

A Report concerning pedestrian safety and related.

After years of experiencing and witnessing abuse on the sidewalks and crosswalks in several towns and cities, it is clear this extreme attitude of not caring about pedestrian safety and mobility shows there exists a “Systemic Hate towards Pedestrians” which likely outnumbers any other form of systemic or popular hate in Ontario.

It is time for pedestrians singly or to organize and take back their original ‘exclusive’ lane and for the municipalities to encourage and support this effort vigorously.

By Political action, Legal action, or Physical action? Your choice - because the answer to violence perceived by the pedestrian as a victim or potential victim is “Counter-violence”. Not much else succeeds.

Recall your personnel harassment and bullying directives from the Province that it is the person who perceives receiving mal-treatment is the one who usually has the upper hand in a prosecution.

Too many people in our cities and towns do not get this and whose fault is that?

Summary:

Just for starters, ask yourself: “What kind of an animal parks or drives on a sidewalk?” We experience it everywhere in Richmond Hill (RH) and York Region (YR). The parking patrols rarely care or are not instructed to patrol enough areas.

1 – The original multipurpose and shared path is the public road. The Region is convoluting this fundamental, and RH is allowing it within its borders. Shame.

2 – The original exclusive lane is the sidewalk – long before the concept of the ‘diamond’ - and should not be compromised by any public service corporation, RH, YR, or others, else to incur lawsuits, counter-measures and in the event of injury, up to criminal liability – because you know it is wrong and dangerous.

3 – The theft, modification or redesignation of sidewalks into any form of shared or multi-use pathway is fundamentally wrong and needs to be undone. Separation and partition of walkways, sidewalks from hazardous new ideas of blending them with road vehicle traffic paths (such as bicycles, bike lanes and all variants of them) needs to be stopped and reversed. Barriers are needed. This affects sidewalks on parts of Leslie, Elgin Mills and Bayview and others. (What YR is doing on Major Mackenzie and Rutherford Road in Vaughan is WRONG, hazardous. Don't let it happen here in RH.

4 – Cyclists (all variants) do not have and never have had any mobility rights or privileges on the pedestrian sidewalks. Real pedestrians will never accept this and will fight back. To operate these road machines on sidewalks, there should be and likely is a prosecutable action and has been done in many municipalities at some time. Motor cyclists are often seen riding on the sidewalks of Yonge street, Industrial Road, Oxford and others in the area of downtown RH. Shame on the police for years of no patrols – why do they hate pedestrians?

5 – No motor driven machines do belong on the sidewalks, walked, ridden or parked. They are motor driven equipment and the operators are 'motorists'. We provide the common part of the road for them. No exceptions! If you want to close a sidewalk for a special purpose, get a permit and provide an alternate, temporary barriered pathway.

6 – There is a federal presentation that "Wheels Yield to Heels" and by observation and experience and observed attitude, cyclists do not and will not yield to pedestrians but aggressively try to drive them off of the sidewalks and other walking paths. This should bring severe and instant punishment. The matter needs a reasonable amount of foot patrols by police or special constables on foot.

7 – From a distance and approaching you, can you really tell if the person racing at you on what appears to be a bike or a scooter is motorized or pedal propelled? So no exceptions please. Even pedal cyclists can drive at over 60 km/h so do you want your aging mother to be on the same narrow path? How about you when you are aging or infirm?

8 – The innovation of corner ramps for wheelchair access mid 1960's - while a good concept - is to blame for the excessive numbers of cyclists on the sidewalks. The concept was badly handled. And we know the corner ramps were innovated for another reason. All corners are wrongly reversed banked and uncomfortable to walk around. The inner section of land needs to be infilled with level concrete to continue the walking path for pedestrians walking around the corner or standing waiting to cross because slants and slopes are hazardous for several reasons. Not everyone is on wheels – Wake-up! We need a new look at this and better design standards by people who walk.

The corner puddles are too large to step over due to the slope of the sidewalk and the same goes for the ice in winter. So dangerous. Perhaps every corner needs a drain?

9 – The "Slip and Trip Dips" along many sidewalks at driveways are a serious safety hazard for many pedestrians. All sidewalks should be restored to flat and level from corner to corner, no sideways slants. No interruptions of the sidewalk at parking lot entrances and other driveways – except it is understood the concrete will not stand up to heavy trucks. Same for those terrible deteriorated asphalt park paths.

This is icy and slippery Canada – Wake up and become decent people please. The violence and hate against pedestrians needs to be stopped. All access ramps and slopes should be external to the walking area. The people who conceived this design and continue it need to be jailed. They are serious violent pedestrians abusers. One just has to go walking to realize this.

10 - We need some machines – since staff love machines – to be pushed/operated along the sidewalks and park paths cutting back and chewing up everything up to one metre from the sidewalk edge on the lawn side and the boulevard side. Chew up vehicles, attachments, poles, bushes, tree branches – everything one metre wide from the sidewalk/path edges to 2.5 metres high. We need zero tolerance for all these neglected and abusive bushes, trees and obstructions. Can you imagine walking into branches sticking into your face unseen at night on sidewalks? You should try it sometime! Many are growing from municipal property. Forget having staff do flowers on Yonge Street and at certain entries to residential areas, it is time to have safe and proper accessibility and mobility on sidewalks and park paths or my suggestion is that pedestrians bring flame throwers to do the job. Angry? Yes! Fire the managers, hire decent people.

Maybe when the IDF is finished in Gaza, we could use them here. They are a determined lot.

11 – All the bricked and asphalt sidewalks and park paths need to be replaced by solid firm level walkable concrete. They just don't last. For example some of the sidewalks on Regent Street, Mill St, Lucas and lots of others are a disaster to walk on. Some of the paths in the ravine attached to the Headwaters park are so badly distorted likely by improper design and by heavy machines. One has only a few cm in the middle to walk, what about opposing traffic? Same in many other places such as the "Beaver Mudway/Floodway", you may know it by another name. There is one stretch always covered by a mud flow, sad. There are places never cleaned up in 20 years by appearances of accumulation of mud.

12 – There are so many short falls in the details of civic design that it would take a 400 page book to list them all BUT the worst is the "Systemic Hate towards Pedestrians".

Just get out and walk.

There is more to summarize but let's get into other details.

(Sorry if there are some repeat items, I was given short notice. Did not get to the final 200 pages, lucky eh?)

As far as local By-Laws go, their job is to coincide and detail some aspects of government laws for practical information and local enforcement staff procedures. This all related to the evolution of the local public service corporation or entity regardless of formal incorporation or not. They also relieve Provincial government departments and courts from dealing with the day today minor offences.

An example is that the Richmond Hill section of its website on cycling is well done and pretty much shows everything as it should be. The problem is there is no active enforcement, nor any civic 'Will' to protect pedestrians. There is very little to zero effective education of the public. Worse, there seems to be no initiative of individuals to educate themselves or their children to comprehend what is shown and what implies the civil behaviour. If sidewalk patrols can only be done by local/regional traffic police, an arrangement is obligated to be made for a sufficient number of (special) constables dedicated or frequently assigned to this responsibility and duty.

Perhaps more signs seem needed but too many signs bore people and the signs are ignored. Stop signs are a good example, so are red lights. There are too many traffic lights close to each other causing motorist frustration and delays and we should get rid of half of the stop signs.

Reality is that the only shared pathway, the only multi-use pathway is what is normally considered the vehicular portion of the road. Expressways such as the 400 series Highways and local designated expressways do not allow pedestrians – they are “expressly for motor vehicles which can attain certain speeds, etc., to keep vehicular traffic flowing”. Sidewalks were installed on local roads where a safe walking area and separation from all vehicle traffic was needed. These exclude almost every wheeled device – motor driven or pedal driven. Manual wheelchairs, baby carriages, little children on children's riding toys and any reasonable sized pedestrian walked wagon type device are exempted for good reason. Many local roads have only one sidewalk, some have none. It is up to the pedestrians to decide if it is safe to use a sidewalk because of abuses by others, lack of maintenance, deterioration from poor choice of materials, design features that do not suit all pedestrians, and a few other reasons. At that point pedestrians are free to walk on the vehicular/multi-use/shared portion of the road and expect safety from road vehicle operators. The sidewalks should not be shared with any vehicles except as noted above. Sidewalks are not a shared pathway. For YR or any entity to allow road vehicles such as bike in any form or to confuse people due to innovations in vehicles, is simply wrong and unacceptable and can be dealt with by the federal criminal code. For example, the theft of and re-designation of the sidewalks along sections of Bayview Ave., Elgin Mills Rd., and Leslie Street from pedestrians is likely a provable crime of endangerment to pedestrians from the so-called cyclists/some bullies want to harass pedestrians, and ignored that lots of cyclists on Leslie St use the proper vehicular shared lanes. **Making these sidewalks into multi-use lanes is fundamentally wrong.** Even the surface material is wrong for pedestrians on parts of Leslie. It should also be noted that large construction and telecom trucks have been using these stolen lanes for parking. Just how sick is society and municipal enforcement these days?

There are signs stating “Share the Road”. Signs that imply “Share the sidewalk” are not legally valid, not acceptable in a civilization such as ours. We will be having more pedestrians all of whom need increased protection and safety in the new environmental world – wake up to it! Some of these new ideas are simply “mal-novations” just to see what public servants and engineers can get away with but one reasonable lawsuit could prove costly.

The bike route signs are closer to the vehicular lanes than the exclusive pedestrian lanes. They need to more strongly imply the bike route is on the road.

Wheeled vehicles are not just bicycles with over 20 inch diameter wheels or any vehicle operated by someone over the arbitrary age of 12 or 14 (Inconsistencies between municipalities), but include unicycles, tricycles, 4-wheelers, scooters of all variants recent and in future.

So, signs would help. I see RH is installing some “Poop and Scoop” signs along a couple of sidewalks, obviously problem areas. While these deal with messes and a health hazard, there is a need for “No Bike/Trike/Unicycle riding on sidewalks” signs and enforcement. Since we paint ‘Sharrows’ on roads why can’t we paint an all-encompassing “No Bikes” symbol on the sidewalks? Other places have done it. Sure it costs but charge a one-time licencing fee for all bike operators and their vehicles. Do you realize pedestrians are the most hated class of humans in the civilized world, they are considered an inconvenience, an expense and so on – how sick is that? Pedestrians are the fundamental mobility.

Bylaws are needed as an extension of the HTA. And safety rules. Posting of signs and reasonable patrols with the publishing of results/fines from the patrols are needed to make those by-laws valid. By-laws of this type are a code of civil behaviour and respect to others in the community just as preventing the erection of an 80 story tower in a peaceful neighbourhood of single homes would be normal.

For example: riding vehicles on crosswalks and crossovers is prohibited under sections 140 & 144 of the HTA. So would this not also infer that riding on the sidewalks that lead to the crosswalks is also a hazard to pedestrians and should not be done regardless of lack of municipal signs and patrols? How many know this?

Are people aware there are marked and unmarked crosswalks that this applies to? Yes, unmarked crosswalks are legal features.

The safety rules are that pedestrians/sidewalk traffic are supposed to stop and look all directions before crossing at the corners (and mid-block), so if cyclists and others on motor driven machines are going to act as equivalent to pedestrians then they too should come to a full stop and check because if they do not and are hit, it will be their fault. Racing up at 60km/h behind a turning car or truck, a cyclist is not going to be seen. SUICIDAL! Right? So it is much less troublesome and more efficient to ‘ride on the road’ – right? They can’t have it both ways, eventually a deadly mis-hap will occur – their fault likely.

Are people aware of the difference between a cross over and a crosswalk? Different rules apply to the motorist/vehicle operator.

But let's go back a few decades or more when sidewalks were innovated. Long before most or all people were here in this part of the world. In times of the horse and card although there were mobility conventions, pedestrians on the street were at the mercy of the lack of courtesy of the horsemen and many roads in the smaller places or in the wild west were just mud. So a wooden or stone platform was built as the exclusive lane for pedestrians. No one needed a 'Diamond' symbol, it was just 'understood' (except by drunks and ruffians). Signs were not needed.

So fast forward to the greed for sales and profits by the big car and truck companies and the sales advantage of speed, cornering ability, fast acceleration and the driver erroneously owns the road, sure the cyclists were getting nervous and there is no objection to marking or dividing a section of common part of the road or placing sharrows upon it for the cyclists physically or implied but that does not give them any legal privilege or Right to mount the sidewalk and scare, terrorize, abuse valid pedestrians on their exclusive lane. The vehicular part of the road as we consider it is the shared roadway and includes pedestrians when they need it. Motorists and equivalent which includes motor cyclists and pedal cyclists must yield to pedestrians or face the wrath of the federal criminal code or the provincial HTA.

The exclusivity of the sidewalk is implied and does not need to be posted but these days it should be. The shared aspect of the vehicular lanes is implied and should not need signs, but they are added in places as a reminder – a good idea. The signs state "share the road" they do not state share the sidewalk. The sharrows show that cyclists belong on the road. Markham has sharrows in the centre of the lane in some places and on the right side depends on the parking arrangements. Only a few places had or still have "no bicycle riding on sidewalks" signs, Etobicoke had some, Owen Sound had some, other places have or had some as one sees when touring around Ontario. Many parks in Toronto prohibited bicycle riding in the parks, other parks are design for it.

So, the laws, traditions, customs, safety rules and conventions are all in place. New laws are not needed. Education and enforcement of the old but always still valid laws and practices are required. Maybe we have too many people who are unfamiliar with our way of life and need a federal program to educate them? What is needed are the procedural by-laws and duty of the complexity of management in towns and cities to implement adequate patrols using by-law staff, special constables or regular police as are legally prescribed and available.

Since the marked and 'unmarked' crosswalks forbid riding of bicycles and all else similar on the crosswalks and crossovers which are the extension of the sidewalk across an intersecting road, per sections 140 & 144 of the HTA, does that not imply that cyclists of any type should not be riding on the

sidewalks? So this is the easiest place to provide patrols to catch and warn or fine cyclists on the sidewalks/crosswalk. It is easy for the municipality to prescribe an administrative penalty for riding on the sidewalk which is this logic for safety as back-up. (Sidewalks do not exist in the HTA.)

That we do not have regular patrols and news to warn abusers is a sad dereliction of duty by the local public service corporation and its agents/police.

Also consider that a cyclist walking a bicycle is a cyclist and not a pedestrian because he or she has care and control of that vehicle, and that there is insufficient width on most sidewalks to walk a bike or similar past an opposing or slower pedestrian, that they should not even be walked on the sidewalks? Ditto for parking on a sidewalk or corner pad and at some transit stops.

The same would naturally apply to all power ranges of motorcycles/motorized cycles and their operators.

Common law likely has a role in this too, because it has been understood by many for many long years that bicycles do not belong on sidewalks: walked, ridden or parked.

If it is okay for cyclist “A” to operate his or her vehicle on the road, why should it not be appropriate for cyclist “B” to operate his or her vehicle on the road?

It would seem to a logical person that the operation of vehicles on sidewalks should be considered stunt driving, impaired or even a form of road rage.

The bike lanes should be renamed to: “Low Power Vehicle lanes” – LPV lanes – and should be two way on busy commercial streets. Only in residential areas need they be directional or narrow.

Enough for now.

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RH