



April 4, 2023

To: Toronto East York Community Council

Re: TE4.66 - Pedestrian Safety on Avenue Road, Bloor Street to St. Clair Avenue West

Dear Community Council members,

I am writing to express Walk Toronto's strong support for improving safety on Avenue Road between Bloor Street West and St. Clair Avenue West, including reducing the speed limit to 40 km/hr and the implementation of a pedestrian safety pilot program, as presented in motion TE4.66 from Councillor Saxe.

The sidewalks on this part of Avenue Road are extremely narrow, and walking on these sidewalks with cars travelling at 50 km/hr or more is frightening and dangerous. It's well established that, in collisions, faster vehicle speeds result in more injuries and deaths, and at 50 km/hr most pedestrians hit by a car will be killed. The chances of survival are much higher at 40 km/hr.

It makes very little sense for this stretch of Avenue Road to be signed at 50 km/hr, since the longer parts of the road south of Bloor Street and north of St. Clair are both now 40 km/hr. Just a few months ago, in December, City Council agreed to reduce the speed limit on Avenue Road between Chaplin Crescent and Eglinton Avenue West to 40 km/hr from 50 km/hr, at the request of Councillor Matlow (TE1.28).

While the section of Avenue Road between Bloor and St. Clair is theoretically six lanes, this width is misleading. There is a permanent lane reduction in place southbound just south of St. Clair in front of Brown Junior Public School. There are some sections where parking is allowed outside of rush hour. As well, there have been constant lane reductions due to the construction of new buildings all along the route in the past ten years, and further lane reductions are expected as projects currently in the pipeline come on board over the next ten to twenty years. Each of these lane reductions and construction zones means less room for vehicles to drive safely at high speeds, and triggers merging into active traffic lanes by moving vehicles that encounter them, which becomes more dangerous with high speeds. As well, they can often require temporary sidewalk detours that expose pedestrians even more to vehicle traffic.

Given the existing lane reductions, and the future long-term but unpredictable lane reductions due to construction zones that are expected all along this stretch of Avenue Road over the next decades, it should be considered as effectively a 4-lane road (it is already 4 lanes both north and south of this stretch) where a 40 km/hr speed limit is reasonable and appropriate. For the safety of pedestrians and other road users, we urge City Council to implement this speed limit reduction.



As well, given the constant but erratic lane reductions at various points along the route, as well as the narrow sidewalks and pervasive danger to pedestrians, for the sake of safety it makes sense to implement a pilot project to make that lane reduction consistent and permanent along this entire section of Avenue Road. Temporary barriers can be used to reduce the road space from 6 lanes to 4. The space created can be used for platforms to widen the sidewalk, planters to make the street more attractive, parklets or café space for resting, or parking or delivery zones where appropriate.

The need for additional sidewalk space is particularly important for accessibility. Many light standards and utility poles are positioned in the middle of the narrow sidewalks on Avenue Rd. along the stretch between Davenport Rd. and St. Clair Ave. These barriers create severe accessibility problems for users of wheelchairs and strollers, especially in the winter when snow accumulations can narrow the pedestrian clearway to an even greater degree.

The use of temporary physical barriers to reduce lanes has already been well-established in Toronto, for example along the King Street Transit Priority Corridor. Not only would this measure create a more consistent, safer street for everyone, but it would give the opportunity to use platforms to expand the sidewalk where it does not meet the City's current minimum standards, greatly improving accessibility and pedestrian comfort and safety.

Reducing the street consistently to four lanes in conjunction with reducing the speed limit will create a safer and more comfortable pedestrian experience along this section of Avenue Road. It is a section that includes an ever-increasing number of residents in new and established multi-unit buildings, and 5 schools and 4 senior's residences on it or within close walking distance. These measures will also likely make for a safer driving experience for vehicles, and cycling experience for cyclists.

We urge the Toronto and East York Community Council to support the motion from Councillor Saxe to improve pedestrian Safety on Avenue Road from Bloor Street West to St. Clair Avenue West.

Walk Toronto is a grassroots, volunteer organization dedicated to making Toronto a better city for walking.

Thank you,

Dylan Reid  
On behalf of Walk Toronto