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**To:** Transportation Services, City of Toronto  
City Planning and Infrastructure Committee  
Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St W  
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

**Subject: Modernizing Pedestrian Crossing Infrastructure  
for Universal Accessibility**

I am writing to formally express my strong support for the city's ongoing infrastructure and transit priority reports, while also raising a critical accessibility gap in the current design and placement of pedestrian "push-to-walk" buttons across Toronto.

While the city continues to implement vital transit upgrades, the physical reality for many residents with disabilities—particularly those utilizing wheelchairs—remains heavily restricted by inaccessible intersection hardware. At the vast majority of Toronto intersections, pedestrian signal buttons are positioned too high or are poorly placed. Even with the ability to tilt or dynamically adjust seating positions in a wheelchair, reaching these buttons to request a pedestrian

crossing cycle safely is often impossible. Although a select few intersections successfully feature dedicated, accessible buttons installed on separate low-clearance poles, these remain rare exceptions rather than the standard.

Long-term shifts in public behaviour have significantly compounded this infrastructural barrier. Since the pandemic, there has been a heightened, understandable reluctance to touch shared public surfaces. Furthermore, relying on standard pedestrian traffic for assistance has become increasingly unreliable. Anecdotally, it is common to be entirely unable to catch the attention of nearby citizens to ask them to press a button, as most individuals navigating the city are wearing headphones, looking at mobile screens, or are otherwise disengaged from their immediate surroundings.

As Toronto advances major transit priority frameworks and updates its public right-of-way designs, we must move away from static, physical button interfaces that exclude vulnerable road users. I strongly encourage city staff and council to investigate and fund the integration of modern, contactless, and universally accessible solutions over the next few years.

### **Proposed Modernization Solutions:**

- **Smartphone Application Integration:** Given that the vast majority of individuals with disabilities regularly use adaptive

smartphone software tailored to their specific operational needs, the city should implement a digital protocol that allows users to securely trigger pedestrian crossing phases directly from an app as they approach an intersection.

- **Ground-Level Tactile Strips and Roll-On Sensors:** Installing robust, weather-resistant tactile activation strips lower on the post or embedded directly in the sidewalk surface would allow individuals to seamlessly signal their intent to cross by stepping on the strips or by rolling a wheelchair tire directly over the sensor.
- **Standardized Low-Clearance Infrastructure:** Where physical mechanisms must remain, the city should mandate the implementation of auxiliary, low-level activation poles positioned explicitly within unobstructed reach of the sidewalk's edge.

Ensuring that every resident can safely, independently, and confidently navigate public streets without second-guessing the infrastructure, sanitation, or availability is fundamental to a world-class transit network. I look forward to seeing Transportation Services actively champion these inclusive technical solutions in upcoming capital works projects.

Clarity and safety should be a guarantee for all road users.

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Sincerely,

**Adam Roy Cohoon**

Toronto Resident and Accessibility Advocate

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