



March 1, 2021

Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward
Director, Project Design and Management,
Transportation Services
City of Toronto

Dear Ms. Hayward,

Re: moving forward - cycling infrastructure and community engagement

Thank you for meeting with us on February 23, 2021 to discuss our concerns and questions about cycling infrastructure and community engagement opportunities. We appreciated your insights and feedback.

Background about Toronto Community Bikeways Coalition

The [Toronto Community Bikeways Coalition](#) was established in June 2020 to build on the momentum of a May 2020 community letter to the mayor and councillors calling for the urgent installation of 100 km of bikeways to respond to the pandemic, particularly to address the needs of transit-reliant residents and essential workers. This call was consistent with the mayor's proposal for bikeways to mirror busy transit routes. The letter was signed by 120 community groups, including residents' associations, and transit, cycling, health, and climate action organizations. The TCBC itself is comprised of volunteers drawn from a variety of fields including health care, law, social justice and road safety.

Process to determine bike lane priorities

We understand that the current process for deciding bike lane priorities for an up-coming year involves a staff review of a variety of factors and measures, along with any input that has been received, though not necessarily solicited, from the public. These priorities are then proposed as recommendations to the Infrastructure and Environment Committee (IEC) for approval, followed by public consultation. Our concern remains that there is no formal process of community engagement **prior to** the staff determination of priorities.

We note, for example, that the Overlea Bridge route (which is not in the 2021 plan) remains unsafe for pedestrians and cyclists while other installations slated for 2021, although useful,

offer relatively marginal safety improvements. We support local residents and groups in the Thorncliffe and Flemingdon Park neighbourhoods in their call for a safe bridge crossing, and yet this obvious peril is not being addressed in 2021, many years after the danger was recognized. We appreciate that thousands of motor vehicles (without distinguishing between the number of people carried on buses versus private automobiles) use the Overlea Bridge and that Transportation Services is reluctant to interfere with this flow of motor traffic. We also note, however, that the current allocation of bridge space is inconsistent with the city's Vision Zero road safety policy and that many of the 55,000 local residents (unlike motorists using these neighbourhoods as a thoroughfare) depend on this single crossing to walk or cycle to school, to visit friends, and to shop. Motorists arriving from north of Eglinton Avenue, on the other hand, have easy access to the Don Valley Parkway via Don Mills Rd.

A "Bike Account" for the city of Toronto

We believe that better communication with city residents about progress on the bike plan can be easily achieved with an annual, concise (1-2 page), easy-to-read Bike Account that provides specific information about the past year's accomplishments, including, for instance, the number of bike lanes and cycle tracks installed, budget allocations, and bike counts. We have provided you, by email, a draft list of measures that would be useful. We want to reiterate that the objective is **not** to add to the work of city staff, but simply to illuminate existing information that is otherwise not accessible to the public. This type of document would ultimately allow the public to be better informed and to allow for practical year-to-year comparisons. In fact, such a document may well save staff resources by pre-empting repetitive questions from the public as well as *Freedom of Information* requests. We anticipate that this Bike Account could be implemented by a motion approved at IEC, and thereby to become a permanent community resource.

Illegal bike lane parking

We summarized for you our recent meeting with senior police officials and their subsequent announcement of weekend and evening enforcement of the law against motorists who illegally stop or park in bike lanes. We believe this additional enforcement will significantly improve the safety benefit of bike lanes in the city. We also discussed with you the need for additional education of motorists (including Uber/Lyft and delivery drivers) about the illegality of bike lane incursions, often rationalized by motorists as being "just for a moment" (a moment that may cause serious injury to a person on a bike who is obliged to veer into the motor lane). In the education of motorists, we suggest that where physical separation of bike lanes is not possible, other indicators, such as signage and distinct pavement paint, should be used.

City Hall bike counts

The city's ongoing bike counts are valuable information. We would appreciate seeing this information disseminated in a timely manner. We understand there are some efforts in this direction. In addition, we look forward to seeing a permanent, mounted display of a bicycle

counter (already used in cities such as Ottawa and Victoria B.C.) to serve as a useful public education tool about the prevalence and popularity of cycling in the city during all seasons of the year.

Budget numbers

We appreciated your detailed response to our letter of December 10, 2020 to the mayor, respecting budget allocations and spending for 2016-2019 (“Why is the community being shortchanged on its road safety dollars?”) Unfortunately, a comparison between our submission, relating to the years 2016-2019, is made very difficult as the city’s numbers are aggregated with the figures for 2020, which was an obvious anomaly, and because the numbers do not separate out available (and spent) federal and provincial grants, amounting to approximately \$47 million, as announced in 2016 and 2017. We note, however, that the Bike Account that we reference above, would allow for precisely the type of year-to-year comparisons that motivated our original letter, instead of requiring the public to spend hours reviewing city budget documents.

We also note that after subtracting 2020 bike lane installations, our reading of your letter is that 20 km of centre-line bike lanes/cycle tracks were installed in the period 2016-2019. (We continue to urge the city to use centre-line counts for bike lanes as offering more useful information and to allow for easier comparisons between cities, including Montreal. If the objective of the city’s practice is to better account for contra-flow lanes, then such lanes can be counted separately.)

Cycling deaths and injuries

Cycling deaths in the four-year period before 2016, when the Vision Zero Road Safety Plan was adopted are approximately equal to deaths in the four years after 2016 --- 14 to 13 --- despite lower motor traffic levels in 2020. We understand that Transportation Services undertakes an internal review after each road death or serious injury -- but that there is no opportunity for public engagement. The result is that the public is generally left in the dark as to causes and remedial measures taken, informed only by initial, often speculative, media accounts that may turn out to be ill-informed. In any case, we hope you will agree that an informed narrative about collisions is vital to better road safety. An internal process by the very officials who oversee the road system is not ideal in terms of transparency or accountability, especially given that the local community is often in the best position to understand the particular dynamic and background of a crash site. Some European cities have successfully used public engagement processes to improve safety. (We will provide additional references by email.) In any case, we believe such an approach, for the reasons we articulate, commends itself to our city.

Social media

We fully agree that social media should always be used in an honest and respectful manner. We do not apologize, however, for calling out City Hall or particular councillors for failures to

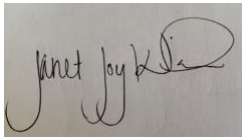
provide adequate safety measures on the local streets of their wards. Vision Zero is a city-wide policy for the benefit of all residents regardless of where they live. We know only too well that failures in road safety can lead to death and serious injury, and a lifetime of anguish for families. Therefore, although our calls for action may sometimes seem harsh, they must be read in the context of the city's own policies and potential consequences.

We look forward to following up with you on these issues and continuing to work with your staff in building a more bicycle friendly city.

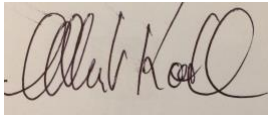
Sincerely,

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

Mary Ann Neary

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Janet Joy Wilson".

Janet Joy Wilson

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

Albert Koehl