

Added Item 6.2(b)



Mobility Planning Within the Context of COVID-19, ANTI-RACISM and CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Written Delegation prepared by Beatrice Ekoko, Senior Manager, Environment Hamilton.

June 16, 2020

To the Chair & Members of the Public Works Committee:

Environment Hamilton has reviewed staff recommendations in their proposed COVID-19 Recovery Phase Mobility Plan (PED20100/PW20034: Staff Presentations, Item 7.3). While we support many of the recommendations, as advocates for the safety of everyone using active transportation on our sidewalks and roads - especially the most vulnerable users- we have noted that the plan is missing opportunities for inclusivity and equitability on our streets and in our public spaces.

The COVID-19 crisis has served to underscore the injustices that vulnerable road users face daily such as the prioritization of cars over their well-being and safety; the dangerous conditions of our streets for those who cycle, walk or use mobility devices to get around (large industrial trucks, 5 and 6 lane roadways through the city make things scary for anyone using active transportation methods to get around); the exposure to street-level air pollution like fine, respirable particulate pollution (PM2.5) - a confirmed cause of lung cancer in humans; insufficient urban tree canopies along most streets in the city, as highlighted in our Friendly Streets work. Now, too, recent weeks of global anti-racism demonstrations and conversations have centred on the systemic oppression faced routinely by Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC). As concerns city building and planning, the planning sector can no longer ignore this long-overlooked reality: that the urban landscape, the streets, and public spaces are NOT neutral spaces; they are often unwelcoming spaces for BIPOC.

Therefore, we see both the COVID crisis and the Black Lives Matter crisis against the all-encompassing backdrop of a recently declared Climate Emergency as not only an opportunity but an obligation to address long-overdue inequities played out in the built environment.

It is imperative that Hamilton's COVID Recovery Mobility Response reflects the commitments made towards a sustainable, resilient, inclusive city, with neighbourhoods that are safe for everyone trying to get around on foot, by bike or with a mobility device -especially those who are most vulnerable. Notably, it should do more to uplift the safety of BIPOC on our streets and in

our public spaces and that moving forward, the City of Hamilton commits to applying an anti-racism lens in mobility planning.

If the City of Hamilton is truly aiming to be a community that is equitable and safe for all people at all times, to uphold its commitment to using a climate lens on all decision-making, not to mention the commitments made in both the Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plans, then the proposed Mobility Plan must embrace and act upon the following:

1. Utilize this unique pandemic moment, coupled with the Black Lives Matter/Anti-racism movement, to uplift friendly, welcoming streets in our neighbourhoods. In a recent Canadian Urban Institute webinar entitled “How do we respond to anti-Black racism in urbanist practices and conversations?” the panelists suggested that city-building conversations need to be informed by *specific experiences*. “We are all in this together, but we are in this together differently,” Toronto planner, Jay Pitter said during the panel. “We are all suffering, we’re all uncomfortable, but we are not suffering equally.”
2. Capitalize on expected changes in mobility patterns as a result of this pandemic and the current increase in both cycling and walking by implementing changes to the built form that will endure beyond the COVID emergency and become “normalized” forms of transportation.
3. Immediately increase space for pedestrians to practice proper social distancing. While we are excited that the proposed mobility plan uplifts cycling and protected cycling infrastructure, we would like to see more support demonstrated through actions to facilitate pedestrian mobility. Based on the Friendly Streets project work we perform, it seems like this is an ideal opportunity to widen and improve sidewalk space. For example, Wilson Street (Ward 2) is a prime location for such treatment. Residents have repeatedly expressed concern over the extremely narrow, and greatly used sidewalk that runs from James Street North to Ferguson Avenue in particular. They have asked for this minor arterial road to be removed from the truck route, and that this street receives a road diet all the way through Beasley (given that the most northerly westbound lane is extremely underused): that is, convert Wilson St., to three lanes--one eastbound, one westbound, one shared turning lane--and the extra space would be used for wider sidewalks which would also calm traffic. Other locations in the city that would benefit from wider sidewalks to accommodate safe passing when taking physical distancing requirements into consideration include Main Street and King Street--where the sidewalk is extremely narrow in many locations (example between Pearl and Dundurn on King Street). Meanwhile, vehicles enjoy plenty of space with 5 one-way lanes along this stretch.
4. Close certain streets to traffic so as to create more public space for pedestrians and businesses in the downtown core; King William Street is an easy one. Examples of cities already doing this in Canada include Montreal, Halifax, Kingston, Toronto, and their

highly popular regular weekend closures of Lakeshore that offer everyone a chance to get out and enjoy the day, with plenty of space to do so.

5. In planning for Hamilton's economic recovery and the steps staff is proposing for curbside pick-up, etc, please also consider active transportation as an integral element of the economic recovery and prioritize the installation of bike racks and protected bike cages in prime locations so that people feel reassured that their bikes will be there when they return.

Finally, we note that there are no timelines attached to proposed action items, compared to other cities that are already making these necessary changes.

We appreciate the opportunity to share these reflections and further recommendations and hope they will be taken into deep consideration and lead to immediate action.

Thank you.

Beatrice Ekoko
Senior Project Manager
bekoko@environmenthamilton.org
[Environment Hamilton](#)
[@EnvHamilton](#)
[Environment Hamilton](#)

EH office: 905 549-0900