

Complete Streets Guidelines – Summary of the Disability, Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee October 27th 2015

Summary:

On October 27th at 9:30 a.m. Adam Popper, Complete Streets Project Manager, and Brent Raymond, Partner at DTAH, presented 44 slides to the Disability, Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee on the development and draft content of the Complete Streets Guidelines. Committee members and deputants responded with comments focused on pedestrian safety. Specific concerns included the delineation between pedestrian zones and cyclist zones, the appropriate designs of mixing zones, the use of 'self-regulated design', the use of the term 'vulnerable users', and methods of consulting the disability community, among others. A motion was passed for Transportation Services staff to consider concerns raised by the Disability, Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee and deputants in further policy development of the Complete Streets Guidelines.

Questions and comments summary

1. Committee Members:

a. Comments summary:

- i. Committee had concern about 'self-regulating design' and wants clear delineation between pedestrians and those moving at faster speeds, including cyclists; mixing zones need to be well thought-out
- ii. The materials used for construction are important, for example sidewalks with smaller lines in-between are better for wheelchairs
- iii. During construction, there should be proper signage for pedestrians prior to the beginning of construction ensuring alternative crossings and pathways
- iv. The term 'vulnerable users' may not be appropriate. Instead, it should be phrased as streets being inaccessible.

b. Questions summary:

- i. How will you show that the concerns raised here are included in the guidelines so people will be aware of the committees concerns about safety, speed and the 'self-regulating' approach?
- ii. Will changes be made to the Queens Quay design?
- iii. How do you ensure members of the disability community are involved in complete streets development and construction?
- iv. Are we considering vertical space when thinking about accessibility? (i.e. sculptures at head level)
- v. How do we prioritize users? How do we ensure streets are not being designed for whoever is loudest at public meetings?

2. Deputants:

a. Comments summary:

- i. Clarity is required when pedestrians and cyclists cross or mix; include signage that requires all users to travel at pedestrian speed
- ii. Unclear signage for cyclists to stop for pedestrians on Queens Quay
- iii. Unclear delineation between bike lane and sidewalk when bike lane is at sidewalk level
- iv. Cyclists don't dismount when signs tell them to on Queens Quay
- v. 'Self-regulated' design may be dangerous without signs to direct people. The City should design so it is difficult to get in harm's way
- vi. Lack of urban Braille included in new designs – look to Hamilton for examples of the use of tactile paving to guide the visually impaired

Please see below for full submission

Appendix:
Submissions to the DAIAC

Gord Brown's Submission to DAIAC D15.2 Oct 2015

October 26, 2015

Submission to Disability, Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee
Agenda Item D 15.2 – Complete Streets Guidelines

Pedestrian Safety Concerns with Proposed Complete Streets Guidelines

This is to ask for the Committee's consideration in requesting the Complete Streets Project Manager to address specific concerns with the Complete Streets Guidelines, and to report back to this Committee as soon as possible. Concerns are summarized at the end of this letter.

I've reviewed the Complete Streets presentation that is scheduled for your October 27th meeting, and I am concerned that Pedestrian Safety is not being explicitly or adequately addressed in the Guiding Principles, or in development of the Guidelines.

While the concerns apply to all pedestrians, their potential impact is magnified for those among the populations that you represent.

Specifically, the Complete Streets Project has a number of goals, the most important is clearly to "Improve Safety and Accessibility". But when I see examples of what the Project Team considers to be a "Complete Street" and assess them against the safety principle, I have concerns.

And in many of the examples of Complete Streets that are being referenced or depicted in the presentation, I believe that pedestrian safety has in fact been compromised when streets have been modified to include bike lanes.

For example, the presentation through words and images references Queen's Quay West as an example of a Complete Street. While I see examples elsewhere in the city where safe cycling has been successfully incorporated in innovative ways, this particular project has been fraught with safety issues and concerns. And I believe that the "fixes" that Waterfront Toronto has proposed fall well short from the perspective of Pedestrian Safety. Attachment 1 highlights some of these, and the pedestrian safety implications are obvious. Attachment 1 also suggests required modifications.

The presentation shows in a number of instances that sidewalk level bike lanes are typical of a Complete Street, and their inclusion implies that they meet the "safety first" principle that the Guidelines claim to champion. But identified pedestrian safety issues with this configuration on Sherbourne Street, and Harbord/Hoskin/Wellesley have yet to be resolved – as presented to you at your last Committee meeting. These unresolved issues are again shown in Attachment 2 with some further clarifications, and I suggest that any implication of "pre-approval" of this configuration be removed from the Guidelines.

Another example is within the presentation itself, where a "sample shared street" simply depicts cars, trucks, cyclists and pedestrians apparently using a common roadway, but without any obvious expectations as to how road user safety will be ensured when high and low momentum users are "mixed". A situation that obviously puts the most vulnerable road users at risk. On the surface, this is no different from the problematic and hazardous Queen's Park West and Queen's Quay situations.

Clearly, the expectation must be that all users move at pedestrian speeds, and that all road users yield to pedestrians – as shown in one instance by the NYC example in Attachment 2.

To adequately address pedestrian safety -- especially for the groups that you represent -- I respectfully suggest that the Complete Streets Guidelines need to be fixed, to reflect the following...

A clear statement that Pedestrian Safety takes precedence over all other forms of Transportation, as approved by Council in the Toronto Walking Strategy. As the most vulnerable road users, pedestrians DO require explicit mention and attention when transportation projects are being proposed, and alternatives assessed – and this requirement is heightened for users with disabilities.

As part of the Safety Guiding Principle, a guiding statement that roadway designs should seek to minimize the potential for negative interaction between road user groups, subject to cost-benefit analysis and space limitations. Such a requirement would favour such things as protected bike lanes (separating bikes and cars), but avoid a simple transfer of risk from cyclists to pedestrians as evident in Attachments 1 and 2.

A clear requirement that a consistent Road User Risk Assessment accompany each Transportation Project Proposal, to objectively assess changing road user risk, and outline any mitigating actions and monitoring activities that are planned. This simple, consistent requirement will support the transparent, documented decision making that the Project indicates is part of their new process – and highlight any unintended transfer of risk between road users, and exemplified in Attachments 1 and 2.

A clear acknowledgement that sidewalks are first and foremost for the safe, convenient passage of pedestrians -- with other uses considered only after this has been achieved. This will help guide assessment of the many tradeoffs for sidewalk space that are contained within the Guiding Principles.

A clear priority on the "passive" pedestrian safety designs that pedestrians have come to expect and appreciate up until now. Specifically, incorporation of a grade separation between sidewalks and ALL traffic (including bicycles), and crosswalks to safely guide pedestrians from sidewalk to sidewalk through ALL traffic (including bicycles). Queen's Quay and Queen's Park West very clearly demonstrate the need for this, and the impact of not doing so – and there has been no justification presented for abandoning these tried and true practices.

A clear expectation that Council-Approved pedestrian initiatives for pedestrian safety and accessibility will be complied with and completed, including, but not limited to, initiatives that will designate the Pedestrian Clearway on all Toronto sidewalks, and initiatives to ensure location/relocation of any sidewalk items that impact the Clearway.

And, where "mixing" or "shared streets" are proposed, a clear requirement of the expectation that all modes of transportation move at "pedestrian speed", and all will yield to pedestrian movement.

I respectfully suggest that this Committee ask the Complete Streets Project to review and disposition these concerns -- and others that you might have -- and to report back at your next meeting.

Sincerely,
Gord Brown, Toronto

ATTACHMENT 1: QUEEN'S QUAY PEDESTRIAN SAFETY ISSUES – AFTER IMPLEMENTATION OF SAFETY “IMPROVEMENTS”.

(1) AMBIGUOUS, CONFUSING PROTOCOL TO ENSURE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY WHEN CROSSING SIDEWALK-LEVEL BIKE TRAIL

Cyclists from the east are ambiguously instructed to “Watch for Pedestrians”.

What does this mean, as opposed to the clear, legal requirements to Stop or Yield?

Who has the right of way in the area between the crosswalk and south sidewalk?

Why is the crosswalk not extended to the pedestrian sidewalk area, to unambiguously ensure pedestrian safe crossing?



Cyclists from the west are give NO direction or warning when approaching the pedestrian crossing zone.



(1) AMBIGUOUS, CONFUSING PROTOCOL TO ENSURE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY WHEN CROSSING SIDEWALK-LEVEL BIKE TRAIL (CONTINUED)

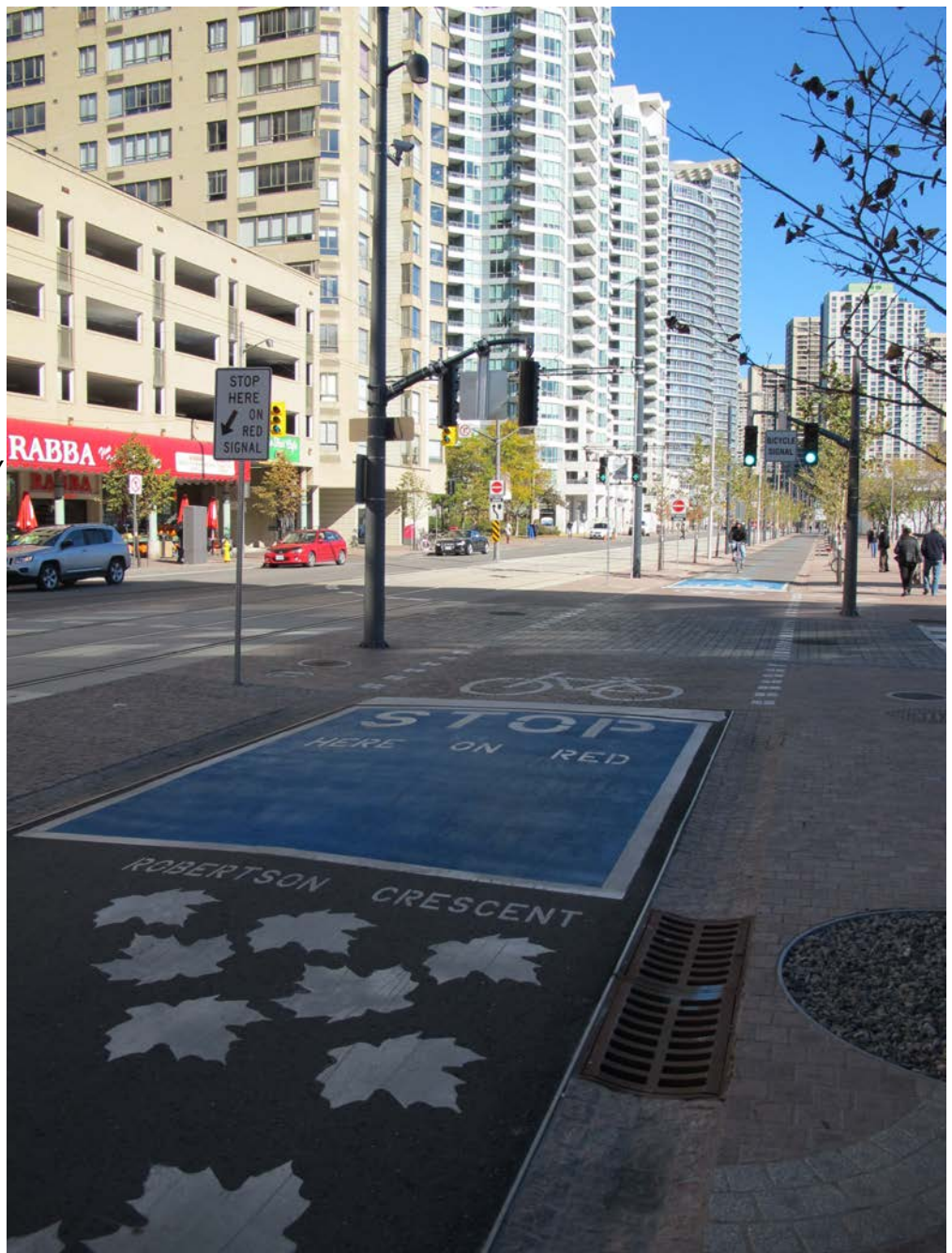
In situations with “Stop for Pedestrians” as opposed to “Watch for Pedestrians”...

Cycling lights are located far from the point of required stopping, and proper action requires clear understanding of the words “Bicycle Signal” and “Stop Here on Red”:

- *there are no requirements that foreign visitors have knowledge of English or Ontario Road Laws when renting a BikeShare bike.*
- *NYC, Barcelona and others have pictorial cycle lights at eye level, at the point of required stopping => much more direct indication of cyclist expectations.*
- *Newspaper reports indicate cyclists are routinely ignoring these “off road” stops.*

Crosswalk and walk/don't walk lights should be extended across the Bike Trail, to ensure safe passage of pedestrians to the sidewalk area.

Eye level, pictorial bicycle signals should be installed in STOP zones, to unambiguously convey this to all road users.



(2) PEDESTRIAN SAFETY RELIES ON UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS THAT CYCLISTS WILL SIMPLY DISMOUNT AT THE END OF THE TRAIL...

Observations noted on Saturday, October 24 were that all cyclists ignored the requirement to dismount at Dan Leckie Way.

Pedestrians are presented with signage indicating “Path Ends” as they approach the end of the crosswalk – which is meaningless. As they step onto the sidewalk, they walk directly into an unmarked area of uncontrolled sidewalk cycling.

Waterfront Toronto Staff propose to address this by adding signs that explain why this is important...which has no reasonable expectation of changing cyclist behaviour.

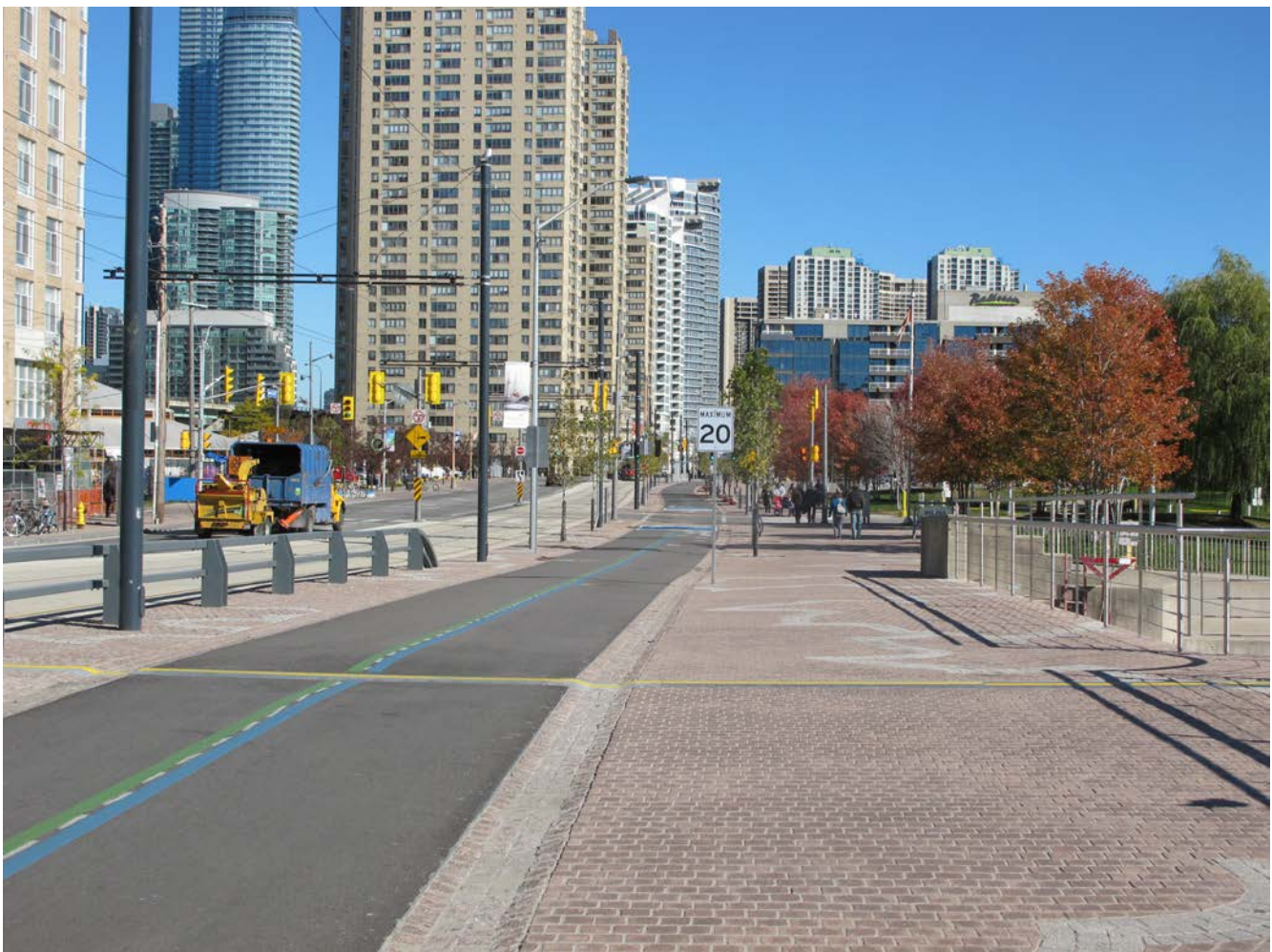


(3) SIDEWALK LEVEL BIKE TRAILS FACILITATE PEDESTRIANS INADVERTENTLY WANDERING INTO HARMS' WAY, AND FACILITATE HAZARDOUS SIDEWALK CYCLING.

Pedestrians wandering onto sidewalk level bike lanes is routinely noted as an annoyance to cyclists. A much greater issue is that pedestrians are inadvertently placing themselves in harms way, without the benefit of a curb separation to signal the hazard.

The infrequent “Bike Trail” designations and subtle paving differences that separate sidewalk from bike trail are ineffective in preventing pedestrian drift onto the bike trail – where cyclist movement is only notionally limited to 20 km/h.

The minimal physical barriers provided between the bike trail and sidewalk do little to discourage cyclist movement onto the sidewalk area. And with significant increases forecast for bike trail usage, the pedestrian risk due to sidewalk cycling will also be greatly increased.



ATTACHMENT 2: PEDESTRIAN SAFETY ISSUES WITH WELLESLEY/HARBORD BIKE LANES AND SHERBOURNE ST. – WHICH ARE HAILED AS “COMPLETE STREETS”

(1) Queen's Park West (QPW) “Mixing Area”: NO protocol to ensure pedestrian safety

How do pedestrians safely get from the crosswalk to the park?

How would they know?

No indication for pedestrians to exercise caution when stepping from crosswalk to the cycling zone, or the requirement for cyclists to watch for and yield to pedestrians.

Pedestrian safety is seconded to cycling convenience, as bike lanes are brought from street level to sidewalk.



NYC Solution:

Signage clearly announces that users are entering a Shared Zone, and what users are expected to do.

Clear expectations for cyclists to move slowly in the shared zone, and for the requirement to yield to pedestrians.

Use of graphics ensures understanding by visitors or ESL street users.

Pictorial bicycle and pedestrian lights communicate very clearly with intended users. Toronto uses standard signals with “Bicycle Signal” signage...



(2) Sherbourne Street Cycle Track Pickup/Dropoff Layby Areas:

Safety Issues:

- Layby areas were installed specifically to provide for safe pedestrian access to/from Wheel Trans, Taxis or personal transportation.
- In order to “minimize bike/car interactions” -- vehicles crossing the cycle track to access the loading area -- cycle track designers indicate that they took the tracks from a straight path to follow the curb into the loading area.
- Pedestrians of all abilities – including those leaving the 410 Sherbourne Medical Clinic -- must now wait until they believe it is safe to cross the cycling right of way that has been placed between them and their transport. Road risk has simply been transferred from cyclists to pedestrians.
- There are no signage/pavement markings or anything to indicate the need for vigilance on the part of pedestrians and cyclists, or the requirement for pedestrians to “wait for gap” -- at loading stations that were installed exclusively for their safety and convenience.

Potential Solutions?

- (1) Reroute cycle tracks to follow a straight path – with cross-hatched markings to signal the need for driver caution when crossing bike lanes, *as is used for the multitude of other instances where cars cross the bike lanes to access properties.*
- (2) Install zebra markings throughout the loading area, indicating Pedestrian Priority, with a flashing light and signage/Pavement Markings indicating “Stop for Pedestrians in Crosswalk”.



(3) Hoskin Avenue Protected Bike Lane – Shifting Parking from Curb, Requiring Pedestrians to Now Cross a Cycling Right of Way to Access Transportation.

Wellesley at Queen's Park East

Loading Zone adjacent to sidewalk (near) and Shifted Car Parking (far).



Hoskin Avenue:

Parking to be shifted to accommodate Bike Lanes – inconsistent with the rest of the Harbord/Hoskin Bike Lanes.



NYC Solution:

Safe pedestrian access to parked vehicles from crosswalks.

No requirement to cross a cycling right of way to access a vehicle, when bike lane is positioned curbside.

Consistently used where bike lanes were inserted between sidewalk and parked cars.



(4) Wellesley/Sherbourne Street TTC Stops:

Safety Issues:

- Signage/pavement markings at these raised transit loading sites are exclusively focused on cycling priorities: “this is a bike lane”, and “cars yield to bikes, if turning”.
- Pedestrians tend to wander into bike lanes, since they are now brought to sidewalk level, endangering themselves and inconveniencing cyclists.
- *What ensures safe passage for pedestrians getting on/off buses?*
- *What discourages cyclists from sidewalk cycling around the transit shelter, to avoid the need for stopping?*

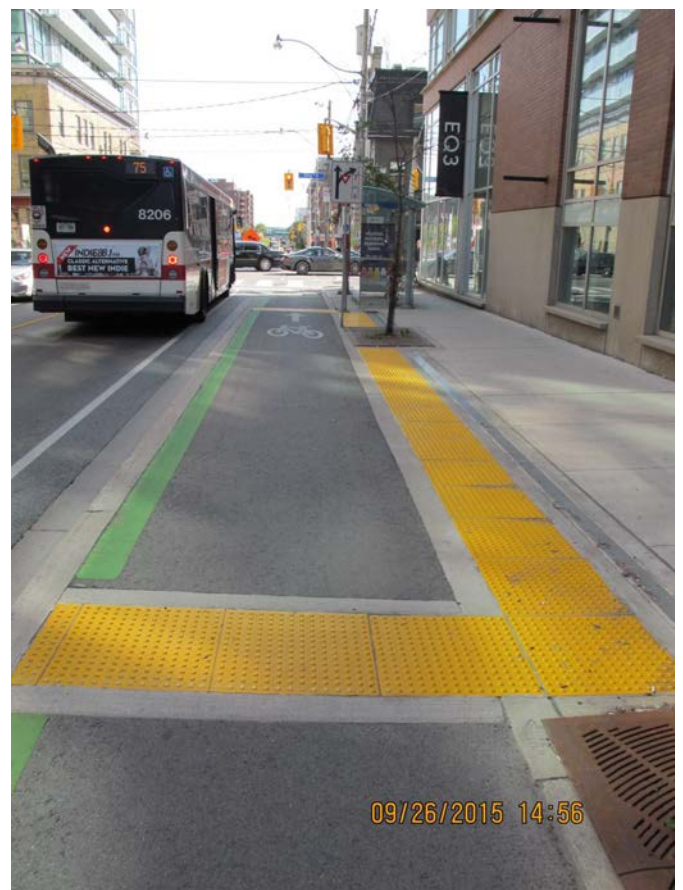
Potential Solutions?

- “STOP FOR OPEN DOORS” painted on cycle track; Zebra Markings at Front/Back Door locations to signal a Crosswalk; Railings/Barriers in advance of shelter to discourage cyclists “ride-around”.
- Assess future designs with Bike Lanes between sidewalk and loading platform, with crosswalk access to get pedestrians safely from sidewalk to loading zone.

Wellesley at Queen's Park West



Sherbourne at King Street West



(4) Wellesley/SherbourneStreet TTC Stops (continued):

Wellesley at Queen's Park East



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(5) Sherbourne Street South/Yonge-Wellesley Raised Cycle Tracks:

Street Level tracks with Curb Separation on North Sherbourne (left) and sidewalk level tracks without Curb Separation on South Sherbourne (right)

Grade separation provides a natural, passive physical separation between pedestrians and ALL traffic. Incidence of pedestrian incursion into bike lanes and sidewalk cycling are reduced.

