

February 26, 2018

Public Works and Infrastructure Committee

Re: PW27.8 Pilot Bike Share Program in South East Scarborough

Dear Chair Jaye Robinson and Members of the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee,

I'm the Director of the Toronto Centre for Active Transportation (TCAT), a project of the registered charity Clean Air Partnership. TCAT's mission is to advance knowledge and evidence to build support for safe and inclusive streets for walking and cycling.

On behalf of TCAT, I am writing in reference to the proposal to pilot a Bike Share program in south east Scarborough. Specifically, we would like to offer our experience and expertise as an organization that has, for the past two years, operated two community bike hubs in Scarborough, one at Access Alliance's Danforth location, and the second at Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre. These bike hubs are part of a project called Scarborough Cycles, funded by the Metcalf Foundation and undertaken in collaboration with the two host organizations, as well as the Toronto Cycling Think & Do Tank at the University of Toronto, CultureLink Settlement and Community Services and Cycle Toronto.

The overarching goal of Scarborough Cycles is to build bike culture beyond downtown. Our research, undertaken with the University of Toronto, identified both a need and potential interest for cycling in Scarborough as a form of transportation. Although Scarborough is often perceived as a place where car ownership is universal, we found many neighbourhoods where more than a quarter of households do not own a car. These residents rely on transit, walking, and rides from others to get around, and often these modes of travel are insufficient, limiting access to work, education, health and settlement services, and social opportunities. Cycling can help fill this mobility gap and increase independence. About half a million trips taken each day in Scarborough are less than 5km (DMG, 2014), a distance easily cycled in 20 minutes.

Cycling also offers significant health benefits, which are of particular importance, considering the health challenges that Scarborough and other Toronto suburbs are facing. A recent study from the UK found that those who cycle to work have a 41% lower risk of dying prematurely from any cause, and an even lower risk of cardiovascular disease and cancer specifically (Celis-Morales, 2017). As Toronto Public Health identified in their *Road to Health* (2012) report, currently the health benefits of cycling are concentrated in the central core of Toronto. Health disparities are further compounded by the fact that many low-income, high risk neighbourhoods are located on the peripheries. East Scarborough, where this pilot is proposed, has the highest incidence of diabetes in Toronto (Toronto Public Health, 2017).



A Project of Clean Air Partnership

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Over the past two years, we have seen over 2,800 participants in our Scarborough Cycles programs. The project's growing success has demonstrated that there are Scarborough residents who, provided with access and support, will ride a bike for local everyday trips, despite limited cycling infrastructure. At our community bike hubs, we offer assisted DIY bike maintenance, safe cycling workshops, group rides, bike loans and bike mentorship (through the Bike Host program), and Earn Your Bike workshops for youth. These programs are specifically designed to address barriers that prevent people from starting to cycle, such as lack of access to a working bicycle, a lack of confidence riding, and a lack of knowledge of safe cycling routes.

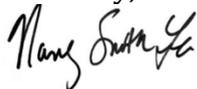
The proposed Bike Share pilot would add additional access to bicycles, and would also help normalize cycling in Scarborough. From a transportation system perspective, installing Bike Share is relatively affordable (\$50,000 capital cost for one station).

The City may wish to additionally consider how Bike Share Toronto could strategically address health and transportation disparities by looking at models in a growing number of jurisdictions, which incorporate social equity into their mandates. For example, Hamilton Bike Share 'Everyone Rides' initiative removes barriers that prevent residents from using their bikes by strategically locating stations in at-risk neighbourhoods, affordable passes are distributed through community agencies and bike education and group rides are offered. Another example is Metro Bike Share in Los Angeles which provides regional accessibility through transit fare integration, making bike share an integral component of public transit.

We commend the City for the success of its current BikeShare program. Adopting the pilot would broaden access to Bike Share and active transportation to a greater number of Toronto residents, and inform how to make Toronto Bike Share a city-wide program that is accessible to all residents as a viable transportation option.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Nancy Smith Lea, Director
Toronto Centre for Active Transportation,
Clean Air Partnership

References:

1. Celis-Morales, C.A., Lyall, D.M., Welsh, P., Anderson, J., Steell, L., Guo, Y., & Gill, J.M.R. (2017). Association between active commuting and incident cardiovascular disease, cancer, and mortality: Prospective cohort study. *BMJ*, 357.
2. Data Management Group, University of Toronto Civil Engineering (DMG). (2014). Transportation Tomorrow Survey Internet Data Retrieval System.
3. Toronto Public Health. (2012). *Road to Health: Improving Walking and Cycling*. From <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2012/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-46520.pdf>
4. Toronto Public Health. (2017). Health Surveillance Indicators: Diabetes. From <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/8c72-tph-hsi-diabetes-july18f.pdf>