

June 12, 2022

Mayor John Tory and Toronto City Council
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2



RE: IE30.19 - Revisiting ActiveTO Interventions on Lake Shore Boulevard West

Dear Mayor Tory and Members of City Council,

The ActiveTO Major Road Closure program has been massively successful in creating safe, accessible recreational opportunities for tens of thousands of Torontonians.

It has been one of the city's most impactful COVID response initiatives, as well as one of its most popular. As noted in the ActiveTO 2020 report, 93% of respondents wish to see the program continue after the pandemic.

Thank you for your leadership in creating and supporting this program.

Over the course of the pandemic, Toronto has seen a cycling boom, with more people than ever engaging in active transportation as their main means of transportation, both for recreation and for commuting. This shift towards walking and cycling aligns with City of Toronto policies, including the Transportation Master Plan, the Official Plan and TransformTO.

ActiveTO has played a major role in this shift, encouraging residents to engage in active transportation on a regular basis. The 2020 ActiveTO report illustrates that more than a quarter of participants on the Lakeshore ActiveTO programs were new cyclists. The impact this program has in supporting the City in achieving the goals laid out in its own master plans cannot be overstated.

As we shift to a post-pandemic city, it is imperative that the good work begun by ActiveTO not be lost. We've seen the demand for greater recreational space on our streets and the need for permanent road safety improvements to Lake Shore West.

It is time to meet those needs and create a truly safe Lake Shore Boulevard West.

It is time to satisfy the demand for healthy recreational opportunities on our streets and explore alternative routes for ActiveTO that connect to as wide and diverse a range of residents as possible.

We urge City Council to implement the following measures:

1. Create a new temporary pilot on Lake Shore West this summer from a road that is dangerous by design, to a more inclusive lake front street with two curb lanes repurposed for active transportation all the time using robust, crash-proof jersey barriers.

There are many good reasons to reallocate a portion of the space on Lake Shore Blvd with temporary infrastructure:

- It doesn't require Paid Duty or Traffic Agent resources
- It creates separated space and reduces conflicts for people using active travel at

different speeds on the already congested Martin Goodman Trail

- It will improve safety significantly by reducing travel lanes and speeds, helping ensure Lake Shore can operate like the local lakefront road it is while maintaining motor vehicle traffic in both directions
- It will improve public space and the beachfront experience, and will allow people to think about the Western lakeshore in a different way
- It can be adjusted and removed if it is not popular, but like most of the temporary bike lane projects implemented under the ActiveTO program, we believe the street will function better for everyone if we move toward a Complete Street approach for our local roads

2. Create a predictable schedule for ActiveTO Road Openings (e.g. last Saturday of each month) and promote these events early, which would provide residents with opportunities to participate and time for people driving to plan for other routes to exit/enter the city. **We also recommend looking for other Open Streets opportunities in the city, including the return of Open Streets TO** to downtown Yonge, Bloor, and Danforth Ave. in tandem with ActiveTO and CafeTO initiatives.

3. Ensure Lake Shore W becomes a Complete Street as part of the long-term Western Waterfront Master Plan, which is currently under review and sets out to include dedicated space for people walking, wheeling, cycling, and using public transit.

Last month, a person biking on the Martin Goodman Trail was struck by someone who lost control of their car on Lake Shore Blvd, and suffered life-altering injuries. Five year old Xavier Morgan was killed in a similarly harrowing nearby stretch of Lake Shore Blvd W. It is clear that Lake Shore Blvd operates more like a highway adjacent to the Gardiner Expressway, than the local lakefront street that it is. Critiques of this program have conflated Lake Shore with the Gardiner: Lake Shore West is not a highway, it is our only western lakefront road and it is currently dangerous by design. But it doesn't have to be this way.

We can reimagine a Lake Shore Blvd that will work well for people driving, biking, walking, wheeling, and using mobility devices. We can accommodate the various ways we Torontonians get around and also create the lakefront experience everyone deserves.

No one ever complains about how serene the eastern waterfront is in the Beaches; residents in the western part of the city deserve that too.

By implementing the changes noted above, we can create the future waterfront we want to see, and we can start now.

Sincerely,

David Simor

David Simor

Manager, Community and Stakeholder Relations, Open Streets TO
Director, The Centre for Active Transportation