



TO: Mayor Tory and Members of Toronto Council
FROM: Walk Toronto (Steering Committee)
DATE: Feb. 10, 2017
RE: Item EX22.2 (Budget) – Section 47: **Re-imagining Yonge**

I am writing on behalf of Walk Toronto, a grassroots, volunteer pedestrian advocacy group that works to improve walking conditions and pedestrian safety in Toronto.

FINANCIAL ISSUES

We urge you to vote against deferring until 2018 the funding of the Re-imagining Yonge Project, which will bring dramatic improvements to Yonge Street between Sheppard Ave. and the Finch Hydro Corridor. **The federal government has promised a \$2 million contribution to the initiative – half of the project's budget. This may be put at risk if the City of Toronto puts Re-imagining Yonge on hold.**

DENSITY ISSUES

North York Centre has seen a huge increase in the number of condos built on or near Yonge Street. Unfortunately, the burgeoning population numbers have not been matched by increases in local parkland, nor has the streetscape seen significant improvements in the last decade, despite the increases in pedestrian traffic along Yonge St.

STREETSCAPE AND WALKABILITY IMPROVEMENTS

The Re-imagining Yonge project will help to remedy some of these shortcomings by:

- Widening sidewalks, straightening uneven building setbacks, and making the street safer for children, seniors and other vulnerable pedestrians
- Enhancing the public realm, adding street trees, benches, creating more public spaces and parkettes
- Turning Yonge Street into a walkable environment that pedestrians can use to reach important green spaces that connect with Yonge:
 - the Finch Hydro Corridor Trail

- York Cemetery (which functions unofficially as a park and is larger than other nearby local public parks)
- Installing cycle tracks on Yonge that will also connect to these green spaces, as well as nearby cycling routes to be built as part of the ten year bike plan
- Strengthening the viability of local businesses, and transforming North York Centre into a more pleasant place for shopping, entertainment and enterprise
- Diverting motor vehicle traffic to Doris and Beecroft Avenues, parallel service roads that have been specifically created to relieve Yonge Street's traffic problems

INVESTING IN THE SUBURBS

If the Council votes against deferring Re-Imagining Yonge it will confirm its commitment to creating vibrant satellite 'uptowns' in the suburbs which are liveable, healthy and walkable.

We should be prioritizing the needs of local business and residents – rather than continuing the status quo, where one of Yonge Street's main functions is as a dangerous, polluted conduit to bring drivers living in the 905 region to Highway 401.

Reinstating the \$4 million capital budget of Re-imagining Yonge will demonstrate that the City of Toronto is serious about investing in the suburbs, and achieving greater geographic equitability in the allocation of our city's resources.

Michael Black
and the members of the Steering Committee of Walk Toronto

###