travel time to weekly physio appointments. Conservatively, that costs Jess least 9 hours per week, or 28,080 minutes per year. Projecting through her life expectancy of 82 years, she can expect to spend another 1,263,600 minutes. Jess spends a similar amount of time on mental health care. Jess has also spent the past 6 years with chronic pain, feeling utterly dejected and stalled in her life. She can't progress in her career due to restrictions from her injuries, and she can't earn the money it takes to re-train for a different career. She has delayed starting a family – she can't imagine being pregnant with the painful condition her back is in after having her spine broken, and her mental health is so poor after the trauma of her crash, she is terrified she won't be a good mom. That's 3,153,600 minutes and counting of delay for Jess. 3,153,600 minutes living a life she wasn't supposed to, drifting farther and farther away from who she wanted to be.

And what about Xavier Morgan, who was killed on this exact stretch of Lakeshore West? He was 5 years old, and with an average life expectancy of 82, he had about 77 years of life stolen from him. That's 40,471,200 minutes of life, senselessly obliterated.

In 2020, 25 Vulnerable Road Users were killed by drivers. For the sake of a quick calculation, if we assume their median age was 39 (the median age of Torontonians), that's 1,075 years of human life needlessly and violently stolen, or 565,020,200 minutes. It usually takes about a week to plan a funeral, so that's 4,200 hours or 252,000 minutes stolen from bereaved families.

In 2020, 124 Vulnerable Road Users were severely injured by drivers. If we do a similar calculation and assume it costs victims an extra 10 hours per week of ongoing mental and physical health maintenance, that's 2,772,640 hours of treatment in their lifetimes, or 166,358,400 minutes. Considering lifelong suffering that ought to have been

prevented, those 124 survivors lost 5,332 years of their former quality of life, or 2,802,499,200 minutes.

2020 was a relatively light year for road violence due to fewer people driving during the pandemic. In 2018, that number would have been 4,610,563,200 minutes. How many traffic jams does it take to add up to **4.6 Billion minutes**?

The time lost to road violence is far more traumatic than time lost to a traffic jam, and it's clear that when all road users' time is considered, the most beneficial and equitable path forward is to continue the Major Street Opening of Lakeshore West.

RE: Elimination of Quiet Streets

We disagree with transportation staff's desire to abandon the Quiet Streets program and "[refocus] the approach to local street calming through existing programs". Those existing programs did satisfy residents' desire to feel safer; they obviously left residents strongly desiring even more effective interventions, quickly and boldly deployed through their neighbourhoods.

We were very troubled to hear that some BIPOC residents felt that instructions for local traffic only became a tool for their exclusion. That is unacceptable, but surely there is another way to address this besides outright cancelation of the program.

Given how successful and well received this program was, we urge the city to reinstate it, with modifications as required, especially to address concerns of racism and exclusion.

RE: Midtown Yonge St Cycle Tracks

We fully support any initiative to add physical protection for vulnerable road users, anywhere in Toronto. This area would connect to the Danforth/Bloor active transportation infrastructure, which is a refreshing change from how new infrastructure is often entirely disconnected, and therefore does not form a useful network. Building a useful network of connected, physically protected infrastructure for active transportation is key to achieving Vision Zero.

RE: Expanding ActiveTO

We deeply appreciate the installation of high-quality infrastructure on the Danforth, University Ave, and Bayview Ave, as well as the improvements on some sections of Bloor St and Dundas St E. It is unfortunate the Huntingwood infrastructure was unprotected and often more of a parking lot than a lane for active transportation, and we

were shocked at the way the Brimley lane was destroyed even though it improved safety. It was very troubling that improvements to Overlea Dr never happened, even with the high density of neighbourhood residents and kids going to school who deserve to walk and ride bikes in safety.

Conclusion:

We hope 2021 will bring a second year of opening Lakeshore West, an expansion of Major Street Openings to neglected suburban areas, another rapid expansion of high-quality physically protected infrastructure for Vulnerable Road Users, and that Overlea Dr will be swiftly caught up to the rest of the ActiveTO infrastructure that was installed in 2020.

We also urge the city to make all infrastructure improvements permanent. Though we are far from our Vision Zero goals, and this infrastructure makes a contribution to getting there.

This is not a time to cling to the 1950s status quo that fails everyone, and resulted in the preventable deaths of our loved ones, and so many destructive, life-altering severe injuries. This is a time to build back better, to take risks, to build on everything that was so warmly received by residents last year. By designing and operating for people rather than for cars, we will simultaneously work toward solving both the ongoing public health crisis of road violence and the incoming existential crisis of climate collapse.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized loop followed by a long horizontal stroke that tapers to the right.

Jessica Spieker
Spokesperson, Friends & Families for Safe Streets