



Monday, March 28, 2022

Infrastructure and Environment Committee
c/o Matthew Green
10th floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON
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Submitted electronically to: iec@toronto.ca

Dear Councillor Jennifer McKelvie and Members of the Committee,

***Re: IEC 28.7 Cycling Network Plan - 2022 Cycling Infrastructure Installation –
First Quarter and 2021 ActiveTO Cycling Network Expansion Project Updates***

We fully support the ActiveTO Yonge Street bike lane, set out among a number of other important advances to the city's cycling infrastructure. Urgent problems of climate change, affordability, and road safety make it vital to move away from single-occupant cars to cycling, walking, and transit. The re-allocation of road space from cars to healthier, cleaner modes is an essential step forward.

Our group has been advocating for a bike lane on Bloor Street (and contiguous Danforth Avenue) since 2007, most recently celebrating the completion of a 15-km bike lane between Dawes and Runnymede Roads – a vital, although as yet incomplete, east-west route. A Yonge bike lane would allow the city to optimize its investments in existing cycling infrastructure with north-south connections. Bells on Bloor is now a member of the Toronto Community Bikeways Coalition.

The bike lane along Yonge Street installed in 2021 is a particularly valuable north-south link, despite its truncated extent, that is a key part of a true city cycling network. We find it troubling that a half century after the Bicycle Boom of the 1970s and persistent calls for a safe cycling network in the ensuing decades, the city still lacks a single north-south bike lane from the downtown to the city's northern boundary. Not only is more action needed, but that action is needed more urgently than ever.

We commend Councillors Mike Colle, Josh Matlow, and Mike Layton for championing the Yonge Street bike lane, and for showing leadership on the most pressing issue of our time: climate change.

On the flip side, we can only describe as comic the suggested link between the Yonge bike lane and climate change. If more and wider roads were the solution to problems such as air pollution and climate change, we would have pristine air, and no one would understand the term “climate crisis.”

The argument of the Summerhill Residents Association about being in favour of cycling and bike lanes --- but just not on Yonge Street --- is the same argument that opponents of cycling infrastructure have used for decades, with the result of stifling a clean mode of transportation for city residents. We have long known that arterial roads such as Yonge Street are popular for cycling for the same reasons that these routes are popular with motorists --- but without the associated danger, cost, and exhaust --- to access shops, restaurants, faith centres, libraries, schools, and workplaces.

There is no "somewhere else" where bike lanes “make sense”; bike lanes make sense where they are needed, where they will be used -- not where they are conveniently out of the way of motorists.

The removal of bike lanes on Yonge Street would not remove cyclists, it would simply deprive them, including the many food delivery workers, of safety.

According to the city report, during peak hours up to 40% of the cyclists in the Yonge bike lane are delivery workers. And although not stated in the report, we know that much of this delivery work is done in the evening, and during all seasons of the year. These essential workers are picking up food and other orders at Yonge Street shops or using Yonge to access local neighbourhoods for deliveries. Has the Summerhill Residents Association so quickly forgotten the essential workers who got us through the pandemic, simply because they pose an inconvenience to motorists, many of whom could easily switch to other travel modes?

Bicycles are a valuable component of a clean, healthy, efficient transportation system – a fact recognized by many leading cities in the world, not simply in words, but in the infrastructure improvements they have already made for residents. Our city must continue to do the same, but with greater urgency.

We also suggest that the increasing cycling volumes on Yonge should be read in the context of a Yonge bike lane that remains a truncated one, with its full potential still unrealized given the lack of complete east-west connections, and extensions north and south.

Some of the key benefits outlined in the staff report are worth repeating:

- Preliminary data collected demonstrates a **reduction in motor vehicle operating speeds** along Midtown Yonge Street, which is an important contributor to road safety.
- the pilot project provided **opportunities to add additional cafés** in locations that were not possible in the pre-pilot configuration.
- Data collected in 2021 shows that while cycling volumes have changed as can be expected with seasonal patterns, **more people were cycling along the Midtown Yonge Street corridor where the new bikeway was installed in September 2021** relative to the period just prior to installation.
- Key findings of the public intercept survey were:

Complete Street Goals:

- 76% of respondents agree that the ActiveTO Midtown Complete Street Pilot met its goals of providing support for local businesses and surrounding communities by expanding outdoor patio areas, improving safety and comfort for everyone, and providing a safe and protected bike lane along the Line 1 subway.
- **78% of those driving cars agreed or strongly agreed that the pilot provides support for local businesses, improves safety and comfort for everyone,** and provides a safe and protected bike lane.

Accessibility:

- **42% of respondents with accessibility needs felt the pilot improved accessibility and 37% felt there was no change.**

Perception of Traffic Congestion:

- When asked if they noticed a change in traffic congestion since the installation, **40% of respondents had not noticed an impact on congestion one way or the other.** 28% felt congestion was much worse and 26% felt congestion was a little worse. 6% noticed a decrease in congestion.

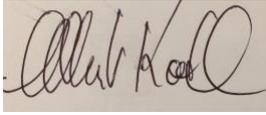
Food Delivery Workers:

- **Food Delivery Workers (using bicycles, e-bikes, etc.) account for an estimated 20% of all bike lane traffic in the study area, rising as high as 40% at peak delivery times.** As their work is dependent on use of the cycling infrastructure, and they were underrepresented in intercept survey responses, a focus group was hosted to hear directly from food delivery workers, and the following perspectives arose:

Bike lanes have greatly increased their sense of safety using the road.

In sum, we fully support the bike lane on Yonge Street and urge you to move forward in extending it north and south as quickly as possible, consistent with the urgent problems we face, including the climate emergency declared by City Council.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature is cursive and appears to read "Albert Koehl".

Albert Koehl