

Strachan Avenue: for a safer street

A **six** point report detailing hazards endangering cyclists along the Strachan Avenue corridor, and recommendations for improvements.



Ward 19 Advocacy Group --- Toronto Cyclists Union – July, 2011

Endorsed by:

Niagara Neighbourhood Now

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Introduction

For cyclists and pedestrians, **Strachan Avenue** is one of the main corridors between bustling Queen West and Lake Ontario. It represents a vital artery (the only one in Ward 19) for cyclists, young and old, that want to make their way to the Waterfront trail.

The neighbourhoods on and around Strachan Avenue are changing quickly as condominiums and houses are built on formerly industrial lands. Strachan is now much more residential. The street, however, hasn't changed to reflect the increased importance as a route for pedestrians and cyclists. Strachan still feels like a fast, dangerous road, more fitting of its industrial past than its present status as a vital pedestrian and cyclist artery. Although a 40 km/hr speed limit is posted along the entire length of Strachan, cars regularly exceed this speed.

We feel strongly that Strachan should be improved for cyclist, as well as pedestrian, safety and comfort. In this report we start at the junction of Strachan and Lakeshore at the south end and we work our way north to Queen (at the south end of the Trinity Bellwoods Park), mapping out the dangers and possible solutions for making the street more accommodating, and safer, for pedestrians and cyclists.

Cyclists are happy that Strachan has bike lanes, as it has enabled many people to quickly and safely get to the lake, but there are many other achievable changes that can be made to improve the liveability for residents and the comfort for cyclists and pedestrians. We hope that a number of things can be done to slow down traffic while also providing better integration with the waterfront. We feel that there are no large barriers to implementing most of our suggestions.



1) Lake Shore Boulevard crossing

Conflict zone:

Crossing Lake Shore Boulevard by bike is not a pleasant experience. Trying to go northbound is even less pleasant. There is no way to cross Lake Shore going north on bike because there is no traffic light to indicate when it is safe and legal to do so.



Proposals:

We ask that cyclists be allowed to safely and legally cross Lake Shore by installing **northbound lights** and **sharrows** to guide us through the intersection.*



** While we recognize the need to keep southbound car traffic moving smoothly, there are a number of options to accommodate safe and legal passage of northbound cyclists, including a dedicated northbound light phase, a shared north and south green light phase, or a demand-activated signal for cyclists. The change may also benefit pedestrians on the western side of the intersection, who currently have an extremely short time to cross Lake Shore.*

2) East Liberty Street/Ordnance intersection

Conflict zone:

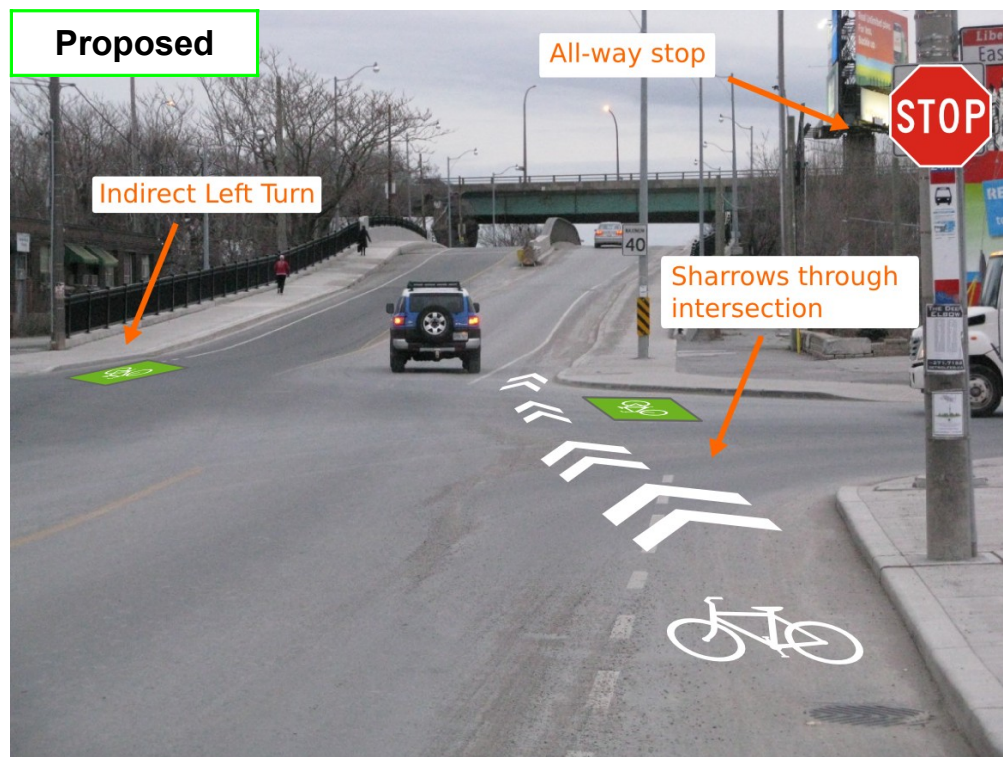
The East Liberty & Strachan intersection is difficult for both cyclists and motorists due to the high speed of traffic on this stretch of Strachan. Simply crossing Strachan is perilous for pedestrians. Making left turns from either street is difficult for both vehicles and cyclists. Further, fast motor traffic going north over the overpass have a blind spot as cyclists or motorists at the bottom attempt to turn left.



Proposal:

We ask that measures be taken to facilitate crossing cyclists, pedestrians and motorists by installing **4-way stop signs or traffic lights** (even if “temporary” until the GO transit overpass is completed). We feel it is necessary to have some traffic control before the GO overpass is complete.

We also ask that the bike lanes be connected throughout the junction with **sharrows** and **bike boxes** to continue the bike lane, such as at Harbord/Spadina. This is especially important on the west side of the street which curves through the intersection.



3) Car lanes too wide from E Liberty to King St.

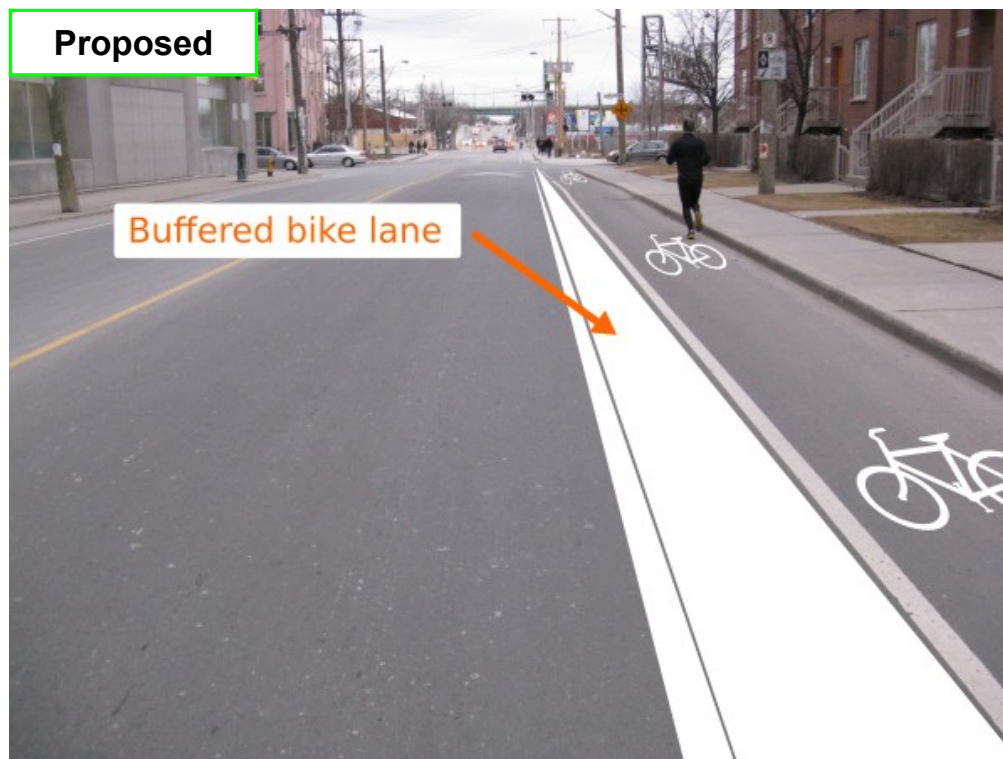
Conflict zone:

The stretch of Strachan from East Liberty to King has particularly wide car lanes, promoting high, dangerous speeds by motorists. The bike lanes are 5 feet wide on either side, and the car lanes are very wide (15 feet in width!) But the roadway is only marked for 40 km/hr.



Proposal:

To reduce car speeds, and improve cycling safety here, we propose widening the bike lanes and either installing a **two foot buffer** or a raise curb between the bike lanes and car lanes. We aim to reduce the width of the car lanes to about 10 feet to provide clues to motorists that this road is residential and that they should stay within 40 km/hr.**



** See biketothefuture.org/attachments/0000/1265/10_ft_bike_lanes.pdf for reasons to narrow lane widths.

4) Strachan and Douro/Wellington intersection

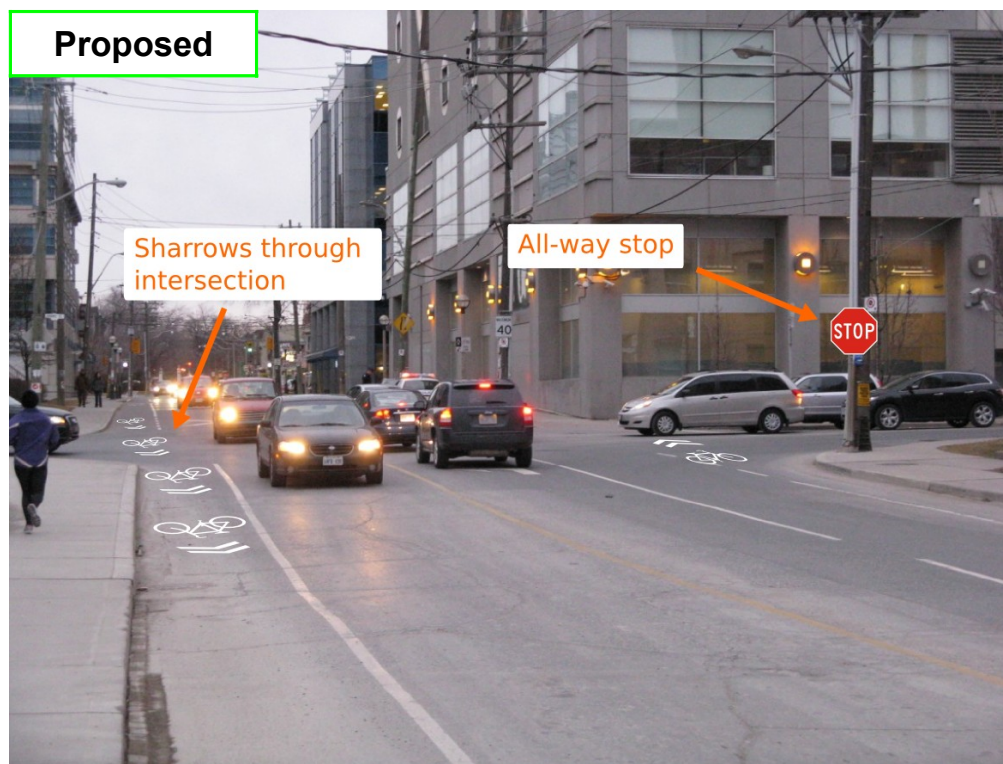
Conflict zone:

Crossing Strachan at Douro/Wellington or turning left from Strachan onto the side streets is difficult and only for the brave. It is even difficult for motorists. It is very unfriendly for crossing cyclists and pedestrians, with no easy and safe way to cross.



Proposal:

We ask that a **4-way stop** or other traffic controls be installed and that **sharrows** and **crosswalks** be marked through the intersection to facilitate cyclists and pedestrians in crossing.***



*** We also think roundabouts would be great at reducing collisions (<http://www.presto-cycling.eu/images/factsheets/presto%20infrastructure%20fact%20sheet%20on%20roundabout%20intersections.pdf>) but we'd be happy with at least stop signs.

5) Bike lane discontinuity north of King

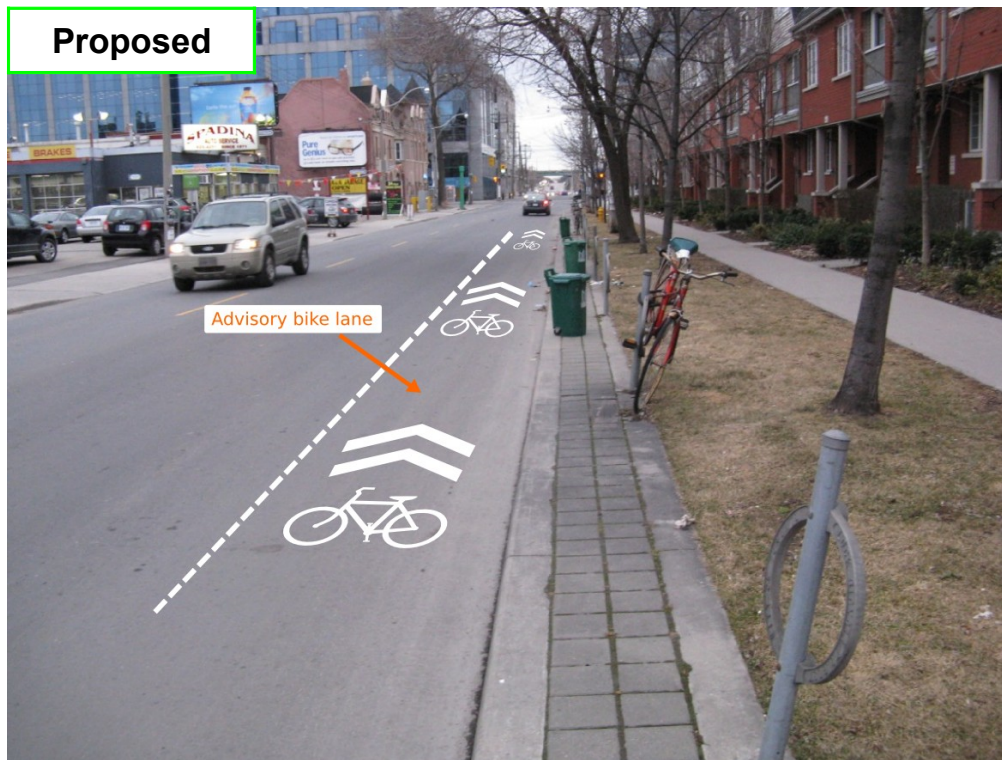
Conflict zone:

Just north of King Street cyclists are abruptly faced with the end of the bike lane and are forced into a narrow lane of traffic. From there until Queen Street cyclists compete for space with fast cars jockeying for room on the narrow lanes. The center line only encourages motorists to quickly and closely pass cyclists as they try to stay within the arbitrary lane.



Proposals:

We ask that **sharrows** be installed from King until Queen on Strachan and that the **center line be erased** to facilitate motorists in passing cyclists with a metre of room (on many Toronto residential streets there is no center line and this facilitate better passing by motorists).****



**** We like the idea of “advisory bike lanes”, which provide a greater delineation and slow motor traffic more than sharrows would when the street is too narrow for bike lanes (less than 28 feet wide). (p.7 Portland Bicycle Plan for 2030 <http://www.portlandonline.com/transportation/index.cfm?c=44597&a=289122>) But we’d be happy with sharrows.

6) Queen Street crossing

Conflict zone:

And finally at the top of Strachan it meets Queen St West. When leaving Trinity Bellwoods Park on the south side, it is unclear when cyclist can cross the road since there is no traffic light. Currently the entrance to the park comprises of two fairly small gates which are best suited for pedestrians and don't connect directly with the road cuts.



Proposals:

We propose that **southbound traffic lights** be installed for cyclists going south to provide a safe and clear indication of when they can cross, instead of just relying on the pedestrian signal. We also propose that **sharrows** be installed through the intersection to provide clarity to drivers as cyclists cross.



**Thanks for reading our report and
happy, safe cycling!**