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BY EMAIL

Steve Taylor, P. Eng.
Project Manager
Morrison Hershfield/BT Engineering
2440 Don Reid Drive
Ottawa, ON K1H 1E1
613-228-4813
steven.taylor@bteng.ca

Don Rowat, P.Eng.
Senior Project Engineer
Ministry of Transportation
John Counter Boulevard
Kingston, ON K7L 5A3
613-545-4723
don.rowat@ontario.ca

Dear Mr. Rowat and Mr. Taylor,

Re: Ottawa Queensway Mid-Town Bridges Study

We, the Councillors for Somerset and Kitchissippi Wards in Ottawa, have had the opportunity to review the Ministry of Transportation's preferred approaches to rehabilitating or replacing the Queensway bridges in our ward.

First, we would like to congratulate you on the exhaustive work that has gone into the consultations to date. The Ministry's deliberations have been clearly and fully communicated, and we applaud your transparency, thoughtfulness, and commitment to safety. We know you have been hearing from residents about many of the same recommendations that we are making.

In reviewing the materials presented at the Public Information Centre #2, we consider that there are several reasons to consider modifications to the preferred approaches that will better accomplish the goal of achieving greater cycling and walking modal share. This is a goal which the City and the Ministry share, through the Ottawa Transportation Master Plan, and the Ontario Cycling Strategy (#CycleON), respectively.

To this end, the City regularly couples cycling and pedestrian improvements with major road projects, and we expect that the Ministry will use this tactic to efficiently execute its #CycleON strategy. Given that 400-series highways are used exclusively by motor traffic, it would be fitting for a project of this magnitude to incorporate cycling and pedestrian components wherever possible within the work area.

Recommendation 1

The CPR/O-Train bridge is currently slated for replacement. The Ministry's preferred approach would see the abutments on the west side rebuilt in such a fashion as to eliminate the possibility of running a west-side multi-use path under the bridge.

We consider that this approach would be short-sighted. A pathway on the west side of the O-Train has been foreseen by the Community Design Plan for the surrounding neighbourhoods, and would facilitate the implementation of Intensification policies mandated by the Province under the Planning Act. This connection will also be essential for the surrounding neighbourhoods to access the future Gladstone O-Train station.

There are many high-density residential buildings being built on this side of the O-Train which will require cycling and pedestrian connectivity to deter excessive growth in motor traffic.

The opportunity, now, to maintain space west of the O-Train underneath the existing bridge, for a future pathway, is clearly an opportunity to advance cycling and walking goals at a negligible cost as part of the Highway 417 project. We hope you will re-visit your preferred approach.

Recommendation 2

For all other bridges, we consider that it is critical to work with the City of Ottawa to ensure sufficient room on the roadways to add cycling infrastructure, pedestrian improvements, and lighting. In some cases, this might be a matter of reducing the roadway width, which can be accomplished later in the process. However, we would ask you to model the addition of bike lanes and wide sidewalks to the roadway, and consider whether there is the need for excavation into the abutment to achieve those.

We are pleased to see that pedestrian and cyclist connectivity will be maintained for a majority of the construction of these bridges. However, for the periods where this access is closed, a safe detour is required. This should take the form of a two-way, temporary multi-use path connecting along the entire length of the detour route, and if necessary should replace a general traffic lane (separated by concrete barriers) to protect people walking and cycling from the increased traffic.

We are grateful for this opportunity to comment, and would be very pleased to provide further details or input as may prove helpful.

Sincerely,



Catherine McKenney, Councillor
Somerset Ward, Ottawa



Jeff Leiper, Councillor
Kitchissippi Ward, Ottawa

cc. Yasir Naqvi, MPP Ottawa—Centre
Heidi Cousineau, Sr. Project Engineer, Area Traffic Management, City of Ottawa
Gill Wilson, Project Manager, Sustainable Transportation, City of Ottawa