



Thursday, December 10, 2020

Mayor John Tory and
James Pasternak, Chair and Council Members
Infrastructure & Environment Committee (IEC)
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen St. West
Toronto

Dear Mayor Tory, Councillor Pasternak, and IEC councillors

Re: Why is the community being shortchanged on its road safety dollars?

The proper thing to do for this stage of the situation, the challenge in front of us, is to go to \$16 million.... This is a significant step forward, to take the resources that were at the level of \$8 million and to take it to something that's going to be double that and produce double the results, I think is important...

*The old way was to set targets that were very ambitious, and sometimes too ambitious, to be frank; not to fund them and then not to achieve them. And I think what we're trying to do here today in advocating for the \$16 million is to say we're going to set a target that has a level of ambition to it, but is achievable, is to be funded, and will be achieved. **And will be achieved** (emphasis in original) ...*

I want to be able to stand in front of people and say we approved that plan, and we went out and did it.

(John Tory, June 9, 2016 during Bike Plan debate)

Toronto roads remain a peril to pedestrians and cyclists. Since September of this year alone, four city residents have been killed while riding their bicycles on city streets. The safety deficiencies of our roads for cyclists persist despite the commitment by City Council and other levels of government of **\$100 million** (a conservative estimate based on debates and budget documents) to cycling infrastructure in Toronto in the period, 2016-2019. During these four years, a paltry seven km of bike lanes were installed per year on the city's 5,600 km road

network, despite an articulated objective of 34 km per year set out in the 2016 Bike Plan.ⁱ In these four years, fewer bike lanes were installed than the plan envisioned for a single year.ⁱⁱ

The 2016 Bike Plan was fully funded, “fully vetted,” and “achievable” -- but not implemented. The plan’s trajectory toward failure was long evident, even publicized in newspapers. This did not, however, elicit a response from elected officials, including the Mayor and IEC, who are responsible and accountable to the public for the plan.ⁱⁱⁱ Surely this failure, in view of the significant funds dedicated to the plan’s success, demands an explanation, especially for the grieving families and injured victims.

2020 demonstrated that City Hall has the capacity to deliver bike lanes, when and if there is political will. The announcement of the pandemic bike lane installations was termed an “acceleration” of the Bike Plan, although the plan had been floundering virtually from its inception in June 2016.

The community has been short-changed on its road safety dollars. The recent cycling fatalities all occurred in circumstances involving commonplace hazards: arterial roads, access and exit ramps for major highways, streetcar tracks, and turning trucks. Bike plans are proactive strategies to address road dangers and to prevent tragedies. *Ad hoc*, after-the-fact, responses to tragedies do nothing for families that have suffered the loss of a loved one.

Each death confirms a daily reality for city residents who cycle: the lack of critical, safe cycling infrastructure despite years of plans and promises to address this deficiency. This reality persists despite the fact that Toronto cyclists are residents whose choice of transport benefits not only their own health but that of the community and our climate.

Cycling infrastructure has the obvious advantage of being inexpensive, an important consideration during difficult fiscal times. Some of the temporary, pandemic bike lanes appear to have been installed at a cost of about \$40,000 per km. We note that many of these lanes, often built with cement curbs, are of a superior quality to permanent ones already in place.

We have carefully reviewed all relevant documents including the 2016 Bike Plan, the 2019 Update,^{iv} and budget documents to which city staff directed us after a *Freedom of Information* request. **We can find no satisfactory explanation to account for the great discrepancy between dollars available for cycling infrastructure and the level of actual installations.**

During the PWIC and subsequent council debate for the 2016 Bike Plan, a key concern was that the plan, unlike the failed 2001 bike plan, be fully funded and delivered. (We provide references in the notes below.^v) The success of the 2016 Bike Plan hinged on the allocation of sufficient funds from the city and other levels of government. The plan was to be 85% funded by the city with the remainder from other levels of government.^{vi} The city voted to dedicate \$16 million annually to the cycling capital budget based on a staff recommendation to ensure the plan’s success. Significantly, the PWIC chair called on the other levels of government to “come to the table.”^{vii} Soon thereafter, the federal government committed \$22 million to cycling

infrastructure in Toronto from its Public Transit Infrastructure Fund (PTIF) while the province committed \$25.6 million from its Municipal Commuter Cycling (OMCC) program.^{viii}

Our review suggests *tens of millions of dollars* were simply left on the table, that is to say, not spent.^{ix} In addition, of the dollars spent, only a small fraction was actually dedicated to new bike lanes (or “cycle tracks”). We know, for example, that in 2018, a mere \$1.26 million from the cycling capital budget was spent on bike lanes.^x In some cases, the new bike lanes were not connected to much-needed ones on dangerous roads. This was the case with recently installed bike lanes in Thorncliffe and Flemingdon Parks, despite the Bike Plan motto: *Connect, Grow, Renew*. In short, only a fraction of the \$100 million in committed funding for cycling capital projects was actually spent, and of that amount only a fraction was spent on bike lanes.

Our review of relevant debates and documents allows for the conservative estimate of \$100 million in dedicated or available funding for Toronto cycling infrastructure for 2016-2019:

2016 - \$8m (this figure was likely much higher based on budget variance documents^{xi})

2017 - \$12m (Bike Plan, App 3)^{xii}

2018 - \$16m (Bike Plan, App 3)^{xiii}

2019 - \$16m (Bike Plan, App 3)^{xiv}

OMCC - \$25.6m (to be spent by end of 2020)^{xv}

PTIF - \$22m (to be spent by March 2020)

(\$16 million was allocated by the city for 2020.^{xvi})

We also request a concise account and explanation of why so little of the \$100 million dedicated to cycling capital projects for 2016-2019 was actually spent, and how much spent on bike lanes.

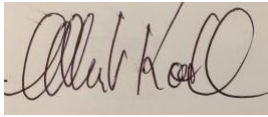
The Mayor’s office and the IEC must ensure that bike plans are carefully monitored for implementation and thereby to assure the community that the safety on roads of people who cycle is important. A commitment in 2021 to bike lane installations at a rate that acknowledges the failures of recent years and that *at least* matches the installation numbers of 2020 should be considered a modest starting point.

We look forward to your response. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

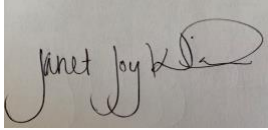
Sincerely,



Mary Ann Neary



Albert Koehl



Janet Joy Wilson

on behalf of the Toronto Community Bikeways Coalition

cc Barbara Gray, General Manager, Transportation Services
Chris Murray, City Manager
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health

ⁱ [Bike lane tracker](#).

ⁱⁱ [2016 Bike Plan](#), approved in principle by council, June 9, 2016, provided for a total of 33.5 km per year (at p 8)

ⁱⁱⁱ See for ex, [Toronto Star, June 17, 2018](#). “Lack of proper cycling infrastructure is a contributing factor to reduced road safety, and Toronto is ‘doing miserably’ on that front.” “Cycling infrastructure is a key part of Vision Zero, and yet very little is happening.”

^{iv} The “Update” in July 2019, reported (p 25) the installation of only **7%** of the (10-year) 2016 Bike Plan. According to the \$16m budget scenario, [a projected 23% implementation for on-street cycling infrastructure](#) was to have taken place by end of 2019.

^v The GM, TS told PWIC members in May 2016 that the plan involved meetings with each councillor and comprehensive surveys. He added that, [“the plan was thoroughly vetted” \(at 4:53:20\)](#). The anticipation was that the plan’s “deliverables” would actually be met - see question by Councillor Janet Davis, [PWIC, May 16, 2016, Ten Year Cycling Plan](#) (at: 4:50:40). The 2016 Bike Plan was an “implementation and budget plan” ([council debate, June 9, 2016, GM, TS at 0:48:17](#))

^{vi} The total city budget needed to implement 85% of the ten-year plan was estimated at \$153m (GM, TS, June 9, 2016, [Council Debate re Bike Plan at 0:45:50](#));

^{vii} “We left some room for provincial and federal funding” – [GM, TS, at 4:56:30, PWIC debate](#). Chair, PWIC, emphasized that the city had now done its part and “I want to hear and see other levels of government come to the table.” Chair said (at 5:25:30) that “it’s important to leave some room” for other levels of govt. In fact, federal and provincial govts had already indicated a willingness to contribute (4:57:30). See generally: [PWIC, May 16, 2016, Ten Year Cycling Plan, at 5:25-5:27, comments by Chair](#).

^{viii} [in August 2016, the federal govt announced its Public Transit Infrastructure Fund](#) (PTIF) totalling \$186m for Toronto from which \$22m was dedicated to cycling infra, to be spent by March 2020 and shared 50-50. In other words, the city was to contribute a matching amount. (An additional \$0.98m was available under PTIF for bike parking at TTC stations.)

^{ix} The budget committee itself asked staff to explain **the significant underspending of allocated funds for cycling infra in 2019**. In response, [TS in a January 28, 2020 Briefing Note](#) pointed to the amount of time it had taken to prepare the Bike Plan **Update** and the need to integrate federal and provincial funding.

^x [dandyhorse, The bike budget that pays for everything except bike lanes](#), April 2019.

^{xi} See: [Appendix 4 - Revised Capital Variance - Capital Dashboard by Program/Agency \(toronto.ca\)](#) p 32, noting \$19.599m.

^{xii} See also: \$13.484m as set out in [Appendix 4 - Capital Dashboard for Programs/Agencies \(toronto.ca\)](#) p 35

^{xiii} See also: \$10.2m as set out in [Capital Variance Report for the Year Ended December 31, 2018 \(toronto.ca\)](#) p 33

^{xiv} See also: \$13.902m as set out in [Capital Variance Report for the Twelve Months Ended December 31, 2019 \(toronto.ca\)](#) p 31

^{xv} In Dec 2017, Queen’s Park announced [Ontario Municipal Commuter Cycling \(OMCC\) program](#), dedicating \$25.6m to cycling infrastructure in Toronto. This contribution was to represent 80% of a project’s cost, with matching funds from city.

^{xvi} [Capital Variance Report for the Nine Months Ended September 30, 2020 \(toronto.ca\)](#), shows a figure of \$20.55m.