

Monday, October 23, 2023

Mayor Olivia Chow
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen St. W.
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Mayor Chow,

Re: Road safety and construction projects

Our coalition of road safety, business, and community groups writes to express our concerns about the dangers to persons on foot and bicycles, including persons with disabilities, posed by construction projects that impinge on bike lanes and sidewalks – and the ineffectiveness of measures currently being implemented by the city.

We raise this matter in the context of the city's [Vision Zero Road Safety Plan](#), which prioritizes human life “over all other objectives within all aspects of the transportation system.” In addition, and central to Toronto's climate action plan, as expressed in the [TransformTO Net Zero Strategy](#), is the 2030 goal that 75% of all trips under 5km to school or work be on foot, bicycle, or transit. In this context, we hope you agree that creating a streetscape that is safe for cyclists and pedestrians, including people heading to the TTC stop or station, is vital to the city's success in achieving its articulated objectives.

Unfortunately, it is our experience and observation that the safety of people on foot or bikes is often treated as an afterthought --- or a “where, and if, convenient to motor traffic” approach -- - as opposed to a priority, consistent with city policies.

By way of example, the Bloor bike lane between Avenue Road and Spadina Avenue is currently closed, and will remain closed, for at least a year. This bike lane, the product of many years of advocacy, is adjacent to many popular destinations, including the University of Toronto and its 60,000+ students and faculty. The bike lanes have essentially been erased and the remaining two lanes treated as general traffic lanes, forcing cyclists to “share” the roadway with cars and trucks many times their size and weight. The result of this reconfiguration is that cyclists are forced to jostle dangerously for space on the approach to a single lane in the construction area, then end up stuck behind idling cars -- and exhaust fumes. Many of us have also regularly observed “single file” signs hidden behind other signage, further undermining cyclists' safety.

In these circumstances, it is no surprise that many cyclists --- perhaps more so those who are less confident or novice riders --- end up on the sidewalk, as confirmed by a recent bike count.¹ Many people will likely be dissuaded or discouraged from cycling altogether, or simply avoid the area to the prejudice of the many businesses along the way. Similar shortcomings in measures to protect people on bikes and on foot have been experienced across the city, including on Adelaide and College Streets, which are likewise very popular cycling routes.

We believe that if city plans and policies relating to TransformTO, Healthy by Design, the Bike Plan, and Vision Zero are to be respected and achieved, then the starting point for construction projects that interfere with bike lanes and sidewalks must be to determine how to safely accommodate city residents travelling on foot or bicycles, even if this means restricting motor traffic.

We appreciate the efforts of Roger Browne, Director, Traffic Management, and his staff in Transportation Services, in an ongoing effort to work with road safety groups to develop clearly articulated rules, a public feedback system, and an enforcement process. However, we also know that since various city departments and divisions will have to coordinate and adhere to the same rules, political direction will be needed to ensure a uniform, effective, enforceable approach.

It is for these reasons, that we ask for the opportunity to meet with you directly, at your earliest convenience, to discuss this important road safety matter.

Sincerely,

Bloor Annex Business Improvement Area (BIA)

Community Bikeways (TCBC)

Cycle Don Valley Midtown

Etobicoke South Cycling Committee

RideFair

Safe Parkside

Toronto East Cyclists (TEC)

Women's Cycling Network (WCN)

cc. Roger Browne, Director, Traffic Management, Transportation Services

Barbara Gray, Manager, Transportation Services

¹ Community Bikeways, Media Release: ["Road Reconstruction Along Bloor Street West Poses New Dangers to Thousands of Toronto Cyclists: Study shows lack of adequate safety measures to protect cyclists and pedestrians,"](#) Toronto, Aug 1, 2023. The count showed 11% of cyclists riding on the sidewalk, compared to virtually 0% at a nearby reference point on Bloor.

