

March 28, 2022

Infrastructure and Environment Committee
c/o Matthew Green
10th floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON
M5H 2N2

Submitted electronically to: iec@toronto.ca

Re: **IE28.7 Cycling Network Plan** - 2022 Cycling Infrastructure Installation - First Quarter and 2021 ActiveTO Cycling Network Expansion Project Updates

Dear Chair McKelvie and Infrastructure and Environment Committee members:

Friends and Families for Safe Streets is a group of people whose lives have been shattered by road violence. Many of us have lost a loved one, senselessly and suddenly, and been shackled by heavy neverending grief and lifelong horror and anguish at the thought of our family members bleeding alone on an indifferent piece of asphalt, overwhelmed with pain from catastrophic injuries in the final moments of their life. Some of us have survived devastating injuries inflicted by a driver, and are now living with diminished mental health, chronic physical pain, missing limbs, brain injury, and disabilities that prevent us from experiencing a high quality of life. All of us know that **the crashes that destroyed our lives were completely preventable, and we are fighting for change to make sure that what happened to us can never happen to anyone else, ever again.**

We are writing to you today in support of the contents of IEC 28.7, the Cycling Network Plan update.

We want to impress upon you that the voices shouting against Vision Zero street design and against road safety improvements are in fact fighting for more road violence, more sudden, senseless and violent death, more funerals, more life-destroying injuries, more sorrow and anguish and fear and grief. Fighting for more road violence by fighting against safe streets is fundamentally opposed to Toronto's unanimously-adopted Vision Zero program, which holds above all the fact that human life is more important than driving convenience. **There is no possible world in which our streets stay the same, and road violence magically stops.** We must change the design of our streets to save lives and achieve Vision Zero, the elimination of death and severe injury on our roads.

Steeles Complete Street Pilot:

The Steeles complete street pilot is commendable because it is finally a start on addressing the worst of Toronto's streets: our deadly suburban arterials. It should be much longer than 3 km. By limiting the pilot to such a short and unambitious stretch, you are deciding not to seize the opportunity to improve a nearby proven deadly area, namely Steeles and Eastvale, about 2 km further east than the easternmost end of this pilot. Steeles and Eastvale is where our member Jacquelyn Persaud's daughter, Jessica Salickram, was senselessly killed in 2018 while trying to walk home from her usual TTC stop. The TTC stop had no pedestrian infrastructure of any kind, no sidewalk or crossover or lights, and that deficiency combined with the high-speed design of Steeles cost Jessica her life. Jessica's death was not an accident. It was a result, a predictable and preventable result of intentional design choices that value vehicle speed over human life itself. Had that area of Steeles been a complete street, the desire line between TTC stops would have been accounted for by a safe pedestrian crossing opportunity, motor vehicle speeds would have been calmed to survivable rates, and Jessica would have made it home safe. Instead, her mother Jacquelyn's heart was irreparably shattered on January 7, 2018, when she found out a minivan driver had slammed into and killed her only child, leaving Jess' shoes strewn in the roadway, blown off her feet with violence impossible to comprehend. The only way Jacquelyn can visit her daughter now is at her niche in the cemetery. She will never get to see Jess graduate, get married, have children of her own. Jacquelyn will never be able to hug her daughter again, or tell her once more how proud she is of the wonderful woman she was becoming. The senseless loss of a child is the most perverse, horrible pain that life can offer to any human being. **Jacquelyn will never wake up from this nightmare inflicted by our deadly arterial roads, but you have the power to act to prevent future devastating loss like this.**

Alarmingly, since a nearby Amazon warehouse was opened, with Amazon employees walking in the area and using nearby TTC stops to get to work, nothing has been improved to prevent another senseless death. No sidewalks, no pedestrian crossovers, no traffic calming of any kind. You could choose to extend the complete street pilot farther east on Steeles to prove that Jess' death was not utterly in vain, and to keep all of those Amazon employees and other road users safe. Their lives have worth, they are not expendable, and they are loved by their families and friends. Why do so little, limiting this pilot to a disconnected stub, rather than considering the whole of the Steeles corridor and striving to do more to save lives?

Yonge St Cycle Track:

The Yonge St cycle tracks have been a positive life-changer for many people who want to ride bikes in safety, including our member Jessica Spieker, who suffered severe injuries after being struck by an SUV driver on her bike in 2015. Now, Jessica is understandably too scared to ride her bike outside of dedicated, protected cycling infrastructure. The addition of a physically

protected cycle track on Yonge St, along with the complete street on Danforth, has opened up significant opportunities for Jessica to regain some of her former capacity to ride her bike, and enjoy all the benefits of improved mental and physical health that come with cycling.

In short, **the Yonge St cycle track has given Jess back some of what Toronto's deadly streets ripped away from her in 2015.** The cycle tracks bring joy and improved health, and make the street vibrant, enjoyable, attractive, and prosperous. If not for the cycle track, Jess would still be driving her car to work on Yonge St, contributing to car congestion, climate disaster, harming herself with a sedentary lifestyle and harming others who are exposed to the air and noise pollution caused by her engine and the microplastics emitted from her car tires - car tires being one of the biggest source of microplastics - all of which drive up health care and municipal maintenance costs. All it takes to end those negative externalities is to build safe, complete streets.

The Yonge St cycle track has increased safety for people walking on the sidewalk as well, by providing a barrier to stop drivers from crashing up onto the sidewalk, and by calming traffic and reducing vehicle speed. This area has significant population density, and with the increased demand for food and other items delivered by bike, Toronto must provide and promote safe active transportation. It is horribly unfair to order food delivered by bike, and then fight against the infrastructure that would keep those essential food delivery workers safe. Once a useful grid of connected active transportation is built, induced demand will further reduce vehicle dependence and congestion in the area.

We call for the Yonge St cycle track to be made permanent to further improve accessibility and safety for Vulnerable Road Users, which will reduce road violence, support our Vision Zero program, and reduce dependency on motor vehicles, supporting the climate mitigation goals of TransformTO.

The Queensway Complete Street Pilot:

Our member Ingrid Buday lives in the Queensway area and has witnessed increased cycling and pedestrian traffic on the Queensway because people need safe and convenient access to the shopping mall that has a Sobey's, Shoppers, LCBO, Dollarama, a medical center, plus other services. This is the only grocery store within walking distance for many residents of the area. It also provides access to the 6,000 people who work at the Ontario Food Terminal. The project is a significant step forward for this area as there are also many families and bikeshare stations that use the cycling network, or would if it were safe to do so.

The issue is that the protected cycle tracks will not be extended to logical connection points on the east and west ends of the project such as Royal York and South Kingsway or even better, Ellis Road. **Building farther to connect this pilot cycle track into a useful network would**

prevent people from being exposed to drivers speeding over the Humber River bridge on the east end or ejected into speeding and potentially lethal traffic on the west end. Ingrid rides her bike on this stretch regularly (and sees it from her condo) and the fact that South Kingsway is an access point for many large trucks should warrant extra protection for Vulnerable Road Users. After all, as IEC committee members you must all be aware that large trucks are disproportionately involved in violently killing Vulnerable Road Users in Toronto. Installing cycle tracks on the Humber Bridge will also calm and slow down traffic, which is known for drivers speeding as there are regular speed traps in the area. Additionally, these measures would support Vision Zero and TransformTO climate goals.

To conclude, FFSS fully supports expanding the cycling network and building complete street infrastructure. We very much appreciate the improvements listed and proposed in this report, but Toronto is moving on Vision Zero far too slowly. It is an urgent moral imperative to build Vision Zero more rapidly, widely, and boldly to save lives and protect Vulnerable Road Users all over the city. Project scopes should not be based on ward boundaries or limited by political cowardice. Vision Zero design changes must be built out at a speed commensurate with the twin existential crises of road violence and climate disaster.

Sincerely,

Jessica Spieker, Spokesperson
Friends and Families for Safe Streets