



To: Toronto East York Community Council
Re: Avenue Road Pedestrian Safety Improvement Pilot Project, proposed by
councillors Layton and Matlow, Oct. 15, 2020 meeting.

Oct. 12, 2020

Dear Councillors,

I am writing on behalf of Walk Toronto, a volunteer pedestrian advocacy group, and as a former resident of Avenue Road, to support the introduction of a pilot project to widen the sidewalks on Avenue Road.

Avenue Road was originally a 4-lane street, but the sidewalks were cut back in the 1950s to create additional lanes in a period when motor vehicle movement took priority over pedestrians and neighbourhoods. The sidewalks are now, in many places, narrower than even the most basic accessibility standard of 1.5 meters, with lamp posts and other obstacles making it particularly difficult and unsafe to navigate for people in wheelchairs, who have visual impairments, or who are pushing strollers. They are far too narrow and unsafe for a major street with many residences and destinations along it.

In the 21st century, we have come to see the folly of that driver-oriented approach, and it is time to begin the process of reverting Avenue Road to a normal size. Already, Queen's Park Crescent and University Avenue, the southern extensions of Avenue Road, have been reduced to four lanes for motor vehicle movement; meanwhile, Avenue Road north of St. Clair is also only four lanes. It only makes sense for the space in between to match these widths – the extra lanes no longer serve any purpose.

As well, due to construction, the curb lanes are already blocked in several places. These blockages demonstrate that the extra lanes are not needed and only serve to cause confusion for drivers.

The city has shown, with ActiveTO, that it has the capacity to quickly install extensive pilot projects using planters and construction bollards. As well, as ActiveTO winds down, Transportation staff should now have the resources available to look at a new project. It would not be difficult to institute a temporary sidewalk widening to test the waters, and it could be adjusted as required depending on the needs of residents, businesses, and drivers. The pilot project would serve as a valuable testing ground for a future, permanent sidewalk widening.

Walk Toronto works to make walking a safer and more enjoyable experience in every part of Toronto. Widening the sidewalks on Avenue Road – a walking route for those in numerous schools, seniors' residences, neighbourhoods, and new condominium buildings – provides an excellent opportunity to work towards that goal.



I lived on Avenue Road in the 1990s, and it is absurd that the sidewalks remain as narrow and dangerous as they were 20 years ago. Times have changed, and it is time for Avenue Road to change with them.

Thank you,

Dylan Reid
On behalf of Walk Toronto