

From: [Jonathan Schmidt](#)
To: [Infrastructure and Environment](#)
Subject: [External Sender] My comments for 2024.IE14.3 on May 28, 2024 Infrastructure and Environment Committee
Date: May 24, 2024 9:47:24 AM

To the City Clerk:

Please add my comments to the agenda for the May 28, 2024 Infrastructure and Environment Committee meeting on item 2024.IE14.3, Cycling Network Plan Update (2025 - 2027)

I understand that my comments and the personal information in this email will form part of the public record and that my name will be listed as a correspondent on agendas and minutes of City Council or its committees. Also, I understand that agendas and minutes are posted online and my name may be indexed by search engines like Google.

Comments:

Members of the City of Toronto Infrastructure and Environment Committee,

We are writing on behalf of the Scarborough Junction Community in Scarborough Southwest (Ward 20) and its residents.

We urge the inclusion of the Scarborough West Trail in the Cycling Network Plan Update (2025 - 2027).

We ask you to ensure the staff and financial resources to build this vital infrastructure quickly.

Transportation Services recommend not moving forward with this project at this time. We disagree. This project has been promised for at least 50 years and has overwhelming community support. This community cannot be told again, "not at this time." This trail is supported by Councillors and the Mayor. We are in a part of Toronto lacking infrastructure for active transportation. This project is essential to Toronto's commitments to equity and addressing climate change. The reasons given by staff for not proceeding are not insurmountable barriers, but rather will require political will and allocation of resources.

This is essential infrastructure in a community with very few safe options for active transportation, as indicated by the large blank area of wards 20 (Scarborough Southwest) and 21 (Scarborough Centre) in the Cycling Network Plan. In the near future, there will be a significant increase in population density in this community as proposed developments are built. Those new residents will need safe ways, and alternatives to cars, to connect to transit, retail, employment, services, recreational space and centres, and parks.

The community has been asking for, and promised, this important infrastructure for over 50 years. A summary of that history can be found here:

https://localwiki.org/toronto/West_Scarborough_Railpath Most recently, our current City Councillor, **Parthi Kandavel**, promised its completion as part of his campaign for election. The majority of candidates in the 2022 election and 2023 bi-election promised the same. Our previous Councillor, **Gary Crawford**, committed to work with the city to create this infrastructure. He stated "I am fully supportive and am working on next steps to make this vision a reality." It was promised by the previous Councilor, **Michelle Berardinetti** as a compromise for removing cycling lanes on Birchmount and Pharmacy. During the Mayoral election, **Olivia Chow** visited the site of this path and voiced her support. Councillor **Josh Matlow** also walked the path route with community members and made the path a promise in his mayoral platform. In 2005 a portion of this trail, including a bridge over St. Clair, was promised to the community as part of negotiations around new housing development in the area.

Not building this infrastructure is a failure of the City of Toronto in its commitments to access, equity and diversity. This is one of the most diverse communities in Toronto and the trail would also provide connections for other diverse communities. This majority of the population of this community are racialized and a significant number face challenges due to poverty.

Not building this infrastructure is a failure of the City of Toronto in its commitments to address climate change. This is a community with few options such as local groceries and other services. This trail will connect several neighbourhoods to the subway and encourage local trips by active transportation (cycling and walking.) Without this trail many in the community are forced to use cars for transportation.

Not building this infrastructure is a failure of the City of Toronto in its commitments to expand safe cycling and walking across the city. This community has a long history of failed initiatives to provide this kind of infrastructure to the point where it is a notable blank space on maps of current and proposed cycling and walking infrastructure. This community deserves alternatives to cars for travel within its neighbourhoods and for connecting to other parts of Toronto. The proposed trail is a rare example of collaboration and unanimous support from both active transportation advocates and community members less supportive of cycling infrastructure.

We recognize that building this trail will not be straightforward. However the obstacles are not insurmountable and will simply require additional effort by the city. We urge the city to provide the staff and other resources needed.

We respectfully disagree with a number of the reasons provided by city staff for not

recommending this trail (as per Attachment 6 to the current report to IEC: Project-specific Council Request Responses

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2024/ie/bgrd/backgroundfile-245677.pdf>. The text is also pasted below.)

- **"Steep slopes approaching St. Clair Avenue East from both sides"**: This is simply not true if the currently abandoned bridge, or a newly built bridge, is incorporated into the trail. The neighborhood to the south of St. Clair; the neighbourhood, community centre, and TTC parking lot to the north of St. Clair; and the proposed route of the trail are all at the same height.
- **"The reservation of the unused bridge span for TTC expansion"**: We are not aware of planned expansion of the TTC in this area. If there is planned expansion, it is at best decades in the future at which time a new pedestrian/cycling bridge can be built rather than the current easier and less expensive option of repurposing the current unused bridge. This has not been named as an issue in any of the previous studies or recommendations for repurposing this bridge. These reports all recommended the use of the bridge to either connect the local neighbourhoods or as part of a trail system:
 - The 2017 [Warden Woods Community Secondary Plan](#),
 - BY-LAW No. 994-2011: ["Conveyance to the City . . . the former CN rail bridge over St. Clair Avenue East to implement a pedestrian/cycling trail system](#),
 - "Section 37 & 45 Community Benefits Secured from 1988 to 2018": "Conveyance of land &/or easements & CN Rail bridge for pedestrian/cycling trail system; easement over existing trail leading from St. Clair Ravine Park to St. Clair Ave. E"
 - A March 9, 2007 City of Toronto [report](#) on the "Former CN Rail Spur North of St. Clair Avenue East between Warden Avenue and Birchmount Road" (recommending this bridge as part of the currently proposed trail system)
 - August 28, 2006 [report](#) on "Former CN Rail Spur north of St. Clair Avenue East; between Warden Avenue and Birchmount Road"
 - October 28, 2005, [BY-LAW No. 949-2005](#), "The former CN bridge over St Clair Avenue East should be considered for re-use as a pedestrian bridge to link the northern and southern portions of the "Green Pedestrian Corridor"."
 - September 21, 2005 "[Final Report Phase 3 Warden Corridor Land Use Planning Study](#)" states, "The former Canadian National GECO Spur rail bridge over St Clair Avenue East should be considered for re-use to link the lands north of St. Clair Avenue with the Warden subway station"
 - It is also notable that in the early 70's, a bikeway system was mapped, including a fully funded (and allowances provided for) [hydro corridor route from the Warden subway station to the Metro Zoo](#)," The plan was thwarted by some Scarborough politicians and staff "worried about the loss of tax revenues to the city from taking over a portion of the hydro corridor, especially for a path that might be used by non-residents."

"A separate, multi-use trail connection is currently being designed which will connect The Meadoway / Gattineau Corridor with the Don Trail." This is simply ludicrous. We

believe the connection referred to is in the Bermondsey Neighbourhood. This access point to the Meadoway will be at least an hour long bicycle ride (2-3 hour walk) from our community following the Taylor Creek Path and then back up a hill from a Don Valley path. The proposed Scarborough West Trail will instead provide a direct route to the Meadoway following a route to Kennedy Station and then following an existing path north along the decommissioned Scarborough Rapid Transit right-of-way.

- **"challenges with design, approvals, exemptions, and property acquisition"** We agree these are challenges to this project. Rather than barriers, they are hurdles that will require political will, negotiations, staff time, and other resources.

With the full support of the residents of Scarborough Junction Community we urge the members of the Infrastructure and Environment Committee to include the Scarborough West Trail in the Cycling Network Plan and to recommend City Council direct city staff and provide the resources necessary to begin work on this long overdue project immediately.

Jonathan Schmidt

Executive member and on behalf of the Scarborough Junction Community
(Resident of: Scarborough Southwest Ward 20)

Addendum:

Scarborough West Rail Trail -MM47.60

Motion: On July 19, 2022, City Council adopted the Scarborough West Railtrail Pedestrian and Cycling Connections, and requested the General Manager, Transportation Services to report on implementing recommendations from the Warden Woods Community Secondary Plan for a future Scarborough West Rail Trail as part of its capital plan along the former GN-GECO rail spur line in Scarborough in the next Cycling Network Near-Term Plan Report. (<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2022.MM47.60>)

Response: Transportation Services reviewed the recommendations from the Warden Woods Community Secondary Plan and identified substantial feasibility challenges. Challenges include the steep slopes approaching St. Clair Avenue East from both sides and the reservation of the unused bridge span for TTC expansion, precluding the option envisaged in the Secondary Plan for an elevated crossing over St. Clair Avenue. The corridor extending north of St. Clair Avenue East towards Kennedy Road is narrow, not under City ownership, and, based on the locations of the hydro towers, creek, rail line, and properties, the 15 m setback required by Hydro One between a trail and hydro towers cannot be achieved.

Due to challenges with design, approvals, exemptions, and property acquisition, Transportation Services does not recommend moving forward with this project at this time. A separate, multi-use trail connection is currently being designed which will connect The Meadoway / Gatineau Corridor with the Don Trail. This connection is expected to be complete in 2025.

West Scarborough Rail Path description and history:

https://localwiki.org/toronto/West_Scarborough_Railpath