



December 2, 2021

Barbara Gray
General Manager, Transportation Services, City of Toronto

Jennifer McKelvie,
Chair, Infrastructure and Environment Committee

Dear Ms. Gray and Councillor McKelvie,

In 2009, the City of Toronto developed the groundbreaking *Toronto Walking Strategy*, which created a vision for making Toronto a better city for walking and listed numerous specific programs and policies that the City would implement to make this vision a reality. This strategy was developed in close consultation with the Toronto Pedestrian Committee (which no longer exists), the public, and experts in the field.

Many elements of that strategy have since been implemented. However, others fell by the wayside, such as the commitments to the production of annual progress reports, to hosting annual forums, and to expanding walk to school programs beyond a few small projects.

As well, in the more than a decade since that strategy was developed, many new concepts and initiatives have emerged that incorporate a more ambitious vision for how to make cities great places for walking. These include “Complete Streets” and “Vision Zero,” both of which have been adopted by the City of Toronto, as well as many specific City of Toronto policies and programs such as the café and patio guidelines and the TO360 wayfinding program, not to mention street transformations such as the Yonge TOMorrow and REimagining Yonge projects.

In addition, in the past decade the need to encourage sustainable modes of travel in order to combat the threat of global climate change has become ever more urgent. The City of Toronto’s TransformTO strategy aims to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, and Mayor Tory recently announced an ambition to accelerate that process and achieve this goal by 2040. A key element of that goal is getting 75% of trips of less than 5 km to be taken by walking or cycling. Such an ambitious goal requires ambitious measures in order to make it a reality.

We are thus writing to request that the City of Toronto embark on a project to update the *Walking Strategy*. Such a project would be led by staff at Transportation Services, but would no doubt also bring in other City divisions. It would benefit greatly from consultation with the many safety and active transportation advocates in Toronto, the members of the public who are deeply engaged with making Toronto a better city for



walking, and the increasing number of experts who are building knowledge about walking as a key element of urban policy.

We note that the Toronto Cycling Network Plan has been regularly updated in recent years as new developments and factors have emerged. We understand that walking issues may involve more complex and in-depth work, but that is all the more reason to bring Toronto's strategy up to date.

An updated *Walking Strategy* could incorporate the many new policies and programs instituted in the past decade. It could re-invigorate goals set out in the original strategy that have fallen by the wayside. And it could serve as a springboard to identify gaps and opportunities and initiate even more ambitious future programs that can help Toronto reach its sustainability goals.

Finally, the updated strategy can provide an opportunity to re-articulate a vision of Toronto as a great walking city. In recent years, a great deal of attention has focused, correctly, on the issue of pedestrian safety. But safety is just the first step in creating a great city for walking, and an updated strategy can remind Torontonians that creating a walking environment that is not only safe, but also useful, accessible, vibrant and appealing, will bring enormous benefits to residents and to the city as a whole.

It is time to bring the admirable *Toronto Walking Strategy* up to date with the developments of the past decade and the goals of the next decade, in order to give Toronto a true roadmap to becoming a great city for walking. We hope that you will be willing to initiate such a project and guide it through to completion.

Thank you,

Dylan Reid

On behalf of Walk Toronto

Cc.

Mike Colle, member, Infrastructure and Environment Committee

Mike Layton, member, Infrastructure and Environment Committee

Denzil Minnan-Wong, member, Infrastructure and Environment Committee

James Pasternak, member, Infrastructure and Environment Committee

Anthony Peruzza, member, Infrastructure and Environment Committee

John Tory, Mayor