

## News Release

May 25, 2020

### **Councillors welcome new bike lanes along Bloor and University as part of City's COVID-19 Response**

Toronto City Councillors Joe Cressy (Spadina-Fort York), Mike Layton (University-Rosedale), and Kristyn Wong-Tam (Toronto Centre) welcomed the announcement of new separated bike lanes this morning along Bloor Street and University Avenue, as part of the City's ActiveTO program. These bike lanes will make it easier for residents and front-line workers to cycle to work and practice physical distancing.

As we begin to transition to recovery in Toronto and more businesses and workplaces open back up, how we will get around is a pressing challenge. For safe physical distancing we need to create alternative and safe methods of transportation. Switching to driving isn't an option for many, and even if it was, the resulting gridlock will grind traffic to a halt, strangling our city and economy. It's time for a new approach.

Bike lanes on University Avenue (through Queen's Park Crescent) and on Bloor Street will provide relief to two subway lines, creating more space on the subway for those who need to ride transit, and offering a new cycling option that is safe and uses our limited road space as efficiently as possible to move the most people.

The new separated bike lanes on these routes will connect cyclists to many of the area's hospitals and health care facilities. Doctors for Safe Cycling, representing many physicians from downtown hospitals, issued a letter earlier this month asking for protected bike lanes, so that health care workers, clients, and others can commute safely to the hospital district by bike. Major hospitals including SickKids and University Health Network have also expressed their support. Councillors Cressy, Layton, and Wong-Tam are committed to working closely with stakeholders, including the hospitals along University Avenue, on effective design and implementation of the bike lanes.

Councillors Cressy, Layton, and Wong-Tam have long advocated for the need to build an inter-connected grid of protected bike lanes across the city, and for safe cycling infrastructure along the busy Bloor and University corridors. Both University Avenue and Bloor Street were already included in the City's approved cycling plan.

The bike lane on University Avenue and Queen's Park Crescent will connect to existing lanes on Bloor, College, Adelaide, and Richmond Streets, while the bike lane extension on Bloor Street will run from Avenue Road to Sherbourne Street. Completing this critical gap along Bloor Street will expand our cycling network, helping to create a continuous 15 kilometre cycling route across Bloor Street and Danforth Avenue, stretching from Runnymede in the west to Dawes in the east.

We know how to keep our city moving safely and efficiently. Other major cities around the world from Montreal to Paris have been rapidly expanding cycling infrastructure for safe physical distancing.

Bike lanes on Bloor and University are an important first step toward keeping our city moving safely as we recover from COVID-19 and start returning to work.

### **Quotes:**

“We know how to make our roads safe for cyclists. We know that we need to build an expanded, city-wide grid of protected bike lanes, so that people can get to work and across the city without fear. Along with community groups and local residents, we have been advocating for a protected bike lane along these routes for some time. Now, it’s clearer than ever that we need to act – not just to protect cyclists, but to facilitate physical distancing and reduce virus transmission.”

- Councillor Mike Layton, University-Rosedale (Ward 11)

“From London to New York to Mexico City, cities are taking action to make it easier and safer to cycle, in order to provide for safe physical distancing. Building a bike lane along University Avenue means that the front-line workers in hospitals, medical clinics, and doctor’s offices can get to work each day safely. It also means that people who live in our community will have a real alternative to driving or the TTC – freeing up space so that those who need it can safely physical distance on our subways, streetcars, and busses.”

- Councillor Joe Cressy, Spadina-Fort York (Ward 10)

“Now, more than ever, it is necessary that we accelerate the installation of critical cycling infrastructure for active transportation while maintaining safe physical distance. What COVID-19 has shown us is that we need to rethink our priorities around how we design public infrastructure to support long-term recovery. We have known for years that an expanded, city-wide grid of protected bike lanes is important for achieving positive environmental, safety, and health outcomes. The global pandemic has provided the urgent public health context needed to drive this work forward, without further excuses or political delays.”

- Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, Toronto Centre (Ward 13)

"Expanding the cycling network in this area will help keep people safe and healthy in the downtown core. Increasing opportunities for daily physical activity has a positive impact on our physical and our mental health. This can also reduce our risk of a heart attack, stroke, and some cancers. Toronto Public Health has long supported active transportation and these proposed changes make sense as we strive to give people more active ways of getting around in our city."

- Dr. Eileen de Villa, Toronto’s Medical Officer of Health

“Right now, we are seeing car traffic and pedestrian traffic at an all-time low while bike traffic has stayed about the same. We know that will change in the coming weeks and months. We need more bike infrastructure to help people move around the city as the restart gets underway. We are working together to push ahead with expanding our bike network to help people get around the city, to help frontline healthcare workers get to and from work, and to make sure we have a safety valve for the TTC.”

- Mayor John Tory

“Two main barriers to increased cycling in Toronto are lack of safety, and lack of connectivity in the cycling network. Cycle lanes on University Avenue address both of these barriers. We wholeheartedly support their adoption as part of an ambitious, evaluated strategy to improve safe and active transportation for our SickKids staff and patients, as well as all Toronto citizens.”

- Dr. Ronald Cohn, President and CEO of SickKids The Hospital for Sick Children

“The opportunity to work with the City of Toronto on a University Avenue bike lane is most welcome. The health and safety of our staff and patients is critical to University Health Network, and this proposed bike lane, by supporting safe bicycle commuting and helping improve Toronto’s air quality, combines both.”

- Ed Rubinstein, University Health Network (UHN)

“Essential frontline health care workers need a safe way to get to work. University Avenue is a crucial north-south route along one of the busiest subway routes in North America, and the access point to several major downtown hospitals. Our group of physicians is calling on the city to build protected cycling infrastructure on University so that we and others can commute to work at our hospitals while maintaining safe physical distancing. We are calling on this to be done without delay.”

- Dr. Peter Sakuls, Doctors for Safe Cycling

“Active transportation will be essential to connecting communities, supporting local businesses, and Toronto's economic and social recovery. Building more bike lanes immediately as part of the city’s pandemic response is crucial to serve as a transit ‘relief valve’ and keep our city moving. The Bloor Street bike lanes are a massive success. Expanding the bike lanes along Bloor will create an essential, continuous protected bikeway alongside much of the TTC Line 2 subway. Protected bike lanes along part of TTC Line 1 will start providing safe north-south transportation options in the downtown core, including for families and people new to cycling in the city, and we are eager to see further expansions soon alongside our busiest transit routes.”

- Michael Longfield, Interim Executive Director of Cycle Toronto

“The inclusion of bike lanes on University Avenue is supported by the Grange Community Association as a long-awaited addition to the growing network in our downtown neighbourhood. In the past, Grange residents have supported the introduction of the oldest bike lane in the city on St. George and Beverley, as well as various contra-lanes and the Richmond and Adelaide routes.”

- Dr. Ralph Daley, Grange Community Association

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