

June 27, 2019

Infrastructure and Environment Committee

Re: Item 2019.IE6.11, Cycling Network Plan Update

Dear Chair Pasternak and Members of the Infrastructure and Environment Committee:

I am the Director of The 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.

TCAT has been a strong supporter of Toronto's Cycling Network Plan since it was approved, in principle, in 2016. However, we are concerned with its slow pace of implementation. The staff report has done an excellent job of developing a plan that can be implemented given the myriad of challenges that have been documented. The plan update includes a range of ways to improve rate of delivery, including more streamlining and neighbourhood clustering of routes and approvals. Addressing these challenges is critical in order to expedite the installation of safe bike infrastructure across the city.

While we support all of the recommendations put forward by the General Manager, Transportation Services, we would like to highlight the following:

1. Cycling network plans are important for assisting in the process of where bike infrastructure should be prioritized given limited resources and staff capacity. However, the reality in a city like Toronto is that most streets, certainly every arterial street, needs to be made safer for people on bikes. Furthermore, the City's Complete Streets policy, adopted in 2014, and Ontario's growth plan, adopted in 2017, provide specific direction for ensuring the needs of all road users of all ages and abilities are reflected in new street design. Each and every time a street is reconstructed presents an opportunity that should not be missed, whether or not it's on the cycling network plan, to install safe cycling infrastructure.
2. Network connectivity is key to building a safe cycling network and extending existing bike lanes is a priority. We support the recommendation put forward by Cycle Toronto to prioritize building protected bike lanes on Danforth and extending protected bike lanes on Bloor West. TCAT was part of the team evaluating the impact of the Bloor bike lane pilot between Shaw Street and Avenue Road. Positive results were found in virtually

every indicator that was evaluated in this comprehensive study, and we believe the full implementation of a bike lane throughout this entire corridor is completely warranted.

3. The strengthening of the Plan's focus on safety is welcome, with more detailed analyses of collisions, and initiatives linked to the Vision Zero Road Safety Plan. However, safety should be even further prioritized and enhanced in the analysis methodology. Not only is it important to install bike infrastructure where collisions have occurred, but where it is clear that the current road design is not safe enough for cyclists and where people do not feel comfortable cycling. As mentioned earlier, this describes the majority of arterials in Toronto, that currently prioritize the fast movement of cars.
4. The plan update notes the overwhelming success of pilot bike lane projects on Bloor, Richmond and Adelaide yet does not feature pilot projects moving forward. Given the host of challenges facing staff in installing permanent bike lanes, pilot projects are an important interim step. The Vision Zero 2.0 Plan Update proposes a program for implementing interim geometric modifications in advance of planned permanent modifications through the use of paint, bollards and other temporary features. This is an extremely important strategy that should be prioritized for improving the safety of people cycling. Cost-effective and easy to install, these temporary features will not only save lives sooner but they provide a fantastic way to try out a design before it's made permanent. This is an important point of alignment between the Vision Zero 2.0 Plan Update and the Cycling Network Plan update, that could be strengthened.
5. The inclusion of the equity lens tool to update the network plan is an important new addition. Safe cycling infrastructure is needed across the entire city, not just downtown. Most people live in suburban environments and most of the short trips are made there. For those living without access to a car, particularly in suburban areas with infrequent transit service, cycling can fill an important transportation gap. In Toronto's TransformTO plan, the goal is that by 2050, 75% of all trips under 5 km will be walked or cycled. With most of these trips located outside the downtown, there's no chance we are going to hit that target unless we see change in suburban neighbourhoods.

Overall, we believe the City's Cycling Network Plan Update will result in progress towards expanding the bike network. We hope the Committee will adopt the recommendations within the Plan, and that City Council will continue to do everything it can to accelerate the implementation of bike infrastructure throughout the City that is safe and comfortable for all ages and abilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nancy Smith Lea". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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