

# **BLOOR STREET WEST**

## **ARMADALE AVENUE AND OLD MILL DRIVE**

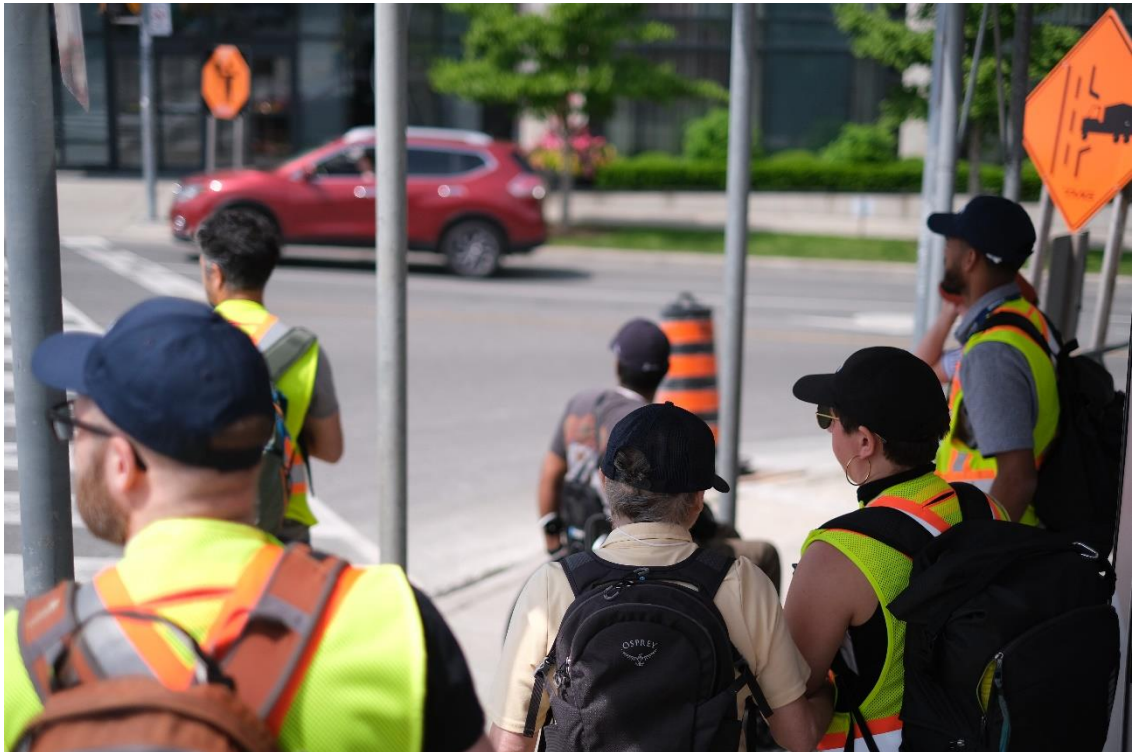
### **Accessibility-Focused Site Visits**

June 2024



**STREETS ARE VITAL  
PLACES IN TORONTO.**

**HOW OUR STREETS ARE  
DESIGNED SHOULD  
IMPROVE SAFETY AND  
ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL.**



# CONTENTS

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## **1.0 Introduction, Vision and Goals**

## **2.0 Accessibility Features and Associated Feedback**

2.1 GRATE COVER AT TTC STOP: SOUTH SIDE OF BLOOR STREET WEST

2.2 INTERSECTION: BLOOR STREET WEST/MOSSOM ROAD/RIVERVIEW GARDENS

2.3 REFUGE ISLAND: BLOOR STREET WEST AND MOSSOM ROAD

2.4 MODULAR PLATFORM

## **3.0 Additional Comments**

## **4.0 Conclusion**

## **5.0 Appendix A: Site Plan**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Bloor Street West Accessibility-Focused Site Visit represents a collaborative effort from City staff and members of the accessibility community. Transportation Services is thankful for the insights and time of all participants.

The tour was led by the Transportation Services Cycling and Pedestrian Projects unit: Becky Katz, Kanchan Maharaj, Igor Samardzic, Sonya De Vellis, AJ Bimm and other Transportation Services staff.

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## Introduction, Vision, and Goals

In June 2024, the City of Toronto's Transportation Services Division conducted a site visit focused on recent upgrades to Bloor Street West between Armadale Avenue and Old Mill Drive. This visit, referred to throughout the report as the Bloor Street West Site Visit, is part of an ongoing effort to gather accessibility-focused feedback on new complete street infrastructure.

The goal of the Bloor Street West Site Visit was to understand the effectiveness of current designs, particularly for those with mobility and sight loss challenges, and to use this insight for future planning and design standards.

This report provides a summary of feedback received from participants during and following the Bloor Street West Site Visit, which is organized by various locations along the route.

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### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The site visit focused on Bloor Street West, between Armadale Avenue and Old Mill Drive, a major arterial road with one lane of motor vehicle traffic in each direction and uni-directional cycle tracks on both sides. Sidewalks run along both sides of the street, and the area is classified by the city as a Mixed-Use Area and Neighbourhoods. TTC overnight service also operates along Bloor Street West.

In 2023, the first phase of the Bloor Street West Complete Street Extension was installed between Runnymede Road and Aberfoyle Crescent. This extension was further expanded west to Resurrection Road in 2024. The design includes cycle tracks separated by pre-cast curbs, parking-protected spaces, and accessible features such as modular platforms at key locations.

### SITE VISIT PLANNING

In Spring 2024, Transportation Services began recruiting study participants and developed a detailed project plan.

This plan outlined the logistics and objectives of the Bloor Street West Site Visit. During the visit, staff members were assigned various roles, which ranged from assisting individual participants in navigating the sites, to conducting thorough note-taking and photography. After the visit, participants met to discuss their feedback providing input regarding signal and traffic operations, key observations, and identify areas for further investigation. Following the debrief, City staff compiled and summarized the feedback, which was shared with the participants for their input and approval.

### SITE VISIT

Six participants took part in the Bloor Street West Site Visit, which began at the northwest corner of the intersection of Bloor Street West and Armadale Avenue. Participants were separated up into two groups as they travelled west along Bloor Street West.

The visit continued west of Armadale Avenue to examine a Gap Plate Bus Stop, modular platform, South Kingsway Intersection, and a refuge island at Mossom Road.

## OVERARCHING FEEDBACK

### Site Visit Feedback

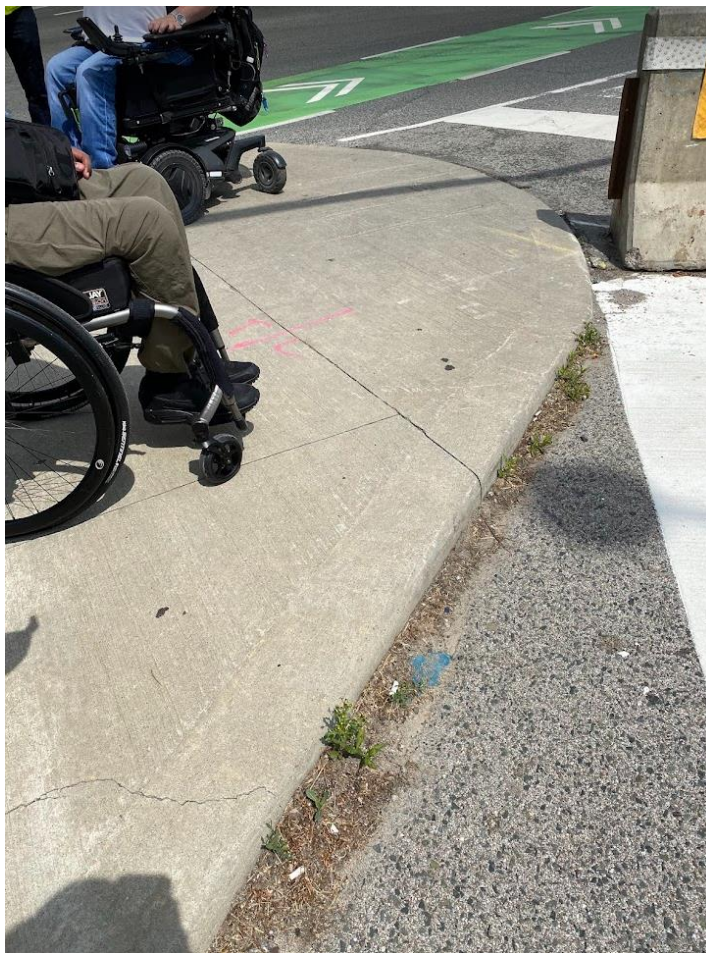
A virtual debrief session was held two days after the Bloor Street West site visit with participants and Transportation Services staff to gather final input. Participants provided a wide range of detailed feedback during the session.

### Design Feedback

Participants stressed the importance of incorporating clearer auditory and tactile cues in navigating the area safely. Concerns were also raised about the effectiveness of tactile elements under snowy and icy conditions.

Additionally, safety concerns emerged regarding interactions with some people on bicycles.

Participants emphasized the need for education and awareness campaigns to encourage people cycling to yield to individuals using modular and accessible loading platforms.





## 2.1

### Grate Cover at TTC Stop: South Side of Bloor Street West

- **Design and Functionality:**
  - The grate cover received mixed feedback.
    - Positive aspects included its general functionality, but there were concerns about wheels getting caught, especially for manual wheelchair users.
    - Ensuring the grate is flush with the surrounding surface is crucial and will be extended to close the gap at the sidewalk edge.
  - Participants expressed the need for more prominent and clear signage to guide people cycling and pedestrians at platforms and intersections.
  - Suggestions for wayfinding aids, such as larger signs and tactile maps, to assist blind and low sighted individuals.
  - Suggestions included installing poles with audible signals or tactile guidelines to provide a clear indication of safe standing areas on platforms to avoid collisions with people cycling.
- **Detectability for Cane Users:**
  - Concerns were raised about the detectability of the grate cover for cane users.
  - Ensuring that the grate is easily detectable and does not pose a tripping hazard is crucial for safe navigation.
  - Suggestions for tactile or auditory indicators to help blind and low sight individuals detect the platform.
  - The importance of distinct tactile patterns and sounds to indicate platform presence and transitions between different surfaces.
  - Some participants found the metal surfaces more detectable and preferable over plastic due to distinct sounds and vibrations.

BLOOR STREET WEST, WEST OF JANE STREET

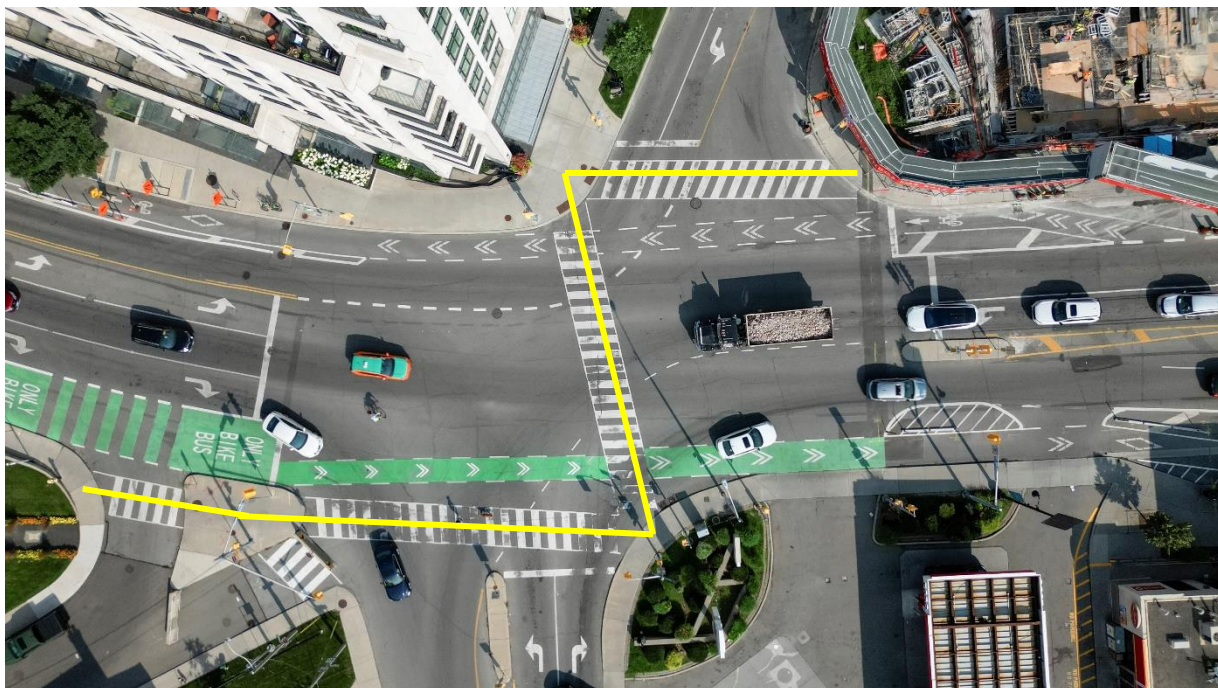


## 2.2

### Intersection: Bloor Street West/Mossom Road/Riverview Gardens

- **Complex Intersection Design:**
  - This intersection's complexity poses significant safety and navigational challenges. The design features unclear traffic signals, conflicting turn signals, and a lack of clearly defined pedestrian pathways, creating confusion for those trying to cross.
  - The multiple vehicular turning possibilities further exacerbate the situation, particularly for pedestrians who find it difficult to anticipate vehicle movements.
  - The wide crossing distances at this intersection add to the difficulty, making it challenging for pedestrians, especially those with mobility issues, to cross safely.
  - Additionally, the absence of consistent curb cuts and the presence of slanted sidewalks create barriers for manual wheelchair users, who struggle with uneven surfaces.
- **Safety Concerns:**
  - At this specific intersection, there is a critical need for improved signalization, including the installation of accessible pedestrian signals (APS), increased time for safely crossing and volume adjustments to find the APS.

BLOOR STREET WEST AND SOUTH KINGSWAY





## 2.3

### Intersection: Bloor Street West/Mossom Road/Riverview Gardens

- **Tactile Indicators:**
  - Tactile indicators at this intersection are vital for guiding blind and low-sighted pedestrians through its complex design.
  - However, the current placement and consistency of these indicators are often inadequate, making navigation more difficult.
  - Temporary ramps and tactile surfaces, when present, are frequently insufficient or entirely missing, posing additional challenges for individuals who are blind, have sight loss, or use wheelchairs.
- **Design Issues:**
  - At this specific intersection, the refuge islands and curb cuts present barriers that obstruct access, making it challenging for wheelchair users to navigate safely.
  - To address this, extending the centre islands and ensuring they do not block curb cuts would be helpful.
  - Additionally, there was a noticeable issue with distinguishing when pedestrians are on the island versus when they have fully crossed the street, underscoring the need for clearer tactile and auditory cues at this location.
- **Accessibility Features:**
  - Ensuring that pedestrian islands are equipped with tactile walking surfaces and APS can significantly improve navigation and safety for blind and low sighted individuals.

BLOOR STREET WEST AND MOSSOM ROAD



## 2.4

### ZICLA Platform

- **Platform Design:**
  - The modular platform received positive feedback for its accessible design, but concerns were raised about potential conflicts with people cycling.
  - Participants emphasized the need for better tactile and auditory indicators to help blind and low sighted users detect these platforms.
- **Safety and Usability:**
  - While the platform design is generally good, ensuring that people cycling yield to pedestrians and improving signage and enforcement are necessary to prevent conflicts and enhance safety.
- **Winter Conditions:**
  - The modular platforms are generally better in winter compared to the metal gap plate cover, but ensuring they are kept clear of snow and ice is crucial for maintaining accessibility.
- **Material and Durability:**
  - The modular ZICLA platform was appreciated for better traction and durability compared to the metal grates, which could become slippery under certain conditions.

BLOOR STREET WEST, WEST OF ARMADALE AVENUE



## 3.0

### Additional Comments

#### Temporary Accessibility Features at Construction Sites

- **Inadequate Temporary Ramps:** Temporary ramps and other accessibility features at construction sites often do not meet safety standards, making them uncomfortable and difficult to use for wheelchair users and blind or low sighted pedestrians. The transitions between sidewalk and road are often uneven and bumpy
- **Responsibility and Maintenance:** Clarification is needed regarding who is responsible for ensuring adequate temporary accessibility features at construction sites, and there should be proactive efforts to address complaints and maintain these features properly

#### Curb Cuts and Sidewalks

- **Consistency and Maintenance:** Consistent placement and maintenance of curb cuts and tactile indicators are crucial to ensure ease of navigation for wheelchair users and other pedestrians. Emphasis was placed on the importance of smooth transitions between different surfaces to avoid any impediments

#### Bike Lane Etiquette and Safety

- **Cyclist Behaviour:** Numerous concerns were raised about people on bicycles not obeying traffic rules, especially at bus stops and intersections. Participants suggested the need for public awareness campaigns and signage to educate people who cycle on proper etiquette and safety.

#### Emotional and Social Aspects

- **Emotional Support:** Participants expressed appreciation for efforts to improve accessibility, noting that these efforts made them feel visible and valued.
- **Cooperation Among Road Users:** The importance of cooperation and understanding among all road users, including pedestrians, people on bicycles, and drivers, was highlighted. Educational campaigns to improve awareness and etiquette were suggested as potential solutions

#### BLOOR STREET WEST, EAST OF RIVERVIEW GARDENS





# 4.0

## Conclusion

### SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK:

Participants emphasized the need for clearer auditory (APS signals) and tactile surface indicators to help blind pedestrians navigate and stay safe from passing people on bicycles and e-bikes. Suggestions included installing poles with audible signals or tactile guidelines on platforms to indicate safe standing areas. Concerns were raised about distinguishing between being on a refuge island and fully crossing the street, recommending improved cues for better navigation.

Concerns about tactile elements being covered by snow and ice emphasized the need for these features to be effective and well maintained in all weather conditions. Participants praised the comfort and spaciousness of new platforms but called for additional measures such as tactile pathways and auditory signals for blind pedestrians.

Safety concerns were expressed about cyclist behaviour, with a lack of awareness and consideration for pedestrians. Participants recommended targeted education and awareness campaigns for people who cycle. Better enforcement of regulations, such as people cycling yielding to pedestrians, was also highlighted.

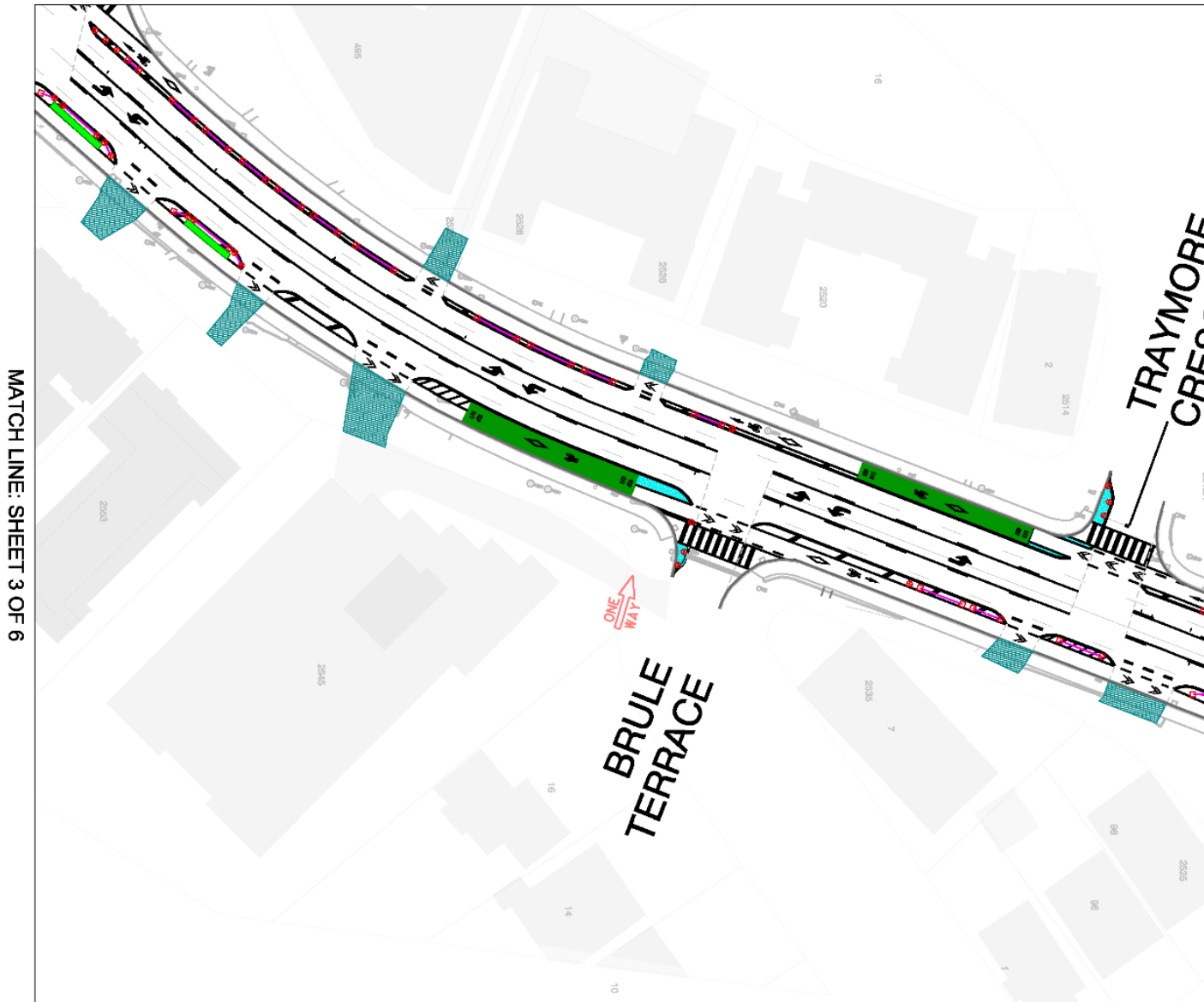
Participants appreciated the city's efforts to improve accessibility and stressed the importance of ongoing engagement with disabled individuals. While new platform designs were praised, additional safety measures were deemed necessary to ensure full accessibility.

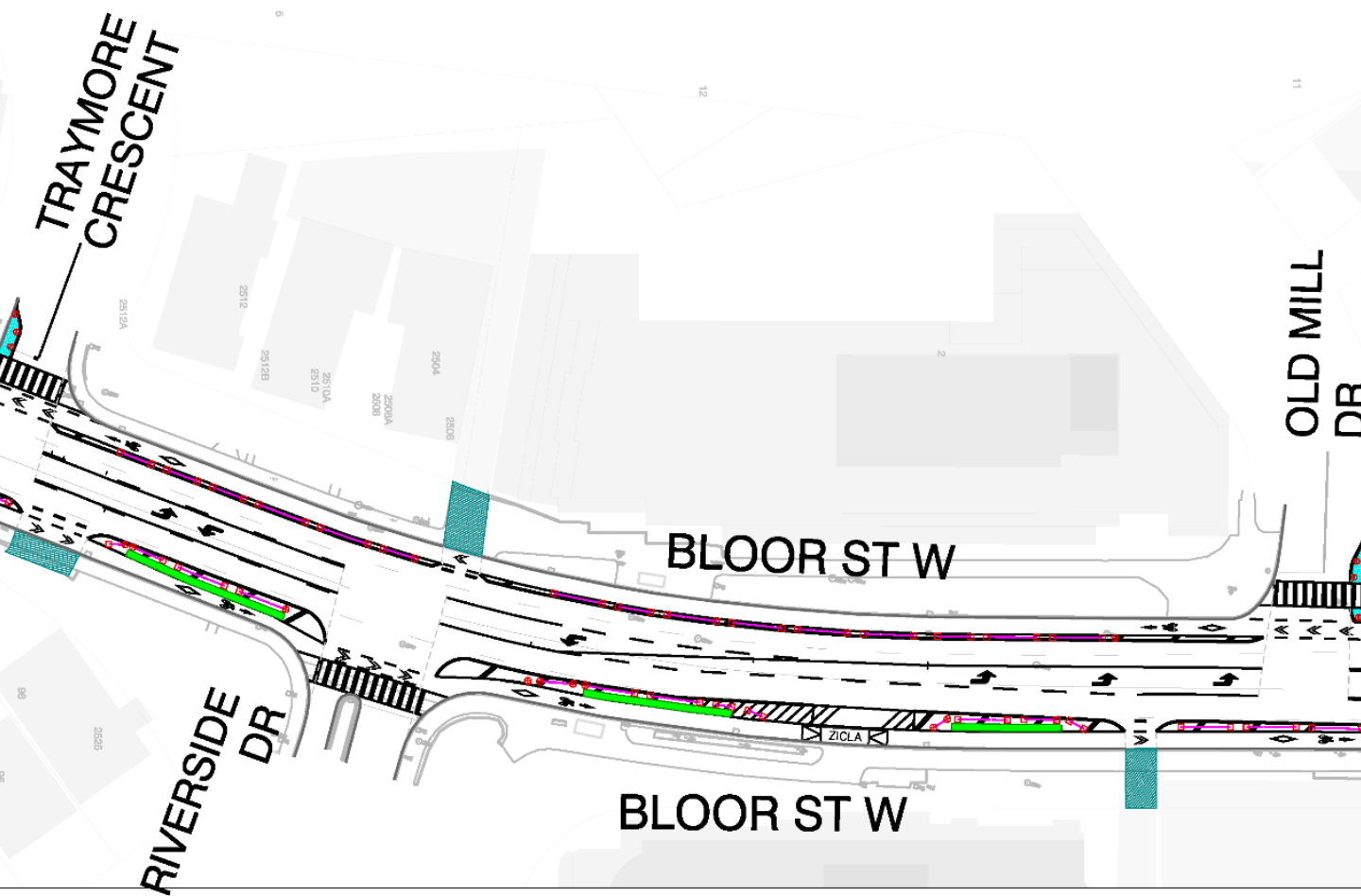
### NEXT STEPS:

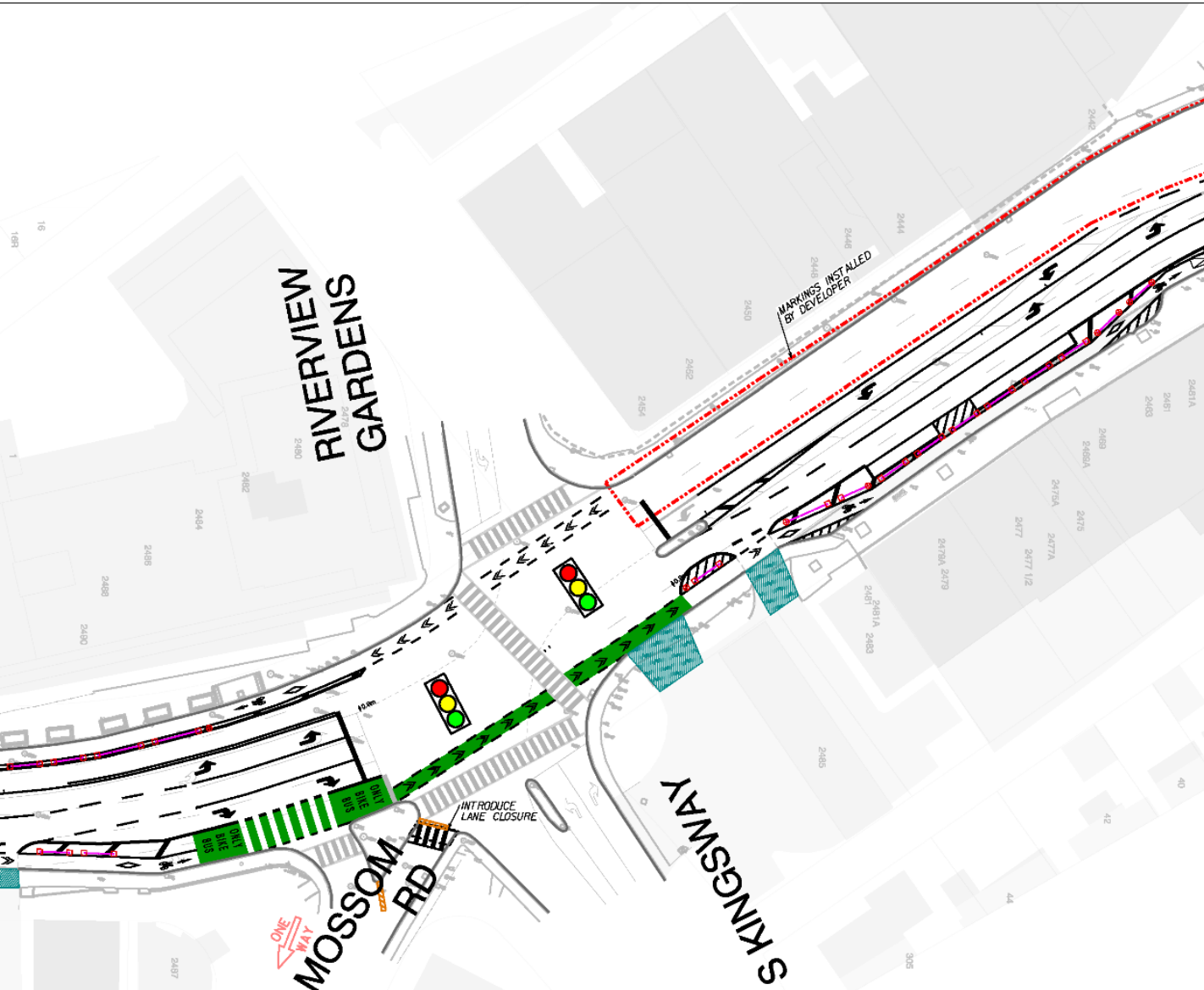
Transportation Services staff will undertake several actions based on the feedback from the Bloor Street West Site Visit:

- Share results of the Bloor Street West Site Visit to inform design and best practices.
- Continue consulting and conducting on-site reviews with people with disabilities to gather feedback on accessible design.
- Continue working with Transportation Services staff to ensure the gap plate cover design is improved to allow for a seamless transition across the sidewalk to the platform, and to ensure that accessible features receive an appropriate level of winter maintenance service.
- Share feedback with Transportation Services staff who are redesigning the Bloor/South Kingsway/Mossom intersection in Fall 2024.
- Collaborate with the manufacturers of the modular platform to determine an updated design that will increase visibility of platform users and compliance of people cycling.









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For advice, insights and comments please contact  
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