

May 21, 2014

Mayor Jim Watson
110 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, ON K1P 1J1

RE: Towards a Complete Street – bicycle lane on St Patrick Street during resurfacing

Dear Mayor Watson,

I am writing on behalf of the Lowertown Community Association to urge you to encourage City Staff to implement a bike lane the length of St Patrick during resurfacing work taking place this summer. We recently learned that the project does envision a partial bike lane, only to Cobourg, but none from Cobourg to King Edward. We encourage revisiting this decision while we can and extending the bike lane the length of St Patrick St.

Last year the Lowertown Community Association conducted two active transportation audits. The first, last June, included recommendations for linking the East-West bikeway to Lowertown, and addressing issues of cycling safety most highlighted by our community, including St Patrick, King Edward, and the crossing at MacKenzie. Cyclists and pedestrians alike highlighted safety concerns, as cyclists who feel endangered ride on the sidewalk, thus endangering pedestrians. At our last community meeting some residents fearful of cyclists on sidewalks asked the police if they could assist by ticketing cyclists on sidewalks. This is clearly indicative of a larger problem that we can address with improved cycling infrastructure, not tickets. As you well know, cyclists feel safer in bike lanes, and would rather ride on a lane than on a sidewalk. Many would-be cyclists in our community hesitate to bike on St. Patrick because of the lack of infrastructure. And sharrows do not constitute safe cycling infrastructure. They do not make bikers feel safer and are vastly insufficient.

Creating a bike lane would neither affect the currently planned vehicular lane width on St. Patrick nor have any budgetary implications. We have heard city staff raised concerns that a bike lane was not included in the plans due to the width of a potential bike lane – 1.15 metres or nearly 4 feet for each direction – not being up to standard. While there are numerous bike lanes of that width or less throughout the City – Cummings Bridge, Montreal Road, Ogilvie Road- more importantly the research is clear that cyclists are safer when cycling in a designated lane versus lanes that simply have sharrows, as are planned in this case.

If the 1.15 m width is deemed insufficient, the vehicular lanes could of course be narrowed to 3 metres in width, to provide a wider 1.65 m bike lane. 3 metre wide vehicular lanes are not unprecedented in a 50 km/h zone in Ottawa and would have the added benefit of helping to slow down the traffic through a stretch of road on which speeding is regular and poses a potential danger to cyclists and pedestrians alike.

In addition, many residents in our community have repeatedly pointed out that they feel very unsafe at the intersection of St Patrick/Beechwood and Vanier Parkway, on the southwest corner where there is a right turn lane and simply a yield sign. Motorists turn very fast, and residents propose a stop sign or else a red light with no right turn on red. We understand the current proposal is to make the bike lane face the traffic at a 90 degree angle but preserve a yield. We request a stop sign.

As you well know, St. Patrick Street is a key route for people in New Edinburgh and Vanier to travel to our community – to the Market, Lowertown, downtown and points further west, and vice-versa. We are pleased to learn of the resurfacing of St Patrick to King Edward, and encourage the extension of the bike lane to King Edward at least, and ideally all the way to the Alexandra Bridge. We note that the condition of the road from King Edward to Sussex is also in serious disrepair, and frequent patching may not be cost effective, or safe. We request the resurfacing be extended to Sussex, and a bike lane added the length of St. Patrick.

As we embark on enhancing the ByWard Market following up on the PPS study, and plan for more than 1 million new visitors in time for the anniversary in 2017, build the new LRT, embrace active transportation through our Transportation Master Plan and adopt a new Climate Change & Air Quality Management Plan, now is the time to increase cycling infrastructure in Ottawa. We have a perfect opportunity to begin with St Patrick as we resurface it this summer. Let us not miss this opportunity. We have laid the groundwork with our Complete Streets Policy, in which streets are to be designed with all users, motorists, cyclists, pedestrians, wheelchair users etc, in mind. Now let's implement it. Starting with St Patrick St.

Please do all you can to use your good offices to ensure that cycling lanes are included in the re-surfacing plan of St Patrick St. We look forward to your positive response.

Thank you,



Liz Bernstein
Acting President
Lowertown Community Association

Cc Councillor Mathieu Fleury
Kent Kirkpatrick, City Manager
Nancy Schepers, Deputy City Manager
Steven Courtland, Program Manager, Municipal Design & Construction
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