

June 22, 2011

Chair, Public Works and Infrastructure Committee
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario, M5H 2N2

Re: Bikeway Network – 2011 Update

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

I am writing on behalf of the Toronto Coalition for Active Transportation, 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. A growing body of international research shows that active transportation is central to making vibrant and economically competitive cities that are also sustainable, accessible, and healthy for all.

I am writing to ask you to accept the four recommendations made by the Toronto Cyclists Union:

1. That City Council and PWIC re-establish the Bloor-Danforth Bikeway Environmental Assessment on the basis of significant community support.

There is currently no safe and convenient way to get quickly across the city on a bike and bicycle-motor vehicle collisions are concentrated mainly on central east-west arterial roads. Bloor Street/Danforth Avenue is a natural choice for an east-west bicycle lane because it runs right through the middle of the city, offers connections to the subway and the street is wide enough to add a bike lane, often without losing parking. TCAT's "Bike Lanes, On-Street Parking and Business" research reports published in 2009 (<http://torontocat.ca/node/533>) and 2010 (<http://torontocat.ca/node/801>) show that there is considerable merchant and patron support for changes in street use allocation to support bike lanes and widened sidewalks. Furthermore, only 1 in 10 patrons surveyed in Bloor Annex and 1 in 5 in Bloor West Village reported driving to Bloor Street. While there are many major projects to be undertaken to improve the Bikeway Network, TCAT identified the Bloor/Danforth bikeway as one of its top three active transportation priorities for this term of Council.

2. That City Council and PWIC direct City staff to report to the September 2011 meeting of PWIC with an implementation plan for a connected network of protected bicycle lanes that includes two east-west routes and two north-south routes.

In recent months we have seen a growing consensus in Toronto on the need for an integrated, continuous network of bike lanes physically separated from motor vehicle traffic. The reasons for this are clear: when correctly designed and maintained, protected lanes offer cyclists the safest and often most enjoyable means of getting around. Networks of protected lanes also encourage more people to make more trips by bicycle. The pros and cons of these lanes have been extensively studied. Research has shown that protected lanes can increase bicycle ridership 18 to 20 percent. Protected lanes are particularly important in accommodating cyclists of different types and skill levels. For an excellent snapshot of the most current research, we recommend the Toronto Cyclists Union review outlining the many health and safety benefits for cyclists and pedestrians alike (<http://bikeunion.to/protected-bike-lanes/safety-ridership>).

In 2010, TCAT released a report titled "Building Better Cycling Arteries in Cities: Lessons for Toronto" (<http://torontocat.ca/node/1472>) that examined how best to accommodate cyclists on arterial roads, with

in-depth case studies of innovations in six cities including Toronto, Montreal and New York. A recent study on protected bike lanes in Montreal found protected bicycle lanes have a 28% lower risk of injury than comparable reference streets, and that 2.5 times as many cyclists use the protected lanes as comparable reference streets. The City of New York has built 250 miles of cycling facilities in the last four years, and increased cycling volumes by 66% in the process. Where it has separate lanes, it has witnessed a 50% reduction in injuries for all users. For a city with the area and population of Toronto, a network of just four protected lanes, two east-west and two north-south, is an acceptable starting point.

3. That City Council and PWIC direct City staff to report to the September 2011 meeting of PWIC on a pilot project for separated bicycle lanes on Richmond Street and/or Adelaide Street to inform the larger overall transportation operations study of the area.

Richmond and Adelaide were identified in Toronto's 2001 Bike Plan as ideal candidates for physically separated protected bike lanes. Their implementation should not be subject to further delay. Research indicates that protected bicycle lanes are particularly appropriate on roads with few cross-streets and long blocks that are conducive to higher vehicle speed, such as Richmond and Adelaide. A pilot project can help to inform the larger overall transportation operations study of this area.

4. That City Council provide direction to City Staff to not remove the Pharmacy and Birchmount bike lanes on the grounds of public safety and respect for the taxpayer.

The removal of on-street bicycle lanes sets a very poor precedent for Toronto, especially outside of the downtown core where very few bicycle facilities exist. Bike lanes, protected or not, increase the comfort and safety of cyclists, and drivers and pedestrians too (through increased predictability, reduced swerving, reduced sidewalk riding, etc). In Portland, 22 of 25 cyclist fatalities from 1995-2007 occurred where no bike lane existed. Removing a bicycle lane leaves the impression that cyclists are not legitimate road users and that their safety is unimportant. It is clear that there have been no significant adverse effects on traffic operations or parking as a result of the bike lanes on Pharmacy and Birchmount. For all of these reasons the bike lanes must be retained.

As noted throughout the report in reference to installation of on-street bicycle lanes "where community supports them and where they do not impede traffic flow" – these factors alone should not dictate the decision for bicycle facilities. Safety, health, connectivity and environmental factors are no less important. The many benefits that cycling brings to a city are clear. While TCAT advises that any decisions on protected lanes be taken with careful consideration of their application and design, we also strongly urge that City Council direct City Staff to establish a plan that meets the consensus of research and opinion and fulfills the promise of a safer, more accessible cycling network for all Torontonians.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Nancy Smith Lea
Director, Toronto Coalition for Active Transportation (TCAT)
Clean Air Partnership
75 Elizabeth Street, Toronto, ON M5G 1P4
Phone: 416-392-0290
Email: nsmithlea@torontocat.ca
Website: www.torontocat.ca