

April 11, 2023  
Toronto and East York Community Council  
100 Queen Street West  
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

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

To Councillors Saxe, Matlow, Bradford, Bravo, Fletcher, Malik, Moise and Perks,

I am writing on behalf of Friends and Families for Safe Streets to express our wholehearted support for recommendations 1 and 3-5 in TE4.66, the motion from Councillor Saxe to make immediate safety improvements along Avenue Rd.

Friends and Families for Safe Streets is a group of people whose loved ones were senselessly killed in crashes that could have been prevented, and survivors who were devastated by crashes causing our severe, life-altering injuries. We are the ones who have paid the worst possible price for Toronto's deadly streets, especially our high-speed arterial roads, whether they be in our suburbs, or in the downtown core, like Avenue Rd.

To mark the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims in 2021, I led a 'tour of road violence' on Avenue Rd, starting at Roxborough St and walking south to Bloor. The amount of violent, devastating crashes along this short 1 km stretch of Avenue Rd is jaw-dropping. It was eye-opening to walk paying close attention to the conditions of the sidewalk: narrow, hostile, loud, disturbingly close to speeding, potentially distracted, drunk or rage-fueled drivers, crosswalks few and far between. People on foot are relegated to extremely narrow sidewalks because that's the only space left after dedicating 6 wide lanes to speeding car traffic. This imbalance becomes even more jarring, callous, frustrating and unacceptable while focusing on all the instances of road violence that arose out of that very design that prioritizes speeding cars over safety. The following violent incidents could have been prevented by better design:

- On November 7 2016, at Roxborough St, a two-car high-speed crash caused one of the cars to fly off the road and into a young man in his late 20s who was walking on the sidewalk, pinning him against a wall and inflicting severe, life altering injuries. The kinetic force required to fling a car off the roadway can only result from extremely high speeds, speeds that should never be achievable by any driver within a city.
- On June 13 2015, 26-year-old Adam Excell was killed while turning left on his bike through the intersection at Davenport. A 19-year-old speeding drunk driver named Mitchell Irwin slammed into him at an estimated 87km/h, then drove off to dump his case of beer before fleeing to Keswick. Had there been a protected intersection, let alone *any* physically protected cycling infrastructure, Adam would not have been exposed to speeding traffic through the centre of the intersection to make his turn, and this crash could have been averted. Moreover, had there been any speed calming in place, either the crash would have been prevented, or it would have been survivable.

- On December 18 2018, another two-car high-speed crash flung one of the cars into the gas manifold at the front of Hazleton Place Retirement Residence. It caused extreme disruption: seniors had to be evacuated, the street was totally closed, and a 'shelter in place' order was issued. As crews dealt with the gas leak, water was sprayed everywhere and froze, covering everything in slippery ice. The gas manifold now has several robust concrete bollards protecting it, as someone took an actual interest in preventing a similar crash in the future. More consideration was given to the safety of a gas manifold than to the safety of any human being walking, rolling or biking along Avenue Rd.
- On July 20 2019, a person in their early 50s was struck and severely injured crossing the street near Bernard Ave. Roadway engineers know that the crosswalks to the north and south were too far away for people to be likely to use them, forcing people who want to cross at this location to take their chances mid-block. They also know that it can be very difficult to gauge when it is safe to cross on a high-speed 6-lane highway. With a raised crosswalk across Avenue, fewer and narrower vehicle lanes and lower vehicle speeds, this person could have made it across without having their health and life destroyed.
- On May 18 2010, a young teenager riding a bike in front of the Ferrari dealership was doored by a driver, slamming them into a TTC bus. This young person survived with severe, life-altering injuries. Had there been a protected cycle track, it would have been impossible for a driver to door them, and this teenager would have had a normal day instead of a terrifying brush with death, and unknown injuries that could include a catastrophic brain injury, severed spinal cord, shattered bones, and ruptured organs.
- On February 25 2006 a person in their late 50s was crossing at Elgin with the right of way in a crosswalk, but was struck by a left-turning driver who failed to yield. They sustained severe, life-altering injuries. A raised crosswalk, curb extensions and a leading pedestrian interval might have spared this person from this senseless, life-destroying violence. This person could have been a parent or grandparent. Who knows what the devastating ripple effect through their family and community was.
- On March 1 2008, a young teenager between 15-19 tried to cross near Elgin St, and was struck and nearly killed. As with the above crash near Bernard, there were no crosswalks within a reasonable distance. This area of Avenue Rd has many appealing businesses and shops on both sides, but no way to safely travel from one side the other.
- On June 14 2012 someone in their early 20s tried to cross Avenue Rd near Elgin, about 40 metres further north than the above teenager. Nothing was learned from that 2008 collision and nothing was changed, so this young person was also struck and also received horrifying, life-altering severe injuries. Both of these young people paid for this negligent street design with inadequate crosswalks with their health and future.
- On May 15 2008, a pedestrian in their early 70s was crossing at Yorkville Rd with the right of way, doing everything correctly, and nevertheless a left turning driver struck and severely injured them. Had there been a raised crosswalk or curb extensions, the driver

might have paid more attention and slowed down, knowing from the intersection design they were about to enter pedestrian territory and encounter a speed hump.

- On August 18 2021, a cement truck driver killed 18-year-old Miguel Joshua Escanan, as he rode his bike north, leaving the safety of the cycle tracks on the south side of Bloor behind him and being thrown to the wolves on the untamed car lanes north of Bloor. The driver passed him too closely, and Miguel was sucked under the rear wheels of the truck and dragged and crushed to death. Had decision makers decided to continue the University/Queens Park cycle track farther north, Miguel would still be alive today. His family would not be devastated by the loss of their promising young man, cruelly robbed of their future with him, their hearts shattered with neverending grief.

What all of this horrific, senseless, devastating violence inflicted on people outside of cars in this mere 1 km stretch has in common is: untamed high vehicle speeds; no physical protection between cars and people who are walking, rolling and biking; inadequate crosswalks, too far apart; and hostile narrow sidewalks. What all of this life-shattering violence and horrific human carnage also has in common is that it could have easily been prevented with Vision Zero road design. We hope that reading the above litany of senseless, preventable road violence will instil an unshakeable sense of urgency to implement a solution to Avenue Rd's dangerous car-centric design as quickly as possible.

Further, we hope that the coming changes will include important safety measures like raised crosswalks, sharp turning radii, curb extensions, protected intersections, more crosswalks, narrower and fewer lanes for cars, and a robustly protected active transportation lane. All of those inexpensive design changes contribute to saving lives. Human life should not be treated by our leaders as if it were cheaper than some prefabricated concrete barriers.

We do not support recommendation 2 because we know that Toronto police are significantly more likely to use violent force and even draw a gun on an unarmed person who is not white. Therefore, involving police for enforcement is not a solution to public safety. The safety of some should not come at the expense of the safety of equity-deserving communities. It is far better, more fair and less costly to build streets that are safe by design.

Overall, we are very pleased to see this motion, and we call on all members of the Toronto East York Community Council to delete recommendation 2 and vote in favour of this motion on April 12, and at the next city council meeting.

Thank you,



Jessica Spieker, Spokesperson  
Friends and Families for Safe Streets