



Monday, January 16, 2023

Mayor John Tory
Gary Crawford, Chair, Budget Committee
Members of the Committee
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen St W
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Sent electronically to buc@toronto.ca and to Mayor John Tory

Dear Mayor Tory, Chair Crawford, and Members of the Budget Committee,

***Re: BU2.1 - 2023 Capital and Operating Budgets
And re: our opposition to \$48m increase to TPS budget -- and opportunities for action***

We oppose the proposed \$48 million increase to the Toronto Police Service (TPS) budget as particularly ill-timed in light of serious, ongoing budget constraints that threaten city programs for vulnerable residents, the failure to address longstanding community concerns about police treatment of racialized minorities, and a lost opportunity to tackle pressing issues of road safety in the context of a worsening climate crisis to which motor traffic significantly contributes.

The [Toronto Community Bikeways Coalition](#) was established after the outset of the pandemic in 2020 to advocate for the installation of new bikeways to mirror transit for the benefit of essential workers and transit-reliant residents. Our work has transitioned to a focus on holding City Hall to account for its cycling, road safety, and climate goals, while supporting and collaborating with a variety of grassroots groups with similar objectives.

As community advocates, we support those groups and individuals that have been championing the fight for police reform to address documented and troubling problems of historic, institutional bias. In addition, we support community leaders that have been calling for greater investment in poverty reduction, social supports, and education as a superior way to address problems, including homelessness and mental health crises, that may manifest themselves in violent or other anti-social behaviour.

In terms of the road safety issues central to our own advocacy and expertise, we lament the failed opportunity to prioritise action --- and spending --- on matters that would coincidentally

not only address road dangers but also public health, social inequity, and climate change. We urge the city to invest in achieving --- and to explore new revenue tools to achieve --- Toronto's Vision Zero Road Safety Plan and its TransformTO and climate emergency goals.

During the Toronto municipal election campaign over 40 candidates, among whom 12 were elected, supported the call from a coalition of grassroots groups for a tripling to \$75 million of the Vision Zero capital budget to accelerate road re-design projects to improve road safety.

The city's Vision Zero Road Safety Plan, adopted in 2016, has seen little progress despite a popular desire for action. The slight decrease in road deaths in 2022, arguably influenced by motor traffic levels that have yet to return to "normal", is a welcome development, but one that falls short of a trend. We note that the average annual road death toll (59) in the five years after 2016 (excluding the anomaly of 2020) remains higher than the annual average (52) for the five years prior to 2016. There is as yet no trend, and we are a long way from zero deaths.

To be effective, road safety measures must go beyond the intermediate measures taken to date, including speed cameras. We know that motor speed is a key determinant of whether a pedestrian who is hit by a motor vehicle will live or die. The cameras, from which almost 600,000 tickets have been issued since July 2020, make clear that speeding in our city is endemic and that the necessary, but more expensive, road re-design measures crucial to changing motorist behaviour have yet to be implemented.

In November 2019, our city declared a climate emergency, but the city's pace of action is inconsistent with the urgency, especially as it relates to the 36% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from transportation, largely from single occupant cars. In order to increase walking, cycling, and transit use, we need safe roads.

A key council goal in adopting the TransformTO Net Zero Strategy last year was to convert to walking, cycling and transit 75% of all trips under 5km by 2030. Unfortunately, there has been little progress toward this goal, while ever larger passenger vehicles such as pickups and large SUVs erode GHG reduction gains from other sectors and, based on the evidenceⁱ, make our roads more dangerous to pedestrians and cyclists. In this context, your committee has the opportunity to revisit a municipal vehicle registration tax, implemented on a slidable scale determined by the size and weight, GHG emissions, and danger of a particular vehicle.

The city is, again, falling behind on its Bike Plan, the completion of which is key to achieving our climate goals. We note that more people than ever need cycling infrastructure, including the proliferating number of food delivery workers on bikes. Despite an average annual goal of 33km of new bike lanes set out in the 2022-24 Near Term Bike Plan, the city last year installed less than 15km on a road network of 5,600km. By contrast, the City of Montreal, despite its smaller size and colder climate, has been installing about 30km per year on a consistent basis, adding to a network that already far exceeds that of our city.

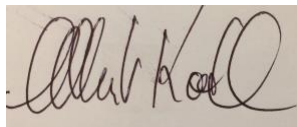
In March 2020 when the pandemic hit, residents wary of taking mass transit would have been able to seamlessly transition to travel by bicycle, including the increasing number of electric bikes, if the city had achieved previous bike plans. Instead, our city struggled to catch up.

We also urge the city to explore new revenue tools that would create funds for road safety initiatives while reducing our destructive car dependency. One option, given the massive public subsidies for car parking, is to impose a commercial parking levy. Among other reasons for supporting such a levy is that it could address the inequity of requiring individuals arriving on foot, bicycle, or transit to pay for the cost of “free” parking enjoyed by motorists at many commercial establishments, including at grocery stores where the parking cost is hidden in the price of food.

Instead of increasing the police budget, we urge you to work with the community to continue the difficult, but necessary task of police reform, and to allocate adequate funds to social programs and other community supports, while at the same time tackling the problem of road danger with investments in road re-design to reduce speed and danger.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns, and to our recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background, appearing to read 'Albert Koehl'.

Albert Koehl

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background, appearing to read 'Mary Ann Neary'.

Mary Ann Neary

¹ Sarah C. Plonka, Sara Volo, Patrick A. Byrne, Ian Sinclair & Thadshagini Prabha, “Ontario’s Pedestrian Crash Causation Study: A Focus on the Impact of Large- Scale Trends on Road Safety,” Ontario, Ministry of Transportation, Research and Evaluation Office Safety Program Development Branch, June 2020