

Re: Bronson Ave Renewal-Widening (North of Gladstone)

Dear Councillors:

The City Centre Coalition (CCC) at its Nov 30, 2011 meeting agreed to write to you and formally express its support of the Dalhousie Community Association and Centretown Citizens Community Association in their efforts to promote alternatives to the current plan to widen Bronson Ave in its northern section as part of the water/sewer renewal project in 2012.

The CCC is a coalition of 11 central area community organizations focused on sustainable transportation issues in the Ottawa urban area. Our list of members is provided at the end of this letter.

The Downtown Moves consultation process that the City has recently initiated has as one of its goals restoring the balance between different users of downtown streets. The current Bronson Ave project is a perfect opportunity for the City to show that it is serious about this initiative.

Although it may be the opinion of some that the proposed widening of this section of Bronson is meant to benefit all potential users of the corridor (drivers, transit users, cyclists, pedestrians, residents), it is our opinion that this will not be the case.

In our view, the proposed changes will have a disproportionately negative impact on pedestrians and residents, provide no meaningful improvement for cyclists or transit users, while resulting in incremental benefits to automobiles. This is not at all restoring the balance but in fact moving the current imbalance in the wrong direction.

- For residents and pedestrians: the movement of the road edge closer to people's properties can hardly be considered an improvement, worse still the loss of a number of mature trees degrades the area even further while the widening of the inner travel lanes has the impact of encouraging even higher travel speeds for vehicles. The correlation between road widenings and increased speeds are a well known fact
- For cyclists: the extra 12-16 in of width on the inside curb lane will not make sufficient difference in improving the safety and attractiveness of this busy and high speed route. Better routes with cycle lanes exist only a block or two away and the community has put forth several recommendations on how these routes could and should be improved in the near term.
- For transit users: it is unclear how the extra 12-16 inches of curb lane will make any positive difference.
- For drivers: changes, like the loss of mature trees on a wider right of way with re-conditioned pavement also communicates the message that the roadway exists mainly for the movement of the maximum number of cars as quickly as possible.

As an alternative, we would like to suggest that the City re-consider some of the excellent proposals brought forward already by the Dalhousie Community Association and Centretown Citizens Community Association and supported by their elected representative Diane Holmes. These include:

1. Re-configuring the road-way in a 3-lane profile: We all know that the volume of traffic on Bronson declines significantly on the northern section of the road. We also know that a 3-lane profile will make a significant positive impact on the pedestrian, cycling, and residential realm. It is our opinion that reductions (if any) in automobile throughput would be outweighed by the benefits. As a very good example, consider the section of King Edward Ave through Sandy Hill. It transitions from a 4-lane profile to a 3-lane profile south of Laurier Ave. The improvement felt along the 3-lane section of the corridor is significant, yet high volumes of Macdonald-Cartier bridge to 417 automobile traffic are still being accommodated.
2. Maintain existing roadway width: At the very minimum, council should not worsen the current situation by making decisions that would result in even greater amounts of the right of way allocated to pavement.

Please carefully consider the opportunity to give credibility to the Downtown Moves initiative by making the decision not to further widen this road.

John Verbaas

Chair: City Centre Coalition

www.ccc-ottawa.ca

PARTICIPANTS IN CITY CENTRE COALITION:

Action Sandy Hill
Centretown Citizens Community Association
Dalhousie Community Association
Hintonburg Community Association
Westboro Community Association

Old Ottawa East Community Association
Glebe Community Association
Dow's Lake Residents' Association
Old Ottawa South Community Association
Carleton University Students' Association
Citizens for Safe Cycling