



## **The Annex Residents' Association**

### **The Annex Residents' Association Cycling Policy Adopted by the Board, January 13, 2011**

The objective of these recommendations is to establish a set of guiding principles for the safe integration of cycling into our community's on-road traffic movement. We have prepared this document to stimulate discussion among residents in the Annex neighbourhood. After placing the "bicycle issue" into context, this document lists and explains recommended policy principles regarding safety and then raises particular points about responsibility and enforcement, as well as parking issues. The aim of the recommendations is also to work collaboratively with the Ward 20 Cycling Committee to press for the implementation of measures conducive to safe and responsible cycling in our neighbourhood, and ultimately to serve as a model for other parts of the city.

### **Context**

Bicycling is a popular mode of transport in the Annex and other downtown Toronto areas, even though overall cycling rates remain low across the broader city.<sup>1</sup> The number of bicycles relative to other on-road vehicles in the area in and around the Annex ranges up to 20%, according to the most recent Statistics Canada data for Toronto.<sup>2</sup> The increases in cycling levels include age groups that are not traditionally considered to be bicycle users. "The greatest increases in the percentage of people riding a bicycle to work were among females aged 45 to 54 (up 136.8% from 2001 relative to 2006) and males aged 55 to 64 (up 147.2%)."<sup>3</sup> Finally, the Toronto Cycling Advisory Committee indicates that the number of our residents that cycle on at least a recreational basis is approaching one million.

The Annex Residents' Association ("ARA") has a strong history of promoting sustainable transportation dating from its activism in successfully opposing the Spadina

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<sup>1</sup> Toronto's cycling levels, at 1.7% of all trips, is nonetheless higher than the provincial average and the highest for any city in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Online at: <http://www.toronto.ca/cycling/reports/statistics/statistics.htm>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Online at: <http://www.toronto.ca/cycling/reports/statistics/statistics.htm>

Expressway in the 1960s. More recently, as expressed in its *Bloor Corridor Vision Study*,<sup>4</sup> the ARA joins the City of Toronto in encouraging cycling, given its many individual and community benefits. Our priority in the Visioning Study was to ensure the safety of all road users with particular attention to pedestrians. The principles below incorporate many of the ideas in the “List of Priorities” prepared by the Ward 20 Cycling Committee.<sup>5</sup>

People cycle for the same reasons they walk, drive, or take transit: namely, to get to particular destinations for shopping, eating, visiting friends, working, or entertainment. Residents who use bicycles bring a significant amount of business to local merchants. A recent study by the Clean Air Partnership found that cyclists and pedestrians spend significantly more each month than motorists at Annex businesses.<sup>6</sup>

We appreciate that a common complaint about cyclists is that many do not obey the rules of the road. We believe that all road users must obey applicable traffic laws. We also believe that a comparison of violations by cyclists to motorists is not productive. We suggest, however, that the best way to promote compliance by cyclists with the law both for their own safety and for that of other road users is to make cyclists feel that their interests are valued through the implementation of safer cycling infrastructure.

We applaud the City’s undertaking to improve upon and to create cycling infrastructure. We agree that safe cycling routes must be constructed and that there must be a City-wide network. We fear that if only a few arteries are made conducive to bicycle traffic the initiative will not only have limited effect, but could cause bicycle congestion and overload cycling infrastructure in areas where cycling infrastructure is developed. We lament the slow pace of the city’s implementation of its 2001 Bike Plan which has seen only 25% of its 500-km bike lane goal for 2011 achieved to date.<sup>7</sup> Only 2% of Toronto roads currently have bike lanes.<sup>8</sup> We therefore urge the City to accelerate the development of a comprehensive cycling network. Although the recommendations below specifically apply to the Annex neighbourhood, we believe they can serve as a model for other parts of the city.

## Safety

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<sup>4</sup> City of Toronto: online at: <http://www.toronto.ca/planning/bloorcorridor.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Online at: <http://www.google.ca/search?q=ward+20+toronto+list+of+priorities+cyclign&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a>

<sup>6</sup> Clean Air Partnership: *Bike Lanes, On-Street Parking and Business: A Study of Bloor Street in Toronto’s Annex Neighbourhood*, February 2009. Online at: [http://www.cleanairpartnership.org/files/BikeLanes\\_ParkingandBusiness\\_Year1Report\\_Feb2009\\_Final\\_0.pdf](http://www.cleanairpartnership.org/files/BikeLanes_ParkingandBusiness_Year1Report_Feb2009_Final_0.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> More recently the Chair of the Toronto Cycling Committee stated that the objective is no longer to put in place a particular number of kilometers of bike lanes but to achieve connectivity of the existing system.

Toronto Star, May 31, 2010, *City’s bike plan switches gears*, online at:

<http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/article/816520--city-s-bike-plan-switches-gears>

<sup>8</sup> Toronto Police Service Environmental Scan, 2008; available online in PDF format.

Cyclists are over-represented in statistics for injuries in on-road collisions.<sup>9</sup> A common type of accident is cyclists, especially those under 18 years of age, riding out from a sidewalk onto an intersection.<sup>10</sup> This type of collision can be eliminated if cyclists are made to feel safe on our roads. Cyclists are less likely to injure other road users but they are more vulnerable to injury than occupants of motor vehicles.<sup>11</sup> In this context we recognize the need to more safely integrate cyclists into the traffic of our neighbourhood and recommend the following measures:

**1. Implement a bike lane on Bloor Street in the Annex from Avenue Road to Bathurst Street within one year, in conjunction with accelerated city-wide infrastructure for bicycle lanes, including along Bloor-Danforth**

Bloor St. is a popular east-west route for cyclists. The Bloor-Danforth corridor was identified as long ago as 1992 by a city report as an ideal bike route that could serve as a spine for the city's cycling network.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately only limited action has been taken on Bloor St. to make cycling safer while the City of Toronto's collision study concludes that collisions involving cyclists are concentrated in central areas of the city, particularly east-west arteries.<sup>13</sup> We therefore urge the city to implement a bike lane along Bloor Street from Avenue Road to Bathurst Street as well as the Bloor-Danforth corridor in tandem with the accelerated implementation of cycling infrastructure across the city, so as to more evenly distribute cycling traffic along the city's road network.

**2. Construct protected and dedicated bicycle lanes.**

Ensuring that cyclists have a protected dedicated space on the road will both enhance their safety and eliminate any reasons (particularly personal safety) that cyclists may have for riding on sidewalks and thereby endangering pedestrians. Measures to provide protected space for cyclists can include various options, as described by the Ward 20 Committee:

- *Fixed barriers* between car and bicycle lanes
- *Bollards* or flexible, vertical pipes separating the two modes of transportation
- *Door zone areas* drawn on streets between parking and bicycle lanes to protect cyclists from being hit by opening left-hand car doors.

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<sup>9</sup> City of Toronto: Bicycle/Motor Vehicle Collision Study, 2003. Online at: [http://www.toronto.ca/transportation/publications/bicycle\\_motor-vehicle/pdf/car-bike\\_collision\\_report\\_execsum.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/transportation/publications/bicycle_motor-vehicle/pdf/car-bike_collision_report_execsum.pdf) at p. 4, quoting the Toronto Regional Coroner's Report of 1998.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, at p. 104.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, at p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Marshall Macklin Monaghan: Final Report for City of Toronto Planning and Development Department: Route Selection Study for On-Street Bicycles Lanes, February 1992. See also the Environmental Commission of Ontario website at: <http://www.eco.on.ca/eng/index.php?page=283> which references the original report.

<sup>13</sup> City of Toronto: *Toronto Bicycle-Motor Vehicle Collision Study (2003)*, at p. i.

### **3. Provide for contra flow bicycle traffic on one-way residential streets.**

Following the lead of some European cities, allowing cyclists to go in the contrary direction on one-way streets would not only be a service to cyclists, but would have other advantages. Since contra flow lanes would normally require narrower lanes for motorists this will lead to lower speeds on residential streets.<sup>14</sup> When it is known where and when contra flow cycling is permitted, cyclist behaviour on one-way streets becomes regularized and anticipated by motorists and pedestrians. Contra flow bike traffic is obviously inappropriate on major streets, and regulations permitting it may also prescribe such cycling only on the non-parking side of a street and only in appropriate weather.

### **4. Allow rolling stops at (non major) intersections.**

So-called “Idaho stops” (as that state permits them) allow cyclists to slowly roll through stop signs. This would provide a reasonable mid point between cyclists coming to a full stop and placing one foot on the ground (as the law requires) and other cyclists who simply ignore the law (on the basis that a legal stop requires an unnecessary expenditure of energy). If a rolling stop is made legal overall safety is likely to be increased since cyclists will appreciate that the community understands the physical nature of cycling and reciprocate by becoming more compliant with laws that actually protect the safety of other road users.

### **5. Implement “bike boxes” at major intersections.**

Since many accidents with cyclists happen at intersections, particularly when motor vehicles make right turns, bike “boxes” provide obvious advantages to all road users. A bike box allows all cyclists to stand in a coloured or designated area at an intersection. Cyclists are therefore much safer since they have a designated area and motorists can more easily see them.<sup>15</sup>

### **6. Reduce the speed limit for motor vehicles on Bloor Street and side streets to 30km/h as is being implemented or considered in many European jurisdictions, and as has been implemented on St. George Street**

A recent joint report by the World Bank and World Health Organization, *The World report on road traffic injury prevention* documents the 1.2 million deaths that occur annually as a result of road accidents.<sup>16</sup> One of the measures encouraged by the WHO to

<sup>14</sup> A German report notes that "Motorists reduce their speeds significantly when encountering bicyclists if a street is less than 3.50 m wide." Alrutz, D. et al: "Traffic Safety on one-way streets with contraflow bicycle traffic" (trans by John S. Allen --

"Verkehrssicherheit in Einbahnstrassen mit gegengerichtetem Radverkehr"), online at: <http://www.bikexpert.com/research/contraflo>

/gegengerichtet.htm On many one-way streets in the Annex, the traveled portion of the road is greater than 3.5m suggesting the potential to slow traffic on residential roads is significant.

<sup>15</sup> The City has recently implemented a few such bike boxes on Harbord St.

<sup>16</sup> World Health Organization, online

[http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/publications/road\\_traffic/world\\_report/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/publications/road_traffic/world_report/en/index.html)

reduce such deaths is to lower speed limits in areas where cars mix with other types of vehicles or road users. The WHO suggests that at speeds over 30 kilometers per hour, motor vehicles do not safely mix with pedestrians.<sup>17</sup> Slower speed limits would also benefit cyclists since drivers will have more time to react.

There is good reason to consider lowering speed limits on residential roads as well as arterial roads such as Bloor St. not only because average speeds likely don't even reach such levels anyway (except for short spurts that increase risk) but because this makes collisions that do occur less likely to be fatal.

A comprehensive U.K. study confirmed by US Department of Transportation data, notes that a pedestrian hit at 50 km/h has approximately a 50% chance of survival while a pedestrian struck by a car at 30 km/h has a 95% chance of survival.<sup>18</sup> Since Bloor St. has a heavy mix of pedestrians, cars, and bicycles there is very good reason to consider lowering the maximum speed to 30km/h, as is already the case on nearby St. George St. at the University of Toronto.

## **Responsibility and Enforcement**

Under Ontario's *Highway Traffic Act* bicycles are legal vehicles on public roadways. Cyclists, like other road users, must comply with the rules of the road. For example, cyclists who are involved in accidents with pedestrians must stop, render assistance, and identify themselves. The measures listed above would help to limit accidents involving bicycles but not eliminate them. Adherence to the rules of the road by bicyclists should be encouraged both by police enforcement and by creating a culture of reciprocal respect among cyclists, motorists, and pedestrians.

The family of cyclists who are killed or injured are able to claim compensation from the province's insurance system or from a provincial fund in cases where the motorist cannot be identified. Motorists whose cars are negligently damaged by cyclists will also be compensated by the no-fault insurance system. Pedestrians who are negligently injured by cyclists may sue the cyclist in question under common law tort.

It is sometimes suggested that cyclists ought to be obliged to buy insurance so that pedestrians who are injured by a cyclist are compensated directly, instead of having to sue the cyclist. Such a requirement may facilitate the monetary compensation of injured pedestrians or other bicyclists who do not have the resources for a civil suit. Such a system, however, would be very costly and complex. In our view, this is an issue properly examined at the level of the province and can be taken up by provincial legislators.

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Richard Cuerden and David Richards, TRL Limited, and Julian Hill, Loughborough University, United Kingdom: "Pedestrians and their Survivability at Different Impact Speeds," Paper Number 07-0440

## **Parking**

While there is still space on several commercial sidewalks for parking stands, and these should be developed, existing facilities are already strained, and with more bicycle use will not be sufficient. Moreover, proliferation of stands can impede pedestrian use of sidewalks. We suggest that the City set aside spaces within the Toronto Parking Authority parking lots it owns or controls for bicycle use to augment existing parking. These should be free of charge, though perhaps returnable coin stands (similar to those for supermarket carts) could be installed.

### **Next Steps**

We recommend the following implementation process:

1. Present this draft cycling policy, including recommendations, to ARA Board for approval; [**Approved by the ARA Board January 13, 2011.**]
2. Present ARA cycling recommendations at a proposed public meeting of the Ward 20 Cycling Committee public meeting;
3. Present final recommendations to the local councillor to press for implementation.

### **Committee:**

**Robert Brown**  
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**Judy Matthews**