

March 3, 2011

Dear Resident Associations and Local BIAs,

Many of you have been recently contacted by the Bike Union about a proposal to re-configure roads and the bike network in the ward. The proposal is the same one that was first floated by Councillor Denzil Minnan-Wong last year.

Its goal is to establish barricaded bike lanes on Richmond, Adelaide, John Street, Beverley, St. George (College to Prince Arthur), and along Hoskin Avenue and Harbord Street.

The bike lane on Beverley and St. George would see both north and south cycling lanes relocated to the east side of the street.

Neighbourhoods and business districts in the three corridors are only now being consulted. The item is apparently going to council for approval as soon as April, following March's Public Works Committee meeting.

This same proposal was shelved last summer because it has several serious design flaws. If approved as currently configured, it would require **several community and city initiatives be cancelled and/or totally redesigned.**

Some of the problems:

**HARBORD** - If approved, the proposed lanes would require half the commercial parking to be eliminated. Since the morning rush hour has the most intense traffic flow, it is likely that the parking on the south side of the street would be lost.

**JOHN ST** - The Entertainment District BIA's plan to create a pedestrian street with capabilities to stage major cultural events would be cancelled. Councillor Minnan-Wong has told me to tell the BIA that the project is cancelled until further notice. The proposal would lock in the deficient sidewalks permanently and eliminate curbside drop-off and pick-up for local businesses. Money (approximately \$11m) raised and partially spent on the project would have to be returned to developers under the Section 37 guidelines under which it was secured.

At the top end of John, the plan would require two new bike lanes on Stephanie and the elimination of on-street parking. One lane would be a contra-flow lane flowing in the opposite direction of traffic. The proposal also suggests that a bike lane be carved through Grange Park and that this infrastructure drive the design process of the park by making the cycling route a priority over other park uses.

**BEVERLEY** - The double north-south lanes on Beverley Street in this bike network proposal would impact the design and access to Grange Park. It would also require residents of the TCHC properties north of Dundas to redesign and move garbage pick-up to adjoining streets, while permanently blocking passenger pick up and drop off for the Hydro Block community.

ST. GEORGE - The University would be required to rebuild St. George to remove the speed bumps and reconfigure the custom tiling and unique lane markings on this street. The pedestrian scramble being considered for the intersection of Harbord and St. George would have to be abandoned and the reconfiguration of the intersection to provide for better pedestrian flow recalibrated to accommodate a 'cycling first' approach to road design.

RICHMOND/ADELAIDE - it appears from submitted drawings that the bike lane would be separated from traffic by a row of parked cars and run along the north side of Richmond. It would extend from Sherbourne in the east to Bathurst in the west. Adelaide would see similar lanes on the south side of the street. No studies have been done on how driveways and deliveries would be handled. Proponents of the bike lanes objected to the sidewalk installation along 401 Richmond Street because it made the street too narrow for their plan. They have asked for all streetscape improvements including the construction of two new parks at Peter and Richmond be suspended until their bike plan is approved and built.

No rationale has ever been provided for why the dedicated twin lanes would run north of Bloor or how they would interface with established lanes that continue north, but that is the extent of the proposal.

All of the projects potentially affected by this bike plan have been evolved with extensive community planning. Grange Park, the John Street corridor project and the re-design of St. George would all have to be reset and in some cases rebuilt to facilitate the bike plan. None of the money already investment in the planning and development of these projects would be recovered. No new funding or budgets are available to implement the bike plan as proposed.

Approving the bike plan would freeze the affected neighbourhoods' planning process, override the community process and leave neighbourhoods throughout the ward with the status quo, despite having the resources in hand now to deliver long desired change to the community.

I am a cyclist; I have been all my life. I support bike lanes. Working with the neighbourhoods and community groups and cyclists of Ward 20 we have improved cycling resources and infrastructure in the ward over the last four years. Together we have created a bike plan for the affected neighbourhoods.

Last term we moved forward with the support of the Bike Union on a plan to move bikes through the ward. Portland Street, Spadina, Peter Street, Simcoe, Bremner and Blue Jays Way were all identified as the community- and BIA- supported options. Council approved design work on these streets. Harbord Street is not perfect, but it was made better with re-paving and re-stripping of the lanes. Harbord was the first street to get bike lanes, and continuous lines and markings through intersections. Sharrows were added where full lanes could not be accommodated. All of this was done with full consultation with the community and affected businesses. All of this work is about to be dismissed if the proposed option by the Bike Union is adopted.

The Bike Union has sent letters to community groups across the downtown soliciting support for their plan. The full explanation of its impact is not included in their package.

So far none of the affected neighbourhoods have written letters of support for the proposal. Many

are on the record as being opposed.

I ran for council on a platform of community-based planning. Adopting this top-down and locally insensitive plan, without consultation or even proper design work flies in the face of what residents and businesses and Ward 20 have fought so hard for.

There is a community process underway around the University's Secondary Plan and a liaison group that manages how the city, the community and the school resolve issues, The Annex and Grange Residents' Associations have community-based planning processes, as does Harbord Village and the King-Spadina neighbourhoods. Grange Park has a community board that effectively manages design proposals for the community green space. The Entertainment District BIA is running a consultation process and concluding an Environmental Assessment on the street.

The Bike Union is aware of all this but instead is riding off in its own direction and is refusing to engage the community on the neighbourhoods' terms or work with the local councillor. Instead they are proposing one-off meetings in isolation where only part of the story is told and only some of the implications are explored. They have chosen to work with Denzil Minnan-Wong and the new Ford administration first, and the community only as needed as a strategy.

I urge you all not to abandon the community planning process that we are all proud of. Please do not support the Bike Union plan at this time and let's continue to work together to make ALL forms of getting around Ward 20 as safe and as beautiful as possible.

Sincerely,

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