

RE: 2023.IE1.4 Midtown Yonge Complete Street Pilot

To Councillors McKelvie, Colle, Burnside, Peruzza, Saxe, and Morley,

Friends and Families for Safe Streets is writing to express our whole-hearted support of making the Midtown Yonge Complete Street pilot permanent. In a city that gestures toward Vision Zero, keeping a significant safety improvement shouldn't even be in question.

We will never, ever reach our Vision Zero or TransformTO climate goals if this city council doesn't have the courage to install complete streets on arterial roadways like Yonge St. We were heartened and grateful for the rapid and urgent ActiveTO infrastructure improvements including Yonge St that were deployed in the first two years of the pandemic.

Our spokesperson Jess Spieker wishes to express with immense thanks and gratitude that the Midtown Yonge Complete Street Pilot changed her life. You might have already heard her personal story about nearly being killed on her bike by a reckless SUV driver who slammed into her, breaking her spine, inflicting a brain injury and blowing her life apart, leaving her diminished and living in chronic pain. Before the Midtown Yonge Complete Street was installed, Jess couldn't ride her bike to work with her midtown clients, because the threat to her life and safety from reckless, speeding, distracted, or hostile rage-fueled drivers was too great on streets designed for high-speed car throughput instead of safety. Since protected cycling infrastructure was installed, now she can ride her bike from her home in the east end to the midtown area, using the connected network of Bloor/Danforth and Yonge. This increase in physical activity allowed by making active transportation a safe option has significantly improved Jess's physical and mental health. The Complete Street has given Jess a part of her former life back that was robbed from her by road violence, and that is hugely meaningful for her. **For every complaint, there are many people whose mobility and health have been improved by the Complete Street.**

It has been clearly and repeatedly proven that naysayers are at best misinformed and at worst intentionally lying about any negative effect on EMS response times. Those who complain about being 'landlocked' intentionally bought homes on streets that could only be accessed via Yonge St. They have always benefited from reduced car traffic on their own street, yet now hypocritically want to deny the safety benefit of reduced exposure to cars to everybody who uses Yonge St, including the precariously employed delivery workers who deliver their restaurant orders to their doorsteps.

Naysayers might also highlight the violent killing of Kartik Saini as evidence that Complete Streets don't prevent road violence. In fact, Kartik was not killed within the Complete Street itself, but rather at an intersection, a weak point in the design. There are no design elements at most intersections in Toronto to protect people outside of cars. The intersection of St Clair W and Yonge St does not have any raised crosswalks or curb extensions to force drivers to slow down and pay attention. Even though the technology is easily available, it does not have camera enforcement against illegal turns or intersection blocking. For reasons we can't understand, the physical protection for the active transportation lane does not continue right

up to the intersection – the lanes are merely paint for nearly 100m from both the north and south. Kartik's death is only proof that more needs to be done at intersections in this city to guarantee that people outside of cars are safe, not that Complete Streets are ineffective.

Further, you may have heard about the pedestrian fatality inflicted by a truck driver on January 6, where the driver struck a light pole, and knocked it over onto a woman who was walking innocently on the sidewalk, ultimately killing her. This occurred on Yonge St, but at Hillside, north of where the Complete Street ends. Had the Complete Street pilot been constructed to connect to Eglinton Ave instead of ending at Davisville, this fatality almost certainly would have been prevented, because the driver would not have been able to park so close to (or on) the sidewalk that they were able to hit the light pole as they pulled away, due to the presence of the cycle track acting as a physically protected buffer, forcing the driver to keep a few feet away from the sidewalk. The victim and her family would have had a normal day, instead of her being needlessly killed and her family thrust into a never-ending nightmare of grief over such a senseless, negligent and easily preventable act.

It is too late for the members of Friends and Families for Safe Streets to personally benefit from Vision Zero. Our loved ones are never coming back, or for those of us who are survivors, our health and quality of life is irreparably destroyed. **We advocate because what we want most of all is for what happened to us to never happen to anyone else ever again.** Infrastructure such as the Midtown Yonge Complete Street prevents road violence from being inflicted on more people. Where it is well designed and offers physical protection from cars, it stops the carnage and devastation of road violence. Infrastructure redesign is the only way cities around the world have reduced road violence and reduced climate-catastrophic car dependency, and it is the only way Toronto will achieve Vision Zero.

A vote against making this pilot permanent is, in fact, a vote for more road violence. **A vote against making this pilot permanent is a vote for more beloved people being killed or horribly injured on Toronto's streets.** No city with a genuine commitment to Vision Zero would ever tear out a Complete Street. Complete Streets make sense everywhere that you do not want people to die in preventable crashes. In other words, Complete Streets make sense everywhere.

The Midtown Yonge Complete Street Pilot must be made permanent, improved at intersections, and rapidly expanded on arterial roadways across the city to confront our twin dovetailing crises of road violence and climate collapse. Please take it from us, the unwilling experts: **it is easier and less costly, in every possible way, to build safe streets than it is to grieve and suffer in the aftermath of road violence.**

Sincerely,



Jessica Spieker, Spokesperson
Friends and Families for Safe Streets