

BRIEFING NOTE

Re: Corridor Safety Study – Avenue Rd.

From: Avenue Road Safety Coalition

To: Councillor Josh Matlow

February 1, 2019

BACKGROUND

In September 2017, the City of Toronto's Transportation Services prepared a 'Corridor Safety Study – Avenue Road,' for the segment of Avenue Rd. between St. Clair Ave. W. and Davenport Rd. A number of local residents' groups concluded that the safety study was inadequate and deficient in addressing:

- the high speed of Avenue Rd. motor traffic, which routinely exceeds the posted 50 km/h speed limit;
- the number of collisions and fatalities at the major Avenue Rd. intersections at St. Clair Ave. W., Dupont St., Davenport Rd. and Bloor St. W.;
- pedestrian safety, specifically for the most vulnerable pedestrians -- children and the elderly; and
- the narrow and unsafe width of the sidewalk, which along some segments is less than one metre wide and intermittently obstructed by utility poles and sign posts, impeding passage for people with strollers or mobility devices, among others. (See photos [here](#).)

As a result of these concerns, **the Avenue Road Safety Coalition** was formed by local residents' associations and parent councils. The coalition now includes the ABC, Annex, Republic of Rathnelly and Cottingham Square Residents' Associations, De La Salle College, Cottingham and Brown Junior Public School Parent Councils, Cycle Toronto Midtown, Walk Toronto and the St. Clare MultiFaith Housing Society.

Our coalition represents the concerns of residents --- the elderly, parents and children, pedestrians and cyclists --- as well as visitors to our community and others on their way elsewhere. Our coalition embodies the TOcore objective to "create the right balance of space for pedestrians, cyclists, transit and vehicles."

On June 28, 2018, pursuant to our request, and thanks to your efforts and those of councillors Kristyn Wong-Tam and Joe Cressy, Avenue Rd. between St. Clair Ave. and Bloor St. was designated as a Community Safety Zone as a first, small step toward making the road safe for all residents.

DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

The 2.1 km stretch of Avenue Rd. between St Clair Ave. and Bloor St., now designated as a 'community safety zone', is a six-lane, high-speed public road that is unsafe, intimidating and hostile to users and incompatible with the residential nature of the area. This segment of Avenue Rd. does not conform with the safe design objectives of the city's Vision Zero Road Safety Plan. We believe the current road configuration and motor traffic speed will continue to contribute to collision, injury and death.

The designated Community Safety Zone, which corresponds with the area of the Avenue Rd. Corridor Study, includes:

- five schools located directly on or within walking distance of Avenue Rd. (De La Salle College, Browns Junior Public School, Cottingham Junior Public School, The Mabin School and Avenue Road Arts School);
- four seniors' residences (Bradgate Arms, The Amica at Balmoral, Hazelton Place and Belmont House);
- four parks that border onto Avenue Rd. (Ramsden Park, Jay Macpherson Green, Sergeant Ryan Russell Parkette and Robertson Davies Park); and
- at least seven new condominiums towers that have been approved and are currently being built and that will house thousands of new residents who will walk, cycle or drive along Avenue Rd.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Immediate term:

Install 'community safety zone' signage as soon as possible, then:

- ***lower speed limit to 40 km/h between St. Clair Ave. and Bloor St., consistent with the existing speed limits north of St. Clair Ave., and along portions of the contiguous roadway south of Bloor St.;***
- ***install digital speed display signs on the downhill southbound from Edmund Ave., toward Dupont St., and northbound from Davenport Rd. to MacPherson Ave.;***
- ***deploy red light cameras to reduce collisions at the intersections of Cottingham St., Dupont St., and Davenport Rd.;***
- ***install pedestrian advance green lights at all intersections and extend the pedestrian countdown signal time;***

- ***initiate a comprehensive safety study of particular Avenue Rd. intersections (for example, at Dupont and at Davenport) about pedestrian safety, including near misses, in order to identify dangerous hot spots and required improvements;***
- ***compile, and make available to the community, comprehensive data on all collisions over the last five years involving pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists;***
- ***enforce the traffic regulations and increased fines of the Community Safety Zone;***
- ***consider restricting right turns on red light signals, specifically at the north-east corner of the intersection of Avenue Rd. and Davenport Rd. and make consistent with the intersection at Balmoral Ave.; and***
- ***require a minimum sidewalk width of 2.1 metres for all new developments along Avenue Rd.***

During this council term:

- ***when the speed camera regulation is in place, install speed cameras;***
- ***improve street lighting and install automated pedestrian detection; and***
- ***widen sidewalks to safely accommodate pedestrians by narrowing to four lanes the current six-lane roadway between St Clair Ave. and Bloor St. (The use of a pilot project approach may facilitate this transition. We note that a constricted roadway has been in place along various segments of Avenue Rd. during residential high-rise construction.)***

Our recommendations are consistent with the city's Vision Zero Road Safety Plan, TOcore Downtown Plan Policies and the Complete Streets Guidelines. As the population density along Avenue Rd. increases, these recommendations take on an ever-greater urgency.

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION, ONGOING SAFETY PROBLEMS, AND THE URGENCY OF ACTION

In May 2018, staff of Toronto's Transportation Services held a meeting with local stakeholders, including our coalition, to discuss community concerns. City staff outlined the actions, some of them included in our 'immediate term' recommendations, that could be taken without council approval. Subsequently, this segment of Avenue Rd. was designated as a Community Safety Zone. As well, as a result of the efforts of Amica, the Avenue Rd. intersection at Balmoral Ave. was designated a Seniors Safety Zone.

Over the past two months, a number of serious collisions have occurred on or near Avenue Rd. These collisions underline the urgency of action on our recommendations:

- November 18: three people were injured when the cars of two motorists collided and ended up on the sidewalk at the intersection of Avenue Rd. and Bloor St.;
- November 20: a mother was struck by a motorist while walking with her child in a stroller in Yorkville;
- December 18: in an effort to avoid a collision, a motorist lost control and mounted the sidewalk in front of Hazelton Place Seniors' Residence, damaging the Enbridge gas installation, and putting the lives of the residents at risk due to a potential gas explosion; and
- December 22: a man and woman were struck after a motorist lost control and rammed the victims' parked vehicle on Davenport Rd. The woman died.

THANK YOU

We thank you for your past work on road safety and for your dedication to ensuring the safety of the residents of our community. We look forward to working with you on this new and important road safety initiative for Avenue Rd.