



Tuesday, April 25, 2023

Infrastructure & Environment Committee
10th floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Submitted by e-mail to iec@toronto.ca

Dear Deputy Mayor McKelvie & members of the Infrastructure & Environment Committee:

***Re: enthusiastic support for a car-free High Park,
And re: IE3.7 (High Park Movement Strategy)***

In the post-pandemic city, and in the context of congested streets, a growing population, and the everyday stresses of urban life, we believe that our city desperately needs a peaceful refuge to which city residents --- including many who don't have backyards or balconies, let alone cottages --- can escape for recovery, for nature, and for enjoyment.

Community Bikeways was established in 2020 to advocate for new bikeways to mirror transit for the benefit of essential workers and transit-reliant residents during the pandemic. Our work has transitioned to a focus on matters of accountability related to city policies and the re-allocation of road space from cars to people, consistent with the city's Vision Zero Plan, Complete Streets Guidelines, TransformTO, and the climate emergency declaration. We are a committed supporter of the Car-free High Park Coalition.

Despite the strong support for the weekend motor vehicle closures --- as well as the fact that the car-free option was the High Park Movement Strategy's most popular option (57% in favour) --- we are dismayed that the staff's preferred recommendation is limited to the closure of only some roads. Worse still, the full park closures to cars are only proposed for Sundays instead of the entire weekend. We urge you to listen to the community feedback and to support making High Park car-free. If New York City can make Central Park and Prospect Park car-free, why can't Toronto do the same?


Some opponents have posed accessibility as a reason for opposing a car-free High Park. Surely this is a technical issue with many solutions. We find it ironic that in a city that has witnessed impressive feats of transportation engineering such as the Don Valley Expressway and the Gardiner Expressway, we suddenly can't figure out how to provide easy access into the park from its entrance, a distance measured in hundreds of metres. We reject the narrative that accessibility and car-free public spaces have to be mutually exclusive. Indeed, this suggestion deprives individuals with disabilities, *who are in fact among the many proponents of a car-free High Park*, from the benefits of such a stress-free refuge.

Surely, in a world in climate crisis, the banning of fossil-fuel burning cars from a park should be done eagerly and as an obvious step, thereby giving a bit of hope to the many people who already feel the effects of climate change --- including those stuck in the stifling summertime heat of some dwellings --- or who are very anxious about what is just around the corner.

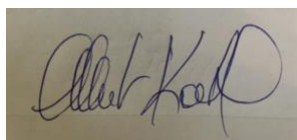
It is for these reasons that we urge you to implement a car-free High Park.

Thank you for your attention to our submission. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mary Ann Neary".

Mary Ann Neary, Coordinator

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Albert Koehl".

Albert Koehl, Coordinator