

High Park Movement Strategy Final Report

Infrastructure & Environment Committee

April 26, 2023

High Park Context

- High Park attracts almost **1.5 million visitors per year** with a wide range of activities and operations with different mobility needs.
- The **speed and volume of motor vehicle traffic** is an issue. Volumes are heaviest on the “High Park Loop” and cut through traffic often travels from Bloor Street West to the Queensway.
- Only one serious collision reported in High Park since 2006, but there are certain areas that often lead to **conflict between road users and pedestrians**.
- There are no formal pick-up/drop-off areas and **angled parking** forces cars to back up into live bike lanes with poor visibility.
- **Moving around High Park** can be challenging due to the size, terrain and sidewalk conditions in the park.
- Subways, streetcars and buses are available around the perimeter of the park but **transit and shuttle service within the park is limited**.

Study Overview

- In March 2020 roads in High Park were closed on weekends and holidays as a pandemic measure to encourage physical distancing and access to green space.
- High Park Movement Strategy (HPMS) was launched in summer of 2021 to explore comprehensive travel network improvements in High Park.
- The goal of the HPMS is to better serve park users and the surrounding community, while prioritizing improvements to safety, accessibility and the park's natural environment.
- A preferred strategy was developed with Transportation Services through the HPMS to provide a comprehensive approach to address these goals and to ensure High Park can continue to successfully serve multiple functions for many different park user groups.
- Full implementation of the strategy will achieve full road closures within the park alongside measures to address accessibility and operational needs.



Study Process – Strategy Options & Evaluation

Four strategies were developed, refined and evaluated as part of the study process:

Full Road Closures

Time-based Road Closures

Area-based Road Closures

Full Road Re-Opening

An evaluation tool was developed with seven criteria categories reflecting the priorities expressed by park users, findings from research and analysis, and alignment with established City plans and policies.

- User Safety
- Access & Equity
- Environment
- Mobility
- Implement-ability
- Impacts to Programs and Permitting
- Technical Viability



Study Engagement

HPMS has been supported by a multi-phase engagement process with in-person and online events that have reached **over 10,000 participants** over the last two years.

Key themes recorded through **engagement** include:

- Strong public support for road closures with varying opinions on where and when these should occur
- Accessibility accommodations
- Improved pedestrian safety measures
- Safe cycling
- Differing ideas on how to reduce conflict between road users
- Supporting High Park's unique natural environment
- Concerns regarding traffic and parking demand in neighbouring areas



Recommended Strategy

Short-Term Actions

- **Permanent closure of West Road and portions of Colborne Lodge Drive**, creating over 1.7 km of new car-free space seven days a week
- **Car-free Sundays** throughout the park
- **Traffic calming** measures (e.g. road narrowing, speed cushions)
- Dedicated **cycling infrastructure** including active-transportation routes and separated bike lanes, and a recreational cycling pilot
- **Parking is reduced** by 60% but main lots at Grenadier Café, High Park Zoo and Spring Rd are maintained

Medium-Term Actions

- **Enhancements to transit and a new shuttle service** that will prioritize affordability, accessibility, frequent service and green technology
- **Improvements to sidewalks** and pedestrian crossing areas
- Addition of **pick-up/drop-off areas, accessible spaces**, and family priority spaces. Paid parking to be explored
- Opportunities for **public realm enhancements and re-naturalization**
- Prepare and deliver **a detailed implementation strategy** for full road closures








Full Implementation

- **Full road closures** and other improvements

Recommended Strategy – Map

- Proposed changes focus on existing paved areas (such as roads, sidewalks, and parking lots).
- Recommendations will be coordinated with the findings and outcomes of the Parkside Drive study, led by Transportation Services.

Map Legend

-  Roads proposed to be car-free
-  Roads proposed to be car-free on Sundays
-  Roads open to visitor vehicles at all times
-  Existing paved pedestrian road (no change)
-  Direction of travel
-  Parking Lot
-  No Visitor Vehicle Entry



Draft Concept Render – West Road



- Transformed into an active transportation route, with dedicated space for people to walk, run, or roll and widened sidewalks to support more amenities.

Draft Concept Render – Colborne Lodge Drive



- Include separated bike lanes and designated pick-up/drop-off areas would be available at key destinations
- Improved pedestrian crossing areas would improve safety and visibility.

Draft Concept Render – Bloor St W Entrance



- Bloor Street West becomes the main exit for motor vehicles with widened sidewalks for pedestrians where possible.
- Cyclists can enter the park via Bloor Street West and the southbound lane would only be used by people cycling.

Implementation

- Phased approach starting with improvements in summer 2023 using current resources. Changes to road closures and more immediate improvements would take effect following August long weekend (August 7).
- Initial cost estimates suggest a range of \$10 to \$15 million dollars based on comparable transportation and public realm projects. Updated costing based on detailed design and a financial strategy will be developed through the next stage of work.
- PFR will continue to engage with park users and consult on detailed design.
- Full implementation of the strategy will achieve full road closures within the park alongside measures to address accessibility and operational needs are in place.

