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May 7, 2023

Dear City Councillors;

Friends of High Park Zoo (FHPZ) have attended every Movement Study meeting to provide input from an organization that has called High Park home since 2012.

We support the recommended preferred strategy #3 as presented by staff to the April 26 Infrastructure and Environment Committee. **We do not** support the amendment

“to continue the full closure of High Park to private visitor vehicles on Saturdays, Sundays and statutory holidays, exclusive of Spring Road parking lot, on an ongoing basis.”

We request that the park be open to vehicles on weekends and statutory holidays from now on and during the implementation of Strategy #3 including the accessible shuttle being up and running through the park, the TTC bus enhancements are in place as mentioned in the report and to add that High Park Subway Stations elevator has been installed to make it accessible.

Over the last three years FHPZ have heard from hundreds of people asking if the park is open on weekends as they are driving from out of town and want to visit the zoo. We also hear from families who drove to the park, could not find parking and so drove home without being able to visit the zoo!

These closures have prevented many from having access to the park and therefore the zoo which is located near the middle of the park.

As FHPZ works to reopen the llama pen activities on weekends and statutory holidays we know that these closures will affect many who wish to visit as well as our volunteers who would like to participate. Not everyone is able to walk or ride their bike to the zoo due to the

topography of the park. Those with disabilities, seniors or families with young children have difficulty accessing the activities near the middle of the park. As FHPZ is run exclusively by volunteers and the majority of us work during the week, weekends are the only time we can host our family fun events.

FHPZ has worked with the City of Toronto on a Master Plan for the zoo. Our most recent project Phase 1, in partnership with the City, was to build a new barn for the llamas and capybaras. In front of this building is where the llama pen activities take place. Visitors have the experience of interacting with the llamas and capybaras. To watch children and adults feeding the llamas and the joy on their faces shows how valuable the zoo is and will continue to be particularly after the last few years of COVID. Without our volunteers this event will not be able to happen.


Our next project in our Master Plan, Phase 2 is the reconstruction of the recreational trail through the zoo as mentioned in the Movement Strategy final report. This is being funded through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program Fund (ICIP) in partnership with the Federal and Provincial Governments, the City of Toronto and FHPZ.

FHPZ pride our self in providing accessible events/programs to everyone on weekends as we continue to raise funds to cover the increased cost of Phase 2 to allow the entire project to be implemented at one time.

**In closing Friends of High Park Zoo request that you:**

- **DO NOT SUPPORT THE CONTINUED WEEKEND AND STATUTORY HOLIDAY CLOSURES.**
- **You re-open the park so everyone has access to this destination public park until the accessible shuttle is up and running, TTC has enhanced its bus service and the High Park Subway Station is accessible.**

Yours truly,



Sarah Doucette

Chair, Friends of High Park Zoo