



Re: EC22.3 - Highlights of the 2024 Street Needs Assessment and advancing the City's Shelter Infrastructure

Dear Members of the Economic and Community Development Committee,

Unhoused people have every right to the city, yet in the absence of adequate shelter and housing supports, the transit system has become a place of last resort to seek physical safety.

We urge you to receive this letter as clear support for additional shelter spaces in Toronto. We express deep concern with the ongoing decommissioning of large shelter programs and the delays to creating safe spaces for unhoused peoples.

To date, the demand for shelter spaces still vastly exceeds available capacity - leaving people with limited options. If additional shelter spaces, including micro shelters, are not approved and expedited, unhoused people will continue to be targets of violence in the city and on public transit. Instead of accessing a shelter spot, people will find and occupy alternative undignified and unsafe spaces including but not limited to subway trains, streetcars, public parks, commercial parking lots, and sidewalks. It's crucial that decisions focus on ending the shelter and housing crisis, rather than rendering the crisis and those most impacted by it invisible.

Unhoused people have every right to public space just as much as anyone who uses the TTC. It is deeply unjust that a transit seat must serve as shelter for someone without housing, while for others it is simply a place to sit.

Being unhoused or dealing with mental health challenges is not a crime. Unhoused people experience more violence than the general population, yet have been unfairly scapegoated for perpetrating violence on public transit. Expanding supportive staff on the TTC is a positive approach, but outreach workers on the TTC focused on connecting with unhoused people will have little effect if there are no safe, supportive, indoor alternatives, such as shelter spaces and 24/7 respite centres, to offer them.

We know that homelessness afflicts people from all corners of the city. It is not an issue that discriminates based on postal code. It is crucial that we have infrastructure near people's community, work, and resources. Upcoming sites at 629 Adelaide St W, 2299 Dundas St W, 67 Adelaide St E, and 233 Carlton St will be transformative for people based out of downtown and the city's west end - but are a far cry for people living on the streets in New Toronto, West Hill, Jamestown, Willowdale, and other parts of the city.

We urge you to address this issue with the comprehensiveness it deserves. Build shelters, and keep building until not a single person is turned away from Central Intake.

Regards,  
Rebeena Subadar, TTCRiders