

TODAY'S WEATHER
 PARTLY CLOUDY
 15 °C 
 4 Day Forecast | Traffic

Great gifts for Dad,
 great savings for you! 

Monday, June 08, 2009 | Today's Toronto Star | Login

PHOTO VIDEO COLUMNISTS BLOGS TWITTER RSS MOBILE NEWSLETTERS ALERTS



thestar.com Web find a Business
 Advanced Search | Full Text Article Archive

 **AUTOS**
CAREERS
CLASSIFIEDS
DEATH NOTICES
REAL ESTATE

HOME NEWS OPINION BUSINESS SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT LIVING TRAVEL WHEELS HEALTHZONE YOURHOME PARENTCENTRAL

Toronto & GTA | Ontario | Canada | World | Insight | Global Voices | Obituaries | Local Highlights | Science-Tech | Acts of Kindness

URBANOLOGY

Which way works for city streets?

> Advertisement <



MORE NEWS

- Divers find Air France tail
- Man granted bail pending new trial
- Injunction sought to prevent story about Raitt
- Beluga whale born at Vancouver's aquarium
- Irish civil court finds 4 liable for 1998 Omagh bombing
- British PM faces revolt after EU thrashing
- Divers recover tail section of Air France jet
- Conservatives make big gains in EU elections
- Additional U.S. Marines begin Afghan duty
- Angry Pakistani villagers turn on Taliban

RECENT SPECIAL SECTIONS

- Do It! This Summer Guide
- Digital Photo
- Golf Magazine 2009
- Sick Kids
- Allergies & Asthma
- Home Improvement
- Home Office Guide
- Wheels Extra
- Canada's Best Diversity Employers 2009
- Investing
- Guide to Colleges & Universities

[More Specials](#)

> Advertisement <



One-way fracas revives a debate about what urban thoroughfares are for

May 10, 2009 04:30 AM

Comments on this story  (25)

CHRISTOPHER HUME
URBAN AFFAIRS COLUMNIST

The question may seem straightforward, but not the answer.

Are streets an ends or a means, a way to get from A to B, or destinations in themselves?

In most cases they are both.

But as the debate over councillor Adam Vaughan's proposal to turn portions of Adelaide and Richmond from one-way to two-way streets makes clear, that doesn't make the decision any easier in a city where the car is king. A similar idea has also surfaced in Oshawa where city councillor Louise Parkes has raised the idea of turning some downtown streets back to two-way. They were made one-way long ago to accommodate shift changes at General Motors.

The one-way/two-way argument boils down to a car-versus-pedestrian struggle. The prevailing view is that one-way streets are better for vehicular flow than two-way. With fewer turns and no oncoming traffic, they tend to be faster.

On the other hand, one-way streets also force drivers to make more than the usual number of U-turns.

By contrast, two-way streets slow traffic, which is thought to make things safer for pedestrians – and drivers, for that matter.

"It means there's a fast way to get across downtown," was how one cab driver explained his preference for Adelaide and Richmond. "I think they should be left one-way."

From the other side, Nancy Smith-Lea of the Toronto Coalition for Active Transportation, told the *Star* last week that "One-way streets tend to be more dangerous for both cyclists and pedestrians. Traffic moves much faster."

Because both Adelaide and Richmond are four-lane roads, conversion from one-way to two would be possible.

Right now neither street sustains the kind of vitality as King, Queen or College Streets. The one-ways are largely back streets west of Yonge, and expressways to the east.

The Bay doesn't bother to dress the Richmond St. windows of its Queen St. flagship store.

In another part of town, a similar, but different, controversy is brewing over a proposal to close the reversible middle lane of Jarvis St. That would mean widening sidewalks and adding bicycle lanes.

Well-heeled north-enders have proclaimed their opposition. On the other hand, if the goal is a more pedestrian- and bike-friendly city, closing the lane is the right thing to do. But that doesn't mean it will be done.

In addition to the power wielded by the burghers of Rosedale and Moore Park, the city itself remains ambivalent about the car. Yes, we want to encourage pedestrians and cyclists, and enhance street life, but not if that interferes with traffic.

The city might take cues from New York transportation commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan. Under her leadership, that city has moved aggressively to make its streets more attractive to pedestrians. That hasn't included changing roads from one-way to two, and in Manhattan, one-way streets abound. But given New York's fierce congestion, that doesn't seem to matter. Blocks are generally short and traffic slow.

Sadik-Khan's strategy involves reclaiming chunks of streets, especially intersections, for pedestrians. Some former corners are now furnished with chairs and tables.

"It's important to look at streets holistically," she says. "When you see the city through the windshield of a car you see one thing, when you see it from a pedestrian point of view, you see it in different ways. Then it becomes clear our cities aren't working."

In Toronto, councillor Denzil Minnan-Wong is talking about a "deliberate campaign against drivers."

If only.

"Our job is to provide solutions to the congestion and gridlock that the city has," he said last week. "Instead, we are becoming more part of the problem. This arrangement is another thing we're going to do to make congestion worse."

In this city, the prevailing hope is that pedestrians and cyclists can be accommodated without getting

 Print

   Choose text size

 Report typo or correction

 Email the author

 License this article

 BOOK-MARK 

"The latest fad among urban planners is to convert one-way streets to two-way. The goal, they say, is to slow down traffic and make streets more pedestrian friendly ...

By almost any measurable criteria – safety, pollution, congestion, and effects on most local businesses – one-way streets are superior to two-way. The idea that two-way streets are superior because they are more pedestrian-friendly is just a planner's fantasy that disguises their real intent: to create an auto-hostile environment."

– From *Vanishing Automobile update #30*
(ti.org/vaupdate30.html)

"One-way streets waste gas, time and lives. To get to my place at Marlowe and Sherbrooke with a carload of kids involves driving down Northcliffe or Vendome, diddling around the lights ... and shooting back up Marlowe to Sherbrooke – only to discover the parking space I spotted earlier is taken ... by the wise guy who raced in reverse down Marlowe from Sherbrooke ... The quiet two-way street of yesterday is now a rocket range."

– From *The Monitor, Montreal*, cited in *The Gazette*

MOST POPULAR ON THESTAR.COM

Most Read

- eHealth executive ejected
- North Korea gives 2 U.S. journalists 12 years
- Horoscopes for Monday, June 8
- 2 killed at Brampton booze can named
- Recession means tough times for sex workers

SPECIAL



Impressing employers

The Star recently asked readers for their best advice to deal with a number of recession-related problems. One question we didn't ...



No doubt, Federer is the greatest

Welcome, officially, to the pantheon of the greatest of the great, Roger Federer. It is an exclusive club, if there ever ...



Recession means tough times for sex workers

Falling prices for services are 'causing a lot of misery' and raising fears prostitutes will take more risks.



9-hour show at Luminato

Robert Lepage's nine-hour creation, unveiled at Luminato yesterday, gets automatic credit for epic scope. But how good is it really? ...

More Specials

Ads by Google

Traffic Ticket Solutions

Speeding? Careless? Red Light?
Call 1-877-TTS-WINS Today!
www.TrafficTicketSolutions.ca

Worried About Points?

We can help save you points & insure
Obtain a free consultation today!
www.NoPointsTrafficTickets.com

East York Homes

Toronto and East York Real Estate
See Listings, Agents Now
www.chrisclarketeam.com

in traffic's way. It's hard to make happen. In urban conditions, planners play a zero-sum game. Jarvis is a good example; adding bike lanes and widening sidewalks requires space, space that can only be gained by closing the fifth lane.

Richmond (one-way westbound) and Adelaide (one-way eastbound) have evolved into urban highways. They're not the Gardiner but, once past Parliament St. in the east become no-go zones for pedestrians and cyclists; then Richmond and Adelaide merge into an overpass that make it clear that this was the intention.

That was then, this is now. Fifty years ago, cities everywhere were building highways. Now many are tearing them down. Think of Boston, Seoul, San Francisco, Oslo...

Others – London and Stockholm – have introduced congestion fees, road tolls by another name. Despite enormous initial resistance, the fees reduced traffic up to 20 per cent.

The intention was to cut the number of car trips and find a better balance of users.

But many Torontonians – voters all – remain attached, limpet-like, to their wheels. Road tolls are too hot to handle and if taking down the Gardiner Expressway, in part or in whole, remains an option, those with the power aren't in a rush.

Perhaps we should remind ourselves that congestion is one thing all great cities share. In New York, Rome, London, Paris or Istanbul the traffic is awful. Even cities planned around the car – Abu Dhabi and Dubai – are as gripped by gridlock.

Sadik-Khan has discovered the urban street grid can be put to better use than just traffic. That doesn't mean removing all cars from the street, but finding a better mix of pedestrians, cyclists and drivers. For half a century, the car was given preference by default, but that's coming to an end.

Torontonians are waking up to the possibilities of the public realm, but still waiting to see results.

The Richmond/Adelaide debate is one whose time has come. The questions it will raise will be about who gets access to what. Is Toronto a place for cars or kids, vehicles or people?

If the city belongs to all the above, the roads are a good place to begin the conversation. If it doesn't, they are a good place to end it.

Comments on this story are moderated | [Login to Comment](#) [Commenting Guidelines](#)

Sort By

It is fortunate

that this particular constituency has a counsellor who is not afraid to be on the forefront of progressive issues. It's far past time that the one-way street disaster was killed off. One way streets are toxic to the urban environment. Even in places the where they don't do much visible damage they function in spite of themselves. Richmond and Adelaide are too valuable to be despoiled any longer. There's a vibrant community there that could really grow and take off if given the opportunity.

Submitted by Torontochav at 3:06 AM Saturday, May 16 2009

[Agree](#) 1 | [Disagree](#) | [Alert a Moderator](#)

To energyblogwalter

And of course the products in those stores would be delivered on bike-trucks or maybe even bike-semis. Better yet, they'd be delivered on the streetcars. People who bought things in those stores would carry them home on their bikes, in the winter, it would be difficult but I'm sure city council would have a cunning plan for all the issues....

Submitted by fedupinTO at 9:03 AM Wednesday, May 13 2009

[Agree](#) 2 | [Disagree](#) | [Alert a moderator](#)

Forget two way, try two bike lanes

4 lanes to 2 lanes, then make them bike paths. Drivers have to learn that they are not the only vehicles on the road in this city. Dedicated lanes would remove lots of bikes from Queen and King since there's no streetcar delay. It would also encourage cycling and convenience, as well as cycle-taxis. The solution to driving is not more driving. Also the lanes would NOT be parking spaces, but treed off like Paris. The cyclists would be the one stopping by the stores along the way, not the mindless driver

Submitted by energyblogwalter at 9:11 AM Tuesday, May 12 2009

[Agree](#) 3 | [Disagree](#) 2 | [Alert a Moderator](#)

Building a neighbourhood not a roadway

Unfortunately a lot of bloggers are simply missing the point with respect to the issue of roads and cars vs. pedestrians and neighbourhoods. Neighbourhoods like cities are evolving, changing entities that must be allowed to adapt with the times and our present day reality is that cars are simply destroying our planet and our neighbourhoods. It is not a left-wing vs. right-wing political debate it is about neighbourhoods like mine, the Old Town of York wanting to grow and develop into a

vibrant urban historical centre, the birth place of Toronto. Two, 4 lane one-way highways (Richmond & Adelaide) right through our community simply does not work. Find other modes of transportation if you must commute into downtown Toronto daily. If the argument is the public transit sucks then lobby every level of government for better public transit but don't think it is your right to invade our community for two minutes every day just so you can have a quicker commute. www.bpfa.ca

Submitted by BPFA at 6:23 PM Monday, May 11 2009

[Agree](#) 2 | [Disagree](#) 1 | [Alert a moderator](#)

Gridlock

Gridlock is entirely caused by vehicles entering an intersection when the exit is blocked. This stops traffic in four directions, and can be seen every day at such locations as King/University or Bay/Richmond. For some strange reason, grids were painted at many of these intersections, but no information is given. Why not put up signs saying "No Entry Unless Exit Is Clear" and station police at several of them, dishing out \$200 tickets until the message gets across?

Submitted by Omer at 3:10 PM Monday, May 11 2009

[Agree](#) | [Disagree](#) | [Alert a Moderator](#)

How many travellers determines best answer

If 100,000 want to travel on Queen St. to get downtown to work but only 3,000 are in car, I think the answer is obvious. The Richmond/Adelaide debate is merely moving deck chairs for too little effect.

Submitted by Civic minded at 5:18 AM Monday, May 11 2009

[Agree](#) 1 | [Disagree](#) 1 | [Alert a moderator](#)

Tamils Provide Needed Public Service

Personally, I would like to thank the Tamil protesters who blocked traffic on the Gardiner Expressway. They have proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that tearing down the Gardiner Expressway is one of the stupidest ideas proposed by the left wing ideologues at City Hall.

Submitted by Scarberia at 11:07 PM Sunday, May 10 2009

[Agree](#) 5 | [Disagree](#) 9 | [Alert a Moderator](#)

City planning the issue

The Opera house "on" Richmond provides a clear example of what we think of Richmond. You cannot help but feel that this building has turned its back on Richmond. City planners can help Richmond and Adelaide by making buildings interact with the street on all sides. The Opera house shows that this is not yet happening.

Submitted by John O at 4:17 PM Sunday, May 10 2009

[Agree](#) 11 | [Disagree](#) | [Alert a moderator](#)

Most Of Us Don't Really Care Anymore

I'm surprised Hume, like Vaughn, has made the jump to city council yet. Most people in this city could really care less about this stuff anymore. Let them do what they wish, most of it can be undone after 2010 when we vote the bums out. The larger stupidities will take longer than a year to complete and will hopefully be reversed by the next mayor. At this point, the lunatics have taken over the asylum and our city has become a shadow of what it once was and could've been.... In famous Bolshevik rhetoric, after 2010 we will take our city back, we will make it liveable once again and we will get rid of all those huge garbage bins on our porches! People band together and vote the NDP infestation out of our City Hall. We did it when they took over the Ontario government and we need to do it again in our city in 2010.

Submitted by fedupinTO at 3:51 PM Sunday, May 10 2009

[Agree](#) 6 | [Disagree](#) 11 | [Alert a Moderator](#)

4 lanes dedicated to the car is 4 lanes dedicated to the car

If the aim is to make a street more pedestrian friendly, then the solution is not to turn 4 lanes of one-way traffic into 4 lanes of 2 way-traffic. That still is 4 lanes dedicated to the car. This does little for the pedestrian while making car traffic more inefficient. The real estate of the street needs to be redistributed. Why not use the efficiency of one way streets, but give them to public transportation, cyclists and pedestrians? The most amazing thing is that on our busy streets, Queen is a good example, we sacrifice two full lanes to parked cars. While a car sits parked for three hours serving one person, hundreds of people pass by on foot, in street cars and in cars. Why do we allow parked cars to occupy such valuable real estate? Imagine pitching a tent the same size of a car and placing it in the middle of sidewalk or in the driving lane - that what parked cars do.

Submitted by John O at 3:44 PM Sunday, May 10 2009

[Agree](#) 6 | [Disagree](#) 3 | [Alert a moderator](#)

Argument for 2 way not based on reality and logic.

How can you have improved pedestrian traffic and attractions when the majority of buildings lining that very stretch do not have retail or restaurant store fronts? That very stretch west of University on Richmond is comprised mostly of old industrial buildings. How does increased congestion and hence pollution help the neighbourhood and residents? The answer to better pedestrian experience is thru asking for better street level designs as new developers go about chomping up our valuable downtown real estate. Lets not get fooled into degenerating this into a simplistic pro-car vs. pedestrian debate. We need an overall balanced solution and shifting too much one way over the other is a recipe for disaster. Heck, I live in Vaughn's ward and walk to work every day yet I can see the fallacy of his arguments. Perhaps its time for Vaughn to get out of his chauffeured limo and spend a few days in the area he will be affecting with his proposed experiment.

Submitted by Mistaken Identity at 3:39 PM Sunday, May 10 2009

[Agree](#) 6 | [Disagree](#) 2 | [Alert a Moderator](#)

my perspective

I don't own a car - I bike, walk and take transit around the city. I avoid Adelaide and Richmond, and nothing is worth risking my life on my bike on Jarvis. It should be pretty obvious that businesses on these streets don't get my business or from other people who don't drive. And drivers rarely get out of their car to buy something - they're just driving by...

Submitted by Mister J at 3:20 PM Sunday, May 10 2009

[Agree](#) 12 | [Disagree](#) 3 | [Alert a moderator](#)

Page 1 of 3

[< Prev](#) [Next >](#)

Ads by Google

Buy 333 Adelaide St. East
2+1 BDRM, 3 Bath, MOZO PH.
Parking & Terrace. See Photos.
www.myArea.ca/MOZO_Penthouse

TheStar.com [Corrections](#) | [Contact Webmaster](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Site Map](#) | [RSS](#) | [The Star on Twitter](#)

Toronto Star [About Us](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Subscriber Self Services](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [News Releases](#) | [Star Internships](#) | [Careers at the Star](#)

Advertise With Us [Media Kit](#) | [Online Advertising](#) | [Print Advertising](#) | [Special Sections](#)

Initiatives [Santa Claus Fund](#) | [Fresh Air Fund](#) | [Community Giving](#) | [Classroom Connection](#) | [Speakers Bureau](#)

Torstar Sites [toronto.com](#) | [InsuranceHotline.com](#) | [Pages of the Past](#) | [Stock Photos](#) | [New In Homes](#) | [ShopTV](#) | [More...](#)



© Copyright Toronto Star 1996-2009 [Terms & Conditions](#) | [Privacy Code](#)

