



the centre for
active transportation

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October 23, 2023

Toronto City Hall

Infrastructure and Environment Committee

100 Queen Street West

Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Re: Connected Communities: Advancing Year-Round Trails Between Earl Bales Par and York Mills Station

Dear **Chair McKelvie and Infrastructure and Environment Committee Members,**

I am writing on behalf of The Centre for Active Transportation (TCAT), **In support of the motion *Connected Communities: Advancing Year-Round Trails Between Earl Bales Park and York Mills Station***. TCAT conducts research and education that support a vision for cities that are safe, equitable and enjoyable communities to walk and bike. As a national leader on best practices and research for supporting sustainable mobility, TCAT has worked with the City of Toronto on evaluating the impacts of several cycling initiatives, including the Bloor Street bike lanes, the Destination Danforth project, and the Midtown Yonge Complete Streets pilot.

Toronto's ravines are essential aspects of supporting healthy, active, and connected lifestyles for many. However, for many communities and individuals, barriers prevent easy access to the ravine system. This has needlessly disconnected neighborhoods, reduces opportunities for children and families to easily and affordably access recreational opportunities, and pushed more pedestrian and bike traffic onto busy and unsafe roadways. Advancing a year-round trail connection in this section of our ravine system would be transformative in several important ways:

- 1) Safe and convenient walking and cycling infrastructure crossing the 401 highway in this area is severely lacking. Those wishing to cross the highway on foot or bike are limited to major streets like Bathurst, where the infrastructure is inhospitable to active and sustainable modes of travel. As the ravine passes underneath the highway, a year-round trail connection would be a convenient and safe active travel route that aligns with the City's cycling network plan.
- 2) A connected and integrated cycling network is an essential aspect of encouraging modal shift and reducing car dependence. Transform TO calls for 75% of all trips under 5km in the City of Toronto to be made by sustainable modes of travel by 2030. A year-round active travel corridor would provide residents around Bathurst and Sheppard with a safe way of connecting to the Yonge subway line as part of their daily commutes. This would support current and future residents of the area and is aligned with the City's mobility and climate mitigation goals.
- 3) Access to green space in Toronto varies greatly based on personal identities (such as gender, race, income, ability). Similarly, personal identity also impacts Torontonians' travel mode, with women, lower income, and racialized individuals more likely to rely on sustainable modes of transportation to get around. As one of Toronto's signature parks and community assets, access to Earl Bales is currently geared towards cars, with ample parking provided, while access by foot or bike is restricted in many places and difficult to navigate. Improving walking and cycling connections to the park will help everyone in the city benefit from access to the park and improve equity outcomes across the board.

In closing, we are optimistic that this initiative can be advanced quickly and look forward to collaborating with local Councillors, community members, and other stakeholder groups to determine what the best possible trail alignment could be.

Sincerely,

David Simor

David Simor

Director

The Centre for Active Transportation