



Wednesday, April 26, 2023

Kimmo Hamalainen
Manager, Engineering & Construction Services
100 Queen St. West
Toronto City Hall, 24th Floor E
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Kimmo Hamalainen,

Re: failure to provide access for cyclists during Phase 3 of Bloor road work?

We understand that the current city plan for road work on Bloor Street West (from Avenue Road to Spadina) may not include any provision for eastbound cyclists during phase 3 (late summer, early fall) of the project. While we are excited about many of the planned improvements to the street, including the protected intersection for the busy pedestrian crossing at St. George, we write today to urge you, for reasons that we articulate below, to ensure that phase 3 include safe passage for cyclists in both directions. We also understand that there is still an opportunity, during negotiations with the successful bidder, to secure safe passage for eastbound cycling traffic along Bloor.

Community Bikeways and its predecessor Bells on Bloor have been deeply invested in advocacy --- and the hard-fought battle --- for Bloor bike lanes since 2007, including the organization of family-oriented parades (see attached photo from the subject area) and the push for a pilot bike lane (finally installed in 2016) and subsequent extensions. (In fact, we ask that you include us in future "stakeholder" consultations, or to at least provide us with an opportunity to comment on traffic management plans for Bloor before they are finalized.)

As your slide deck makes clear, the Bloor bike lane is among the city's busiest cycling routes. During some months, counts for this bike lane are as high as 6,000 to 8,000 people every day. The phase 3 plan to divert cyclists to Harbord Street is problematic for several reasons -- and comes at a time when the connecting north-south Queen's Park bike lane has also been closed for many months (a matter we previously raised with the city).

1. The detour apparently proposed for eastbound cyclists is very unsafe. The southbound connection from Bloor to Harbord along Spadina would require cyclists to make a perilous left turn onto Harbord Street from Spadina, then proceed east to Queen's Park where they would presumably be required to travel south around the park then travel

back north onto Bloor (along the closed Queen's Park bike lane) to continue their eastbound journey. Even if the detour to Harbord involves using the contraflow on Brunswick Avenue, the return to Bloor for cyclists intending to continue along Bloor, east of Avenue Road, is equally problematic. (Brunswick, as a residential street contra-flow, may not be adequate as a connection from Bloor to Harbord, given the volume of cyclists involved.)

2. As articulated by Brian Burchell, General Manager of the Bloor Annex BIA, the diversion would significantly interrupt the Bloor cycling route thereby negatively impact the economic interests of its members. As the city has previously reported, people on foot and bikes are not only valuable local shoppers, but they spend more and visit merchants more often than motorists;
3. Some cyclists may not use the detour to Harbord, but instead attempt to ride east along Bloor given the directness of the route, regardless of the attendant danger. This may be especially true for food couriers who are particularly prominent and valuable in this area, and who, given the focus on timely delivery, may be more apt to risk riding eastbound on Bloor, including late at night -- perhaps even using the sidewalk;
4. Some city residents may simply forego riding their bikes altogether, especially if their trips are less direct, and instead turn to other modes, either putting more stress on our roads or the transit system, and thereby increasing GHG emissions, and
5. Since Bloor-Danforth is a vital east-west bikeway, diverting cyclists into a far longer route undermines the city's policies promoting active modes of transportation.

We also point to the observation of Brian Burchell that the previous, similar road work for the section of Bloor between Spadina and Bathurst Street --- which is far narrower --- was accomplished without obliging cyclists to reroute to another, less direct route.

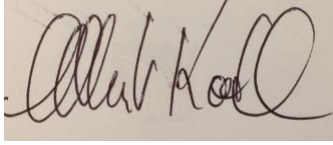
As noted, while the "protected intersection" planned for Bloor and St. George is a very welcome development, this too is contradicted by a project that apparently contemplates closing this busy route to eastbound cyclists altogether.

Finally, we also note that the city is currently studying a motion by Councillor Dianne Saxe to address construction projects that impinge on the Bloor bike lane.

It is for these reasons that we urge you to reconsider any Phase 3 approach that would divert eastbound cyclists from Bloor Street.

We would be happy to meet with you in person to further discuss our concerns, and preferable options.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink on a light-colored background. The signature is cursive and appears to read "Albert Koehl".

Albert Koehl, Coordinator
Community Bikeways

Cc Ahmed Bhabha, Engineering and Construction
Mark De Miglio, Public Consultation Unit
Becky Katz, Manager, Cycling and Pedestrian Projects Unit
Brian Burchell, General Manager, Bloor Annex BIA
Councillor Dianne Saxe, University-Rosedale

