



Monday, June 28, 2021

Stephanie Tsui  
Planner Transportation  
Transportation Services, Planning and Capital Program

Becky Katz  
Manager, Cycling and Pedestrian Projects

[City of Toronto](#)  
100 Queen St W  
Toronto, ON, M5H 2N2

*Submitted to: [cycling@toronto.ca](mailto:cycling@toronto.ca)*

Dear Stephanie Tsui and Becky Katz,

***Re: our feedback on Cycling Network Plan (CNP) Update***

Thank you for the invitation to the June 7, 2021 briefing for the Cycling Network Plan Update. We appreciated the presence of staff to answer questions. We are pleased to provide our feedback.

The Toronto Community Bikeways Coalition was created in June 2020 to push for 100 km of bikeways to mirror busy transit routes to meet the needs of essential workers and transit-reliant and other residents. (This demand was initiated by a coalition of 120 community groups in a May 14, 2020 [letter to the mayor and council](#).) Our group is comprised of volunteers drawn from a variety of fields including health care, law, business, road safety, and social justice. We believe that cycling infrastructure is an important component of a healthy transportation system and benefits the community by addressing urgent problems of climate change, equity, and road safety.

We also commend you for the ongoing success of the installations in 2020 (as well as the recent installation of bike lanes on a midtown portion of Yonge St) which continue to pay dividends not only as opportunities for transportation and recreation during the pandemic but as a component of a clean, efficient road system. We urge you to repeat this success for the benefit of the many communities that are still without access to bikeways and to ensure action commensurate with the urgency of the problems we face, while fulfilling city policies listed in your presentation. We believe that the addition of 30 km of new bike lanes/cycle tracks each year on a road system of over 5,600 km (excluding highways) should be a minimum target.<sup>i</sup>

If we understand the Cycling Network Plan Update correctly it is intended to provide a progress report to the Infrastructure & Environment Committee on September 14, 2021 – and subsequently to council – on the implementation of projects in 2021, as well as to seek endorsement of proposed projects for the “Near Term Implementation Plan,” 2022-23.

### **Budget and staffing**

We would be happy to support an annual cycling capital budget increase to \$20 million with yearly increases – a sum that would help bring Toronto’s funding allocation closer to that of leading cycling cities. However, we are concerned, based on recent history, that the city has not even spent its \$16 million annual cycling budget (approved in 2016), nor the significant additional funds provided through the federal Public Transit Infrastructure Fund and the Ontario Municipal Commuter Cycling Program.<sup>ii</sup> We believe that a rationale for the increase would be beneficial in gaining public and council support. We also support additions to the existing staff complement in order to accelerate annual bikeway installations.

We suggest, in order to facilitate a better public understanding of issues such as budget allocations and staffing needs, that an annual “Bike Account” be prepared to allow for year-over-year comparisons on progress in creating a safe cycling network. Such a document, which should ultimately save staff time (by avoiding the need to answer the same questions from the public) would include information such as budget allocation, sources of funding and spending, staff numbers, bike lane installations, and progress on Vision Zero. On a related matter, we are pleased to see bike lanes now being reported as “centre-line” km, which is easier to understand and easier to compare with other jurisdictions.

We support the streamlining of approvals for quicker implementation. In fact, we remain concerned about long delays that result from studies, especially in the context of the city’s careful system of prioritization and suitability scoring for new cycling infrastructure. Specifically, once a road is identified as a priority --- based on the long list of factors listed on your “prioritizing for delivery” and suitability scoring slides --- what other matters are left to be studied? We would appreciate an articulation of a list of these issues, beyond anticipated design and consultation work. We note that the Vision Zero Road Safety Plan declares that “human life should be prioritized over all other objectives within all aspects of the transportation system.”

### **Proposed Routes**

The Cycling Network Plan Update proposes a number of bikeways which we believe are necessary and important, including:

- Bloor St (Runnymede to Royal York) plus a **study** for an extension to the Six Points intersection;
- Yonge St (**studies** from Front to Bloor and from Davisville to Avondale, along with the previously approved stretch from Avondale Rd to the Finch Hydro Corridor);

- Danforth Ave (**study** from Victoria Park to Kingston Rd along with the recently approved extension from Dawes Rd to Victoria Park);
- Kingston Rd (**study** from Danforth Ave to Scarborough Golf Club Rd);
- Victoria Park Ave (**study** from Danforth Ave to Gatineau Hydro Corridor); and
- Overlea Blvd Bridge (**study** underway).

We do, however, question the continuing emphasis on studies that may delay installation (and safety) for years, despite the prioritization of these projects based on your listed factors. We suggest that the need for such studies be re-evaluated based on the urgency of the problems that we face – including climate change, inequity, and road danger – and in the context of the significant success of initiatives such as the Bloor-Danforth bikeway, which had been the subject of comprehensive studies since at least 1991, but with minimal action until the pandemic.<sup>iii</sup> In fact, this year marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first 1.6 km bike lane on Bloor (running across the Viaduct to Sherbourne). In the 2016 Bike Plan, an extension to the Bloor Street bike lane (as well as a Danforth bike lane) was to be the subject of a major corridor study to be completed by 2018 --- but it was never started --- and yet the bike lane was subsequently approved (after design work and public consultation), and installed in 2020, with significant, immediate success.

On the issue of studies trumping action, we commend to you [the June 28, 2021 letter of the Toronto East Cyclists](#).

In terms of making information easily accessible and understandable to the public, we suggest that maps be supplemented by charts that list type of cycling facility, length, status, and anticipated installation date. The current maps and scoring system make it very difficult to discern which roads are being prioritized. As well, since the scoring system includes a very wide array of factors, it would be helpful to provide examples of how the scoring system is actually applied.

We would appreciate your clarification on what role public input plays in the selection of bikeways. We note that the slide deck sets out a long list of factors to be considered in determining priority but the only reference to community demands is the somewhat ambiguous “requests (including councillor input).” We have previously raised with city staff our concerns about how the public can engage in calling for additional bikeways needed to make their communities safe.

As for the projects identified as under study, we would appreciate an actual anticipated timeline for installation, as well as the potential for acceleration of installations. Our concern is based on the fact that in the period 2016-2019 the city only installed about seven km of bike lanes/cycle tracks annually when the 2016 Bike Plan called for 335 km of bikeways by 2025. We remain over 100 km short of the bike lanes/cycle tracks envisioned in that plan.

### **What’s Missing**

Among the projects that we would urge you to treat as a priority, which include areas identified through your equity lens, are the following:

- Weston Rd: Church to Eglinton Ave;
- Don Mills-Overlea-Broadview, including the Overlea bridge identified as under study;
- Dundas St W: Aukland to The East Mall as the westward extension of the Bloor bike lane<sup>iv</sup>; and
- Yonge St: Finch Hydro Corridor-Steeles Ave and Queen-Front, as well as upgrades to the existing bikeway from Front St to the lake to connect with the upcoming bikeway on The Esplanade.

The Weston and Don Mills-Overlea-Broadview routes would help serve neighbourhood improvement areas such as Weston, Mount Dennis, Thorncliffe Park, and Flemingdon Park, all of which lack safe active transportation infrastructure on arterial roads, which would provide vital connections. Finally, including the last part of Yonge from the Finch Hydro Corridor to Steeles would allow for the completion of a continuous north-south cycling corridor from Steeles to the waterfront, as well as help relieve the future Yonge subway extension from overcrowding. (We also refer you to [our October 2020 letter](#) articulating the routes (as updated), rationale and corresponding community support for some of these projects.)

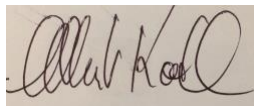
Finally, we suggest that the plan would benefit from the articulation of specific measures and benchmarks of success – for example, especially in the context of the removal of the ten-year time frame, progress toward the completion of a (defined) city-wide network, the reduction in GHG emissions, fulfilment of the TransformTO goal of converting 75% of trips to active modes, progress on Vision Zero goals, and action on access for Neighbourhood Improvement Areas.

We would be pleased to provide any clarification for the above matters.

Sincerely,



Robert Zaichkowski



Albert Koehl

*Toronto Community Bikeways Coalition*

Website: <https://www.communitybikewaysto.ca>

Twitter: @BikewaysTO

Facebook: <https://www.communitybikewaysto.ca>

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<sup>i</sup> If our reading of your map is accurate, it appears that the most substantial part of 2021 implementations (based on the chart) is on Eglinton Ave, a 7.8 km route. (Metrolinx is building cycle tracks outside of its stations only.) Since we know that the LRT will not be completed in 2021, we assume this bike lane will not be installed (as previously confirmed to us by staff). The 2021 installations of bike lanes/tracks/boulevard level paths, including contra flow lanes but exclusive of the Eglinton cycle track **is, therefore, only 12.55 km**. The total rises to 13.55 if the Martin Grove installation is included, although this is listed as a bike lane/sharrow.

<sup>ii</sup> The capital budget for the 2016 Bike Plan was increased from \$8m to \$16m on the premise that bike lane installations would approximately double, however this doubling did not occur.

<sup>iii</sup> Marshall, Macklin and Monaghan, "Route selection study for on-street bike lanes," Final report, Feb 1992

<sup>iv</sup> While Bloor St is identified as an east-west priority, we believe Dundas West offers a more useful route west of Six Points by allowing for an easier connection to the TTC subway and to the multitude of residential towers along Dundas W.