

ActiveTO Midtown Complete Street Pilot Consultation Report

March 2022

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Overview

Project Summary

As part of the installation of the temporary ActiveTO Midtown Complete Street Pilot on Yonge Street, City staff have worked to provide safe mobility options for essential trips during the pandemic. The Pilot has included CaféTO on-street patios, streetscape improvements, temporary bikeways, space for parking, loading, and deliveries, as well as road safety improvements. Public consultation has been an ongoing process as staff monitor, adjust and continue to address site related concerns and respond to different needs.

This report summarizes consultation activities and feedback received leading up to and following pilot installation from March 2021 to February 2022 with meeting notes that are available on the project website under the consultation tab. Public feedback together with technical and policy considerations informs staff recommendations to the Infrastructure & Environment Committee on March 29, 2022 followed by IEC recommendations to City Council on April 6 and 7, 2022.

Notifications

A variety of methods were used to notify stakeholders and members of the public leading up to the installation of the complete street pilot:

- Project Website www.toronto.ca/activeto
- Canada Post direct mail (April 12, 2021 over 33,000 information brochures with website link and invitation to the public meeting mailed to addresses between Davisville Avenue, Bloor Street, Avenue Road and Mount Pleasant Road.)
- Email to project list (currently 900 contacts) resulting in part from registration in the April 27th virtual meeting and email correspondence sent to active_TO@toronto.ca
- Email to stakeholder list including representatives of residents associations, community groups, institutions and local elected officials (60 contacts and 35 organizations represented with varying levels of participation in stakeholder meetings)
- Transportation Services social media posts to Instagram, Facebook and Twitter between April 20 and April 27, 2021.
- Canada Post direct mail (June 10, 2021 over 33,000 construction notices with pilot installation details mailed to addresses between Davisville Avenue, Bloor Street, Avenue Road and Mount Pleasant Road.)
- How to Brochure printed and distributed during 2021 summer months via BIAs and City staff.

Activities

Email and Phone

Stakeholder representatives and members of the public were invited to share comments and ask questions via phone, email, or written letter. A total of 300 comment submissions were received between March 2021 and February 2022. All comments were recorded and reviewed for consideration and response by the project team.

Community Petitions

A petition circulated on change.org was forwarded to Councillor Matlow, Toronto St. Paul's, and staff on October 18, 2021 with currently 1,100 signatures. The petition describes "removing bike lanes from Yonge Street". Some of the key criticisms shared are that the bike lanes have made motor vehicle traffic worse affecting the local movement and safety of residents, businesses and emergency services.

Another petition circulated by CycleTO with 3,337 pledges supports permanent protected bike lanes on Yonge Street Midtown and further extending from Steeles Avenue to Lake Ontario.

The petition sites that protected bike lanes on Yonge Street is about more than transportation and has the power to connect communities, improve our mental and physical health, provide space for children to play, and allow businesses to thrive.

Stakeholder Meetings

Two virtual stakeholder meetings specifically with local Business Improvement Associations (BIA) took place on March 5, 2021 and March 31, 2021 with in-person site walks taking place on April 12-13, 2021.

Five virtual stakeholder meetings were held March 15, 2021, April 9, 2021, May 11, 2021, July 2021, and October 18, 2021. From an overall list of 30 invited stakeholder organizations, representatives from 27 local organizations participated online at various meetings and are listed below:

1. Bloor Yorkville BIA
2. Midtown Yonge BIA
3. Rosedale Main Street BIA
4. Yonge + St. Clair BIA
5. Avenue-Bay Cottingham Residents Association
6. Cottingham Square Community Association
7. Deer Park Residents Group
8. Governor's Bridge Ratepayers' Association
9. Oriole Park Association
10. Greater Yorkville Residents' Association
11. Quantum Owners & Residents' Association
12. South Eglinton Ratepayers' & Residents' Association
13. Summerhill Residents Association
14. Avenue Road Safety Coalition
15. Midtown CycleTO
16. CycleTO
17. Mid-town Ravine Group
18. Toronto Community Bikeways Coalition
19. Toronto Seniors Forum
20. Toronto Youth Cabinet
21. Walk Toronto
22. The York School
23. Yorkminster Park Baptist Church
24. Canada Post
25. Mount Pleasant Group
26. Tricon Residential Inc.

27. Toronto Lawn Tennis Club

City staff provided presentations with project updates and received questions and feedback. Participants were also able to provide submissions and a note taker recorded minutes.

Individual Stakeholder Meetings

Several virtual meetings took place to help resolve site specific issues and concerns (e.g. loading, curbside pick-up and drop-off, parking, planters, maintenance and turning lanes).

1. Summerhill Residents Association Annual General Meeting on March 23, 2021
2. Yorkminster Park Baptist Church on April 19, 2021, Sept. 23, 2021 and Feb. 15, 2022
3. Canada Post on May 19, 2021
4. The York International School on May 19, 2021
5. 1650 Yonge Street Building tenant on August 2, 2021
6. Avenue-Bay Cottingham Residents Association on November 9, 2021
7. Rosedale Main Street BIA AGM on November 30, 2021

Public Event

The virtual public event took place on April 27, 2021, and was attended by over 300 people. The materials prepared for the public event, including presentation slides and comment form were posted to the project website on April 27, 2021.

Online Comment Form

To provide additional feedback opportunity, an online comment form was available from April 27, 2021 to May 10, 2021 that received 338 responses.

The comment form included background information on the project, and asked the questions listed below. The questions provided opportunity for multi-choice or multi-select responses, in addition to open ended comment boxes, and optional demographic questions.

1. What is your overall opinion for the ActiveTO Midtown Complete Street Pilot? Please explain the reasons for your opinion.
2. How do you typically travel in this neighbourhood?
3. Describe your relationship to Midtown Yonge.
4. What is your opinion on the different design elements of the complete street pilot?
5. If you have concerns, please explain why, and or provide other comments on the design element(s) in question.
6. Any other comments for this pilot project?

Submissions

Formal letters shared with staff either directly or from the Mayor's Office and local Councillors:

1. CycleTO letter of support representing 17 organizations submitted February 23, 2021.
2. Deer Park Residents Groups letter of support submitted April 8, 2021.
3. Cottingham Square Community Assoc. letter of concerns and questions May 10, 2021.
4. Leaside Residents Association letter of support submitted August 13, 2021.
5. Federation of North Toronto Residents Association letter of support with 41 signatures submitted November 10, 2021.
6. Summerhill Residents Association shared emails from 24 individuals with both opposition and strong concerns about pilot submitted January 4, 2022.

Feedback Summary

Stakeholder Meetings

During the stakeholder meetings, participants expressed questions and comments summarized below:

Topic	Question and Comment Summary
Businesses and Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure accessible loading areas. • Curbside pick-up and servicing needs of businesses (e.g. no laneway access) are a priority with concerns about losing customers due to a lack of pick-up or drop-off space. • While ride hail can be done from loading/parking zones on Yonge Street, some people stated it can be more difficult when it needs to be done from a side street. • General maintenance requests including request to remove planters during winter months.
Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different perspectives about public consultation program ranged from feeling a lack of local involvement to appreciation for responsiveness of staff to follow-up on concerns. • Suggestion for more communication and education to promote sustainable transportation attitudes and practice by community members for a successful pilot. • Multi-modal approach needed for reporting and communications in order to reflect that the majority of people downtown walk, cycle and take transit.
Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requests for quantitative data including both motor vehicle and cycling counts as well as a formal position on pilot operations from Emergency Services. • Specific inquiries about the volume of people cycling as a result of pilot cycle tracks.
Road Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretations of road safety improvements differed. For some stakeholders, designated, separated bike lanes make it easier to delineate who should be where, and makes all commuters more aware and safe. For others, the complete street design is confusing and increased traffic congestion to an extent that was not worth the complete street design change.
Side Streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about an increase of motor vehicle traffic on parallel streets and side streets which involved consideration about turn lane restrictions as well as employing traffic data and multi-mode counts to inform the design modifications. • Specific concern about the planned addition of new left turn lane from Yonge Street to Roxborough Street West with alternate solutions suggested to help mitigate motor vehicle congestion and volumes • Issues for "land-locked" residents where Yonge Street is the only access point including obstructed sight-lines, road safety, requests for additional engagement opportunities and relocating pilot to Mount Pleasant Road or Avenue Road.

Support for Café TO and ActiveTO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enthusiasm for pilot with respect to improved safety and experience for pedestrians and people cycling because of cycle tracks • Multi-modal approach reflects that the majority of people downtown walk, cycle and take transit. • Important role of pilot in a post pandemic future to respond to climate crisis, follow Vision Zero guidelines and consideration of younger people.
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Public Input

The following key comments were received leading up to, during and after the public event and submitted online feedback questionnaires.

- Concern and frustration about **travel time delays** for motor vehicles from lane reductions on Yonge Street and perception of increased **traffic and pollution**.
- **Increased comfort and feeling of safety** riding a bicycle on Yonge Street for people of all ages and abilities.
- Support for Vision Zero principles and **prioritizing vulnerable road users** (i.e. separated space for people on bikes, artistic curb extensions to reduce crossing distances, and speed limits).
- Concern about **Emergency Medical Service (EMS)** being stuck in traffic with limited ability to pass vehicles with reduced motor vehicle lanes resulting in response times being affected.
- Requests for **accessible parking, pick-up and drop-off locations**.
- Assurance requests for **transit reliability** when the subway is closed.
- Concerns about **maintenance program** for street cleaning and snow removal (i.e. cycle tracks, planters, sidewalks, winter condition).
- Broad support from **CaféTO** participating businesses for curbside patios to allow for more outdoor dining space separated from motor vehicle lanes.
- Requests to **extend complete street pilot** north of Davisville Avenue and south of Bloor Street.
- Too many design features (bollards, planters, patios, painted curb extensions etc.) make the **street look cluttered and confusing**.

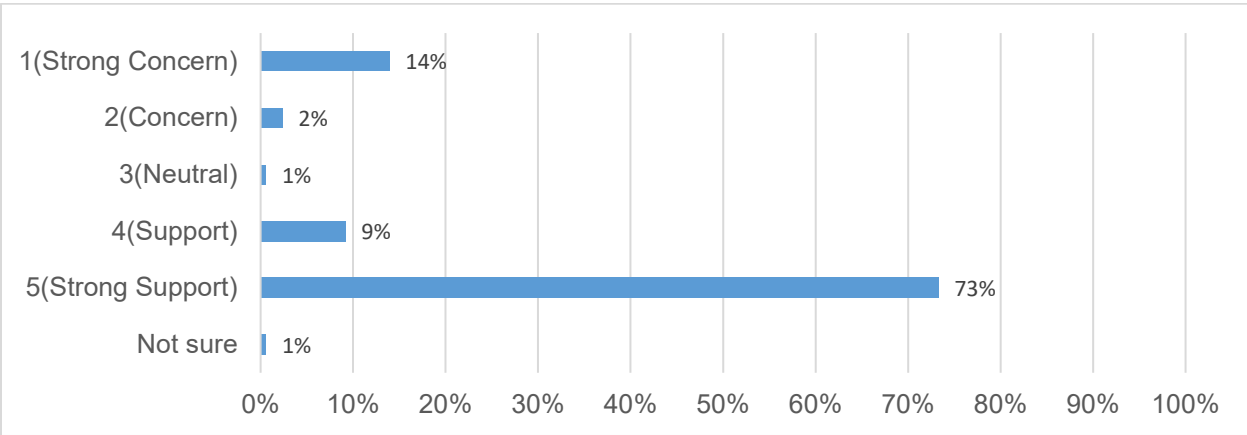
Online Comment Form

Responses received (337) to each question in the online comment form from April 27, 2021 to May 10, 2021 are described in this section.

Question 1) What is your overall opinion for the ActiveTO Midtown Complete Street Pilot?

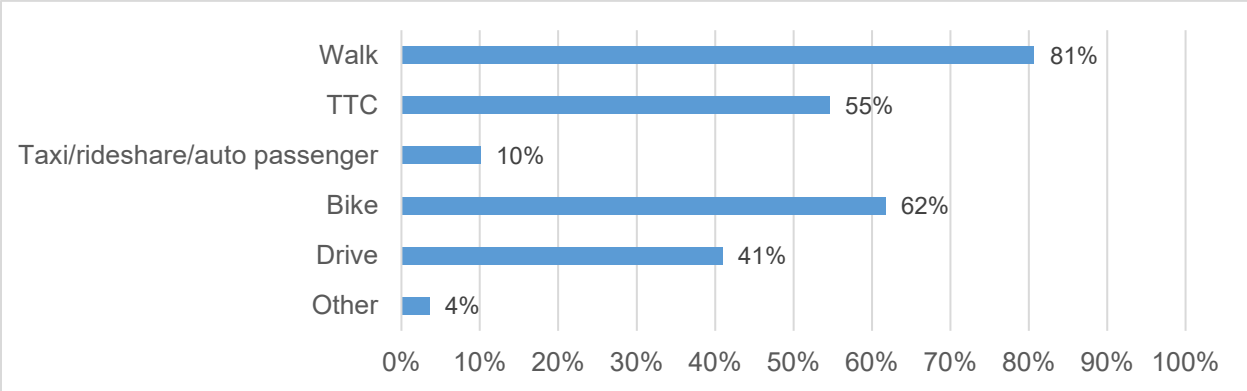
A total of 14% respondents (47) indicated strong concern, 2% respondents (8) indicated concern, 9% respondents (31) indicated support and 73% respondents (247) indicated strong support for pilot.

Responses in support of the pilot leading up to installation generally cited: feeling safer as pedestrians and people who cycle; supporting businesses with outdoor patios, and importance of promoting active transportation and recreation. Points of concern included: increased traffic congestion; worry about winter conditions; and negative effects for local side street movements for residents.



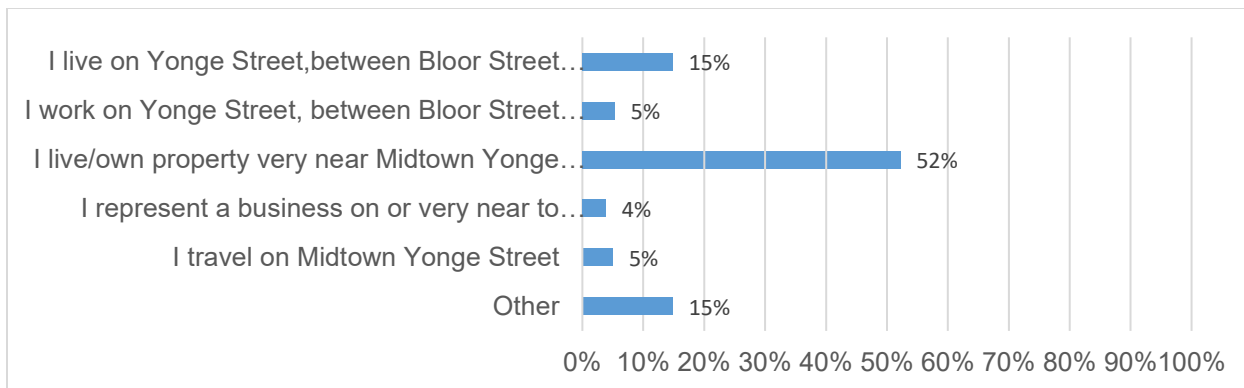
Question 2) How do you typically travel in this neighbourhood?

Responses for neighbourhood travel confirmed that people use multiple modes of travel with most everyone identifying as a pedestrian. A total of 81% respondents (272) indicated walk, 55% respondents (184) indicated TTC, 10% respondents (34) indicated taxi/rideshare/auto passenger, 62% respondents (208) indicated bike, 41% respondents (138) indicated drive and 4% respondents (12) indicated other.



Question 3) Describe your relationship to Yonge Street?

A total of 15% respondents (50) indicated that they live on Yonge Street in pilot area; 5% respondents (18) work on Yonge Street in pilot area; 52% respondents (176) live/own property near Midtown Yonge Street; 4% respondents (13) represent a business near Midtown Yonge Street; 5% respondents (17) travel on Midtown Yonge Street and 15% respondents (50) selected other.



Question 4) What is your opinion on the different design elements of the complete street pilot?

Out of 13 different design elements listed which received similar levels of support, the top three elements that were strongly supported included:

1. Cycle tracks

Cycle tracks (protected bike lanes) provide a safer environment by allowing a more predictable, consistent streetscape design. The protected bike lanes are located adjacent to the curb. In the summer, the cycle track contours the curb lane cafés and are protected by curb stones and bollards.

2. Separators

The type of separation varies along temporary complete street corridors depending on the characteristics of each block. Flexible bollards mounted to pre-cast concrete curbs are the preferred type of separation since they perform well on many of the evaluation criteria such as deterring motor vehicles from entering the bikeway, highlighting curb stone locations for snow maintenance and reducing maintenance costs. The use of planter boxes provides additional separation for the cafés, adds greenery and sense of continuity along the corridor. Gaps between separators allow for loading, deliveries and solid waste pick-up.

3. Planters and Hex Posts

Separating the cycle track from the curb lane cafés with planters and hex posts offer additional protection between the cycle track and the curb lane cafés.

Question 5) If you have concerns, please explain why, and or provide other comments on the design element(s) in question.

Common themes of concern and input about the different design elements included:

- Education needed for people who drive and cycle about rules of the road and pilot design.
- Questions about how loading and deliveries will work.
- Support for all design elements and enthusiasm to make pilot permanent.
- Concern about increased traffic on Yonge Street spilling over to side streets.
- Importance of curb extensions and protected intersections to ensure visibility of vulnerable road users especially considering turning vehicles movements.
- Too many design feature make the street confusing and potentially dangerous with traffic related accidents.
- Questions about maintenance of damaged bollards, planters and winter clean up.
- Yonge Street as a major arterial road does not warrant lane reduction.

One Window Commenting

The following chart includes a summary of popular questions and comments received post-installation from the public (email and phone correspondence) and stakeholder meetings and how they were responded to by staff.

Counts and Data

1. Do you have baseline data for comparison to measure effect on road users?

Yes, baseline data (e.g. volumes and travel times) both before the pandemic and during the pandemic were collected and are being utilized to monitor the changes on the street.

2. What comparable data from the Danforth bike lanes do you have in terms of usage and acceptance?

There is a significant mode shift for both projects with many respondents now using more active modes of transportation or regularly using a combination of multiple modes after just a few months into each pilot.

For example, 30.5% of respondents to an intercept survey completed on September 11, 14, 16 and 18, 2021 changed their mode of travel to the study area as a result of the ActiveTO Midtown Complete Street Pilot, including 12% of residents who stopped driving or using rideshare and taxi. By comparison, this is a larger shift than the 27.5% of those surveyed as part of the Destination Danforth study with a similar complete street pilot who changed their modes as a result of the installation in 2020.

3. Questions about the number of people using the cycle tracks.

Preliminary data showed an approximate 110% increase in cyclist volumes on Yonge Street, on average, across the corridor when comparing daily counts (16 hours) for May 2021 and July 2021. Updated data shows an approximate 75% increase in cyclist volumes for May 2021 and September.

4. Given lane reductions, how is new traffic to be considered from the large number of proposed high-density residential projects and forecasted population growth in the area?

The pilot is having an impact on the distribution of existing trips (within various modes) which may mitigate traffic growth occurring within the Yonge Street corridor.

New development trips need not always be associated with an increase in vehicular trips – by providing mobility options for residents / businesses we help shift trips from new developments to other modes (walking, cycling, transit) – the pilot supports this by improving options for people walking and cycling.

The impacts of reducing two vehicular lanes to a single vehicular lane can be mitigated to some extent by exploring turn restrictions, providing auxiliary turn lanes and signal coordination efforts. All of these strategies continue to be explored by the project team through this phase of on-going monitoring.

Design

5. Why was Yonge Street chosen over Avenue Road and Mt. Pleasant Road for the pilot?

A corridor comparison analysis was conducted early 2021 on Avenue Road, Yonge Street, and Mount Pleasant to evaluate the potential benefits and impacts of implementing a temporary complete street pilot. Yonge Street performed best overall, based on:

- Highest potential for business benefits based on mixed-use land uses, employment along corridor and concentrations of BIAs compared to the alternatives;
- Demand for improvements as demonstrated through requests for CaféTO Street Permits as well as fewer anticipated parking impacts;
- Demonstrated need for safety improvements based on collision trends;
- Overall importance of the corridor to the cycling network considering the Cycling Network Plan prioritization process, topography, and current bike share utilization; and

Lower vehicular volume throughout compared to the alternatives, as well as policy support for complete streets and role of the corridor in place-making.

6. How is there enough road space for both CaféTO and ActiveTO?

Curb lane cafes and cycle tracks occupy the curb lane. Travel lane widths have been reduced in accordance to the City's lane width guidelines.

7. How have accessibility requirements been considered?

Wheel-Trans and accessibility needs are key considerations in the design. Transportation Services continues to work with the TTC, Wheel-Trans and the accessibility community to identify ways to best accommodate accessible loading, pickup/drop off and other needs. Staff also presented to City of Toronto's Accessibly Advisory Committee (TAAC) and received endorsement for the project and also engaged with TTC's Advisory Committee on Accessible Transit (ACAT).

8. Why aren't the cycle tracks wider?

The width of a cycle track is balanced with the need for space for café patios and operation of vehicular lanes.

Emergency Services

9. Have Emergency Services been consulted?

Safety is a guiding principle for the pilot. As such, safe access for emergency vehicles is a fundamental part of the design. A traffic model was developed to understand the impacts of the street transformation on Traffic flow and guide decisions, such as where to include turning lanes or where a double southbound lane should be accommodated.

Transportation Services has also developed road design standards and guidelines with input from the City of Toronto's Fire Services, Paramedic Services, and Police Services to support vehicle maneuverability and maintenance, while balancing road safety. The roll plans for the pilot were also circulated to emergency services staff.

Staff have not received any major concerns from emergency services staff who continue to monitor their operations and arrive at their calls within an acceptable amount of time including by changing their routes when possible and needed.

Operations and Maintenance

10. How are motor vehicle traffic operations managed (e.g. turning lanes, signal modifications)?

Operational plans include consideration of turning lanes, signal timing and curb extensions. The geometry of Yonge Street does not allow for turn lanes at every street. Vehicular movements are being monitored and we are hopeful that traffic flow will be improved once traffic signals are optimized. Signal timing modifications are currently being reviewed for implementation.

Please note, that an auxiliary northbound left-turn lane was proposed at Roxborough Street and met with significant opposition by local residents. We are assessing other turn lane opportunities where physically possible, balancing the needs for loading, parking and CaféTO.

Also consider that the closely spaced signals at locations like Scrivener Square, Price Street, Rowanwood Avenue, Roxborough Street are hardwired and co-ordinated together for safety purposes.

Curb extensions with flexi-posts have been introduced at the mouth of some intersections and at the entrance of residential street. These installations increase the overall visibility of people walking and cycling, reduces the crossing distance and mark the transition to a lower speed street.

11. What is the plan for winter maintenance?

For snow storage, winter maintenance is part of the complete street pilot. Vehicular lanes and cycle tracks are plowed. The new configuration does allow for storage within the curb extensions and windrows along the cycle track buffer.

Snow removal of cycle tracks is employed as per approved City maintenance standards.

Following the January 17 snow storm in particular, reminders shared for people to report obstructions to 311 because Transportation Services continues to respond to, and resolve, all snow-related service requests.

Traffic

12. What is being done about increased traffic congestion and air quality?

Staff continue to monitor traffic operations and employ strategies to reduce motor vehicle travel times. Overall, there has been an increase in bicycle and walking trips on the corridor with a decrease in motor vehicle trips which has a positive impact on air quality.

Preliminary data collected indicates that motor vehicle travel times on Midtown Yonge Street have increased in comparison to the pre-pandemic baseline from Fall 2019. After various adjustments to the pilot and with evolving pandemic restrictions, travel times have increased by up to 30 seconds in AM/PM peak periods (down from 90 seconds observed Fall 2021) and approximately 102 seconds midday (reduced from 150 seconds observed in Fall 2021).

At this point, the motor vehicle impacts are within the scale of impacts of the other ActiveTO 2020 and permanent bikeway projects that removed motor vehicle travel lanes. The largest impacts have been observed in the northbound direction during the middle of the day. As a result of this data and follow-up field observations, signal coordination timing adjustments and a Corridor Traffic Management System project are being implemented to optimize traffic operations along the corridor.

13. How have local side streets with only one access point in and out "land-locked" (via Yonge St.) being considered in terms of motor vehicle traffic operations and safety?

Where specific issues were noted, the City's consultants reviewed the matters and requests. Changes were made as best as possible within the context of the 2021 CaféTO layout.