



Monday, May 27, 2023

Infrastructure & Environment Committee
c/o Matthew Green
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario, M5H 2N2

Submitted by e-mail to iec@toronto.ca

Dear Members of the Infrastructure & Environment Committee,

***Re: IE14.3 (Cycling Network Plan Update 2025 - 2027) and
IE 14.4 Cycling Network Plan - 2024 Cycling Infrastructure***

The City of Toronto is making visible progress on installing cycling infrastructure, a fact that was not obvious even in 2019. We are happy to commend these new cycling installations, including new bike lanes on arterials where they make a significant difference to the safety of city residents, including pedestrians on sidewalks. Unfortunately, we cannot ignore that the current pace of action both in the 2022-24 Near Term Plan and the proposed 2025-27 plan fall substantially short of what the city has indicated is required to achieve its TransformTO climate plan.¹ We believe that a new approach and accompanying process are needed – as articulated in our [letter of March 8, 2024](#) – that does not constantly revisit the question of whether we have a right to be safe on our roads. We would have thought that the Vision Zero principle that “human life should be prioritized over all other objectives within all aspects of the transportation system” fully responds to any question about a right to safe roads, no matter the mode of transportation.

In this letter we highlight:

- A review of implementation successes;
- The projected installation shortfall for 2022-24 bike lane/cycle track installations;
- The failure of the 2025-27 plan to “catch up” in the context of our Vision Zero and TransformTO goals;
- The piecemealing of measures on Avenue Road to address obvious dangers, including substandard sidewalks and high motor vehicle speeds despite a commendable plan

¹ We note, for example, that according to statistics cited by city staff, 40 kilometres of bike lanes were to be installed annually if the city was to meet its goal of converting by 2040 (now 2030) to 75% the number of trips under 5km that are completed on foot, bike, or transit.

proposed by city staff had gone through extensive public consultation and is fully consistent with city road safety plans and policies;

- Our concern about the lack of progress in installing the West Scarborough Rail Path, despite longstanding community demands; and
- The absence of connections to the Bloor West bike lane for equity-seeking communities in the Islington Village area, and the failure to finally complete an east-west cycling spine to connect to the border of the City of Mississauga which itself has a plan in place for bike lanes on Bloor.

Praise for laudable features of the 2022-24 and 2025-27 Near Term Implementation Plans

There are many laudable elements included in the 2025-27 plan, such as Parkside Drive (Lake Shore Boulevard to Bloor Street West), Yonge Street (Davisville Avenue to Eglinton), and Avenue Road (Bloor to Davenport Road). Groups such as Safe Parkside, Yonge4All, and the Avenue Road Safety Coalition have been advocating for such improvements over a number of years. We welcome the inclusion of the Mid-Humber Gap which will help complete the Loop Trail consisting of the Martin Goodman, Don River, Humber River, and Finch Hydro Corridor trails. We also appreciate the closing of the gap on Marlee Road cycling infrastructure, which has the added benefit of connecting the communities of Little Jamaica and Lawrence Heights.

We are also happy that the current 2022-24 plan has closed some key gaps, while adding Complete Streets features and new bikeway connections, notably,

- Bartlett-Havelock-Gladstone connections;
- College Street upgrade of the bike lane to cycle track;
- Upgrades to the Bloor Street West cycle track between Avenue Road and Spadina Avenue;
- Extension of the Bloor West Complete Street from Runnymede Road to Six Points (Kipling Avenue); and
- Cycle tracks along the Finch West LRT, which are expected to be completed this year.

Shortfall in bikeway implementation

The 2022-24 Near Term Plan will, however, fall significantly short of its installation goals. The new plan, while repeating the same 100-kilometre installation target for new bike lanes/cycle tracks (including contra flow lanes and boulevard level paths) over three years, recycles many projects from the previous near-term bike plan without offering any “catch up.” Given there have been four cyclists killed in the first four months of 2024 alone and the ever-escalating climate crisis, we call on the Infrastructure & Environment Committee, Mayor Olivia Chow, and Toronto City Council to approve the plan, but to enhance it with additional projects to create a bolder plan that Toronto needs to meet its road safety and climate goals.

The City of Toronto is currently on track to only complete 58 kilometres of on-road cycling infrastructure (excluding sharrows) during the 2022-24 period (plus an additional six kilometres

of off-road trails). Aside from the pandemic year of 2020, Toronto has never met its bike plan goals, which motivates our call to change the approval process moving forward. Currently, the bike plan gets approved “in principle” (after public consultation, debate, committee review and recommendation, and council approval), followed by design and new public consultation – usually including a significant community mobilization. Each project then returns to IEC and City Council for final approval after additional, usually long debate. Toronto must treat road safety as a right that is not open to constant debate, usually entailing the repetition of arguments related to whether residents have a right to be safe on roads. We believe staff should be given far greater authority to implement cycling infrastructure once the plan has been initially approved by council. In this one step approval process additional public consultation led by city staff is still advisable, but focused on how bikeways should be designed instead of whether to build them.

Avenue Road and the bizarre piecemealing of simple road safety improvements on a dangerous 2.1 km stretch

On March 27, 2024, a proposed staff plan to address serious safety concerns on Avenue Road – as articulated by the Avenue Road Safety Coalition (of which we are a member) over a period of seven years – appeared ready to go to the IEC. The proposed plan had been the subject of a comprehensive public consultation and survey. The proposed plan advanced key city policies, including TransformTO objectives and the Vision Zero Road Safety Plan. The councillor elected in October 2022 for the University-Rosedale ward had campaigned on a [platform to address safety deficiencies](#) on this urban motorway in the central city, including the reduction of road space for cars.

The proposed staff plan then mysteriously disappeared with little explanation. No new date for consideration of the plan by the IEC was set. On April 30, 2024 there was another --- tragically predictable --- death on Avenue Road in the 700-metre stretch between Bloor Street and Davenport Road. Suddenly, the plan was back on the agenda -- but only for this short stretch where two other cyclists had been killed in the past decade; making this the most dangerous stretch of road for cycling anywhere in the city. Now, one part of the earlier, proposed staff plan – the installation of a short cycle track – is back before the IEC but, curiously, the remainder of the proposed plan is absent. In the background report for IEC 14.4, there is mention of minor safety interventions for pedestrians (in the segment from Davenport Road to St Clair Avenue) that fall embarrassingly short of what was in the staff plan upon which the public was fully consulted. While we strongly support a cycle track for Bloor to Davenport, we reject the dubious piecemeal road safety approach for Avenue Road that does virtually nothing for pedestrians and falls pitifully short of our road safety and climate action plans.

West Scarborough Rail Path

We note a particular failure to create a rail path for which there has been significant community advocacy. Over a decade ago, Toronto's Cycling Policy Framework declared that “[b]ig gestures are needed to expand cycling culture in Toronto's inner suburbs.” The map of this network plan shows a failure to make those bold gestures. Large parts of Toronto such as in Scarborough still

have little or no safe cycling infrastructure. Most of what is in this update is a recycling of studies and projects in those areas long proposed but not implemented. We are particularly disappointed that city staff have recommended the city not move forward with the West Scarborough Rail Path. This multi-use trail is one of those rare projects in Scarborough where road safety and cycling advocates, as well as those less supportive of cycling, have collaborated and come together to identify this project as important for our communities. We are also frustrated with the lack of progress for the Danforth-Kingston Complete Streets project.

Bloor Street West connections to equity-seeking communities, and completion of westward extension to connect to Mississauga's planned bike lanes on Bloor

The omission of a short connection from population concentrations in residential towers along Mabelle and Cordova Avenues is curious, especially in light of the equity lens applied to cycling infrastructure planning. Many of these residential towers are Toronto Community Housing buildings. We note that a connection could easily be provided via Tom Riley Park (as proposed to city staff), or alternatively, via Resurrection Road. These connections would involve a bikeway of a few hundred metres length, and close a dangerous gap that otherwise forces people to ride along a short, but very dangerous stretch of Islington Avenue.

“We Belong on Bloor” is one of our group’s campaigns, which includes calling for the completion of the Bloor bike lanes to the Mississauga border. While we are excited about the completion --- and applaud city staff for its expert work on the extension from Runnymede Road to Aberfoyle Cres. (with work already underway on Phase 2) --- we are disappointed that the portion from Beamish Road to the Mississauga border will only see a *study* during the 2025-27 period. This approach fails the [road safety calls to action](#) by a coalition of community groups – and signed by twelve city councillors plus Mayor Chow. One of the calls to action was the completion of “spine” bikeways on Yonge Street and Bloor-Danforth-Kingston to the city limits by 2026. The City of Mississauga is planning to implement a redesign of their part of Bloor Street this fall, including protected bike lanes. We therefore believe that it is critical that Toronto completes the four-kilometre stretch from Beamish Road to Mississauga as soon as possible, consistent with city road safety and climate plans and policies.

Conclusion

If Toronto is to meet its goal of having 75% of trips under 5km done by walking, cycling, or transit by 2030, we reiterate our call for the Infrastructure & Environment Committee, Mayor Chow, and City Council to enhance the 2025-27 Bike Plan into the bolder plan that Toronto needs to meet its climate action targets. We also call for a change in the bikeway approval process in which the City of Toronto recognizes that road safety is not open for constant debate and that staff are given delegated authority to implement bikeways without having to send each project back to IEC and City Council for approval.

Thank you for taking these views into consideration.

Please contact us should you have any questions.

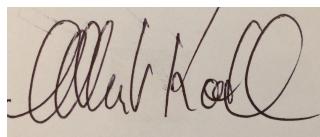
Sincerely,



Robert Zaichkowsky, Steering Committee



Jessie Ye, Coordinator



Albert Koehl, Coordinator

CC: Becky Katz – Manager, Cycling and Pedestrian Programs
Barbara Gray – General Manager, Transportation Services
Mayor Olivia Chow

Community Bikeways (est. May 2020) is a grassroots organization dedicated to holding City Hall to account for implementing its cycling network, Vision Zero Road Safety, and TransformTO climate plans. We also strive to amplify community voices, offer policy solutions, and host community events that highlight the joy, affordability, and convenience of cycling.