

May 28 2024
Toronto City Hall
Infrastructure and Environment Committee
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

RE: IE14.3 Cycling Network Plan Update (2025-2027)

To Councillors McKelvie, Colle, Burnside, Peruzza, Saxe, and Morley,

Friends and Families for Safe Streets (FFSS) is a group of people whose loved ones were senselessly killed in violent traffic crashes, and people who survived a preventable crash with severe, life altering injuries. All of the trauma, violence and loss that was inflicted on us, very suddenly and utterly against our will, could have been prevented with effective Vision Zero design changes to our streets and better policies around the uncontrolled way cars are allowed to proliferate on our streets.

It is through the lens of our painful life experience that we are writing to offer feedback, both grateful and critical, about this update.

Avenue Rd Complete Street

We are thankful to see the Complete Street being installed on Avenue Rd between Bloor and Davenport, where 3 people on bikes have been killed by drivers, and many severe injuries have been inflicted in preventable traffic crashes. This installation is tremendously overdue and will prevent future senseless, devastating fatalities and injuries.

However, we are surprised and dismayed to see the area between Davenport and St Clair W be largely neglected in terms of safety improvements for people outside of cars. We had hoped for rapid, more ambitious changes. At the very least, why not drop some jersey barriers to separate the curb lane from car traffic, and allocate that curb lane space to active transportation? It would make sense to bring this section of Avenue Rd into line with the rest of it, becoming 2 lanes in each direction, instead of leaving a portion with 6 high-speed lanes for cars.

We have seen some staunch opposition to any change to Avenue Rd, which must make change politically difficult. However, the city's own Vision Zero plan states, "human life should be prioritized over all other objectives within all aspects of the transportation system." That means that **safety improvements must be prioritized more highly than political expedience and some parking spaces**. It also means that doing temporary quick-build projects to improve safety until a road re-build is due is more important than doing nothing until the road re-build is due. Beyond the statement of Vision Zero values, all statistical evidence shows how necessary

safety upgrades are on the whole stretch of Avenue Rd between St Clair W and Bloor, not just the southern portion between Bloor and Davenport. In fact, in the Toronto Police's all-collision database, more collisions have been reported in the northern section of Avenue Rd (St Clair W to Davenport: 1458) than the southern portion (Davenport to Bloor: 1429).

On the northern portion north of Davenport, in the last 10 years, 150 people have been injured in crashes. 23 people riding bikes have been struck by drivers since 2014, with 19 of them injured, and 4 of those being extremely severe KSI-level injuries. 20 people on foot were struck by drivers, of whom 19 were injured, and 2 of those were extremely severe KSI-level injuries. On average, over 4 people outside of cars are struck and injured each and every year, on a mere 1 km of very dangerous high-speed highway-like roadway.

Though motorists are the enormous majority of those who vocally oppose safety improvements, it is motorists who bear the highest brunt of injury on this northern section of Avenue Rd. 112 people inside of cars were injured, more than 10 every year, and of those 4 were extremely severe KSI injuries. Avenue Rd is dangerous for everyone. Allocating the curb lane to active transportation, reducing Avenue Rd to two lanes in each direction, would make it safer for vehicle occupants.

Leaving the northern portion of Avenue Rd as a 6-lane speedway with no added safety for people outside of cars indicates an acceptance of the ongoing human toll of road violence. It can't possibly be the case that members of this committee, City Council, or city staff are pleased to see over 10 people be preventably injured every year, with 1 life-threatening KSI inflicted every year between Davenport and St Clair W. We urge you to install a temporary barrier such as jersey barriers to allocate the curb lane to people outside of cars and bring immediate safety improvements, building in some loading zones and accessible parking spaces where necessary.

Danforth-Kingston Delay

We are also dismayed to see the delay of the project to extend the Danforth Complete Street eastward into Scarborough between Victoria Park Ave and Scarborough Golf Club Rd. Toronto's Vision Zero 2.0 plan recognized Scarborough as an area that sees a disproportionate amount of violent death and injury. Yet, residents of Scarborough are continuing to be neglected and therefore continuing to be injured and killed.

The [Toronto Vision Zero 2.0 Road Safety Plan Update](#) states that:

more KSI collisions occur in the suburban districts, especially in Scarborough with the lowest average household income, highest percentage of immigrant population, lowest number of daily auto trips, but a more car dependent built

form. ... Scarborough has the highest rate of fatal collisions amongst the four Districts. This is in spite of the fact that Scarborough has a lower number overall traffic collisions compared to North York and Toronto & East York Districts. Moreover, a disproportionate number of KSI collisions involving school-aged children have happened in Scarborough over the last five years.

According to the Toronto Police All-Collision Database, since 2014, this area of Danforth-Kingston has seen 4,255 collisions with 6 fatalities and 694 people injured. 118 people on foot were struck, of whom 98 were injured. 66 people on bikes were struck, of whom 54 were injured.

Going farther back in time, according to Toronto's Vision Zero map, since 2008, 62 KSI collisions have occurred. Broken down by type of road user, KSI collisions and their resulting horrific injuries or deaths were inflicted on 22 people walking, 6 people on bikes, 10 people on motorcycles and 23 motor vehicle occupants. In total, 10 people were killed and 52 people had horrific life-altering injuries inflicted on them. It is extremely clear that this area of Danforth-Kingston is not safe for any road user.

This project was supposed to be completed this year. It is callous and wildly inappropriate to dither and delay on a promised, long-overdue lifesaving project in an underserved priority area. Let's get at least part of it built this year to show Scarborough residents that they aren't forgotten, and that their lives are just as valued as those whose areas are better served with Complete Street infrastructure.

Unambitious, Business-as-Usual Pace

We agree with many other individuals and groups that the Cycling Network Plan and Vision Zero need to be urgently sped up. For a city whose leaders supposedly believe that even one death or severe injury caused by a crash is too many, we are moving at what feels like a glacial pace when it comes to effective safety upgrades to prevent crashes and lessen their severity and protect people outside of cars. We know the staff who work on Cycling and Pedestrian projects and Vision Zero do excellent work, but they are seemingly understaffed and under-resourced. No Cycling Network Plan has ever been completed on time that we are aware of. In over 7 years, our Vision Zero road safety goals have never come even remotely close to being met.

When these things are within our reach, but our leaders choose not to do what it takes to reach them, it send the message that driving convenience matters more than safety, that parking spaces matter more than human lives, that yielding to infuriated motorists who don't understand what it's like for a loved one to be killed is more desirable than preventing violent death.

Conclusion

In this submission there have been a lot of numbers, but we want to close by reminding you that road safety death and injury statistics are not numbers. They are people. Each death comes with a shattered, grieving family and waves of devastation rippling through numerous communities. Those who survived with severe injuries are people whose lives were destroyed, people who were cruelly denied the rich future they had envisioned, people who will live in ceaseless chronic pain and maybe even require lifelong care. Those who survived with less severe injuries have had their sense of safety and belonging robbed from them. All of the blood spilled on our roads, all the carnage, pain, grief, anguish, rage, all of it could be prevented.

We ask you to treat road violence like the preventable public health crisis that it is, instead of chipping slowly away in small increments. More bold, widespread, and rapid implementation of road safety improvements and Complete Streets than what is in this plan, especially in our outer suburbs, are what is needed if Toronto ever hopes to complete a Cycling Network Plan on time, or ever hopes to see a year in which no road user is killed or severely injured.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'J' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Jessica Spieker
Chair, Friends and Families for Safe Streets