

Active TO Midtown Complete Street Pilot

Stakeholder Meeting - 18 October 2021

I am Debbie Briggs, President of the Summerhill Residents Association, and would like to address the following six concerns:

1. The land-locked corridor middle
2. The missing land use planning
3. Vehicular traffic operational issues
4. Cycle tracks operational issues
5. Surface transit impacts
6. The post-pandemic future

1. The land-locked corridor middle:

Our Summerhill neighbourhood is blocked in by the CPR-tracks, the ravine, and the escarpment with no alternative vehicular access or egress. This is different from the situation faced by South Rosedale, ABC, or Deer Park. There are 16 land-locked streets in the area from Jackes Avenue to Price Street on the east side and from Walker Avenue to Marlborough Avenue on the west side. The residents within this area rely exclusively on Yonge Street for access to anywhere. The impacts arising from the substantial reduction of Yonge Street's carrying capacity haven't even been considered.

2. The missing land use planning:

The analysis of the three corridors – Avenue Road, Yonge Street, and Mount Pleasant Road - reveals that basic land use issues were ignored. Of the 19 indicators used for evaluation, land use was reduced to this single one: *“Routes with higher percentages of commercial and mixed-use frontages receive a higher ranking.”* There was no recognition of the important relationship between transportation and the land use it serves, including existing densities, future developments, and trip generations. Even in the land-locked island itself, for example, there are several major developments under construction or under review at Scrivener Square, at Marlborough, at Birch, at Woodlawn East and at Jackes - and many more immediately to the north.

3. Vehicular traffic operational issues:

The absence of sufficient turning lanes in a single-lane situation on Yonge results in single cars waiting for a gap in traffic regularly stopping the entire traffic flow in one direction. Similar problems have been created on side streets. On both Shaftesbury and Summerhill, for example, the right-turn movements to go north have now been obstructed by poles. The existence of traffic lights in quick succession at Rowanwood, at Price, at Scrivener Square, and at Shaftesbury with sub-standard spacings in between creates gridlock and often blocks intersection. Both the reduction of snow storage space and the effects of sliding cars and buses on an icy incline in a single-lane configuration have not been properly addressed.

4. Cycle tracks operational issues:

Although this pilot seems to be propelled primarily by cycling objectives, even the needs of cyclists have not been adequately met. The bicycle lanes are too narrow to permit passing in many locations, too riddled with potholes, too obstructed by on-street features, too interrupted by an excessive number of traffic lights (often ignored by cyclists), and too steep for a safe operation in icy winter conditions. In addition, faster-moving electric bikes and scooters contribute to force many cyclists onto the sidewalks or the single traffic lane – thereby creating new hazards for cyclists, pedestrians, and cars alike

5. Surface transit impacts:

The planned and un-planned subway shutdowns regularly inundate the narrowed streets with shuttle buses and create frequent gridlock around the Yonge-St. Clair intersection and beyond. This situation impedes access for emergency vehicles, particularly, to land-locked addresses. The March 2021 staff report indicates that the impacts of the pilot project on the transit operation would be further investigated. However, there was no mention of a comparable investigation of the serious impacts of the frequent surface transit operation on residents and businesses under present conditions.

6. The post-pandemic future:

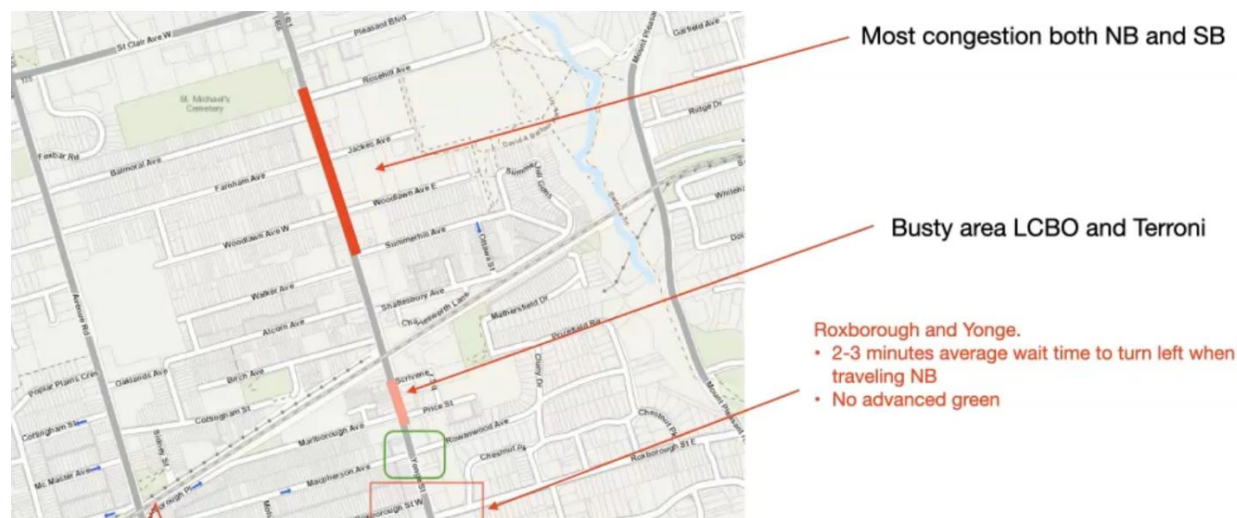
A COVID 19 pandemic response was one of the reasons for the delivery of a complete street pilot. Substantial changes to current traffic patterns can be expected when businesses adapt to a post-pandemic world but workers remain hesitant to return to transit. Similarly, the need for such temporary features such as CaféTO or on-street patios may diminish. No information has been made public on the nature of the proposed transition from this temporary pilot to a post-pandemic future and how the residents will be engaged.

In conclusion, these are fundamental issues that, in our view, have not yet been addressed.

Additional Concerns arising from the Stakeholder Meeting Presentation:

7. Traffic congestion:

An interesting presentation by an ABC-resident highlights the importance of evaluating the feasibility of a permanent installation segment-by-segment. It shows the greatest congestion, both northbound and southbound, in the Summerhill area which also includes the steepest incline on Yonge Street (see illustration below). This congestion, partly, is caused by the absence of southbound left-turning lanes both at Summerhill and at Shaftesbury, which give access to seven land-locked streets. Interestingly, the staff presentation slides show almost no cars anywhere. One of the overall objectives of extending the bicycle network, surely, is to improve the air quality by reducing car traffic. Ironically, the Summerhill residents are now regularly exposed to the exhaust of idling cars and trucks in gridlock when walking for chores to Yonge and St. Clair. Please release any recent air quality monitoring data for specific areas.



8. Access for emergency vehicles:

Although, the SRA has raised the issue of large land-locked areas in this corridor as early as March 2021, the latest staff update is still silent on it. The stakeholders had been assured earlier that Toronto's emergency services had reviewed the proposed installations and signed off. Anecdotal evidence suggest that such acceptance may have been premature. Please release the latest communications with emergency services. The SRA received this week an unsolicited report from a concerned resident (and cyclist) who offered the following observations: *"During busy times of the day (most of the time), there is no room for traffic to pull over to allow emergency vehicles to pass. I watched a fire truck from the Balmoral station try and move up Yonge Street during rush hour, and of course there was no room for traffic to get out of the way. This especially deprives residents of Summerhill of emergency services most of the day."*

9. Coverage errors in intercept surveys:

It is great to have data-driven decisions – as long as the data used is both valid and meaningful. The intercept surveys suffer from multiple fundamental coverage errors which render the sample unrepresentative of the target population, as follows: 1) the street surveys were conducted near all subway stops within the corridor – except at Summerhill – which means that the close to 5,000 people living on the 16 land-locked streets are vastly under-represented; 2) business owners and staff are unlikely to wander the streets and, hence, are under-represented; 3) drivers in moving vehicles cannot be interviewed in the street about their experience and, therefore, are under-represented; and, 4) transit users and cyclists, accordingly, are vastly over-represented. The magnitude of these coverage errors makes the results of the intercept surveys not just unreliable but misleading.

10. Measurement errors in intercept surveys:

A phenomenal 76% project support was reported based on the following question: *"The goals of Active TO Midtown on Yonge are to provide support for local businesses and surrounding communities by expanding outdoor patio areas, improving safety and comfort for everyone, and providing a safe and protected bike lane along the Line 1 subway. Do you agree Active TO Midtown on Yonge has met these goals"* This one question manages to combine three measurement errors, as follows: 1) 'Do you agree' is a leading question and should have been a neutral 'Do you agree or disagree'; 2) a triple-barreled question does not allow respondents to differentiate degrees of support or non-support for outdoor patios, improving safety and comfort, or bike lanes; and, 3) it is a social desirability question which has an inherent conformity bias since, in this case, nobody wants to appear to be against green policies. Accordingly, the result is meaningless.

11. CaféTO 2022 and beyond:

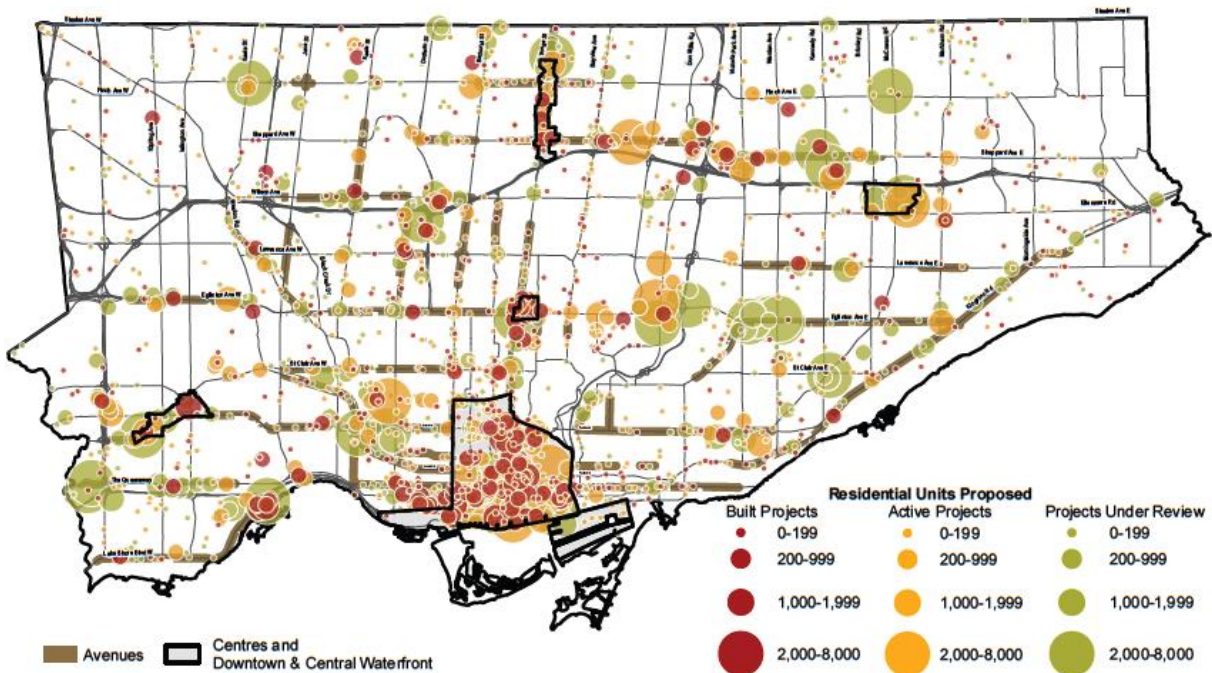
Given the current public policy direction, as outlined in the staff report of 13 October 2021, of making the CaféTO program permanent, it becomes even more urgent to find an alternative route for the Midtown bicycle lane extension project. This corridor cannot support both uses. It remains unattractive for patrons of these establishments to sit in the middle of regular traffic jams and, in addition to food and drinks, being treated to the exhaust fumes of idling cars.

12. Traffic data:

The staff presentation lists various sources of traffic data that are being monitored, including traffic flows at the intersections of St. Clair Avenue with Avenue Road, Yonge Street, and Mount Pleasant Road – the three corridors under consideration. It is not clear, though, how useful this information is for long-term planning since, at his time, most businesses still operate remotely. More useful are transportation models that predict the traffic

volumes under more normal conditions, superimposed with new traffic to be generated by the large number of proposed high-density residential projects in the immediate area and beyond. Toronto's *Development Pipeline 2021* report of last June shows that, unlike Avenue Road and Mount Pleasant Road, the Yonge Street corridor will continue to attract the bulk of the new projects. It does not need an expert to figure out the obvious: if two single lanes cause congestion in a low-volume traffic situation, two single lanes will function with even less efficiency in the forecasted growth scenario.

Map 2: City of Toronto Proposed Residential Development



Source: Land Use Information System II
 Development projects with activity between January 1, 2016 and December 31, 2020. Built projects are those which became ready for occupancy and/or were completed. Active projects are those which have been approved, for which Building Permits have been applied or have been issued, and/or which are under construction. Projects under review are those which have not yet been approved or refused and those which are under appeal.

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