



February 26, 2024

Toronto City Hall
Infrastructure and Environment Committee
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON
M5H 2N2
Re: IE11.1 – Congestion Management Plan 2023-2026 Update

Dear Chair McKelvie and committee members,

As per the Walk Toronto submission of October 2023, we would like to highlight that the staff update continues to emphasize congestion over safe passage. The word congestion implies negative impacts for operators of vehicles in the city. It is our core belief that the safe passage of people, not vehicles, must be prioritized.

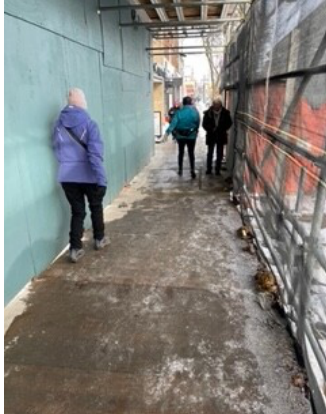
Because much of the Toronto congestion is the direct result of the ongoing construction, there is considerable focus in this item on ways to better facilitate movement around these sites. We commend Transportation Services on their efforts to engage the public in this issue and we appreciate many of the suggestions outlined in the report to resolve the wayfinding challenges around construction work — all of which we hope will be approved by the committee and forwarded to Council.

We would add, based on our experience walking around the city, that this long-term plan needs augmenting with immediate resolution of dangerous sites.

We include example photos of such sites as per an email sent to Transportation Services on February 16, 2024. Several of these photos identify treacherous construction sites alongside high-speed arterial roads. Could there be a quick and effective way to lower posted speed limits at these construction sites.



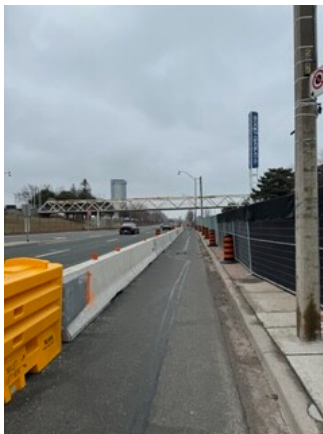
Queen Street West, east of University Avenue. Dangerous path and unclear messaging.



NW corner of Castlefield and Yonge on Sunday, January 14, 2024. This “walkway” was a slipway. Plywood covered what had been sidewalk. All it took was a light snowfall to make this surface completely treacherous for pedestrians.



Sheppard Avenue West (east side looking north) just south of Kodiak Crescent, on Sunday, February 11, 2024. Vehicles easily drive along Sheppard Avenue West at speeds 20-30k over the posted limit.



Martin Goodman Trail at Ontario Place, Thursday, February 1, 2024. While the jersey barrier is better than cones, vehicles travel along here at much higher speeds than the posted limit. This is a good example of a location that would benefit by reducing the posted speed limit to lower risk for injury to vulnerable road users and construction site workers. Also, this narrow detour will be entirely insufficient the minute spring reliably arrives, and people return to the Martin Goodman Trail.

Further, Walk Toronto would ask that members of the IEC consider some of our additional concerns around longer term solutions mentioned in this report.

Re: Recommendation 1. "...undertake a pilot to provide construction closure information in an accessible format for the visually impaired."

Walk Toronto believes that, like many of the recommendations in this report, this pilot will take considerable time, and we need immediate measures to eliminate dangers.

A GPS-based application would have to provide directions to assist the person to navigate safely around the barrier, information to allow the blind person to alternate route to follow. Such an application should be considered as an additional way to convey information, but it cannot be the only one, as not every blind person has a smartphone with a data plan. Additionally, people will have to be trained on the use of the app and the new functionality.

Walk Toronto also recommends seeking input not only from CNIB but from all organizations catering to the needs of individuals who are blind or partially sighted (including but not limited to Balance for Blind Adults, Canadian Council of the Blind, Alliance for the Equality of Blind Canadians). A collaborative approach ensures diverse perspectives and a more inclusive outcome. This is something the City should be leading, and it should not be outsourced.

The City should continue to leverage existing Standards for Accessible Communication and ensure a the baseline for any digital communications related to construction disruptions. It is important to note that there are already well-established standards, such as the AODA communication-related standards, and best practices for accessible documents that the City should already be following. It is the City responsibility to adhere to these standards and ensure that information is presented in text-based formats. Information about specific location of construction related disruptions on sidewalks, intersections, and other areas that impact pedestrians should be presented in text (e.g. the south sidewalk in X street, the northeast crossing at X intersection is blocked), not only shown as images in maps.

In addition, we recommend active Engagement with Disability Organizations: Beyond the minimum requirement of providing accessible documents, the city should take proactive steps to ensure that information about construction closures reaches people with disabilities effectively. This involves actively engaging with organizations serving individuals with disabilities and leveraging their communication channels, including newsletters and social media. This collaboration would enhance the dissemination of crucial information to the target audience.

Re: Recommendation 2. Walk Toronto believes construction sites should have a paid worker partly responsible for assisting people navigate safely around construction barriers, and coordinating/informing the City about specific changes that will impact pedestrians and cyclists, someone ensuring there is someone on-site who is accountable for the barriers in public space.

Re: The Status of work regarding "Don't Block the Box".

Walk Toronto believes that in addition to the fine increases noted in the report, that increases should be included for violations at intersections when drivers turn right on a red when signed otherwise.

Walk Toronto has long believed that right-on-red should be banned across the city but as soon as possible at any intersection experiencing any construction.

It should be noted that right on red movement of vehicles poses a significant danger to pedestrians and cyclists. Further, while the right on red is often seen to improve flow of vehicles (minimize vehicular congestion), it is often true that vehicles making rights on a red light impede movement of vehicles travelling safely through a green light.

Re: The City's Need to Pilot New Technologies.

It is essential that anything that comes out of those collaborations already incorporates accessibility and inclusive design standards. In the past, Walk Toronto has expressed concern over automated devices on sidewalks, including micro-utility devices. Expanding pilot projects outside the Technology Innovation Zone risks personal injury to pedestrians and people with disabilities, especially given the tragic state of sidewalks and roads around the city in the current construction environment.

Sincerely,

Daniella Levy-Pinto & Lee Scott, Members: Steering Committee, Walk Toronto info@walktoronto.ca

cc. Cllrs McKelvie, Colle, Morley, Pasternak, Perruzza, Saxe