

March 3, 2014

RE: PW 29.6 – Pedestrian Refuge Island: Victoria Park Avenue at Terraview Boulevard/Farm Greenway

Dear Chairman Minnan-Wong and Members of the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Toronto Centre for Active Transportation (TCAT), a project of Clean Air Partnership. TCAT conducts research and education that supports a vision for cities that are safe, convenient, and enjoyable communities to walk and bike.

Members of the public previously identified that the intersection of Victoria Park Avenue and Terraview Boulevard/Farm Greenway is unsafe for pedestrians and requested the city to install a traffic signal. However, in response, the staff report recommends *against* the installation of a traffic signal and *for* the removal of the pedestrian refuge island and both transit stops on either side of the road!



Pedestrian refuge: Victoria Park & Terraview/Farm Greenway



Transit stop: Victoria Park & Farm Greenway

Not only would this further degrade the pedestrian experience by making transit more inconvenient, it could make this busy street even more unsafe by removing the pedestrian refuge island without installing any other measures to improve pedestrian safety. It's like a cruel joke. While I understand that technical warrants are being used and this is not a deliberate intention to make it more unsafe, nevertheless I strongly believe that could be the result.

According to the Federal Highway Administration, medians (such as the one pictured below, directly north of this intersection) and pedestrian refuge islands are a proven safety countermeasure particularly effective at multi-lane intersections, reducing pedestrian crashes by 46% at marked crosswalks and 39% at unmarked locations.



Median: directly north of Victoria Park & Terraview Boulevard/Farm Greenway

I request that you approve the installation of a semi-actuated traffic signal at Victoria Park Avenue and Terraview Boulevard/Farm Greenway and keep the pedestrian refuge island and existing transit stops for the following reasons:

1. **Safe School Routes:** There are many pedestrians, especially vulnerable pedestrians such as children, who need a safe pedestrian crossing at this location, as it is on the desired path from the residential community to elementary schools on the other side of the street.
2. **Transit Stops:** There are also many transit riders that use the Victoria Park bus route. The report does not provide a number for how many transit riders board and alight at these transit stops at Terraview Boulevard/Farm Greenway, and this should be considered. More people would likely cross if it was safe. There are over 23,000 transit riders on this bus route daily per weekday, and this route generates more revenue than cost per rider. The transit stops at Victoria Park and Terraview Boulevard/Farm Greenway should not be removed as there are many mid-rise buildings in the area, and schools/institutions whose members use this busy transit route.
3. **Low Impact on Vehicular Flow:** A semi-actuated traffic signal will not significantly impact vehicular flows on Victoria Park or cause congestion, because the signal will only be activated at particular times when there are pedestrians or vehicles. The spacing of the signals is also well within a reasonable range given the land uses and busy transit route.
4. **Saves Lives:** Most importantly, a semi-actuated traffic signal will save lives and reduce liability for the city, because over the last few years there have been 6 collisions preventable by the installation of signals, and 4 of these have been pedestrian collisions.

In 2012, the Ontario chief coroner called for an overhaul of the design of our city streets to reduce speed in order to prevent pedestrian deaths. The posted speed limit on Victoria Park is 60 kilometres per hour. This is already a dangerous speed in such close proximity to pedestrians, yet according to the staff report the operating speed is 73 kilometres per hour! Permitting and facilitating speeds of this magnitude within city limits is lethal and unconscionable.

With the city's emphasis on making Toronto more liveable, healthier and age-friendly, it is important to weigh all the factors and instead of only looking at historical patterns, look forward and make the community a safer and better one – not just for pedestrians, but also for transit and drivers who will benefit as there will be fewer collisions.

In conclusion, I request that you vote against the removal of the pedestrian refuge and two transit stops on Victoria Park Avenue at Terraview Boulevard/Farm Greenway and approve the installation of a semi-actuated traffic signal at this location.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



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