



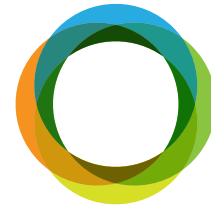
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We see the growing need for thoughtful, integrated, enabling policies and planning-driven strategies to guide the decisions being made around transportation systems. 06



PlanON AWARDS

Honouring Excellence in Planning



Registered Professional Planners (RPPs) play a critically important role in shaping the quality, livability, and sustainability of Ontario communities, now and for future generations.

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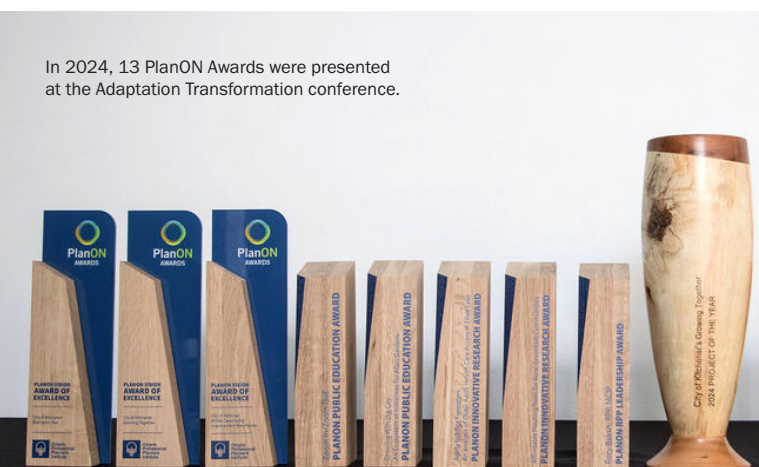
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VISION AWARD: AWARDS OF MERIT

In 2024, 13 PlanON Awards were presented at the Adaptation Transformation conference.



The **2025 Awards Gala** will take place
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INSPIRE



COMPLETE STREETS

Complete Streets is a transportation policy and approach that focuses on safe, convenient streets for people of all ages and abilities, whether they are walking, cycling, taking public transit, or driving. Complete Streets can also be designed to consider features such as patios, street furniture, trees, utilities, and stormwater management. The concept is holistic and flexible with the emphasis always on safety and transportation equity for all users.

As WSP Canada Inc. states in its 2023 report, *Complete Streets: Latest Advancements and Best Practices for Building Thriving Communities*, there is no singular approach to creating a vibrant and successful design: “In fact, Complete Streets actively respond to their surrounding environments, resulting in context-specific designs rather than a standardized approach.”¹

After all, not all streets are the same.

“Some streets are designed or programmed to prioritize particular travel modes, like dedicated public transit – LRT, BRT, or streetcar – and/or designed to be key conduits to efficiently move people and goods, while other streets are less a conduit and more a place – part of a neighbourhood that offers cafés, shops, services, parking, streetscape design, and seating areas that support human interaction and activity, not just movement through the street,” says Dave McLaughlin, Principal and Senior Director of Planning and National Active Transportation and Complete Streets Practice Lead with WSP Canada Inc.

For more on this topic, please see page 51, the RPP Profile, an interview with Dave McLaughlin from WSP Canada Inc.

¹ Complete Streets: Latest Advancements and Best Practices for Building Thriving Communities (April 2023). WSP Canada Inc. Full report at: <https://www.wsp.com/en-ca/insights/ca-complete-streets>



Transportation is an inherently connected yet complex component of our urban fabric, built form, and function. It is planned and designed within a framework that starts at the official plan and is continually woven throughout the various levels of the planning hierarchy down to site-specific circulation and access.

While there is growing awareness and interest in the area of transportation planning, there is also, at times, misunderstanding of how transportation and mobility fit into broader community planning. Historically, the role of transportation planning has been deemed to be a sub-component of more traditional land use practices and, at times, has been undertaken by allied professionals such as engineers. However, we are experiencing the growing need for thoughtful, strategic, and integrated land use and infrastructure planning as we tackle the pressures of growth and development, climate adaptation, and resilience and modernization.

Furthermore, we are seeing a professional shift in industry practice towards planning for space and place that supports the movement of people as opposed to vehicles, human-centred design, and equity-based practices designed for all ages and abilities. What encourages and influences the way people move isn't always the infrastructure — routing, facilities and design. It must be considered within the wider context of the built environment in which these systems are interacting and the experience that is being created through our land use and built form. Even more so, we see the growing need for thoughtful, integrated, enabling policies and planning-driven strategies to guide the decisions being made around transportation systems relative to future community growth and development.

This begs the questions — what is transportation planning, what should it be, and what is the role of the planner in these conversations relative to other professions? What we know to be true is that effective, systems-based thinking and transportation enhancement is most effective when it is done in a way that reconciles the many levels

of policy, balances quantitative and qualitative thinking, and finds opportunities to leverage and enhance community infrastructure integration and coordination through engagement and facilitation. Planners have a strong and necessary role in the space of transportation and have the opportunity to be considered the “first point” of influence in the space of mobility, connectivity, continuity, accessibility, and equity.

We are excited to share this thoughtful and thought provoking issue of *Y Magazine* which focuses on the role of transportation planners and the exception and innovative work that is being undertaken. The Ontario Professional Planners Institute is working with public and private sectors, as well as transportation planners and engineers to better define roles, responsibilities, opportunities for coordination and collaboration, and a strong foundation of policy and planning support to achieve broader societal targets and priorities.

We continue our ongoing work on major initiatives in addition to topic-specific educational offerings and look forward to providing updates on our ongoing work related to DEI, future organizational rebranding, and our joint conference with CIP being hosted in Toronto, July 8 to 10. OPPI is committed to enhancing our voice and role in the space of transportation planning and within the broader planning profession no matter the area of practice, geography, or interest.



Claire Basinski, MCIP, RPP, CPs
Chair,
Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI)

Harnessing the transformative power of the Yonge North Subway Extension

BY DAVID FLEISCHER, MCIP, RPP AND KANT CHAWLA, MCIP, RPP

Every new transit project has the potential for fostering change but the City of Markham is preparing to harness the full transformative power the Yonge North Subway Extension (YNSE) will bring.

In 2019, the YNSE was one of four priority projects announced by the provincial government. The other three projects (the Scarborough Subway Extension, Ontario Line, and Eglinton Crosstown West) are entirely within Toronto, but the YNSE entails five new stations along an extension of the TTC's Line 1 subway north into York Region, through Markham, Vaughan, and Richmond Hill.

The 2017 extension of Line 1's western arm into Vaughan has already brought higher-order transit from "urban" Toronto to "suburban" York Region and the subsequent, parallel extension of the Yonge side of Line 1 to York Region further highlights the obsolescence of perceiving Steeles Avenue as a meaningful dividing line.

"For the City of Markham, the subway project presents a once-in-a-lifetime city-building opportunity."

For the City of Markham, the subway project presents a once-in-a-lifetime city-building opportunity. Far more than simply providing trains and tunnels or replacing buses with rapid transit, the subway will allow the city to implement a new vision, transforming Yonge Street's

appearance and function and catalyzing the evolution of the communities that line it.

Yonge Street has long been the GTA's historic main street, stretching north from Lake Ontario almost to the shores of Lake Simcoe (where it splits off into Highway 11 and cedes its mythical status as the world's longest road). Whether you are driving its length, flying over the city or looking at aerial photos, a stark, consistent row of spiky towers, like the spine of a stegosaurus, make it easy to spot the GTA's premiere intensification corridor.

Since its designation under the 2006 Growth Plan, the joint Richmond Hill Centre-Langstaff Gateway growth centre — the south half of which is in Markham — has been dormant, waiting for the subway and other opportunities to awaken. Though centrally located, the Yonge Street-Highway 7 intersection has been shaped by history into something of an unexplored and under-utilized territory. Once home to Toronto's Langstaff Jail Farm, it's been historically severed by highways and hydro corridors and now features big box stores and low-intensity industrial uses. Finally, thanks to an evolving policy framework and the arrival of the subway, it is poised to become a high-density, mixed-use community.

More than 15 years ago, Markham engaged leading New Urbanist Peter Calthorpe to develop the secondary plan for Langstaff Gateway as a state-of-the-art neighbourhood. Seeing the site constraints as a challenge that could be overcome through the unique convergence of transit infrastructure, he worked with the city to create something that was not just transit-oriented but transit-dependent.

Some of details of that plan have since been superseded by a Minister's Zoning Order for a transit-oriented community on the west half of the site, but the City of Markham's longstanding vision remains

"...create something that was not just transit-oriented but transit-dependent."

for a high-density residential and office development, centred around the subway, GO station, and a bus terminal serving local and bus rapid transit routes.

South of Langstaff Gateway, the in-process Yonge Corridor Secondary Plan (YCSP) will soon establish a policy framework for transforming the low-rise, auto-oriented retail strip along Yonge into an urban, transit-oriented landscape while also ensuring it properly transitions appropriately to the interior, mature residential blocks.

In relatively short order, the intensification that began transforming "suburban" North York Centre in the 1980s will continue north, from Highway 401, past Finch and Steeles Avenues, to beyond Highway 7. That transformation includes Yonge Street itself evolving from an auto-centric thoroughfare into a vibrant, people-oriented place with a greater focus on active transportation infrastructure, in accordance with an ambitious York Region streetscaping plan. Critical to the YCSP's success will be providing parks and community amenities to develop a complete and connected community that complements the transportation infrastructure.

The Yonge-Steeles intersection, roughly at the subway extension's midpoint, will soon have high-rise development replacing the existing, auto-oriented land uses at a node where multiple municipalities converge and are tied together by shared infrastructure at the subway station. Ensuring the four corners, five jurisdictions, and three transit agencies blend into a single community that functions for new residents and workers (and commuters!) is a unique challenge and opportunity for Metrolinx, YNSE, and the project's many stakeholders with various needs and circumstances.

The subway extension has taken a long path to realization. The TTC's Line 1 stopped at Finch Station

in 1974 and transit plans have since come and gone, including one from the early 1990s that would have brought both ends of the Line 1 subway up to Steeles Avenue and then linked them by completing the loop along Steeles.

As growth exploded beyond Toronto's borders, the implementation of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, and its identification of growth nodes, dovetailed with the creation of Metrolinx to provide a framework for more regional transportation thinking and planning. The long-planned subway extension to York University finally happened but went further north to serve Vaughan's nascent downtown. In the meantime, the need to improve transportation infrastructure along Yonge Street only grew, as literally hundreds of buses each hour continued to join increasing auto traffic, serving a continuously growing population.

Fast forward to the early 2000s, when York Region was rolling out its Viva Bus Rapid Transit network along both Yonge Street and Highway 7. Soon after, plans were announced for the Yonge North Subway Extension and an environmental assessment was undertaken for the next phase of transportation infrastructure. The momentum seemed unstoppable but after an initial rush, the YNSE plans lingered unrealized until the current government unveiled its new suite of plans in 2019.

And now, it's finally happening.

Shovels are not yet in the ground nor are tunnels being bored beneath Yonge Street, but they will be soon and the complex work in which Metrolinx and its partners are engaged, designing the subway and everything that comes with it, is immense and continuous. Rapid growth has not waited on the subway but Markham and its counterparts are working hard to build a better future and ensure this key corridor and the communities that surround it realize every advantage the subway offers.

Everything has been waiting for this moment. 



David Fleischer, MCIP, RPP is a Member of OPPI who has worked on a variety of policy, public engagement and development projects in the public and private sectors. He is currently a Senior Planner at the City of Markham, with a focus on bringing the Yonge North Subway Extension to fruition. He is also a volunteer member of OPPI's Government & Public Relations Committee and Canu's Urbanizing Suburbia Caucus. **Kant Chawla, MCIP, RPP** is a Member of OPPI and currently managing Yonge North Subway Extension (YNSE) project at the City of Markham. He has over 30 years of transportation planning and policy experience internationally, working on multi-modal strategic initiatives.

Bikeshare feasibility planning with data from other jurisdictions: Generalizing the ridership model used in the Ottawa-Gatineau Bikeshare Feasibility Study

BY AARON BAXTER, MCIP, RPP

In the fall of 2024, Envirocentre, on behalf of a group of stakeholders from across Ottawa and Gatineau, engaged Mobycon to conduct the Ottawa-Gatineau Bikeshare Feasibility Study. This study employed a multi-faceted approach to model bikeshare potential in a region without an existing system, drawing lessons that can be applied to other Canadian jurisdictions. The study's methodology, which can be adapted for use in other areas, involved a two-stage modelling process incorporating data from existing systems and local factors. This article provides an overview of the methodology, with a focus on how it could be adapted for other jurisdictions.

STAGE 1: REGRESSION MODEL USING DATA FROM OTHER CITIES

The initial stage focused on creating a high-level estimate of bikeshare potential. Like many jurisdictions across Canada, Ottawa-Gatineau lacked a bikeshare system, so no existing ridership data could be used to infer bikeshare usage behaviour patterns. To solve this lack of local ridership data, existing ridership from systems in other cities was used and a simple regression model was derived that could predict annual ridership. This model used several key inputs, all of which are freely available on various open data portals:

- **Census Data:** Demographic metrics from the 2021 Canadian Census at the dissemination area (DA) level were used. A subset of census variables known or assumed to impact bikeshare ridership were selected, including population, income, education, and employment information.
 - **Transit Data:** Transit service information was gathered from general transit feed specifications of agencies operating in the areas of analysis. This included stop locations and trip times, with higher value assigned to stops with more trips. Higher-order transit stops (ex. metro, subway, LRT, commuter rail) were differentiated from the rest of the system.
 - **Street Network Data:** Bikeable street network data was extracted from Open Street Maps (OSM).
- To standardize the data from various sources, a common grid system was used. An increasingly popular approach in planning studies is to leverage the H3 indexing system, a computationally efficient hexagonal grid system with varying cell sizes that provides contiguous coverage across the study area. Data from the input sources are assigned to these cells, and a multiple linear regression model used to assess which input variables had a statistically significant impact on ridership. The final model included proximity to higher-order and non-higher-order transit trip frequency, the density of the population that walks to work, and the density of the population that bikes to work.
- The modelled relationships between these input variables and existing ridership data were used to calculate a ridership potential index for each grid cell in the study area, representing the expected annual trip activity. This exact same approach can be applied in any jurisdiction in Canada where transit information is present (since census and OSM data

have complete national coverage). This highlights the real power of this approach; it provides a data-driven statistically significant starting point for any jurisdiction where model input data exists. However, it should be considered as only a starting point because to really make bikeshare succeed, and to ensure you are responding to the goals and ambition for bikeshare present in the community, you must consider the local context of the community in question.

“This highlights the real power of this approach; it provides a data-driven statistically significant starting point for any jurisdiction where model input data exists.”

STAGE 2: LOCAL LAYERS

The second stage of the modelling process incorporates local data to enhance the initial results of the Stage 1 Model. The data is classified thematically into layers, which are then subsequently mapped and combined using a multi-criteria decision strategy. The number and type of layers should depend on the varying needs of any local jurisdiction using this method. For example, these layers could include:

- **Equity Priority Layer:** This layer aims to highlight how a focus on equity could affect the service area. Input factors are combined to identify areas with the highest social and economic vulnerability. These criteria are necessarily local in nature, as the individual goals and approaches to addressing equity concerns are intimately tied to the local context of the community.
- **Trip Conversion Potential Layer:** This layer focuses on areas with the greatest number of trips likely to be captured by bikeshare. This is where an existing origin-destination model for the jurisdiction is extremely valuable. With a solid origin-destination dataset, a mode shift and trip distance potential can be applied with different weights assigned to various modes and trip distance bands based on the likelihood that a given trip would be replaced by bikeshare.
- **Popular Destinations Layer:** This layer augments the model with local destinations likely to be popular for bikeshare. This could include waterfront cycling infrastructure and points of interest as identified in the community. This is a straightforward concept that takes local knowledge of the jurisdiction (popular places, likely bikeshare trip generators) and applies it to the model. One alternative could

be to use an activity density dataset such as those derived from location-based services data brokers (i.e. smart phone ping density), should that data be available and of sufficient quality.

- **Future Growth Layer:** This layer allows bikeshare to serve areas with expanding population and employment using population and employment growth projections. As we are planning future feasibility, we necessarily should be concerned with how the community will grow and change.

BRINGING IT TOGETHER

The results from Stage 1 and Stage 2 are then mapped and added together using a multiple-criteria decision strategy in a GIS (ex. PostGIS). This is a repeatable process for any jurisdiction, allowing the model results to be run iteratively as the study evolves, new data becomes available, and the goals or operating strategies become more refined. Additionally, it can be run on conventional GIS hardware and does not require the use of advanced processing units or expensive compute time. The output provides a data-driven, defensible output, augmented with standardized and traceable planning rationale.

Perhaps most importantly, this entire methodology is predicated on the availability of freely available open data and underscores how important open data is in supporting effective and efficient planning studies. Although there are many open data portals providing information, there is still some work on a project-by-project basis to standardize the information for use across jurisdictions, so that what is true in one area can be used as lessons learned in other areas. I am left wondering how beneficial a national standardized planning database would be that we could all collectively contribute to and use, a meta-layer that sits on top of all the existing open-data portals and provides standardized metrics for comparison. Certainly, my own experience suggests this would be very useful and well worth the effort. What do you think? 



Aaron Baxter, MCIP, RPP, is a Member of OPPI and founder and Chief Nerd at Baxter Analytics, a consulting firm providing geospatial analytic services for planning projects. Aaron uses geospatial technologies to identify, process, and contextualize information to help guide communities, their residents, and visitors to a healthier and more fulfilling future. He is also a Professor of Advanced GIS at Concordia University, teaching at the undergraduate and graduate level.

Engaging people with disabilities in shared micro-mobility programs

BY ARMI DE FRANCIA, MCIP, RPP

Municipalities implementing shared micro-mobility programs have faced criticism for a lack of engagement among people with disabilities.^{1,2,3,4,5} They feel pressured to choose between expanding independent mobility options through micro-mobility or ensuring safe, independent movement of pedestrians with disabilities. Instead of choosing between one or the other, it is worth asking, how can we provide more options for people, including people with disabilities, to get around? In implementing shared micro-mobility, how can we also ensure safe, independent mobility among pedestrians with sight loss and other disabilities?

To answer these questions, this article shares lessons learned from the Town of Ajax Shared E-scooter and E-bike Pilot Program, which involved implementing a campaign in collaboration with people with disabilities. The results of this campaign will help practitioners learn to understand and respect the diversity, needs, values, and aspirations of people with disabilities and encourage discussion and to identify and promote meaningful participation for people with disabilities.⁶

PROGRAM SCOPE

- **Shared micro-mobility:** programs providing light-weight electric-powered vehicles that people can rent for a fee, typically using electric kick scooters and pedal assist e-bikes.
- **Electric kick scooters (e-scooters):** vehicles with two-wheels along the same longitudinal axis, a platform, a steering handlebar, an electric motor (<500 watts), and a maximum speed capacity of 24km/h.⁷
- **Pedal assist e-bikes (e-bikes):** bicycles that require pedalling to activate the

electric assist. It has a fork and frame, maximum speed of <32km/h, maximum weight of 120kg, and an electric motor with <500 watts.⁸

The program does NOT include mopeds, anything resembling a motorcycle, or any vehicle with characteristics outside of the provincial or Town of Ajax definitions.

In Ajax, e-scooters and e-bikes are permitted on roads (posted speed <60km/h), bike lanes, cycle tracks, multi-use paths and paved trails more than two metres wide). They are prohibited on sidewalks, unpaved trails/paths, and paved paths that are less than two metres wide.

THE CAMPAIGN

In 2024, the Town of Ajax partnered with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) to implement a campaign encouraging safer behaviours and bringing attention to the concerns of pedestrians with disabilities. The campaign consisted of:

- Videos of people with disabilities speaking about the dangers of speeding and improper parking.



- Six pop-up booths with a community ambassador with sight loss and an activity illustrating different eye conditions.
- Focus group among people with sight loss and hearing loss facilitated by CNIB.

The campaign engaged 391 visitors and 10 focus group participants and received 1,111 views on YouTube. Some important lessons were learned.

PRIORITIZE INDEPENDENT MOBILITY WHILE EXPANDING MOBILITY OPTIONS

Our engagement processes revealed an underlying fear among people with sight loss and other disabilities of losing independence — the ability to navigate their communities. Focus group participants and community ambassadors expressed that near misses made them feel unsafe. For guide dog users, harm inflicted on guide dogs means losing the ability to navigate and there are wait lists for guide dogs. Near misses increase social isolation which affects the well-being of people with sight loss.

Furthermore, mis-parked shared micro-mobility vehicles can be daunting to detect

or navigate around. They can create tripping hazards or block access to accessible pedestrian signal buttons. They may even cause a person with sight loss to fall into a ditch or step onto the road exposed to vehicular traffic. With multiple vendors, reporting can be difficult for people with sight loss since they cannot distinguish one company's branding from another.

Therefore, it is essential to collaborate with people with disabilities and recognize the underlying need for independent mobility.

COLLABORATE WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ACROSS DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

Not all disabilities are the same or are visible. Not everyone with sight loss uses a white cane, guide dog, or braille. The diversity of different disabilities means diverse needs and perspectives among people with disabilities.

"The diversity of different disabilities means diverse needs and perspectives among people with disabilities."

The Town of Ajax has encountered, consulted, and collaborated with people with sight loss and other disabilities who believe that e-scooters should not be introduced or should be banned. In various projects, the town has also encountered:

- An e-scooter user with sight loss who requested more bike infrastructure.
- Seniors who use e-bikes because they can no longer bike without an electric assist.
- A mother who is deaf who drives and has deaf children who bike.

While lesser known, there are advocacy movements and research drawing attention to the people with disabilities who use bikes and e-bikes.^{9, 10, 11} These different perspectives need to be included and better understood.

IN-PERSON ENGAGEMENT HELPS ENCOURAGE SAFER BEHAVIOURS AND CREATES A CULTURE OF RESPECT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Allowing community ambassadors to speak to the public brings awareness on how unsafe behaviours affect the independence of people with sight loss.

In-person demonstrations helped reduce the likelihood of near-misses and mis-parked e-scooters and e-bikes. Mis-parking is often attributed to the lack of understanding of how/where to use the vehicles or park them. Focus group participants explained that near collisions were often with less experienced riders who struggle with handling (braking, turning, using bell, etc.).

In-person demonstrations provide hands-on learning for people to learn proper parking and handling skills in enclosed spaces or with supervision and guidance. The Town of Ajax plans to work with the selected vendor to increase in-person engagement.

Amidst the backlash against shared micro-mobility lies an underlying need for independent mobility among pedestrians with

disabilities as well as a need to increase mobility options for everyone.

We encourage other municipalities to collaborate with people with disabilities across different perspectives and use in-person engagement methods to create a culture of respect for people with disabilities while expanding mobility options.

Together, we can create a transportation system that honours the independence of pedestrians with disabilities and provides more options for all. Let's continue to work alongside people with disabilities to create a more inclusive transportation system. 

¹ Callan, I., & D'Mello, C. (2024, November 26). Ontario's 10-year e-scooter pilot a "slap in the face," disability advocacy group says. Global News. <https://globalnews.ca/news/10884497/ontario-extend-electric-scooter-pilot/>

² AODA Act Alliance (2022). "Brampton Accessibility Advisory Committee Gets Seriously Troubling Presentation on Electric Scooters by Brampton City Staff". Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Available at <https://www.aoda.ca/brampton-accessibility-advisory-committee-gets-seriously-troubling-presentation-on-electric-scooters-by-brampton-city-staff/>

³ Forestell, K. "People with sight loss overlooked during Ottawa e-scooter pilot". Canadian National Institute for the Blind. Available at <https://www.cnib.ca/en/news/people-sight-loss-overlooked-during-ottawa-e-scooter-pilot?region=on>

⁴ (2020) Letters from Stakeholders - from the Senior Project Manager, Strategic Policy and Innovation, Transportation Services. City of Toronto. Available at <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2021/di/bgrd/backgroundfile-164399.pdf>

⁵ Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance (2023). "Hamilton, Ottawa and Brampton Endanger Safety and Accessibility for Vulnerable People with Disabilities, Seniors and Others with Electric Scooters, While Paris France Votes Against Them". Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance. Available at <https://www.aodaalliance.org/whats-new/hamilton-ottawa-and-brampton-endanger-safety-and-accessibility-for-vulnerable-people-with-disabilities-seniors-and-others-with-electric-scooters-while-paris-france-votes-against-them/>

⁶ OPPI Professional Code of Practice, Section 1.1 and 1.4. <https://ontarioplanners.ca/oppi/about-oppi/professional-code-of-practice-standards>

⁷ Highway Traffic Act, O.Reg. 389/19: Pilot Project – Electric Kick-scooters, Section 1 (2024). <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/190389>

⁸ At the time this article was written, the *Safer Roads and Communities Act* 2024 was not proclaimed. This article uses the definition outlined in the following webpage: Ontario Ministry of Transportation. (2024). Riding an e-bike: What you need to know about riding an electric bicycle in Ontario. Retrieved from <https://www.ontario.ca/page/riding-e-bike>

⁹ League of American Bicyclists (2023, March 31). When Biking Is the Only Option: A Conversation With Disabled Cyclists [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMksll0ZN4k>

¹⁰ Lee, K., & Sener, I. N. (2023). E-bikes toward inclusive mobility: A literature review of perceptions, concerns, and barriers. *Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 22, 100940. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trip.2023.100940>

¹¹ Rooted in Rights (2021, March 1). Disabled People Ride Bikes (and Trikes, and Tandems and Recumbents)! [Video]. Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzCPvsPGhbU>



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Region of Waterloo's secret weapon for a sustainable future: the bus

BY BLAIR ALLEN, MCIP, RPP, ADAM FRASER, MCIP, RPP, AND KEVAN MARSHALL



The Grand River Transit (GRT) team at the Region of Waterloo never stops moving. Buses hit the road every day. Fare systems need to run smoothly. Repairs and replacements must get done. Stops and stations need snow clearing. Schedules have to be met. Every rider needs to get somewhere.

And transit planners need to plan tomorrow's transit system while responding to today's demands and commitments.

Planners promote the benefits of strategies like transit-oriented development, complete communities, and more recently, 15-minute communities. While these strategies differ in approach, they share a central goal: communities should be designed to ensure convenient access to most daily needs without relying on cars.

“Thoughtful planning and significant, sustained investments in useful public transit are critical to reducing car dependency.”

However, our urban realities are far more complex. Our inherited built environment, shaped by previous planning priorities, land-use incompatibilities, the inertia of car-oriented sprawl, and challenges like land and housing affordability, create physical and behavioural barriers between where people live and where they need to go. People spend more time in traffic, incur high car ownership costs, or even choose to relocate to areas more convenient for car use — outcomes that contradict the intended goals of most growing communities.

“The Region of Waterloo is also one of Ontario’s fastest-growing communities, with its population projected to reach 1 million by the 2050s...”



Thoughtful planning and significant, sustained investments in useful public transit are critical to reducing car dependency. Public transit plays a pivotal role in realizing the benefits of these planning strategies. To shift away from cars, transit services must be useful and competitive to attract riders and be responsive to existing customers. Municipalities and transit agencies working toward a balanced mode understand this challenge well, and the Region of Waterloo is no exception.

In 2019, the Region of Waterloo launched its ION Light Rail Transit (LRT) system, marking one of the most significant and transformative investments for a region of its size in North America. The success and future expansion of ION LRT, coupled with the remarkable level of transit-oriented development generated along its corridor, will continue to yield benefits for generations.

The Region of Waterloo is also one of Ontario’s fastest-growing communities, with its population projected to reach one million by the 2050s – an increase of more than 300,000 people over the next

25 years. Accommodating this growth while reducing auto dependency cannot be accomplished without public transit.

In 2024, GRT, the region’s public transit operator, launched its latest business plan initiative to guide transit investment priorities through 2030 and beyond. The plan builds on priorities identified in the Region of Waterloo’s Strategic Plan and budget consultations, responding to key changes in Waterloo Region, including:

- **Strategic Priorities:** The region’s Growing with Care Strategic Plan emphasizes housing for all, equitable services, future-ready resilience, and climate-aligned growth.
- **Climate Action:** The region has endorsed the TransformWR community climate action plan, aiming to reduce community emissions by 80 per cent by 2050. Achieving this goal requires a transformative shift away from driving alone and increases in active and sustainable transit use.
- **Housing and Transportation:** The housing crisis and evolving policies

have shifted where people live and their transportation needs. In response to Bill 23, now more than ever transit agencies and local municipalities need to communicate and collaborate to ensure the land use and neighbourhood design in new growth areas can support transit connectivity, reducing families’ dependence on car ownership.

- **Ridership Trends:** GRT’s ridership has fully recovered from the pandemic and is now at record levels. However, travel patterns have shifted, with more riders travelling during mid-day and evening hours. Industrial employers are also seeking transit options to support 24/7 operations and a resilient local economy.
- **Specialized and Rural Services:** There is growing demand for specialized transit and expanded rural transit services to better connect all communities across Waterloo Region.

The GRT Business Plan consists of three components, tailored based on feedback from riders, staff, community members, and partners. Through online surveys, in-person events, and on-site engagement



at stops, stations, and on buses, the GRT team gathered input for Conventional Bus and ION Train Business Plan, MobilityPLUS and Kiwanis Transit Business Plan, and a Township Transit Strategy. Highlights of the proposed transit investment strategies for each component are outlined below.

GRT CONVENTIONAL BUS AND TRAIN BUSINESS PLAN

- Frequent transit network: Service every 10 minutes on weekdays, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., and every 15 minutes all other times on 16 routes in Cambridge, Kitchener, and Waterloo
- Strategic new coverage: Strategic expansion focused on new growth and industrial areas with streamlined routes for useful improvements to coverage
- Consistent schedules: Enhance frequency to make schedules more consistent all day, every day, so more transit trips are more equitable and intuitive for more riders
- Highway express: Introduce frequent and rapid single-seat service between Cambridge, Kitchener, and Waterloo, giving riders more time back in their day
- Overnight network: Launch 24/7 service on key routes with 30-minute overnight frequency supporting shift workers, students, and core areas

GRT MOBILITYPLUS AND KIWANIS TRANSIT SPECIALIZED SERVICE BUSINESS PLAN

- Improve GRT's capacity to meet growing trip requests
- Continue to improve MobilityPLUS service and customer experience
- Investigate technology solutions to improve service
- Better understand customer needs and improve customer communication
- Improve coordination between MobilityPLUS and Kiwanis Transit

TOWNSHIP TRANSIT STRATEGY

- Improve existing transit routes that connect township communities into the region's cities

- Introduce new fixed-route services that capture a significant portion of built-up areas of under-served townships
- Introduce a new, frequent, all-day service to Waterloo International Airport located in Woolwich Township
- Expand on-demand transit service to all other township areas not served by a fixed route

WHAT'S NEXT?

The GRT team is presenting the combined GRT Business Plan to Regional Council in the spring of 2025, including recommended phasing, fares strategies and financial models that balance affordability, making transit easier to use, improving transit equity, and prioritizing frequency and speed. Together, the plan will serve as GRT's roadmap to guide transit investment priorities to 2030 and beyond through the region's annual budget process for transit services, infrastructure, and operations. The GRT Business Plan will be a critical input to the Region of Waterloo's upcoming integrated mobility plan (transportation master plan).

As we achieve each milestone of the GRT Business Plan, we will help make transit the easy transportation choice for more residents across Waterloo Region. To learn more about the GRT Business Plan, visit GRT.ca/2025.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Grand River Transit would like to thank the collaboration and skillsets provided by the following consulting teams who have worked on elements of the GRT Business Plan initiative.

- Arcadis Canada — Conventional Bus and ION Train Business Plan and Strategic Transit Technology Plan
- Dillon Consulting — Township Transportation Strategy
- Left Turn Right Turn — MobilityPLUS Business Plan



Blair Allen, MCIP, RPP, is a Member of OPPI and the Manager of Transit Development at Grand River Transit (Region of Waterloo), overseeing the coordinated integration of the GRT Business Plan. Blair received the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA)'s William G. Ross Lifetime Achievement Award in 2024 in recognition of his significant transit planning contributions and dedication to enhancing public transit in Waterloo Region over a 36-year career. **Adam Fraser, MCIP, RPP**, is a Member of OPPI and a Principal Planner with GRT (Region of Waterloo). Adam has a background in both land-use and transportation planning and is actively involved in transit service planning, coordinating GRT's Rural Transit Strategy, and monitoring GRT's ongoing Electric Bus Pilot. **Kevan Marshall, MES**, is the Project Manager for GRT's Conventional Bus and Train Business Plan. Kevan has worked on integrated sustainable transportation planning, policy development, infrastructure, and program portfolios in various roles at the Region of Waterloo since 2012. Kevan received CUTA's Young Leaders Award in 2023.

Under the Gardiner, a hidden gem of public space is emerging

BY ILANA ALTMAN AND ROBERT MCKAYE

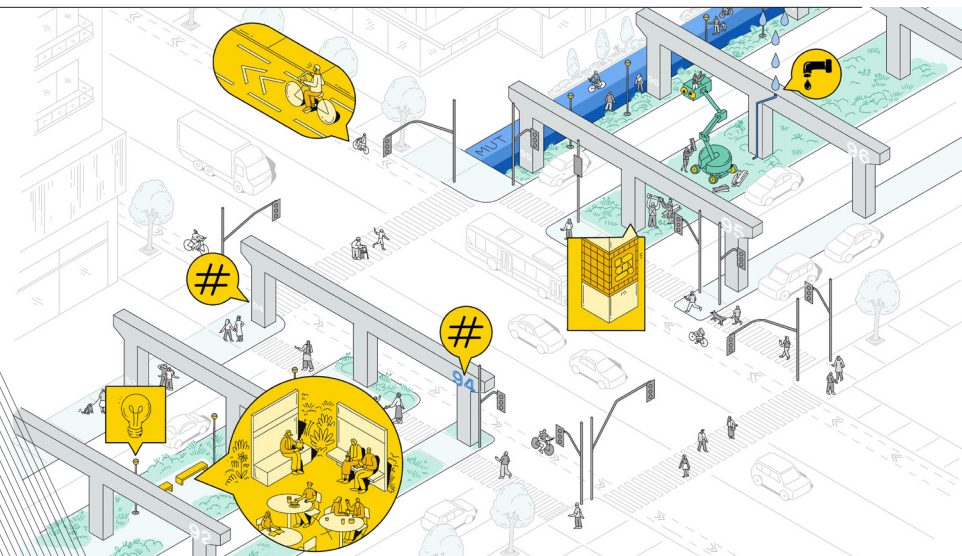


Gardiner Expressway

The Gardiner Expressway was built in the 1950s and 60s as a critical transportation link between the downtown core and neighbouring communities — a new artery for a growing city heralded as “Toronto’s great waterfront highway.” But what the elevated highway connected above, it divided below, serving as a contentious and formidable barrier at grade that cut off much of the city from its waterfront.

Today, Toronto’s waterfront looks very different to when the Gardiner Expressway was built, trading in industry and shipping ports have given way to high-density residential developments and cultural destinations. For years, the space beneath the Gardiner has been largely underutilized, leaving a policy gap and psychological void in the heart of these growing communities.

“...a comprehensive vision to revitalize the entire seven kilometre stretch beneath the Gardiner Expressway, from Dufferin Street in the west to the Don River in the east.”



Typical Intersection. Vignette by Kathleen Fu. Courtesy of The Bentway Conservancy.

In 2015, a group of civic leaders took the first steps to address this gap and transform this longstanding obstacle into an opportunity.¹ This gave rise in 2018 to The Bentway Phase 1, a dynamic 175,000 square foot public space located under the highway from Strachan Avenue to Fort York Boulevard. The space welcomes 250,000 visitors each year, serving as a vital backyard to tens of thousands of local residents and a vibrant destination hosting year-round free and accessible recreational and cultural programming.

Building on the success of Phase 1, the City of Toronto and the Bentway Conservancy have launched the Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan (PRP), a comprehensive vision to revitalize the entire seven kilometre stretch beneath the Gardiner Expressway, from Dufferin Street in the west to the Don River in the east.

“...connected corridor of distinctive public spaces, supporting cultural programing, recreational amenities, social infrastructure, ecology zones.”

REMOVAL OF BARRIERS TO THE WATERFRONT

The Under Gardiner PRP is a vision to turn the spaces under the elevated highway into a connected corridor of distinctive public spaces, supporting cultural programing, recreational amenities, social infrastructure, ecology zones. The plan seeks to shift the perceived limitations of the Gardiner Expressway toward opportunities for enhancing civic identity, connectivity, and climate resilience across the city's waterfront.

The PRP was developed in partnership by The Bentway and the City of Toronto, and supported by a team of designers, architects, and climate engineers, including PUBLIC WORK, Two Row Architects, and Transsolar KlimaEngineering.

The project leverages this particular moment of significant private and public investment across the downtown core, underscored by the ongoing efforts to rehabilitate — and in some cases, rebuild — the Gardiner Expressway from end to end. Gardiner Expressway Strategic Rehabilitation efforts began in the mid-2010s and are expected to complete in 2030. Additionally, in November 2023, the Government of Ontario and City of Toronto reached a new deal that included the potential upload of both the Gardiner Expressway and the Don Valley Parkway (DVP) to the province, subject to completion of a third-party due diligence process.

The Under Gardiner PRP aligns with these efforts, guiding improvements to the public realm to keep pace with the evolution of the Gardiner Expressway and the continued growth of the waterfront communities. The plan reinforced other stated City of Toronto priorities such as the Official Plan (Central Waterfront Secondary Plan & Downtown Plan), Public Art Strategy, Visitor Economy Strategic Directions, Vision Zero Road Safety Plan, TransformTO Net Zero Strategy, Complete Streets Guidelines, and more.

INSPIRATION FROM GLOBAL URBAN PROJECTS

In developing the PRP, The Bentway and the City of Toronto drew inspiration from successful projects around the world, particularly New York's High Line, which transformed an abandoned elevated railway into a popular elevated park. The success of this model led to the formation of the High Line Network, a group of North American partners transforming under-utilized infrastructure into new urban landscapes.²

"...the PRP aims to blend green infrastructure, pedestrian pathways, cycling lanes, public art, wayfinding, and cultural activities into a cohesive linear set of public spaces."

Like many projects within the High Line Network, the PRP aims to blend green infrastructure, pedestrian pathways, cycling lanes, public art, wayfinding, and cultural activities into a cohesive linear set of public spaces.

CORE RECOMMENDATIONS: TWO COMPLEMENTARY APPROACHES

The PRP outlines two distinct but complementary approaches to the Under Gardiner's redevelopment. First, the creation of new Under Gardiner streetscape standards (termed the New Baseline), which aim to equip the corridor with new features for safety and connectivity, predictable amenities, and result in a cohesive corridor identity uniting partners and places along its length. These include elements such as inclusive seating, colourful signage and wayfinding, resilient vegetation, multi-use paths, and more.

Acting in complement, a series of unique site-specific projects have been identified. These include spaces for new destinations below the Gardiner that support public amenities and programming, critical crossings, and the creation of new landmarks.

CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION

Environmental sustainability and stewardship are key considerations in transportation planning across Ontario, particularly as municipalities and the province grapple with the impacts of a rapidly changing climate.

With its focus on low-impact stormwater management systems, resilient and native vegetation, the Under Gardiner PRP outlines how a structure so closely tied to polluting automobiles can begin to contribute positively to the environment. Furthermore, the central trail network that unites the spaces along the corridor supports new opportunities for active transportation that complement Toronto's growing public transit system.

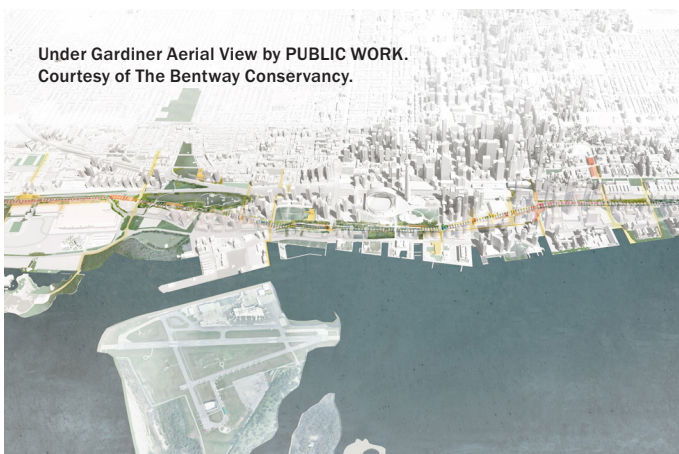
ENGAGING FROM THE GROUND UP

The PRP strives to support equitable development and to ensure that as we build denser waterfront communities, we are investing in public realm that keeps pace with the needs of a growing population.

As planners consider how to maximize the use of public realm, the Under Gardiner must be re-positioned as an asset to all — regardless of income, mobility, or background — providing free and accessible shared backyard and gathering spaces, amidst the housing and affordability crisis facing our urban centres.

Over the past few years, The Bentway and the City of Toronto have worked closely with residents, local organizations, and other community partners to ensure that the plan reflects the needs and desires of the people it will serve.

The team used a combination of techniques, including interactive social pinpointing to get first-hand perspectives on the Gardiner and surrounding geographies, live engagement events,³ 1:1 interviews, and focused partner meetings. Throughout the process, there were over 2,000 unique visitors to the Under Gardiner PRP website, over 150 comments by social pinpoint, and 120+ visitors to the open house that informed the final report.



Under Gardiner Aerial View by PUBLIC WORK.
Courtesy of The Bentway Conservancy.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND FUNDING

The measure of success for the Under Gardiner PRP depends on more than just design — it will require clear implementation pathways, strategic partnerships, and long-term funding solutions.

Following the approval of the PRP at Toronto's City Council in April 2024, the city and The Bentway have formed an interdivisional



“...a unique opportunity to rethink what transportation infrastructure and public space can look like in the 21st century.”

advisory team, which will guide further recommendations and the plan's implementation. This advisory includes representatives from multiple city departments, The Bentway, and the Province of Ontario, as well as planners, designers, and community stakeholders.

The advisory will guide an implementation strategy that aligns the PRP's recommendations with ongoing civic work and investment. This includes prioritizing near-term interventions — such as enhancement to multi-use paths — while planning for long-term development, such as future phases of the Bentway project.

FINAL THOUGHTS

As Toronto continues to grow and urbanize, the Under Gardiner PRP proposes a unique opportunity to rethink what transportation infrastructure and public space can look like in the 21st century. By adopting new hybrid solutions and aligning them with broad-based civic performance, Toronto is making a bold statement

about its commitment to resourcefulness, community care, connectivity and resilience.

The project and the collaboration that it was founded on demonstrates that transportation infrastructure can do much more than move people from one place to another; it can be the foundation for the creation of vibrant, equitable, and sustainable cities that work for everyone. 

¹ Bentway Phase 1 was made possible through the collaboration of a range of city-builders and experts, including City of Toronto, Ken Greenberg, PUBLIC WORK, Waterfront Toronto, Artscape, and The Bentway Conservancy staff and volunteers. Together with City divisions and creative partners we are expanding this way of working through the Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan.

² High Line Network. <https://network.thehighline.org/>

³ Frontier Design led the development of physical engagement materials for the Under Gardiner PRP Open House (pictured above), along with the Bentway Project Team.



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A conceptual rendering of the future development on Ookwemin Minising and the broader eastern waterfront.



The history of Waterfront Toronto: How a failed bid for the Olympics led to comprehensively planning the revitalization of downtown Toronto's waterfront.

BY JED KILBOURN, RPP

The small shoots that grew out of the dirt exposed by the digger were a surprise to everyone. Construction crews had anticipated, and found, bits and pieces of turn-of-century objects — the broken face of a porcelain doll, sludge-filled glass medicinal bottles, preserved piers from long lost docks — but no one had anticipated finding a living thing.

Built as part of the infrastructure to support the Port Lands Flood Protection project and future neighbourhood on Ookwemin Minising (formerly known as Villiers Island), the Cherry Street North Bridge is the gateway to the Port Lands.



The shoots belonged to a bulrush that had been buried and lain dormant for over 100 years, evidence of one of North America's largest freshwater marshes at the mouth of the Don River, which flowed south toward Lake Ontario to the east of downtown Toronto. For millennia, Indigenous people living on the north shore of Lake Ontario fished and hunted in the wetlands. In fact, it's thought that the fishing weirs, the footings of which have been found in earlier excavations, lent their name to Tkaronto, a Mohawk word meaning "trees standing in the water."

"...no one had anticipated finding a living thing."

By the late 19th century, the expansion of the Town of York into the City of Toronto significantly impacted the wetlands and shaped the shoreline of the new city. As the city grew, piers extending into Lake Ontario were filled in, extended again and filled in again, eventually connecting to rail spurs and hubs that radiated outward from the city's downtown. The Don River became central to fueling industrial expansion and supported brick works, mills, breweries, and distilleries, and the wetlands became an open sewer and dump, subject to regular flooding.

From the 1890s, successive municipal governments began filling in the wetlands and the Port Lands began to emerge as an approximately 300-hectare port and heavy

industrial heart of the city, with oil storage and refining, shipbuilding and bulk shipping replacing marshland. The newly channelized Don River terminated in the Keating Channel, which diverted the mouth of the river to extend westward into the city's inner harbour.

As the city grew, so too did the network of rail lines that extended into the harbour, and the consolidation and shipping of bulk goods, whether soybeans, grain, malt, sugar, salt or concrete, typified Toronto's waterfront.

The Gardiner Expressway, built between the late 1950s and early 1960s, largely followed the city's former shoreline and, subsequently, the rail lines that cut across the city's waterfront, further separating Toronto's industrial waterfront from the rest of the city.

By the 1970s, however, Toronto's shipping industry was in decline and the waterfront was largely forgotten, except for small but significant developments like Harbourfront Centre or hotels such as the Westin Harbour Castle offering disconnected attempts at waterfront revitalization. It was Toronto's failed 2008 Summer Olympic bid in the late 1990s that galvanized the municipal, provincial, and federal governments into comprehensively planning the revitalization of the waterfront.

Then Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, Premier Mike Harris, and Mayor Mel Lastman asked businessman Robert Fung

to develop a vision for our waterfront. Fung developed a vision that went beyond disparate developments — it was a vision for an integrated solution to the environmental, transportation, infrastructure, housing, economic, and tourism challenges confronting the city. While the Olympic bid failed, the vision for a revitalized downtown waterfront — the "Central Waterfront" — had gained momentum, and in 2001, the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation, later called Waterfront Toronto, was created by the three orders of government to lead the revitalization work.

The Central Waterfront Secondary Plan, adopted by City Council in 2003, offered four core principles that would direct revitalization efforts:

- 1) Removing Barriers/Making Connections
- 2) Building a Network of Spectacular Waterfront Parks and Public Spaces
- 3) Promoting a Clean and Green Environment
- 4) Creating Dynamic and Diverse New Communities

The Central Waterfront Secondary Plan required that prior to any residential development, a more comprehensive precinct planning process was to be undertaken — and, in partnership with the City of Toronto, Waterfront Toronto led the precinct planning for the West Don Lands, the East Bayfront, Keating Channel West, and Ookwemin Minising (formerly Villiers Island).



Aerial view of Corktown Common, the new park that was built as the first phase of flood protection for the eastern waterfront. It unlocked the area now known as the Canary District for development of a new neighbourhood.



The wetland in Corktown Common is part of its design for stormwater management. It also provides diverse natural habitat.



The Water's Edge Promenade in East Bayfront is now a popular destination.

“Enabling the transit that will support these future neighbourhoods is a critical part of what we need to deliver in order to ensure a resilient and sustainable city.”

Despite being developed over a period of almost 20 years, the precinct plans are consistent in their direction to achieve a mix of residential and non-residential uses (between 20–25 per cent non-residential), animate the ground floor of new development, and ensure that an affordable housing target of approximately 20 per cent of residential gross floor area on public lands is achieved.

The precincts were designed to be connected by light rail, the Waterfront East LRT, extending eastward via Queens Quay East, which is to be reimagined as a complete street, with ample room for pedestrians, cyclists, transit, and cars, knit together by an outstanding public realm.

As planning commenced, the public was concerned that the waterfront, once predominantly publicly owned, would be privatized. In response, the Water's Edge Promenade was envisioned, ensuring a 19-metre-wide public promenade along the water, intended to extend the length of the revitalized waterfront and connect to new neighbourhood-scale parks that act as “living rooms” for the new mixed-use communities.

Since 2005, Waterfront Toronto, in partnership with the City of Toronto and private developers, has been delivering on each of the precinct plans. In 2017, governments recommitted to the tri-

government model and invested \$1.4 billion in Waterfront Toronto's Port Lands Flood Protection project, which was designed to protect future development in the revitalized Port Lands from the periodic flooding of the Don River.

Today, after eight years of design and construction, the Port Lands Flood Protection project is about to be opened to the public. The project represents Waterfront Toronto's city-building ethos — to implement public realm infrastructure improvements in a way that prioritizes and leads with landscape. Flood protection, in this instance, has meant the renaturalization of the mouth of the Don River and excavation of a new river valley out of the former industrial port. The bullrush shoots that were uncovered were propagated at the University of Toronto and clones were planted along the banks of the new river along with a host of local plants.

Waterfront Toronto's work is not yet complete. In partnership with all three levels of government, we will continue to deliver more housing, affordable housing, community amenities, public spaces, and regional destinations and events. Enabling the transit that will support these future neighbourhoods is a critical part of what we need to deliver in order to ensure a resilient and sustainable city. 



Attendees blowing bubbles at the opening of Love Park in 2023.



Jed Kilbourn, RPP, is a Member of OPPI and currently serves as the Director of Development Planning at Waterfront Toronto. With almost two decades of expertise in urban planning, housing advocacy, and urban revitalization, he navigates municipal development processes and the financial intricacies of revitalizing Toronto's waterfront. Throughout his career, Jed has collaborated with municipalities, senior levels of government, and the private sector to deliver outstanding city-building initiatives, including the revitalization of Toronto's Regent Park neighbourhood.

The Corktown Station Transit-Oriented Community slated for the future Ontario Line.



The Exhibition Station Transit-Oriented Community slated for the future Ontario Line.



The future Weston Park Transit-Oriented Community, a partnership between Weston Park Baptist Church and Castlepoint Numa.



To build a vibrant city, Toronto must embrace transit-oriented development

BY MICHAEL MATTHYS, MCIP, RPP

If you live in Toronto, you're likely aware of how quickly the city is transforming. Facing a surging population, Toronto has sought to accelerate urban development, promising to build 285,000 housing units by 2031 — an ambitious goal of 30,000 per year.

In 2024, the city's population surpassed seven million residents.¹ By 2031, an additional 600,000 people are expected to arrive. The scale of the need is immense and the solutions complex, but done right, this growth presents an opportunity to design our cities more equitably, safely, and sustainably.

Transit-oriented development (TOD), supported by transformative projects like the Ontario Line, Yonge North Subway Extension, and Scarborough Subway Extension, offer a powerful means of managing population boom by concentrating housing, jobs, and amenities around key mobility hubs.

The need for this integrated approach to city building is made apparent by the cost of today's congestion, with Toronto consistently ranking as one of the most gridlocked cities in the world. This not only drains billions of dollars from the GTA's economy through increased transportation costs and lost productivity but also takes a serious toll on resident health and wellness.²

To foster a thriving and vibrant Toronto, we must plan and design for a future that

enables residents to live close to where they work, learn, and play. By prioritizing walkable and inclusive communities that boast a broad range of amenities from restaurants and markets to parks, cafes, and more, we can create a globally recognizable public realm that's warm, charming, and inviting for everyone — the hallmark of a successful city.

Focusing growth around transit infrastructure creates local centres for housing, commerce, and community life that minimize travel times and improve quality of life. It offers the chance for neighbours to connect in vibrant public spaces, support local businesses, and access essential services — all within walking distance. Not only can this strengthen the sense of local community, but it also encourages people to embrace a car-free lifestyle, helping reduce congestion and greenhouse gas emissions in the process.

This is the positive change Toronto is waiting for, and it can be delivered through major transit projects if planners, communities, designers, land owners, developers, decision-makers, and governments collaborate to maximize the benefits from the outset. A coordinated approach ensures thoughtful design, equitable outcomes, and infrastructure that successfully integrates into the community.

Take Weston Park for example. This TOD includes a rich mix of uses that brings myriad stakeholders' needs into focus adjacent to the station. It includes residences, recreational

spaces, community services, and places of worship, while increasing ridership opportunities for the transit agency.

As one of the fastest growing regions in North America, Toronto has an opportunity to cement its status as a globally recognized hub for innovation, cultural vibrancy, and economic opportunity. First, though, it's time we have a candid conversation about where everyone will live, how they will get to work, and what the future of our city will look like. Critically, we need to focus on solutions that tackle these challenges in tandem and seamlessly integrate housing and mobility to create connected communities. 

¹ Toronto Star. Jan 17, 2025. Toronto metropolitan population hits seven million thanks to immigration. https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/toronto-metropolitan-population-hits-seven-million-thanks-to-immigration/article_b399d974-d421-11ef-af79-6b2a86311d16.html

² CTV News. Dec 9, 2024. A 'traffic crisis': Economic, social impact of congestion cost Ontario more than \$50B in 2024, study finds. A 'traffic crisis': Economic, social impact of congestion cost Ontario more than \$50B in 2024, study finds. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/toronto/article/a-traffic-crisis-economic-social-impact-of-congestion-cost-ontario-more-than-50b-in-2024-study-finds/>



Michael Matthys, MCIP, RPP, Planning Lead at SvN, is a Member of OPPI and an urban planner dedicated to creating more livable, sustainable, and inclusive communities through design.

More multi-modal options, more solutions: How active transportation master plans are starting to incorporate more innovative approaches to support more people with more mobility options

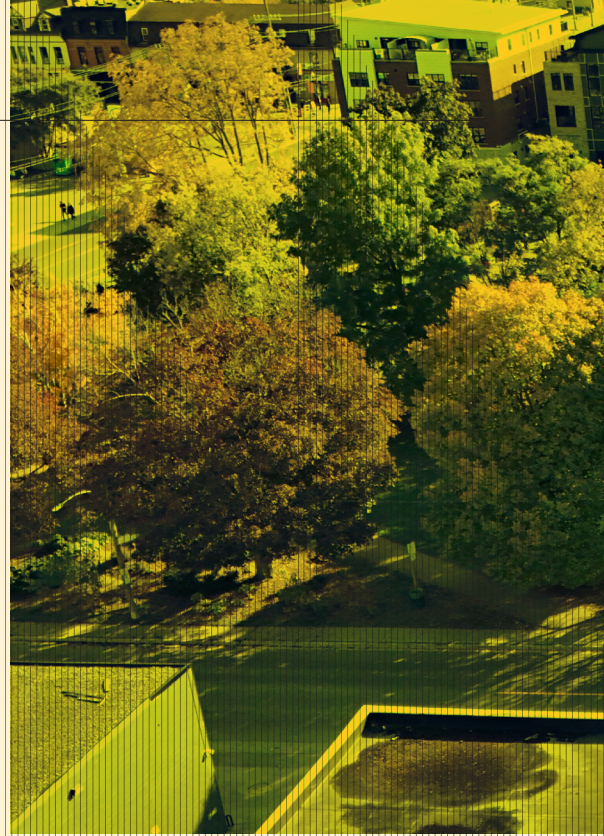
BY NICK SULLY AND SARAH GIACOMANTONIO, MCIP, RPP

Mobility in our cities, towns, and municipalities fosters livable, vibrant communities, offering choices of where to go and when. Active transportation master plans (ATMPs) support our ability to have choice by promoting multi-modal transportation and enhancing quality of life through options like walking, biking, and wheeling. These plans reduce traffic congestion, provide sustainable transportation choices, promote social inclusion, and support economic growth by connecting businesses with customers and employees.

ATMPs aim to grow both physical and social active transportation infrastructure, leveraging existing foundations like cycling and walking networks. They often apply frameworks such as complete streets and vision zero, focusing on community needs, safety, and connectivity.

“As planners and engineers, we are constantly looking to ensure that our approach to all projects is grounded in the greater good, servicing all people within all communities.”

As planners and engineers, we are constantly looking to ensure that our approach to all projects is grounded in the greater good, servicing all people within all communities. To ensure this fundamental approach is being honoured, it is important to inform our practices with the latest approaches, research, and data available. Within the context of creating an ATMP, this entails prioritizing working towards mobility for all, which requires prioritizing the application of an equitable lens to the entirety of the plan.





Bethune Street, Peterborough, viewed from a drone (Source WSP)

York Street Greenway from the St. Catharines ATMP (Source WSP)



WSP Canada's Active Transportation and Complete Streets Team has started to apply this approach in the ATMPs we develop for municipalities. A recently approved example is the City of St. Catharines ATMP, which included a focus on improving active transportation for people of all ages and abilities through our network planning approach and recommendations for monitoring active transportation use.

“An equitable active transportation network provides infrastructure that feels safe and comfortable for all types of trips and for all types of users.”

NETWORK PLANNING

An equitable active transportation network provides infrastructure that feels safe and comfortable for all types of trips and for all types of users. The goal of many plans and guidelines has been to focus on separated cycling facilities on major roads which are, of course, very important. The approach of planning routes on major roads inherently focuses on providing safe cycling facilities for commuters but does not prioritize local trips and the people who make them. Our recent approach to network planning for ATMPs has recognized this inequity and sought to create routes that are comfortable for all potential users, addressing a wider range of trip types.

To accomplish this, network planning for active transportation can consider two types of networks: the spine network, which focuses on the most direct routes that often require using major roads, and



Access Restrictions for Motor Vehicles on Bethune Street, Peterborough (Source: Nick Sully, WSP)

the low-stress network, which focuses on more local roads by reducing the stress caused by high motor vehicle speeds and volumes with traffic calming or diversion measures. These routes are often referred to as neighbourhood bikeways or greenways.

The St. Catharines ATMP shows a good comparison of these network types. The network leverages existing trails throughout the city and local roads to create low-stress routes that are often parallel to busier arterial/collector roads. One such example is the proposed York Street greenway. This route is parallel to Lake Street, a busy arterial road, and will provide a low-stress route from downtown to the area to the northwest. This route is intended to be planned with features to reduce traffic stress and is going through design approval at the city this year.

We find that some of the best examples of low-stress routes that have been implemented in the province include both traffic calming and traffic diversion measures to ensure low traffic stress. Routes such as Shaw Street in Toronto

include speed humps and alternating one-way motor vehicle traffic patterns to reduce speeds and volumes. Bethune Street in Peterborough includes narrow lane widths and chicanes to slow traffic and access restrictions for motor vehicles while allowing bicycle through movements to reduce volumes. Other municipalities across Canada that we work with are exploring similar strategies.

“Low-stress networks not only provide comfortable facilities for a larger group of people, but they also create more equitable transportation networks.”

Low-stress networks not only provide comfortable facilities for a larger group of people, but they also create more equitable transportation networks. Many of these routes utilize more local roads, creating safer opportunities to access more local destinations. For example,

historically patriarchal norms and gendered employment patterns result in women using cycling networks differently than men, such as for child caring responsibilities. Planning safe local routes to local destinations such as parks and schools provides safer transportation options for caregivers.

However, the limitations of local routes in active transportation network planning must be recognized. Many local roads and trails do not cross major barriers in the network, such as highways, rivers, and other geographic barriers. In the St. Catharines ATMP network, the York Street greenway directs users back onto Lake Street to cross the QEW. Low-stress routes across the highway were proposed as potential pedestrian bridge locations, but we recognized that new bridges are expensive projects and may require applications for additional funding in the long-term. In the near term, creating physically separated cycling facilities on major roads may be the most feasible option. The goal should be to minimize the distance on major roads between connections in the low-stress network as much as possible.

MONITORING

A key part of assessing the long-term success of an ATMP is establishing a monitoring and data collection strategy. This includes tracking changes in behaviours and attitudes towards active transportation after facilities and programs are introduced and evaluating if these interventions meet the ATMP's objectives and goals.

“Historically, prioritizing equity in monitoring has been overlooked in ATMPs.”

Historically, prioritizing equity in monitoring has been overlooked in ATMPs. In the St. Catharines ATMP, we addressed this by recommending consideration of equity-deserving communities in the monitoring process. Evidence shows a clear link between historically disadvantaged communities and transportation disadvantages, including youth, women, gender-diverse individuals, Indigenous and racialized peoples.

Without recognizing equity in the monitoring process, it cannot be a fundamental measurement for all key indicators of an ATMP's success. We have recommended two key approaches to introducing equity considerations within monitoring programs:

- 1) Introducing equity considerations within all key performance indicators (KPIs):** KPIs, also known as meaningful performance measures, support the prioritization of future projects. They help allocate resources appropriately and equitably when considerations are taken. Before program or facility implementation, baseline data is collected and then compared to future data, approximately one to two years later, to assess the impacts of active transportation implementations on each metric. We often recommend a variety of KPIs for our clients to consider, including active transportation usage, perceptions of safety, and geographic distribution of active transportation infrastructure.
- 2) Introducing equity considerations in monitoring and evaluation programs:** These programs are the specific ways in which KPI data is collected. Surveys for usage should include questions about gender, ability, and employment status and should be conducted on both spine and low-stress routes to capture users of all confidence levels. Some research shows that gender equity can be an indicator of the safety and quality of the active transportation network, since self-identified women often self-report concerns of safety and

security as primary reasons that they are less likely to cycle. Gendered employment patterns and the need for local trips prompt them to use more local routes through neighbourhoods.

While equity considerations are recommended within each KPI for the ATMP's success, it's crucial to include equity monitoring as a standalone program. This allows for collaborative engagement with the communities it aims to support.

This involves working with equity-deserving communities to monitor and report on systemic barriers and imbalances they define in relation to active transportation network access and usage. A useful tool for this is the Gender Equity Tool Kit in Transport (GET IT), created by three women-identifying transportation planners based in the U.K. who saw a gap in their field of incorporating gender mainstreaming into projects.¹ GET IT educates transportation experts on the impact of their work on women's and gender-diverse people's travel. It promotes gender-sensitive practices to establish equitable transportation systems, including guidelines on monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation.

WSP, in partnership with our clients, have made strides towards including an equitable lens within our ATMP work. Using network planning and monitoring and evaluation programs, we are only scratching the surface. It is approaches such as these in which we, as an industry, company, and community, can begin to more authentically consider the ways in which our communities' vastly different lived experiences impact their ability and interest in using non-motorized vehicles to get around to where they want to go. ♿

¹ Gender Equity Tool Kit in Transport (GET IT): <https://www.the-get-it.com>



Nick Sully, P.Eng., is a Transportation Engineer and Project Manager with WSP Canada's Active Transportation and Complete Streets Team. He has three years of experience developing Active Transportation/Cycling Master Plans across Canada, often focusing on the analysis and planning of active transportation networks and development of policies to support active transportation.

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Unlocking the potential of transit station areas:

Key lessons in creating vibrant, accessible communities

BY CHRISTOPHER SIDLAR, MCIP, RPP,
ROBERT KEEL, MCIP, RPP, AND
MACKENZIE RIGGIN, MCIP, RPP



Major transit station areas (MTSAs), defined generally as the lands within 500–800 metres of a transit station, present unparalleled opportunities to foster vibrant, sustainable, and connected communities. However, transforming these areas into mobility hubs is no small feat. Planners must navigate a delicate balancing act — reducing car dependency, fostering seamless transit connections, and creating inclusive public spaces — all while working within the constraints of existing urban fabrics and regulatory frameworks.

This article explores three key lessons in shaping successful plans for MTSAs, illustrated through innovative examples from Yonge Street North in Toronto, Eastgate Mall in Hamilton, and Central Oshawa GO in Oshawa. These case studies highlight how bold planning and design strategies can address shared challenges and support unlocking the potential of the transit stations to serve as thriving community anchors.

“Connectivity ensures residents and visitors can move easily within the area and access transit efficiently, while also supporting vibrant, human-scale development.”

LESSON 1: CREATING FINE-GRAINED STREET NETWORKS FOR CONNECTIVITY

A well-connected street network is fundamental for walkability and reducing car reliance within MTSAs. Connectivity ensures residents and visitors can move easily within the area and access transit efficiently, while also supporting vibrant, human-scale development.

In Hamilton, the redevelopment plan for Eastgate Mall includes reimagining the site’s large surface parking lots, replacing them with a permeable network of new streets and development blocks. These new streets were carefully designed to promote a balance between local connectivity and traffic management and to serve two primary functions: enhance the accessibility of the site and distribute newly generated traffic.

The introduction of a finer-grained street grid was essential to promoting a balance between users of all modes of travel. The recommended new streets and pathways sought to create development block lengths of between 80–110m, establish ideal spacing for pedestrian crossings that align with key walking routes, and enhance overall accessibility, focusing on providing generous space to allow for internal circulation and to simplify the user experience.

Understanding the traffic constraints that exist within the surrounding area, existing and future residents need to be provided with new routing options to ensure growth can be appropriately accommodated. This approach seeks to establish a balance between accommodating increased vehicle traffic while mitigating adverse impacts on the surrounding neighbourhood. Additionally, the proposed street design integrated a suite of traffic calming measures to complement the delineation of each street’s function and character, helping to guide appropriate traffic flow. This included proposing physical modifications such as narrower lanes and speed humps to discourage through traffic. Meanwhile, strategically proposed intersections and access points direct vehicular traffic toward major arterial roads, reducing the likelihood of infiltration into quieter adjacent neighbourhoods.

LESSON 2: BALANCING TRANSIT INFRASTRUCTURE WITH ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

To maximize accessibility and minimize vehicular dependence, transit-supportive design must seek to integrate active transportation

networks. Successful MTSA achieve this balance by prioritizing walking and cycling as a primary means of accessing higher order transit services.

In Toronto, the plans for the Yonge Street North MTSA place significant emphasis on the integration of active transportation. While the extension of the TTC's Line 1 subway was a driving force behind the area's redevelopment, walking and cycling trips were identified as being critical for internal connectivity.

To support these trips, the plan proposes significant recommendations including the introduction of protected cycling facilities, enhanced pedestrian crossings, and even the integration of shared mobility options, such as bikeshare and carshare programs. The plan also includes making accessibility improvements to existing facilities, ensuring all routes can be easily navigated, are flexible in accommodating a wide range of abilities, and are fully integrated with the broader transportation network.

These measures are aimed at supporting the necessary shift in travel behaviour, ensuring the area can be enjoyed by all users, encouraging shorter trips within the area by foot or bike while supporting the use of transit for longer journeys. The plan also addresses reducing parking supply, proposing policy changes tied with site-level transportation demand management measures to reduce car dependency and promote alternative modes of travel.

LESSON 3: DESIGNING PUBLIC SPACES TO ANCHOR COMMUNITIES

MTSAs thrive when public spaces are designed as focal points for community interaction. Well-designed public spaces enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors, making these spaces more than just transit hubs – they become vibrant places to live, work, and gather.

In Central Oshawa, a major industrial redevelopment site was planned with a north-south promenade that will not only connect the development to the future GO station but also will serve as a central public space. Design features like raised crossings are proposed to be integrated along all intersecting streets to prioritize pedestrian safety while maintaining access for emergency and service vehicles. Lined with active commercial and community uses, the promenade is envisioned as a vibrant area, fostering a sense of community and enhancing the site's appeal as a desirable place to live and visit.

In Toronto, Yonge Street plays a central role in the vision of the area. Building upon this, the plan recommends the continuation of the planned Yonge Street Promenade from the North York Civic Centre, reducing a vehicle lane in either direction to accommodate public realm improvements, including

streetscaping, wider sidewalks, and cycling facilities. Recognizing the required displacement of vehicle traffic, alternative routes that bypass the core area were proposed – allowing for the prioritization of locally generated trips over regional through traffic. These changes look to transform the central corridor into a pedestrian-friendly civic spine, building upon major infrastructure investments, reinforcing its role as a local and regional hub, and supporting the enhanced mobility for all of its users.

“The transformation of an MTSA into an accessible, walkable, and cycling-friendly place requires innovative planning and collaboration.”

CONCLUSION

The transformation of an MTSA into an accessible, walkable, and cycling-friendly place requires innovative planning and collaboration. Whether it's through creating fine-grained street networks, balancing transit infrastructure with active travel, or designing public spaces that anchor communities, examples like Yonge Street North, Eastgate Mall, and Central Oshawa demonstrate the potential of bold, people-centred strategies.

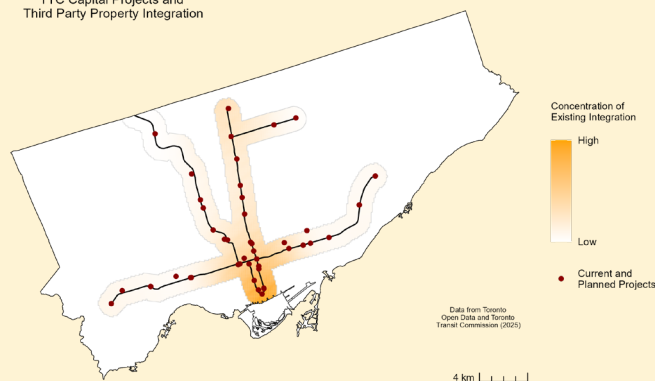
By embracing these lessons, planners can lead the charge in shaping sustainable, vibrant MTSA that meet the needs of today's communities while laying the groundwork for future growth. With thoughtful design and a commitment to inclusivity, transit station areas can become the beating hearts of connected, resilient cities. (P)



Christopher Sidlar, MCIP, RPP, is a Member of OPPI and a Senior Vice President of Transportation at LEA Consulting Ltd. He has a wealth of experience undertaking and managing Master Plans, Environmental Assessments, and Infrastructure Planning Studies. **Robert Keel, MCIP, RPP**, is a Member of OPPI and the Manager of Transportation Planning at LEA Consulting Ltd. Joining LEA in 2018, he has experience in both the public and private sectors being responsible for leading a number of major large-scale strategic transportation planning and parking studies. **Mackenzie Riggin, MCIP, RPP**, is a Member of OPPI and the Senior Transportation Planner at LEA Consulting Ltd. She provides expert knowledge with respect to planning theory, provincial legislation, and transportation planning principles for both site specific and large-scale projects.

Space for transit: Planning for TTC's subway expansion programs in a constrained urban environment

BY MICHAEL LIPKUS, MCIP, RPP, AND MICHAEL STEVENSON, MCIP, RPP



In March of 1954, Toronto's first subway line, extending up Yonge Street from Union to Eglinton Stations, began operation. It was a historic moment for Toronto. Today, it is difficult to discuss the evolution and shape of urban regions without identifying transit as a critical backbone of good planning — the two are inextricably linked.

There is much discussion today around the next era of rapid transit expansion in Toronto and beyond. Lines 1 and 2 are being expanded to the north and east, respectively, a new subway line will operate through the downtown core, and new rapid transit lines are being planned or are under construction, connecting many communities — and as planners, we want to see even more! These expansion projects will be as transformative to the city as the initial subway construction was in shaping densities and attracting development around transit. It is an exciting time in the transit world.

“The needs of the below-grade world can be in constant battle in a fight for space...”

The long-term investment and capital programs of the TTC are connected to those of the City of Toronto, and there is much focus on the need to upgrade and expand the existing system to support anticipated transit ridership growth. It is this need that forms the core objective of TTC's major capital programs. The TTC is working to upgrade capacity of Lines 1 and 2 through critical system upgrades and subway station reconfigurations and expansions.

Work on the TTC's Bloor-Yonge Station Capacity Improvements Project has already begun, which will see a major expansion to the city's busiest subway station and transit interchange. Billions of dollars of capital investment are planned for TTC's infrastructure over the next 15 years.

TTC's capital projects continue to grow in scope and complexity. Minimal lot setbacks, extensive building foundations, and essential municipal and servicing infrastructure are crowded below grade. The needs of the below-grade world can be in constant battle in a fight for space, and existing subway tunnels take up large amounts of space and are fixed in location. This poses additional challenges to TTC's subway expansion, where the more critical projects are in some of the most constrained urban environments, offering limited space.

To support its capital programs, the TTC collaborates with adjacent owners and developers to support the integration of essential transit infrastructure into third-party properties. This is not a new initiative for the TTC. The original construction of both College and Queen Stations incorporated direct entrance connections through private developments, and historic growth particularly in Toronto's core and along Yonge Street has resulted in a steady level of transit integration. The TTC now has 70 third-party entrance connections into the subway network, with more under construction and in the planning stages. With development encouraged around transit stations, opportunities to find space to support TTC projects outside those areas of higher concentrations of integration are critical.

Partnerships with the development industry have resulted in transforming TTC's existing subway network, incorporating critical infrastructure such as emergency

Historically Toronto's subway network in the downtown core has had the highest concentration of third-party integration. With lower concentrations found along other parts of the network, it is vital to work continuously with planners and developers on opportunities for infrastructure projects along the entire transit network.

exits, bus and streetcar loops, ventilation infrastructure for fire and life safety, new elevators for station accessibility, and direct connections to subway stations within these developments.

Successful TTC projects that integrate with adjacent properties and developments take time. They are intertwined with planning review processes and long-range planning studies and require time to identify rights and permissions and execute the needed agreements. These projects are found throughout the city's subway network, and the TTC system could not function without this third-party space.

As transit projects continue to advance throughout the city, it is important we continue to link the transit needs of the city with the opportunities posed by planned growth and development around the existing transit network. ☺



Michael Lipkus, MCIP, RPP, is a Member of OPPI and the TTC's Director of Planning and Approvals, responsible for securing permitting and planning approvals, utility coordination, and strategic planning initiatives. He has over 17 years of private and public sector experience managing land development, real estate, and transit expansion projects. **Michael Stevenson, MCIP, RPP**, is a Member of OPPI and the TTC's Head of Property, Planning and Development, responsible for the development, implementation and administration of the Engineering, Construction & Expansion Group's property, planning, and approvals portfolio. He has over 20 years employment experience in the development planning and transit infrastructure sectors.

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Redesigning Upper Wellington Street: Applying a complete streets approach and incorporating equity into planning

BY MIR AHSAN TALPUR, RPP, MCIP, MEGAN SALVUCCI, RPP, MCIP, AND OLIVIA STANCIU



Figure 1: Upper Wellington Street – Limits of Subject Corridor

Upper Wellington Street is a minor arterial roadway in Hamilton's mountain area, forming a boundary between the city's Ward 7 and Ward 8. The City of Hamilton tasked WSP Canada Inc. to identify transportation and stormwater improvements for an approximately one-kilometre-long section of Upper Wellington Street between Stone Church Road and Limeridge Road (hereafter referred to as "the subject corridor") (Figure 1).

South of the subject corridor, this street has an urban cross-section with three lanes of traffic (one through-lane in each direction plus a centre turning lane), on-road bike lanes, and sidewalks on both sides of the road (Photo 1). Within the southern portion of the subject corridor, this street has a two-lane rural cross-section with a sidewalk on the west side (Photo 2), which transitions in the northern portion to an urban cross-section with two lanes of traffic in each direction and sidewalks on both sides (Photo 3). There are no cycling facilities within the subject corridor.

For street design purposes, the corridor was split into two segments due to varying constraints and opportunities, including the differences in existing infrastructure. North of the subject corridor, this street has an urban cross-section with two lanes of traffic in each direction, sidewalks on both sides of the road, and no cycling facilities.

This article focuses on how equity is considered in the street design process for transforming this corridor into a complete street – a street that is comfortable for users of all ages and abilities.

EQUITY IN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Complete streets are designed to be safe for everyone, including pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, drivers, and people of all ages and abilities. The City of Hamilton's version of these streets is called Complete, Livable, Better (CLB) Streets. Properly designed CLB streets enhance safety, accessibility, connectivity, sense of

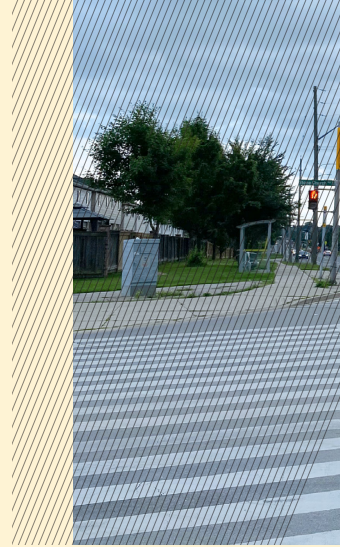




Photo 1: South of the subject corridor, this street has an urban cross-section with three lanes of traffic (one through-lane in each direction plus a centre turning lane), on-road bike lanes, and sidewalks on both sides of the road.



Photo 2: Within the southern portion of the subject corridor, this street has a two-lane rural cross-section with a sidewalk on the west side.

place, and the overall public realm. The approach moves away from traditional designs that prioritize motor vehicles and instead creates public spaces that consider the needs of all road users; it places a greater priority on the development of active transportation facilities, which include support for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users. Through the application of CLB streets, the prioritization of active transportation infrastructure not only improves the transportation network operationally but also contributes to improving community equity.

“Active transportation provides an accessible means of transportation from both a physical and financial perspective.”

Active transportation provides an accessible means of transportation from both a physical and financial perspective. It can accommodate any user from a physical perspective, regardless of age or ability, and can be designed to provide a high-level of comfort to those users. It also provides financial accessibility as walking, cycling, or even taking transit can be much more affordable than using a personal vehicle, especially since some modes are entirely free. This makes these modes accessible regardless of income or socio-economic status.

Furthermore, active transportation can contribute to both environmental and health equity. With walking and cycling creating no greenhouse gas emissions and transit typically creating lower emissions per user than personal vehicle use, supporting these methods of transportation can help improve air quality in neighbourhoods. Providing sufficient facilities for these modes can also make taking them more attractive and more likely to be considered as an option. This contributes positively to health equity as it provides users with a safe and comfortable opportunity to incorporate physical activity in their daily lives.

Implementation of CLB streets can ensure that the equitable benefits associated with active transportation are achieved,

including physical accessibility, financial accessibility, environmental equity, and health equity. Since CLB streets prioritize active transportation, supporting the implementation of CLB streets directly supports improvements to community equity.

APPLYING THE COMPLETE STREET APPROACH AND INCORPORATING EQUITY

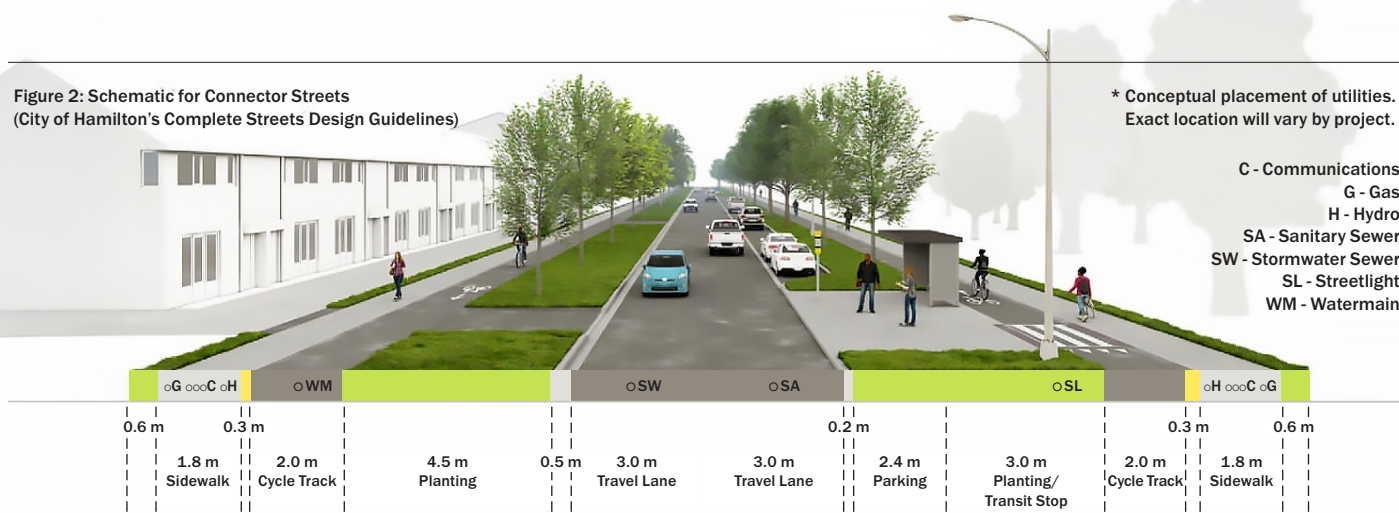
In June 2022, the City of Hamilton released the Complete Streets Design Guidelines, which provide consistent guidelines and tools for designing, implementing, maintaining, and monitoring CLB streets throughout the city.

Additionally, a CLB Street Design Decision Support and Audit Tool was developed to help designers and planners interpret the guidelines and evaluate street designs. It can be used to plan future improvements or to audit existing streets, helping to identify future needs and opportunities. This tool ensures that streets are designed as CLB streets by considering the context and adjacent land uses. Knowing who the users are and what trips are being made allows for the design of user-focused facilities; this is often tied to the surrounding land uses.



Photo 3: The street transitions in the northern portion to an urban cross-section with two lanes of traffic in each direction and sidewalks on both sides.

Figure 2: Schematic for Connector Streets
(City of Hamilton's Complete Streets Design Guidelines)



For the project's transportation assessment, the audit tool was used to evaluate the current conditions of Upper Wellington Street and to plan for future needs. Upper Wellington Street was categorized as a "connector" based on the city's Complete Streets Design Guidelines. Connector corridors link residential and employment areas with moderate capacity for people movement and access control (Figure 2).

Along the subject corridor, land uses include residences, a place of worship, a neighbourhood park, an existing retirement/long-term care home for seniors, a new retirement home (under construction at the time of writing this article), and future residential developments (both low density and high density). The area just outside of the subject corridor is mostly residential with some elementary schools, neighbourhood parks, and a few commercial buildings. Considering the primary land use is residential, with some community services, there is a high likelihood that many movements through the corridor may be short distance and be more recreational focused.

This leads to a higher likelihood that active transportation is used or could be considered by users. Understanding this land use context also helped identify potential vulnerable road users that would use Upper Wellington Street, including families with children, students walking or cycling to schools, seniors, and people with disabilities. With these potential vulnerable road users identified and an understanding of types of trips, the objective was to develop a street design that would include separate facilities (vehicle lanes, bike lanes, sidewalks and transit stops), which would provide opportunities to accommodate all road users (pedestrians, cyclists, transit users and auto drivers). This approach aims to enhance safety, accessibility, and inclusivity, ultimately improving the overall well-being of the road users.

REDESIGN PROCESS AND OPTIONS

Based on the current and future context of the subject corridor, two road design options were identified, both including on-street and off-street bike lanes and sidewalks on both sides. For Segment 1, road widening is proposed to three lanes with bike lanes, boulevards for trees, and sidewalks on both sides. For Segment 2, a "road diet" is proposed to reduce the street to

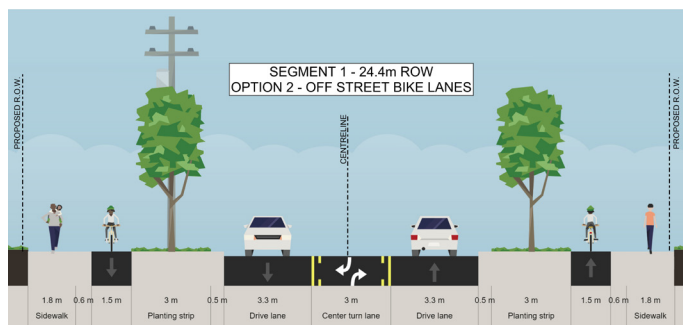


Figure 3: Recommended Design for Upper Wellington Street - Segment 1

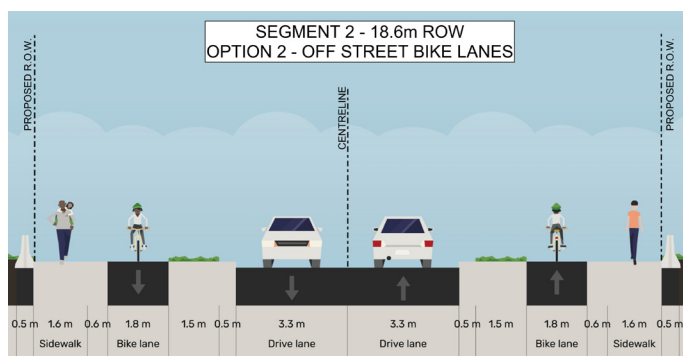


Figure 4: Recommended Design for Upper Wellington Street - Segment 2

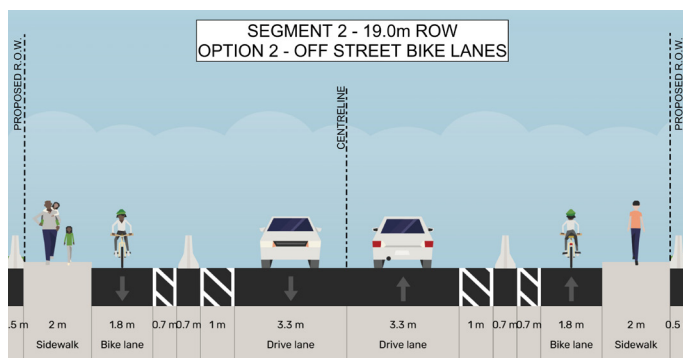


Figure 5: Recommended Design for Upper Wellington Street - Segment 2 Over the Bridge

two lanes with turn lanes at intersections, bike lanes, and sidewalks on both sides. Additionally, opportunities for improving transit infrastructure were identified to enhance the transit user experience, including ensuring active transportation connections to stops and the provision of elevated amenities at the stops.

“...opportunities for improving transit infrastructure were identified to enhance the transit user experience...”

Multi-use paths were considered but not evaluated for several reasons: they would create inconsistencies with existing and future bike lanes to the south and north of the subject corridor, require extensive intersection rebuilds, and pose real and perceived safety risks between pedestrians and cyclists. The interaction between cyclists and pedestrians is particularly significant as some of the identified vulnerable road users would be likely to use these modes on a regular basis.

The street design options were then evaluated using several considerations related to transportation, social, economic, natural, cultural, technical, and cost. The evaluation of road design options led to the selection of off-street bike lanes and separate sidewalks as the recommended design (Figures 3, 4, and 5). This option offers several key benefits:

- **Safety and Comfort:** Physically separated bike lanes eliminate the possibility of vehicle encroachment, providing the highest degree of safety and comfort for cyclists. Pedestrians will benefit from dedicated facilities, ensuring a safe and comfortable environment for all, including vulnerable users such as seniors and students.
- **Equity Considerations:** Physically separated facilities offer the highest degree of safety and comfort for vulnerable road users, including seniors and children. This approach ensures equitable access to safe transportation options for all residents.
- **Transit Connectivity:** Raised bike lanes allow cyclists to seamlessly connect to transit stops without having to navigate curbs. Dedicated bus shelters are anticipated to improve the bus user experience.
- **Alignment with City Plans:** This design aligns with City's Pedestrian Mobility Plan (2012); Transportation Master Plan Review and Update (2018); Cycling Master Plan Review and Update (2018); and Proposed Accelerated Active Transportation Implementation Plan (2024–2028) (November 2023).

The recommended street design was presented at an in-person community consultation event and made available on the project website for public review and input. During the in-person event, project team members engaged in interactive discussions with the attendees.

IMPLEMENTING THE STREET DESIGN: LOOKING AHEAD

At the time of writing of this article, the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment study was planned for completion by the summer of 2025. Following that, the project would proceed to detailed design, utility relocation, and subsequently to construction. At this time, the construction of this project is anticipated to begin in 2028.

The transformation of Upper Wellington Street into a complete street corridor exemplifies Hamilton's commitment to creating safe, accessible, and equitable public spaces for all road users. The City of Hamilton is currently in the process of implementing additional accessibility tools, such as a formal multi-modal level of service analysis requirement in transportation planning projects. This will elevate the needs of active transportation users and will stray from the traditional approach of prioritizing the level of service of personal vehicles. We look forward to continuing the process of learning about, and incorporating, equity improvements in the transportation realm for years to come. 



Mir Ahsan Talpur, RPP, MCIP, is a Senior Environmental Planner with WSP Canada Inc. He has 11+ years of experience in coordinating and leading environmental assessments, securing regulatory approvals, and project management for infrastructure projects related to municipal, energy, and power sectors. **Megan Salvucci, RPP, MCIP**, is a Senior Project Manager at the City of Hamilton where she manages environmental assessments and the planning of capital infrastructure projects. Megan has expertise in transportation and environmental planning, public engagement, and stakeholder management. **Olivia Stanciu, MSC, PMP**, is a Project Manager at the City of Hamilton where she manages environmental assessments and natural heritage assessments. Her background lies in utility coordination, stakeholder engagement, and project management.

OPPI's Planning Exchange Blog

Decisions about how to move people and products efficiently around the province are about far, far more than just vehicles. Planners understand all the angles, from zoning by-laws, access to services and employment, and infrastructure costs to climate change, community engagement, and so much more.

The response from contributors to the “transportation and mobility” issue of *Y Magazine* has been outstanding. To continue sharing knowledge and perspectives, some excellent new articles have been posted to OPPI's Planning Exchange Blog at www.ontarioplanners.ca/blog/planning-exchange.

SHIFTING THE CONVERSATION: IMPROVING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

By Garrett Stevenson, MCIP, RPP, and Rosa Bustamante, MCIP, RPP

Most planning projects and processes include opportunities for public input, but the methods and approaches that are used vary widely from one municipality to another and even from one project to another. Over the last five years, the City of Kitchener planning team has made significant strides in facilitating public engagement that is timely, more equitable, effective and meaningful.

Learn more about how Kitchener removed long-standing barriers and brought new and underrepresented voices to the planning table, including how community working groups transformed their approach to Kitchener2051, the City of Kitchener's new Official Plan.

UPDATE DOWNSVIEW: MOBILITY STRATEGY FOR NOW AND THE FUTURE

By Justin Shin and Frank He

The Downsview Secondary Plan establishes a 30-year vision for a former airport in north Toronto. Over 115,000 new residents and 47,000 workers, representing one of the largest city-building efforts in the history of Toronto, will be welcomed to the 540-hectare site. With access to multiple existing rapid transit stations, integrating land use and mobility strategies to reduce auto dependency and promote sustainable urban living is a pillar of the plan.

Learn more about how City of Toronto planners are turning the departure of Bombardier into a transformative opportunity to develop the transportation framework from the ground up.

ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT OF THE YORK UNIVERSITY, KEELE CAMPUS

By Mahtot Gebresselassie, PhD, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change, York University, and students from the 2024 Transportation Policy and Planning graduate course

In the social model of disability, it is the built environment that has a disabling effect on individuals with impairment. The built environment includes buildings and roads. Its inaccessibility limits disabled individuals' access to education, employment, health care, entertainment, political participation, and many other aspects of life.

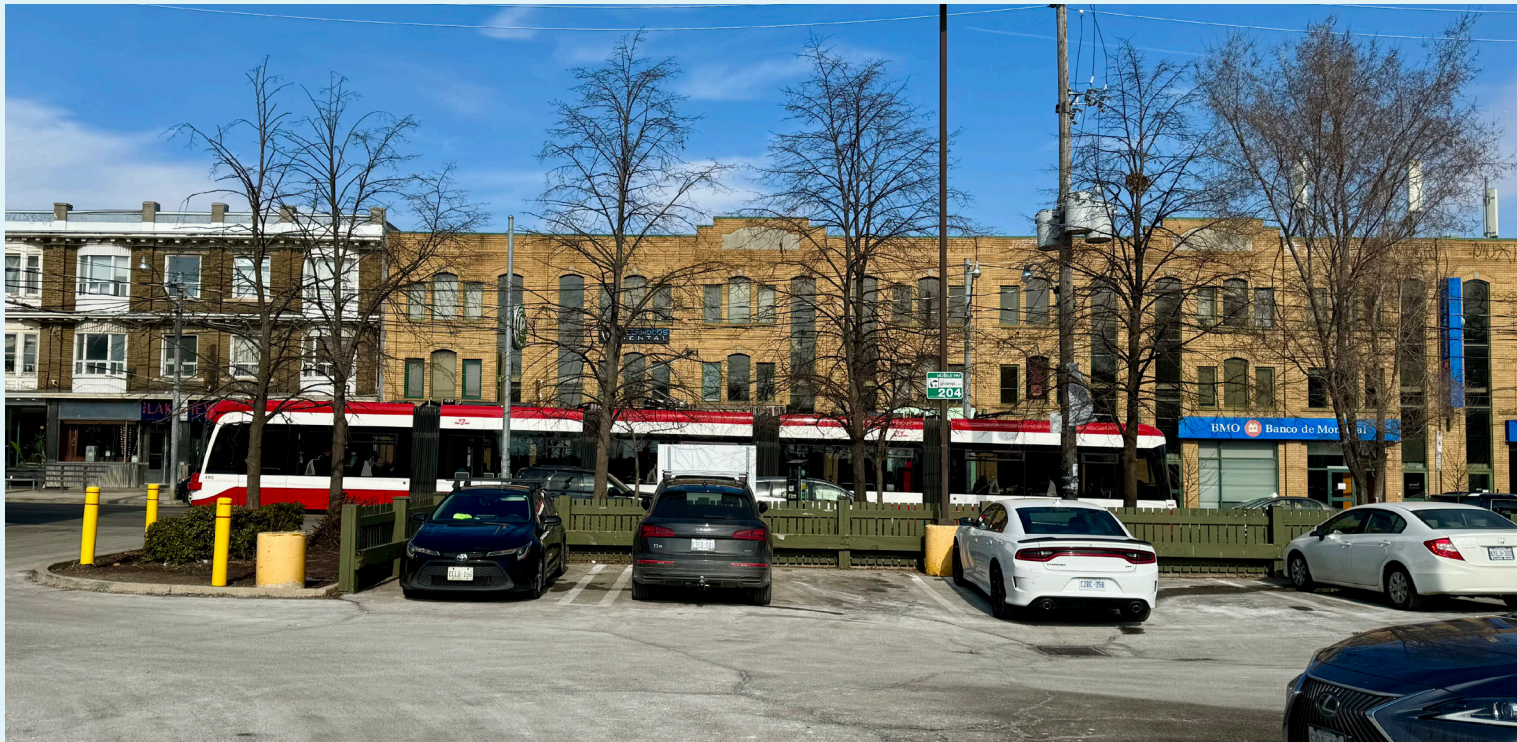
Learn more about the results of the accessibility audit of York University's Keele Campus, barriers and suggestions for areas that deviate from the Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines.

To continue reading these articles and many others, go to www.ontarioplanners.ca/blog/planning-exchange.

ACADEMIC

Publicly owned parking lots: The affordable housing solution hiding in plain sight?

BY ANN GODLY, CALEB BABIN, AND BRIAN DOUCET



“...surface parking lots offer some of the easiest and quickest pathways towards the development of non-market housing.”

Figure 1: A Green P Parking lot on Dundas Street West in Toronto will soon be turned into a 100-unit development with significant affordable housing. Photo by Brian Doucet

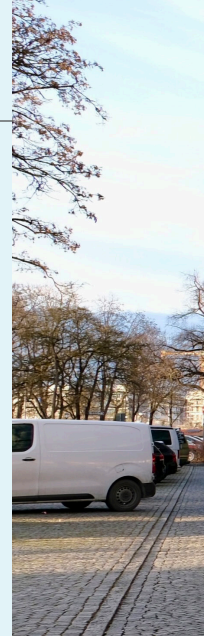
Building and maintaining affordable housing near good transit is one of the biggest challenges facing cities. While government policies are directing new housing supply to transit corridors, very little of this is affordable, particularly to low- and moderate-income households. This is because market-based solutions, such as inclusionary zoning, are limited in the scale of affordable housing they can provide.

Publicly owned land both along transit corridors and across the city offers the opportunity to be much more ambitious and proactive in shaping what kind of housing gets built. Of all the land that municipalities or other public sector agencies own, surface parking lots offer some of the easiest and quickest pathways towards the development of non-market housing.

In this article, we outline the potential and limitations of turning publicly owned parking lots into affordable housing, introduce two successful international models, and suggest ways planners can help leverage these assets to create transformative outcomes.

LAND AND THE POLITICAL COMPONENT

In Canada, when public land is declared surplus or ready for development, it tends to be sold on the open market to the highest bidder. However, disposing of this land without any conditions represents a missed opportunity to directly address the affordability crisis.



“...there are no provincial rules regarding the inclusion of affordable housing in the sale of public land in Ontario.”

“Affordable housing is often met with NIMBYism...”

“Surface parking lots are under-utilized public assets.”

An example of this is the sale of a parking lot at the Port Credit GO Station in 2021 to a private developer for \$64.5 million dollars without any provision for affordable housing.¹ While it is easy to point the finger at Metrolinx, the provincial government agency that owned the land, there are no provincial rules regarding the inclusion of affordable housing in the sale of public land in Ontario. This is despite the province’s own affordable housing task force recommending that in any such sale, there should be an affordable housing component of at least 20 per cent.² This recommendation was not adopted by the Ford government.

This political context also places more urgency on municipalities to act. Over the last two years, Toronto, Cambridge, Hamilton, Kitchener, and the Region of Waterloo have explored repurposing some of their public parking lots to convert them into new affordable housing developments. A debate which started in Cambridge in 2023 quickly spread around the province, with several jurisdictions pledging to develop strategies to turn some of their parking lots into affordable housing.³ In 2024, it was announced that a city owned parking lot on Dundas Street West in Toronto would be turned into the one of the city’s largest mass timber housing developments. The 10-storey project, led by CreateTO, will have 100 units with the aim of 30 per cent of them being affordable (Figure 1).⁴

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

There are some practical challenges to consider when turning parking lots into affordable housing. Converting a parking lot for residential use often requires several regulatory and zoning changes. A big challenge to such a conversion can also be community and political opposition. Affordable housing is often met with NIMBYism, which manifests itself through concerns that neighbourhood character will be negatively impacted, as well as the loss of parking. This was evident in the Hamilton community of Stoney Creek, where the mayor had to use her strong powers to overturn a council decision to reject a proposal for a 67-unit project led by a non-profit.⁵

Despite these challenges, publicly owned parking lots offer immense potential to achieve affordable housing objectives. A combination of factors creates the right context to be both ambitious and proactive. Surface parking lots are under-utilized public assets. Many are situated in desirable areas in the heart of the city or close to schools, hospitals, employment centres, and transit stations. While there may be some remediation costs, there are also no demolition costs which also means no tenants or businesses will be displaced.

Using publicly owned land can significantly reduce the cost of development, since there are no costs to acquire sites. In addition to this, development on public land can be aided by a range of government grants, incentives, and advantageous zoning laws that would



Figure 2: The Dantebad social housing project in Munich has created 100 housing units. By building the housing on pillars above the parking lot, 105 of the 111 parking spaces have also been retained. Photo by George Liu

otherwise not be possible on privately owned land. Non-profits who regularly get outbid by private developers can also have sites to work with.

All this allows for far more ambition than is possible on private land. While inclusionary zoning is one of the few planning tools to influence the kind of housing that gets built on private land, this is limited to five per cent of units, rented at 80 per cent of market rates for only 25 years. There is also no rent control in units first occupied after 15 November 2018. On public land, it is far easier to develop social, non-market, or rent geared to income housing. Homeownership models that de-couple prices from the market are also possible, as the Whistler Housing Authority has done for many years.⁶

This is all possible because, as Carolyn Whitzman, one of Canada's leading housing experts has noted, using a combination of public land and non-profits can reduce built costs by as much as 50 per cent.⁷

“Munich is a pioneer in this approach...”

THE MUNICH AND CALIFORNIA MODELS

The practice of using publicly owned parking as sites of affordable housing is common throughout the world. In our research, we have identified two approaches based on notable places where they are practiced: the Munich model, which retains

parking and builds new housing on top, and the California model, which completely redevelops former public parking lots.

The Munich model: In dense, bustling cities where land is both expensive and scarce, retaining parking while developing housing above is a practical way of maximizing the utilization of valuable publicly owned sites. Munich is a pioneer in this approach, although similar housing can be found elsewhere in Germany, as well as in Australia, the U.K., and Korea.

A pioneering example of this approach is the Dantebad project adjacent to a swimming pool and near the Olympic Stadium. The municipally owned site is more than 100 metres long, yet very narrow, and originally housed 111 surface parking spots, 105 of which were retained in the development (see Figure 2).⁸

Led by the municipal housing association GEWOFAG, the development opened in 2016 and took just 180 days to build. The pillars around the surface parking that support the four storeys of housing above are made of concrete, including a ceiling that provides insulation between the two uses. The structure housing the 100 affordable units was constructed using prefabricated timber. Rental costs are geared towards tenants' incomes and cost around half the average of private market rentals in the city. The site is also close to both a tram and underground station. In 2018, the project won the German Builder Prize.⁹ This example was

then replicated by the larger Dantebad II located nearby, opening with 144 affordable units in 2021.

In Canadian cities and elsewhere, the loss of existing parking spaces is one of the most prominent arguments against converting parking lots into housing. However, the Munich model demonstrates how municipalities to achieve both objectives — providing parking and affordable housing — without requiring a compromise and in a cost-effective way.

The California model: Unlike the Munich model, many examples in California repurpose and redevelop publicly owned parking lots owned by transit authorities entirely for non-market residential and accessory community uses. Since most of the original parking spaces are lost, this often coincides with a revised parking strategy and proximity to public transportation.

A notable example is ShoreLINE, a seven-storey complex with 126 affordable units that opened in 2024 beside the Grantville station of the San Diego Trolley.¹⁰ The San Diego Metropolitan Transit Development Board leased the land to Affirmed Housing for 99-years.¹¹ The \$62.6 million project involved a range of partners, including the San Diego Housing Commission, the California Department of Housing and Community Development, and the City of San Diego.

Unit sizes range from studio to three bedrooms, with amenities including a

courtyard, community room, kitchen, and computer room. The project also has space for a range of supported services, such as after-school programs and a career development centre. Eligible residents must earn between 30–60 per cent of the area's median income. This project is part of the Metropolitan Transit System's broader plan to build transit-oriented communities and is one of several examples of turning parking lots near transit station into non-market housing in San Diego.

CANADIAN EXAMPLES

There are several important examples of both approaches already in place across Canada. In Toronto, Dunn Housing, at 150 Dunn Avenue, offers 51 supportive studio units for homeless individuals and was built on the site of an old hospital parking lot. Completed in 2024, residents have access to onsite health and social services, as well as the nearby hospital. It is the first of five such supportive housing projects planned by the University Health Network, in partnership with the city and United Way of Greater Toronto. Dunn House is based on a "social medicine housing" concept, where patients have access to essential community resources, health care, and housing.

In Hamilton, the non-profit organization Indwell completed a supportive housing project in 2022 that has incorporated new parking on the ground floor. The Oaks is a community of 108 affordable housing units spread across three buildings, including repurposing the stable and carriage housing of a former milk bottling plant. The surface parking is in the new building constructed on East Avenue North, where the residential floors are supported by pillars. Since many tenants do not own cars, the new parking spaces also have the potential to be an income-generator for Indwell, especially given the proximity to Hamilton General Hospital.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING

Surface parking lots and other forms of public land are valuable assets that should be leveraged to create new affordable housing that is rarely possible on privately owned land. This is essential to addressing not only a housing supply crisis, but an affordability one as well. Examples from Canada and beyond demonstrate how this approach can deliver genuinely affordable housing quickly and cheaply.

What can the planning community do to advance this approach? One of the first steps is to identify public land that is suitable for development. Even this basic step can lead to tangible results, as demonstrated by the City of Kitchener's partnership with the YW-Kitchener Waterloo to lease a small parcel of land which now has two buildings of supportive housing on it.¹² Proactive cities can also strategically acquire sites through Ontario's Realty Directive, which offers the possibility to purchase surplus public properties at appraised values, rather than on the open market.¹³

Identifying sources of funding and partners is also essential to financing affordable housing projects and working with both market and non-profit actors. Not every unit needs to be social housing. However, if this approach is going to be impactful, there has to be significantly more affordable housing than what is possible through the market.

Encouragingly, there are signs that some public agencies are thinking differently about their land. Canada Lands Company recently

updated its strategic plan to include a 20 per cent affordability requirement for any project they are involved with. At a minimum, other public and quasi-public bodies should adopt a similar strategy.

Addressing the root causes of the housing crisis requires ambitions and proactive solutions that cannot be achieved through the normal means of development. Turning public parking lots into sites of genuinely affordable housing unlocks housing types and housing partners that are priced out of normal circuits of development. Whether parking is retained as in Munich or eliminated as can be seen in the California model, using these public sites to build non-market housing is a solution to the housing crisis that is hiding in plain sight. ☺

¹ Metrolinx sells public land to developer for \$64.5M with no conditions for affordable housing: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/provincial-land-transit-hub-private-developer-sale-1.6330555>

² Housing Affordability Task Force report: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/housing-affordability-task-force-report>

³ Motion to investigate housing above city parking lots defeated at Cambridge Council, 5-4: https://www.therecord.com/news/motion-to-investigate-housing-above-city-parking-lots-defeated-at-cambridge-council-in-5-4/article_0ba7a736-146a-5c0e-9d73-45560a7bfdae.html; and Waterloo Region to look for more affordable housing opportunities on public property: https://www.therecord.com/news/waterloo-region/waterloo-region-to-look-for-more-affordable-housing-opportunities-on-public-property/article_d37046cd-53a7-5997-bbad-1666eb5f5429.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=copy-link&utm_campaign=user-share

⁴ City unveils designs for 'transformational' mass timber building near Ossington strip: https://www.thestar.com/real-estate/city-unveils-designs-for-transformational-mass-timber-building-near-ossington-strip/article_e219d070-ab18-11ee-9928-7f930603b6c7.html

⁵ Affordable housing on Stoney Creek parking lot is a go after Horwath uses strong mayor powers: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/stoney-creek-affordable-housing-1.7183628>

⁶ Whistler Housing Authority: <https://whistlerhousing.ca/>

⁷ Home Truths: Fixing Canada's Housing Crisis: <https://www.ubcpress.ca/home-truths>

⁸ Deutscher Bauherrenpreis Hohe Qualität – Tragbare Kosten im Wohnungsbau: <https://www.zukunft-mobilitaet.net/166948/analyse/bezahlbarer-wohnraum-ueberbauung-parkplatz-dantebad-muenchen/>

⁹ <http://www.deutscherbauherrenpreis.de/projekt/pilotprojekt-am-dantebad-muenchen/>

¹⁰ Affirmed Housing Completes San Diego Affordable Community: <https://www.multiphasingnews.com/affirmed-housing-completes-san-diego-affordable-community/>

¹¹ Affirmed Housing: Shoreline: <https://1gt.b7f.myftpupload.com/completed/shoreline/>

¹² 'Having a place to live is freedom': Families move into YW's newest affordable housing building: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/kitchener-waterloo/yw-kw-block-line-road-housing-mothers-and-children-1.6857425>

¹³ Ontario's Realty Directive: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontarios-realty-directive>



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ACADEMIC

Perceptions of road rights: Understanding why cycling infrastructure is so polarizing

BY EMMA MCDUGALL



On-road cycling lane in Waterloo's urban core: an example of a bike lane that could be a target for removal under Bill 212.

Premier Doug Ford's Bill 212, or the *Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act*, has put a new spotlight on the longstanding cycling lane debate. While much of the current discussion has focused on congestion and traffic, this debate is one aspect of a much larger conversation about ownership of the road.

Terms like “bikelash” have been coined to capture the breadth of anti-cycling ideology, to better understand why people are so opposed to cycling infrastructure. In a relatively ironic juxtaposition, this opposition exists on a spectrum.¹ On the one hand, and currently dominant in public debate, people worry that cycling will have a negative impact on their community. From decreased property values to congestion, this form of bikelash often argues that bikes do not belong on the road. On the other hand, bikelash also comes from concern that cycling lanes could add value to a community, increasing desirability and fear that neighbourhood change could push residents out. This form of bikelash is much more about the purpose of cycling.

“...we must acknowledge the way people have claimed ownership of the road and consider the role that mediation needs to play...”

Despite these differences, bike lane debates ultimately centre the idea of belonging. It is this inherent bias that people and politicians bring that has made this debate so much more personal. As a result, we see news outlets, social media, and academic research alike continue to explore the contention that exists on the road between drivers and cyclists, pointing to a growing us-versus-them mentality.

Despite a spokesperson for the Ministry of Transportation describing this push to reprioritize the car as “just common sense,” the City of Toronto estimates that bike lane removal will cost \$48 million in addition to the millions of dollars spent installing them.² This puts into perspective what the financial implications of this

hasty push for a complete overhaul of Ontario's cycling system really mean, which is only one dimension of change we need to consider.

Taking the stance that cycling lanes are a valuable transportation tool, improving road safety and increasing cycling use, the path forward is complicated.^{3,4} While planning professionals have the empirically supported tools to propose practical solutions to address both vehicular and cycling concerns, an expert approach is not enough to settle the decades of contention that have now pitted drivers against cyclists. To begin to interrogate planning best practices, we must acknowledge the way people have claimed ownership of the road and consider the role that mediation needs to play in defusing and depolarizing the discussion. We recognize that there is a place for cars and bikes on the road, but how we communicate this to people is more important than ever before. (V)

¹ Wild, K., Woodward, A., Field, A., & Macmillan, A. (2018). Beyond ‘bikelash’: Engaging with community opposition to cycle lanes. *Mobilities*, 13(4), 505–519.

² Callan, I. & D'Mello, C. (2024, November 05). Toronto's bike lanes cost millions to install. How much will it be to remove them? *Global News*. Retrieved from: <https://globalnews.ca/news/10851150/ontario-bike-lane-removal-cost/>

³ Morrison, C. N., Thompson, J., Kondo, M. C., & Beck, B. (2019). On-road bicycle lane types, roadway characteristics, and risks for bicycle crashes. *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, 123, 123–131.

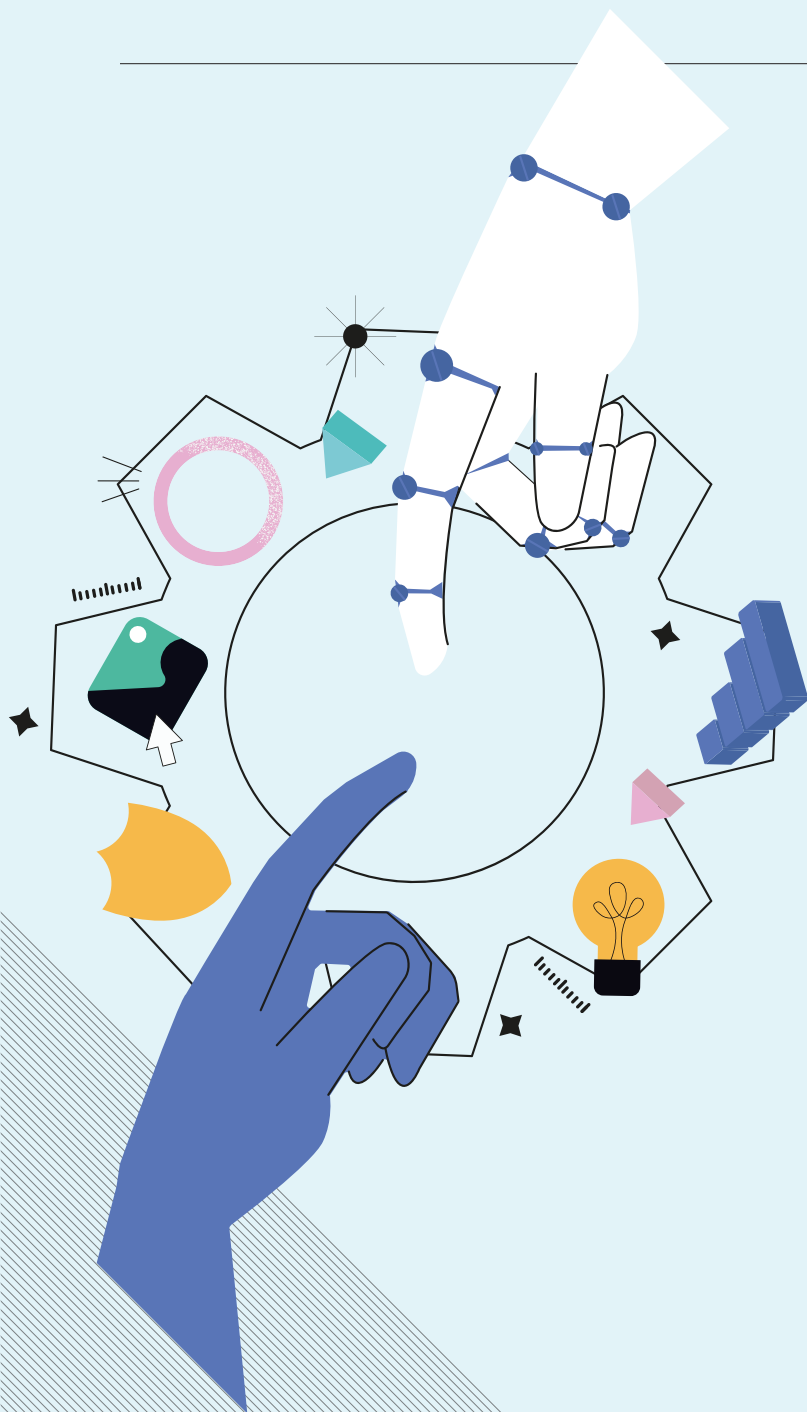
⁴ Nanayakkara, P. K., Langenheim, N., Moser, I., & White, M. (2022). Do safe bike lanes really slow down cars? A simulation-based approach to investigate the effect of retrofitting safe cycling lanes on vehicular traffic. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 19(7), 3818.



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In a world with generative AI, what is the role of the planner?

BY KATHERINE PERROTT, MCIP, RPP, CARRIE MITCHELL, AND CALEB MILLER



Whether you are an AI-advocate, a curious dabbler, or a strident opponent, the prevalence of AI means that, as a profession, we must engage and discuss its ethical and appropriate use. AI's computational intelligence has long been a part of planning's technical side and has surged in use alongside the rise in digital data about our cities and everyday movements. The rapid and popular development of generative large language models (e.g. ChatGPT) and image-producing diffusion modeling (e.g. Midjourney), and their integration into apps and internet browsers, means that AI impacts every planner — even the least technical among us.

This article distills the key takeaways for planning education and practice that we developed through our work in University of Waterloo classrooms, a survey of over 200 planning students, and professional workshops, including an OPPI conference session in fall 2024. We have asked: in a world with generative AI, what is the role of the planner?

IN A WORLD WHERE AI IS A TOOL FOR GENERATING TEXTS AND IMAGES, BE A SKILLED CRAFTSPERSON

Generative AI can be likened to a Swiss army knife; there are many ways to put it to functional use, but it also has the capacity to cause harm. The potential opportunities and risks vary across planning sub-fields and activities.

For example, some planners may find AI useful for quickly developing texts or images that can serve as springboards for discussion among colleagues or at a public meeting. In the classroom, this has been useful for students to prototype ideas and show them to each other before moving forward with their own unique work. In these forums, transparency about when, how, and why we are using AI can mitigate the harm of misinformation.

While there is a growing niche for people working at the intersection of planning and computing, most of us will be users of AI not developers. AI is a black box that makes errors due to a lack of genuine understanding of the subject matter. Models estimate what an appropriate generation of text or an image might be to your input, often creating facsimile data known as “hallucinations.” Tools are not meant to work on their own. When we approach generative AI as a tool, it is simply a way to aid the work; we remain the skilled editors, fact-checkers, and creative agents in control of the texts and images that we craft.

IN A WORLD WHERE AI READILY OFFERS UP ANSWERS, BE THE ONE WHO ASKS BETTER QUESTIONS

Generative AI is an answering machine that can rapidly search, evaluate reports, summarize policy documents, and suggest many solutions. AI large language models can be useful in “strength training” when testing arguments and counter arguments, and specialized tools can be built to aid in niche professional contexts.

Steel sharpens steel: having an outside perspective on arguments or communications can be used to enhance the quality of human work, rather than outright replace it. This is especially true so long as limitations of generative models continue to be reduced but not eliminated altogether.

“How we frame a planning problem shapes the solutions available to us.”

In spite of these uses, the skill of asking good planning questions requires the human intelligence of nuanced local knowledge and savvy. How we frame a planning problem shapes the solutions available to us. The problem-posing, question-asking work of planning in complex political contexts will not easily be replaced by quick answers generated in language models which are typically void of such external contexts.

IN A WORLD WITH AI, THE PAST IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR OUR FUTURE-ORIENTED PROFESSION

Generative AI is trained on information from the past and can reinforce biases and negative patterns. We know, for example, that AI is often trained on white, male bodies. The implications for people of colour and women have already started to materialize — from facial detection software simply not recognizing a subset of humans to self-driving cars failing to spot darker-skinned pedestrians.¹ Dr. Joy Buolamwini refers to this practice as the “coded gaze” and cautions that while AI will move us to new technological frontiers, it also has a built-in path dependency programmed by humans.²

As a future-shaping profession, extant and past trends are not good enough to push society forward. AI brings us new ethical concerns — beyond the scope of this short article — but also exacerbates existing ones. The digital has a physicality and environmental footprint in the form of servers, warehouses, cables, and their supportive cooling systems, electricity,³ and distribution infrastructures that can run in and through unceded and contested Indigenous territories.

We need to wrestle though this as planners with a special interest in land use and as a society more

broadly. Algorithmic predictions based on past data, generated by water- and energy-thirsty servers are not enough. The radical imagination needed for climate resilient futures demands more.

IN A WORLD WITH AI, WE NEED TO KNOW HOW TO “LAND THE PLANE” WHEN THE COMPUTER FAILS⁴

Generative AI may become a tool that replaces or supports certain routine planning tasks, but we should not risk becoming too reliant on these tools.

Most of our surveyed students identified that AI will be important in their careers and felt somewhat confident in their preparedness for that future, while expressing a desire to learn more about its appropriate applications in practice. We have been innovative in our classrooms to address this need, but make no mistake, the fundamental skills, creativity, and critical thinking processes of planning remain central to our curriculum.

Like a pilot who still needs manual skills, our students still need to know how to land a plan(e) in the absence of AI tools. As the limitations become clearer, and costs increase, already some of the hype and buzz around generative AI has died down. The technology around us is constantly changing; as planners, we need to pay attention and cautiously adapt — as we always have. Rather than diminish the value of human intelligence and experience, the prevalence of AI raises the value of being a human planner in real life. ☺

¹ Wilson, B., Hoffman, J., & Morgenstern, J. (2019). *Predictive inequity in object detection*. arXiv preprint arXiv:1902.11097.

² Buolamwini, J. (2024). *Unmasking AI: My mission to protect what is human in a world of machines*. Random House.

³ De Vries, A. (2023). The growing energy footprint of artificial intelligence. *Joule*, 7(10), 2191–2194. 4

⁴ We initially heard this ‘land the plane’ metaphor from David Nicol on The Campus podcast (July 6, 2023), available: <https://www.insidehighered.com/podcasts/campus/2023/07/06/how-use-generative-ai-your-teaching-and-research>. The metaphor gained further resonance in our conversations as Caleb began shifting into new training as an air traffic controller.



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ACADEMIC

Mississauga's new LRT: Advanced transportation equity or pushing it off track?

BY SUZAN RAKHA



Figure 1 Hazel McCallion LRT Project

The 18-kilometre Hazel McCallion Line will soon provide a sustainable and dependable transit solution for this fast-growing region. With 19 stops, the line will pass through two urban growth centres and seamlessly connect to key transit systems, including GO Transit (Milton and Lakeshore West lines), the Mississauga Transitway, Brampton Transit, Züm, and MiWay. Operating in a dedicated lane, the Hazel McCallion Line intends to offer a smooth, reliable, and convenient travel experience along one of the region's busiest streets, promoting connectivity and sustainable urban development (Figure 1).¹

Transportation equity emphasizes that public transit exists to serve those who have no means or capacity to access private forms of transportation—disadvantaged communities and low-income groups. The stake is high in Mississauga's City Centre/Square One area, where 19 per cent of residents rely on public transit.² For this population group, public transit is an essential link to jobs, education, and health care. However, transportation-oriented projects, like the LRT in Mississauga, often risk advancing market interests over accessibility and equity, therefore compromising the fundamental equity objectives of public transportation systems.

Thus, although, we would like to envision the LRT transforming Mississauga to a vibrant city where transit lines are thriving with activity, connecting people and neighbourhoods, and easing traffic congestion, higher property values, increasing rents, and the displacement of low-income groups are some of the unintended consequences of a promised better transportation infrastructure. Rising property prices, and evidently renting costs, drive many to move farther from transit corridors, thereby depending more on unaffordable or ineffective means of transportation.

“...higher property values, increasing rents, and the displacement of low-income groups are some of the unintended consequences of a promised better transportation infrastructure.”

EFFECT OF THIS TOD ON GENTRIFICATION AND DISPLACEMENT

Transit development leads to significant increases in property values near transit stations. This property appreciation is between four per cent and 24 per cent (APTA, NAR), and in some cases up to 45 per cent for apartments (CTOD). Within the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), including the city of Mississauga, proximity to transit stations and lines could increase property values by 10 per cent to 20 per cent (Metrolinx). Development potential, enhanced accessibility, and market demand are the factors fostering this appreciation.^{3,4}

In cities like Mississauga, the rental cost often ranges from three per cent to four per cent of the value of the property.⁵ Therefore, as property values increase — as projected by an average of 17 per cent near LRT stations — rent paid by tenants will increase proportionally. Further premiums show up through a “bid-up mechanism,” where perceived desirability and improved accessibility drive up rents even more. This mechanism disproportionately benefits higher income groups while displacing disadvantaged populations.

VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES ALONG THE LRT CORRIDOR: A MULTIFACETED PENALTY

A spatial analysis of the LRT corridor between Queensway and Eglinton shows a significant concentration of disadvantaged and vulnerable communities dealing with severe socio-economic challenges. One of these challenges is identified

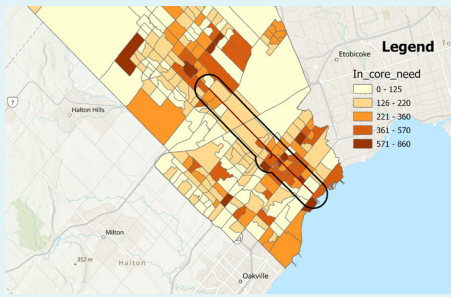


Figure 2 Concentration of households in core need based on Census 2021

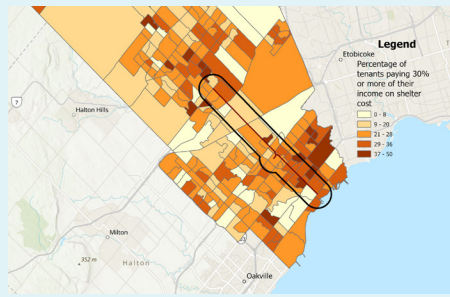


Figure 3 Percentage of renters spending 30 per cent or more of their income on shelter cost by Census tract based on Census 2021

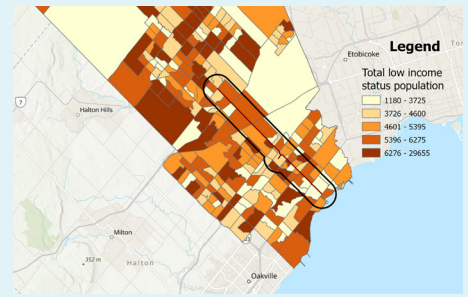


Figure 4 Number of households identified as low-income status based on Census 2021

as core housing needs with dwellings requiring major repairs (adequacy), overcrowding due to insufficient bedrooms (suitability), and unaffordable housing costs, with many spending over 30 per cent of their income on shelter (affordability) (Figure 2).⁶ Furthermore, a high proportion of renters spend 30 per cent or more of their income on shelter cost (figure 3) and individuals living below the low-income cut-off (LICO) threshold (Figure 4) are concentrated along this corridor, underscoring the fragility of these communities.^{7,8}

THE MULTIFACETED PENALTY

Rising shelter expenses along this transportation line could cause the least advantaged groups to be displaced, further isolating and marginalizing them. This displacement will make them subject to a “multifaceted penalty”:

- Costlier commutes resulting from being forced to either owning and maintaining a car or using infrequent bus services with longer travel times and higher costs.
- Loss of accessibility to essential services, activities, and employment opportunities.
- Exclusion due to transit adjacent neighbourhoods risk becoming affluent living spaces for wealthier residents, while least advantaged are pushed away to marginal areas, hence widening socio-economic gaps.

TARGETED ACTIONS FOR EQUITY

Whether the TOD tends towards deepening inequality, or if will it serve as a catalyst for inclusion and equity, the answer lies in a deliberate planning initiative and meaningful community engagement to offset any potential of non-desired gentrification outcomes and create an equitable and inclusive Mississauga as well a transit friendly city.

In this regard, the city should adopt key measures along the LRT route to prevent displacement and advance transportation equity:

- **Inclusionary zoning policies:** Mandating affordable housing near LRT stations to ensure low-income households stay in transit-accessible areas.
- **Rent stabilization and tenant protections:** Strengthening protections against growing rents and evictions in high-demand areas along the LRT, therefore preventing displacement of vulnerable groups.
- **Bus service expansion and transit subsidies:** Improve connectivity for those displaced away from the LRT by offering

transit subsidies for low-income riders and providing frequent bus routes, ensuring affordable access to core Mississauga.

- **Preservation of existing affordable housing stock:** Enforcing rental replacement bylaws and providing incentives for landlords to maintain affordable rental units — especially in transit-adjacent areas.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A public transit system mostly serves the requirements of disadvantaged populations; hence, it is imperative to engage low-income people in policy decisions and planning process.

Establishing community watchdogs to track trends and encourage inclusive development guarantees their opinions and concerns are heard. If the target is to build an inclusive livable centre for Mississauga, the city should offset the unintended consequences led by market interests by taking proactive measures to build a transit system that strikes a balance between equity and development so guaranteeing the LRT benefits all people.

With these proactive measures, Mississauga can create a transit system that not only links locations but also strengthens ties among individuals from all population groups. This approach will advance inclusive and accessible urban development, transportation equity, and dynamic, livable, and diverse community. 🌐

¹ Metrolinx. Hazel McCallion LRT project map. Retrieved from: <https://www.metrolinx.com/en/projects-and-programs/hazel-mccallion-lrt>

² “Mississauga City Centre Mobility Hub Profile” (PDF). Mobility Hub Profile. Metrolinx. December 2015. Retrieved 25 October 2016.

³ American Public Transportation Association (APTA), *The New Real Estate Mantra: Location Near Public Transportation* (Washington, DC: APTA, 2016).

⁴ Metrolinx. (2015). *Mobility hubs in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area: A progress report*. Toronto: Metrolinx.

⁵ PWC, & Urban Land Institute. (2023). *Emerging trends in real estate 2023*. Washington, DC: PWC and ULI

⁶ Peel Region (2024): <https://census-regionofpeel.hub.arcgis.com>

⁷ Peel Region (2024): <https://census-regionofpeel.hub.arcgis.com>

⁸ Peel Region (2024): <https://census-regionofpeel.hub.arcgis.com>



Suzan Rakha is a Student Member of OPPI and a doctoral researcher specializing in transportation and mobility within the Faculty of Urban Planning at the University of Waterloo. Her research focuses on advancing accessibility, mobility, and inclusion through various research projects.

Planning student projects

Students at Ontario's six accredited planning schools are the future of the profession and the Registered Professional Planners of tomorrow. Here is a look at some of the exciting and progressive projects from future RPPs.



SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

Mobilizing Economic Planning Knowledge for Rural Ontario

Rural economic development planners are at the front line of facilitating prosperous, rural communities, places, and environments across Ontario. This initiative created a series of plain language summaries on innovative approaches to building and maintaining sustainable rural livelihoods in a post-pandemic environment. Graduate students translated knowledge shared at an international rural planning and development conference related to community energy projects, food insecurity, rural housing, economic approaches, and entrepreneurialism. Learn more at <http://ruraldev.ca/connecting-international-research-to-rural-ontario-communities-and-practitioners>.

Program: Rural Planning and Development

Advisor: Ryan Gibson

Students: Damilola Oweyale, Lucas Berek, Christine Miller, Avery Velez, Eliza MacLauchlan, Natasha Pennell



SCHOOL OF URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING, QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY

Pathways to Unity: Assessing the Social Impacts of Auroville on Surrounding Communities

Our project aimed to support Auroville, India in enhancing positive social impacts on surrounding communities while mitigating negative ones. Our team analyzed governance, planning, and development guidelines in Auroville, studying its relationship with neighbouring villages and conducting qualitative assessments to identify its impacts. Engaging with local stakeholders, villagers, and businesses, we explored whether these impacts aligned with Auroville's vision of human unity. Finally, we provided actionable recommendations to promote mutually beneficial outcomes and address future challenges.

Program: International Project Course

Professor: Ajay Agarwal, PhD, RPP

Students: Maeve Beckett, Chloe Bullen, Daniel Frangione, Tara McInnes, Spencer Mulvaney, Caley Savage, Wendy Yang



SCHOOL OF URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING, TORONTO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

Aging in Community in Non-Market Housing: A Toolkit for Non-Profit Housing Providers

Hamilton East Kiwanis Non-Profit Housing Inc. wanted to explore what aging in the right place might look like for their residents and apply it to an in-progress development site in Hamilton. The team did extensive background research in academic/grey literature, focus groups with more than 40 older adults and interviews with municipal/non-profit sector experts to produce principles and recommendations at multiple scales. They created process diagrams of the housing placement/subsidy/downsizing processes and partnership development, then developed potential points of intervention.

Advisor: Samantha Biglieri, PhD, MCIP, RPP

Mentor: Rachel Weldrick, PhD, McMaster University

Client: Brian Sibley, Lisa Cook, Kathy Nagy, Tina Santarelli and Ron Larkin, Hamilton East Kiwanis Non-Profit Homes Inc.

Students: Jonathan Chan, Nicole Gordon, Emily Lim, Julia Pisani, Isabella Suppa, Lilian Thompson



**SCHOOL OF PLANNING, FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENT,
UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO**

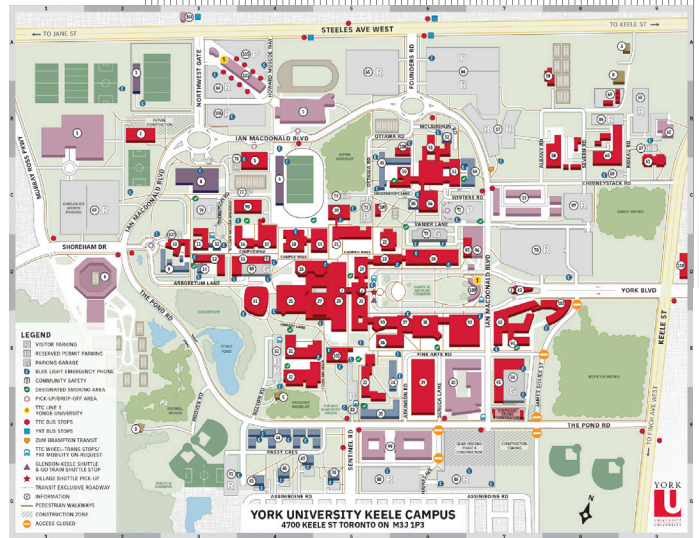
The Play Studio

“Live, work, play” is a shorthand formula for mixed-use communities; yet play is often treated with the least significance. As our communities densify, places to play prove harder to find. When we foreground play and put urban planning and psychology students in the design studio together, what questions and solutions emerge? This studio course explored how young adults use public space for play, resulting in design concepts for sites in Uptown Waterloo and the University of Waterloo campus.

Advisor: Katherine Perrott, PhD, MCIP, RPP

Client: City of Waterloo, Uptown Waterloo BIA

Students: PLAN 313 students in collaboration with PSYCH 363/680 students and Daniela O'Neill, PhD.



FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND URBAN CHANGE, YORK UNIVERSITY

Accessibility Audit of the York University, Keele Campus

In the social model of disability, it is the built environment that has a disabling effect on individuals with impairment. Its inaccessibility limits disabled individuals' access to education, employment, health care, entertainment, political participation, and many other aspects of life. Every year, students in the Transportation Policy and Planning course conduct an accessibility audit of the university campus. Their findings include parts of the exterior paths of travel on campus that are in accordance with the Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines and others that are not. The lesson here is that barriers exist.

Read the full summary of the project on the Planning Exchange Blog at <https://ontarioplanners.ca/blog/planning-exchange>.

Course: Transportation Policy and Planning

Professor: Mahtot Gebresselassie, PhD, Candidate Member of OPPI

Students: Angelica Eccles, Anson Ho, David Martino, David Mejia Monico, Joanna Grace Silva, Luka Sonevski, Maria Clara Ferreira, Nathan Wener, Sara Abbasian, Shannon Harman, Steven Lum, William Russell, and Xinyu Lu.



POLICY

Fixing gridlock in Ontario: Time to think regional

BY ALEX GLISTA



“...the policy objective of giving Ontarians beyond our big cities an option not to drive...”

As Ontario returns to normal post-COVID-19, our gridlock has, unfortunately, also recovered. Our highways and local roads are bogged down with people driving to work, school, sports games, and leisure destinations.

While Ontario is currently undertaking the largest transit build-out in a generation, it is playing catch-up for decades of infrastructure inaction. Our province has seen record population growth, and more people are moving farther from cities like Toronto to afford homes, thus travelling farther for work. This comes at the cost of being farther away from frequent, reliable all-day transit, forcing car use.

The planning profession knows that induced demand — the concept that adding road capacity increases demand for driving, resulting in more traffic — is real. This is especially felt on local roads when an arterial or highway is expanded. It's like connecting a fire hose to a lawn hose — the water backs up and can't flow.

“Ontario’s traffic issues aren’t going to improve unless we take bold action to get people out of cars...”

How do we get Ontarians moving again? It is time to start planning the next generation of transit projects, and we should focus on improving connections between big cities, suburbs, exurbs, and rural areas with an expanded GO Transit regional rail system.

The GO expansion program is already doing some of this work by electrifying existing rail corridors, adding new tracks, and building new stations to support two-way all-day train service every 15 minutes or better in the core of the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area (GTHA). Building on this project, we should expand

this GO regional rail network farther outwards to bring high-quality transit service to additional underserved and growing communities in Southern Ontario to get more people out of cars.

Ontario’s small towns and suburban communities beyond the core GTHA are growing quickly. Delivering regional rail to communities while they are growing, not after, is an opportunity to directly tie transit to land use by building vertically near stations, supporting walkability, and reducing car dependency. These new rail corridors can act as “transit spines,” being fed by local transit services and an expanded GO bus network, bringing riders from smaller communities to rapid, reliable rail service.

While freight rail ownership has often been an impediment to expanding GO, it is a solvable obstacle. Building dedicated passenger tracks beside freight rails is one solution and can be achieved for millions per kilometre, not billions like other transit projects. Ontario could also emulate other jurisdictions by upgrading under-used railways and could explore re-activating abandoned rail lines where the linear corridor remains intact.

While regional rail beyond the GTHA may not yield the same ridership as a downtown Toronto subway, it does achieve the policy objective of giving Ontarians beyond our big cities an option not to drive, which means fewer cars on highways and local roads. It also means urbanites, who increasingly don’t own cars, can visit communities farther away without driving. Regional rail can also be delivered relatively cost effectively and bring high-quality transit to many Ontarians who don’t have access to it now.

Ontario’s traffic issues aren’t going to improve unless we take bold action to get people out of cars, and an expanded GO Transit regional rail system is an effective way to get our province moving again. 

Alex Glista is a Manager at StrategyCorp, specializing in land and infrastructure development. He is a Master of Planning graduate from Dalhousie University and has a keen professional and personal interest in how enhanced public transportation can shape our communities for the better.

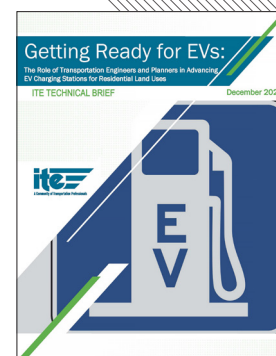
ELECTRIC VEHICLES: ARE YOU READY?

Electric vehicles (EVs) are transforming transportation, and communities everywhere need to be ready. The Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) is an international membership association of transportation professionals who work to improve mobility and safety for all transportation system users and help build smart, livable communities.

In December 2024, ITE published *Getting Ready for Electric Vehicles: The Role of Transportation Engineers and Planners in Advancing EV Charging Stations for Residential Land Uses*. This technical brief offers essential guidance for integrating EV charging into residential areas. With over 80 per cent of EV charging occurring at home, the brief outlines strategies for equipping single-family and multi-family developments with charging infrastructure.

Transportation engineers and planners will gain practical advice on challenges such as retrofitting buildings, securing funding, and ensuring equitable access. The brief also highlights innovative solutions, including partnerships with third-party providers, load management optimization, and EV-readiness requirements in building codes.

The brief is free for ITE members and \$25 for non-members and can be downloaded from www.ite.org/technical-resources/resources. A number of other transportation planning-related resources have been released by ITE and may be of interest.



KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL CONSULTING CAREER

Peter Homenuck, MA, MCP, PhD, and an RPP for more than 40 years, has gathered highlights from his long career as a planning consultant and professor of planning and geography in his soon-to-be published book: *Keys to a Successful Consulting Career: True Stories from the Field*.

In conjunction with his academic career, Homenuck was involved in writing more than 1,500 planning proposals and completed about 800 projects across Canada and the United States. His goal in publishing this book is to help others manage their careers through stories of his own successes — and stumbles.

“I’ve had experiences that may be helpful to others, and if that stops them from making a mistake I made, then so much the better,” he says.

In particular, he looks at the social aspects of planning work — communication and community involvement — noting that as long as a client isn’t pushing you to do something unprofessional, you have to fit in.

“They all have values they hold dear whether you agree with them or not, and if you’re working for them, you have to follow suit.”

Homenuck adds that communication is always best face to face, in part so you can pick up on the nonverbal communication, something easily missed in a Zoom or Teams meeting.

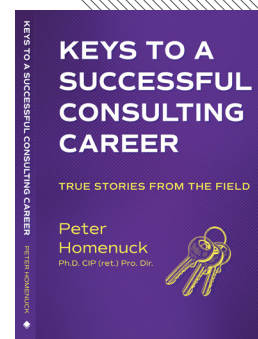
“Knowing how to react and treat people is really very important,” he says.

“I am trying to get people to recognize that the way you handle yourself is as important as substantive knowledge.”

Homenuck says there are social, psychological, and financial costs and benefits to consulting as there are in most professions.

“It comes down to what you feel good doing and what you are good at doing.”

Keys to a Successful Consulting Career: True Stories from the Field is being published by Friesen Press and is slated for release in spring 2025.



About the Complaints Committee: 2024 Recap

BY RYAN DES ROCHES

2024

New complaints in calendar year	7
Nature of complaints received in calendar year ³	• Alleged violation of Section 1 of the Professional Code of Practice: 6 • Alleged violation of Section 2 of the Professional Code of Practice: 5 • Alleged violation of Section 3 of the Professional Code of Practice: 4
Ongoing complaints made in previous calendar year	3
Complaints disposed of by Complaints Committee in calendar year	3 (resolved without a referral to the Discipline Committee)
Complaints carried over to next calendar year	4
Complaints from calendar year that were dismissed without investigation	1
Complaints from calendar year that were investigated	6
Average length of time per complaint in calendar year	5 months
Average length of time to reach a decision on complaint with no investigation	6 months
Number of Complaints Committee meetings in calendar year	11

¹ OPPI Professional Code of Practice: <https://ontarioplanners.ca/oppi/about-oppi/professional-code-of-practice-standards>

² OPPI Complaints and Discipline Provisions: <https://ontarioplanners.ca/getattachment/OPPI/About-OPPI/OPPI-Complaints-and-Discipline-Process/Complaints-and-Discipline-Provisions.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US>

³ Note that a single complaint may make allegations under more than one section of the Professional Code of Practice.

⁴ Complaints and Discipline page: <https://ontarioplanners.ca/oppi/about-oppi/oppi-complaints-and-discipline-process>

OPPI is responsible for regulating and governing the conduct of its members in the practice of their profession. As such, it has prescribed the Professional Code of Practice which forms the basis of planning practice by members and must be adhered to by all Candidate and Full members.¹ This Code is enforceable through the Institute's Complaints and Discipline Provisions.² Members of the public (including other OPPI members) may file professional practice complaints about OPPI Candidate and Full members.

All complaints go to OPPI's Complaints Committee, which is its complaint screening body. The Complaints Committee is responsible for assessing, reviewing and responding to every complaint. Complaints that do not meet a minimum threshold of "information that the member may have breached the Professional Code of Practice" are dismissed without an investigation. All other complaints are investigated.

Following an investigation, the Complaints Committee has several options for disposing of a complaint. It can take no action, refer the matter to the Discipline Committee for adjudication, issue a caution or take some other appropriate action. The Complaints Committee is not an adjudicative body and cannot make findings of professional misconduct or order penalties. Those outcomes can only take place after a full hearing by the Discipline Committee.

This year, OPPI has decided to share in *Y Magazine* statistical data related to the treatment of complaints in the prior calendar year. The data concerns complaints that were received and reviewed by the Complaints Committee.

In 2024, there were seven fewer complaints against members as compared to 2023.

OPPI encourages its members to review the Code on a regular basis and to have conversations with colleagues and peers about what constitutes ethical practice in order to further mitigate the likelihood of complaints.

For more information on OPPI's Complaints & Discipline Process, please consult the Complaints and Discipline page of the OPPI website⁴ or contact the Institute's Registrar at registrar@ontarioplanners.ca.



Ryan Des Roches, CO, OCF, is OPPI's Registrar and Director, Special Projects



With more than 30 years of experience in the transportation and land use planning fields, Dave McLaughlin, MCIP, RPP, is one of WSP's leading national urban mobility and complete street specialists and is often involved in projects from the planning and approval stage through functional and detailed design.

Registered Professional Planner

PROFILE

NAME:

Dave McLaughlin, MCIP, RPP

LOCATION:

Thornhill, Ontario

POSITION:

Principal and Senior Director of Planning, and National Active Transportation and Complete Streets Practice Lead with WSP Canada Inc.

Dave provides planning, design and advisory services and technical support to all levels of government, agencies, and many of the firm's multi-disciplinary teams for active transportation, complete street, vision zero, cycling, trail, transit integration, and multi-modal transportation assignments across Canada.

In addition to his memberships with OPPI and CIP, Dave is a member of the Board of the Ontario Traffic Council (OTC), co-chair of OTC's Active Transportation Committee, a member of the Institute of Transportation Engineers, a member of the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals, and on the Board of Directors of the Share the Road Cycling Coalition. He was recently appointed by Town of Aurora Council to its Active Transportation and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee.

Dave is also a co-author of several Complete Street Design Guideline manuals, including the award-winning London (2019) and Hamilton (2022) Complete Street Design Guidelines, as well as the Ontario Provincial Bikeway Design Guidelines, Ontario Traffic Manual Book 18: Cycling Facilities (2013 and 2021 editions), and the Ontario Protected Intersection Design Guide (2023).

In addition to his contributions to numerous municipal integrated transportation master

plans and active transportation, cycling and trail master plans across Canada, Dave has delivered conference presentations and co-authored a number of articles and papers, including one on e-bikes, e-scooters and micro-mobility.

What inspired you to become a planner? At what point did you focus your work on transportation and complete streets?

My career path towards becoming a planner began when I entered my final year of an undergraduate program in political science and urban studies at York University. I recall reflecting at the time on what engaged and excited me at university (beyond working at a campus pub), and urban planning and transportation planning emerged as a strong contender, though I confess I also was thinking about law school.

I chose to pursue my interest in planning through a two-year Master's in Environmental Studies program that focused on transportation planning and urban design. As part of this program, I benefited from some great university and employer mentors. I participated as a student intern at the Royal Commission on the Future of Toronto's Waterfront, led by past Toronto Mayor David Crombie. Following that, I was lucky enough to get a co-op placement in the Transportation Planning Group at Marshall Macklin Monaghan Limited (now WSP Canada Inc.) for a summer term.

Upon graduation I was hired on contract to support the Ontario Royal Commission on Planning and Development Reform for a year (sometimes referred to as the Sewell Commission named after another former Mayor of Toronto, John Sewell). These experiences confirmed my interest in pursuing a career in planning and in the private sector. I never looked back and as I moved forward early on in my career, I obtained my first full-time job at Marshall Macklin Monaghan Limited (MMM) and, with their support, encouragement, and mentorship, I was able to gain and apply my knowledge and experience in active transportation, complete streets, and place making. In 2001, I received my RPP accreditation and formally became a Registered Professional Planner.

Transportation is one of the hottest topics in Ontario right now. Can you comment on what is happening?

Cities are complex and rely, among other things, on efficient transportation systems and infrastructure to be healthy and successful. When these transportation systems begin to break down because of increasing demand and inadequate planning, frustration on the part of residents, visitors, and business owners boils to the surface and discontent grows.

So how did we get here and how can we address this discontent?

If one views a city as a living organism, then transportation systems and infrastructure are the life blood and arteries that serve to connect people with their communities and support goods movement and commerce. Like a healthy body, a healthy city needs good flows and connectivity. The challenge is that as our cities grow, especially vertically, more demand is placed on our traditional transportation systems. As the opportunity to expand these systems become more challenging and costly, we need to re-evaluate or, better yet, reimagine how we all move. We also need strong political leadership and annual long-term investment in multi-modal solutions.

Our cities and towns are always evolving and changing and, more often than not, growing in population. As change occurs, policies, plans, and supporting infrastructure must also adapt and evolve to meet the needs of our future communities and the demands of its residents and business communities. This includes managing change in a way that strives to make our cities more livable and sustainable while acknowledging and respecting Indigenous history, land treaties, and the importance of reconciliation and improving relationships with Indigenous peoples.

It also includes improving the efficiency of how we inhabit and develop land and mitigate or minimize the negative impacts to the air, land, waterways, and environment that come with this urban growth. One of the challenges we are all seeing and experiencing is that our transportation systems are not diversified enough, nor are they meeting demand in their current form. As a result, over the last few decades, congestion on both our roads and our transit systems has grown and is restricting the flow of people and goods and negatively impacting the health of our cities.

So, what is the solution to this very complex situation? I do not believe there is a one “fix it all” answer, but the following are some

ideas that, although not new, I suspect may resonate with many reading this article:

- Avoid the addition of more automobile lanes on roads leading in and out of the core of our cities as the internal city street and intersection network in most cities cannot accommodate many more cars except during overnight hours. Accommodating more automobiles to enter a city core will only worsen congestion.
- Invest much more in higher order urban public transit and mobility hubs. We are seeing this underway now in the GTA, Waterloo Region, and Ottawa and when these transit corridors come online, they should have a meaningful impact on reducing current congestion along some corridors and improving transportation equity.
- Expand the frequency and capacity of regional commuter rail service e.g. GO Trains in the GTHA, Waterloo, and Niagara Regions — again these investments are now underway but should have happened a decade ago.
- Repurpose roadway / right-of-way space where feasible to provide a network of connected and dedicated pedestrian and cycling infrastructure throughout the city. This needs to include direct connections to transit and mobility hubs and major residential and commercial nodes.
- Implement and market an integrated suite of transportation demand management (TDM) programs, services, and incentives such as offering more flexibility in daily work hours, hybrid work arrangements, improving the efficiency of mobility as a service (MaaS), and expanding car-share capacity.
- Encourage, if not require, overnight delivery by smaller trucks from suburban goods distribution hubs into our cities. This is one part of the solution that would make more efficient use of available road capacity. Expanding, repurposing part of, or building new regional highways on the periphery of our cities may improve goods movement between cities and to outer edge suburban distribution hubs, but how do these goods then get into the core of our cities without adding to congestion?
- Implement smart mobility technologies to improve travel flow and efficiency for all travel modes and to support transportation systems that serve all users.
- Explore and pilot congestion pricing to reduce traffic congestion in the core of some of our largest cities.
- Improve the frequency of regional rail service and implement high speed rail between our major cities.
- Develop or expand and subsidize municipal bike-share systems (similar to public transit) and integrate these bike-share systems with public transit systems.
- Implement, market, and provide incentives to purchase personal micro-mobility devices, such as e-bikes, to support transportation equity and reduce reliance on single-occupant automobile use, especially for inner city trips.
- Encourage small goods delivery / courier service in our city cores via micro-mobility type as well as explore the use of automated micro-utility devices / robots that could serve a variety of functions from delivery to EV charging to enforcement.

All levels of government, especially provincial and municipal governments, need to be more proactive in transportation planning and investing in transportation systems, as well as the infrastructure to support multi-modal travel and urban planning solutions in both the short and long terms to support the health of our cities.

**What are the most common objections to complete streets?
How do you get around the objections?**

Diversity in urban street design can be important to residents and businesses to help distinguish a street or section of street as part of a local neighbourhood and to celebrate its local history e.g. Greektown, Chinatown, or Little Italy. This adds to the charm and vibrancy that is characterized by the community along the street.

Challenges that often emerge when seeking changes to “improve” a street when it comes up for reconstruction or rehabilitation often include loss of some parking, widening of sidewalks, loss of existing trees, addition of dedicated bike lanes, removal of one or more travel lanes, addition of a pedestrian crossing and/or traffic signal, introduction or removal of loading zones or accessible parking spaces, accommodating space for streetscape design/public art and other features. Engaging area residents and business owners and the local BIA (business improvement association) if one exists and sharing information early on and requesting their input into the planning and design process is key.

“Engagement and consultation need to be authentic and not simply a step in the approval process.”

Engagement and consultation need to be authentic and not simply a step in the approval process. People who live, shop, or work on most streets in any city will value and feel ownership of “their” street and sometimes change is not welcomed or understood. The ultimate solution recommended should be one that incorporates, where feasible, input from the local community. This often means a change to the initial concept presented to the community. It may not accommodate all of the design changes requested by those who participated, but it is an outcome of a planning and design process that sought local community input and strove for consensus on a final design solution. Process is important and should never be overlooked. Most complete street projects that follow this process will result in modifications to the initial design concept.

Where do e-bikes, e-scooters, and micro-mobility fit into the picture?

Micro-mobility is increasingly becoming a key component of a city’s multi-modal transportation system, and I suspect will become even more important in the not-so-distant future. Whether it be the rapidly growing use of e-bikes, use of e-cargo micro-mobility vehicles by courier companies, or the growing use of e-scooters in those municipalities that have selected to pilot them in Ontario, they provide transportation choices that for some are more affordable and more practical.

As with all innovative technology, there will be issues that emerge. An example of this is the small risk of fire from lithium batteries that power these devices. Municipal transit organizations, such as the TTC in Toronto, need to assess and balance this risk with other goals. That said, I expect technology will only improve and micro-mobility devices, especially the sale and use of e-bikes, will continue to grow in the coming years (by the way, I love my e-bike). Cities with existing and planned dedicated cycling networks will likely see the greatest growth in micro-mobility devices as most of these devices can utilize cycling infrastructure for travel.

The reality is that living and working in a city is expensive and many people, especially younger generations, are increasingly making decisions to live and work within walking or biking distance to public transit and pedestrian and cycling networks so as not to incur the cost of owning or maintaining a car. The good news is that as more people bike, take public transit, and utilize micro-mobility devices, they will not be in cars or adding to motor-vehicle congestion in our cities.

Which cities worldwide would you consider the “gold standard” for transportation and mobility?

I think most people who have the opportunity to visit cities in the Netherlands like Amsterdam, Copenhagen in Denmark, Münster in Germany, or more recently Paris, France, will comment on how most of these cities have implemented mobility strategies that work well and mitigate congestion to some degree. That is not to say they do not experience congestion during peak hours or events, but their adoption of a truly integrated rail, transit, cycling, and pedestrian scale transportation system is an example to cities around the world, including in Canada, on what can be done with the right political leadership and infrastructure investment priorities.

Where should municipalities be focusing their efforts with transportation and mobility?

Municipalities should focus on developing integrated transportation master plans that focus on making the most efficient use of their existing street and area highway infrastructure, while focusing future investments more on transit, cycling, and pedestrian networks. This is not a “war on the car” strategy, rather it recognizes cars will likely be a primary mode of transportation for many generations to come, but that car ownership and frequency of use can be significantly reduced by investments in convenient and accessible public transit, pedestrian, and cycling infrastructure. Encouraging more people to select other modes of travel to the automobile, especially within our major cities, will reduce the growth in automobile traffic and could have one of the biggest impacts on mitigating some of the congestion issues cities are facing resulting from motor vehicle use.

Do you have a message for other RPPs and up-and-coming planners?

Planners need to be bold, advocate for the public interest and the principles of good planning and design, collaborate effectively with other design professionals, and serve as change makers not gate keepers. (V)

ACTION: 2025 CIP & OPPI NATIONAL PLANNING CONFERENCE

The year 2025 stands as a pivotal moment in history. It represents five years since the COVID-19 pandemic, 10 years since the 94 calls to action were issued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the quarter mark of the 21st century. The world has undergone profound changes in just a few years, transforming the planning profession along with it.

From July 8 to 10, OPPI and the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) are hosting a joint conference at the Westin Harbour Castle Convention Centre in Toronto. Professional planners from across the country will come together to reinvigorate our profession with fresh ideas, innovative tools, cutting-edge research, and a renewed sense of compassion and determination.

Find all the conference details, including registration, speakers, and partnership opportunities, at www.ontarioplanners.ca/conference-2025.

RECAP: 2024 ADAPTATION TRANSFORMATION CONFERENCE

OPPI's 2024 Adaptation Transformation conference, which was held from September 25 to 27 at the Hamilton Conference Centre, brought together more than 1,800 delegates in-person and virtually.

In addition to the 258 speakers presenting in sessions and on panels, attendees participated in guided excursions, such as the West Harbour Walking Tour and the Hamilton Rising Walking Tour, browsed the Marketplace, and enjoyed a variety of networking opportunities. The conference highlight was the sold-out PlanON Awards Soiree.

OPPI staff and Council would like to thank all attendees who joined us in person in Hamilton and virtually for making it such a success. We look forward to seeing you in Toronto for ACTION 2025, the joint OPPI and CIP conference from July 8 to 10, 2025.

OPPI 2025 STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

Today's planning students are tomorrow's RPPs. To encourage and support future planners, OPPI provides student members with scholarship opportunities that award excellence and community contributions. Here are the scholarships for 2025.

The Ronald M. Keeble Undergraduate Scholarship (up to \$3,500) assists in furthering planning education and recognizing undergraduate student members who are making contributions to their communities.

The Gerald Carrothers Graduate Scholarship (up to \$3,500) assists in furthering planning education and recognizing graduate student members who are making contributions to their communities.

The OPPI Opportunity Scholarship (up to \$5,000) acknowledges the financial barriers to education that disproportionately affect Black, Indigenous, and other racialized people. This scholarship may be awarded to an Indigenous, Black, or other racially marginalized person currently enrolled in an accredited undergraduate or graduate planning program in Ontario.

The application period for scholarships is open until May 1, 2025. Recipients will be announced in August 2025. Find more information, including application forms and eligibility requirements, at www.ontarioplanners.ca/scholarships.

2025 PLANON AWARDS: SUBMISSIONS OPEN IN APRIL

In 2024, 13 PlanON Awards in seven categories were presented at OPPI's conference in Hamilton, including the Project of the Year and Vision Award of Excellence, both of which were awarded to Kitchener's Growing Together project team.

This awards program celebrates the work of OPPI members at every career stage and recognizes the important role the planning profession plays in shaping the quality, livability, and sustainability of communities for future generations. The submission period opens mid-April and award recipients will be celebrated at the PlanON Awards ceremony in September.

Details on the categories, as well as eligibility and submission requirements, are available at www.ontarioplanners.ca/PlanON.



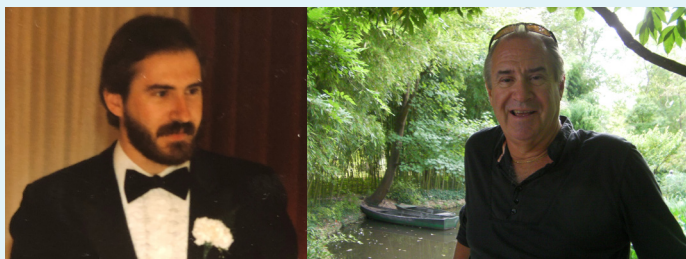


RETIRED RPP SPOTLIGHT DAVID A. BUTLER, MCIP, RPP (RETIRED)

After 50 years of practice as a planner, including 40 years running his own company, David Butler has retired.

David's long, successful planning career started when he graduated in 1974 from the School of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Waterloo.

"I think we were the third or fourth class to come out of that program, which started in the late 1960s," he says. "And in that class, there were some pretty significant folks. A lot of important planners that have been part of that program."



After graduation, David was working within a week at the Region of Peel as a junior planner in the policy division, preparing background studies for a new official plan.

"The province had just created all the regions around Toronto, and so there was all kinds of planning work," he says.

In 1977, he joined the former Borough of Etobicoke as principal planner in the policy and research division, where he initiated studies on the Etobicoke City Centre and Metroplan. Then, in 1984, "at the ripe old age of 32" and with the complete support of his wife Barb as part of a "strategic plan," David launched his own planning practice, The Butler Group Consultants Inc.

"I had had enough of the bureaucratic world and wanted to be more fully engaged as a planner," he says. "I wanted the independence and excitement of risk taking and personal freedom."

Among his many career highlights, the South Etobicoke Overview Study stands out. It involved working out a compromise planning

process that was agreed to by all levels of government. Another point of career pride is the work he did over the years with the Ontario Municipal Board — now the Ontario Land Tribunal — and municipalities on various mediation efforts, including Mimico GO station redevelopment, City of Toronto neighbourhood and apartment policies, and numerous site-specific developments, including the Humbertown Plaza redevelopment that received an award from OPPI. David also assisted the Region of York in formulating their 2010 and 2023 official plans, including mediation and an Ontario Municipal Board hearing in Markham in 2013.

David's involvement with CIP goes back to the beginning of his career and includes a stint on the executive of the Central Ontario Chapter from 1984–85. Significantly, he was part of the team that negotiated and ultimately created OPPI.

"That was a career highlight," he says. "I served on the initial OPPI Executive from 1985–87. I have watched the growth of OPPI into a significant force within CIP and Canada as a professional planning body. Short of licensing, the RPP designation is a necessary and practical requirement to be known as a professional planner and practice in Ontario."

David received an award of merit for his contribution to OPPI.

Although he is still feeling his way through the initial stages of retirement, he intends to continue with OPPI by assisting with OPPI committees and mentoring, something he has tried to do throughout his practice. He is particularly interested in mentoring in skills such as negotiation, presentation, group problem-solving, and a planner's ethical role in the profession.

"I strongly recommend that new planners actively participate in OPPI and as many group functions as possible," he says. "You can learn a lot from your planning peers."

His message for membership is to support OPPI in any way that you can and be cautious with information.

"In these turbulent times, planners should be doing everything possible to ensure proper dissemination of information, use of appropriate technology, and provide leadership and guidance to our communities," he says.

NEW RPP SPOTLIGHT ANSON WONG, MCIP, RPP

For new RPP Anson Wong, the draw to the planning profession was its diversity of disciplines and perspectives and how they intersect.

“Planning is a really interesting mix of various disciplines – involving technical disciplines like engineering and infrastructure but also being able to explore areas such as sustainability, economics, sociology, or geography,” he says. “And I think that’s what really drew me to the field. It was giving myself the opportunity to work with different disciplines and understand various facets and how they all interact.”

He considers himself fortunate to have had a very good geography teacher in high school.

“He was a fantastic mentor and teacher, and he really sparked my interest and fostered my interest in geography, which ultimately extended to things like urbanism, how cities grow and develop, and the socioeconomic issues relating to urban development.”

Anson graduated in 2020 from the University of Waterloo, where the co-op program led to a series of planning jobs, starting with engineering assistant with the Regional Municipality of York.

“It was an interesting experience because being my first planning-related job, I really didn’t know what to expect and it being my first co-op term couldn’t really be too picky either,” he laughs. “It was interesting in the sense that I worked with a lot of engineers rather than people who came from a planning background or education, and I don’t think I realized until later how differently the two fields function yet how interconnected they are. It was a really insightful experience and I’m very thankful and grateful that I had the chance to do it.”

His next co-op position was with Mattamy Homes, large private developer, where he was working on land development — a very different experience in terms of scope. For the third co-op, he was back with Mattamy Homes but in a completely different role.

“It was more of a research-focused role, where I was researching innovative building materials and building practices. I also had a chance to work on and explore smart home technologies and other sustainability measures such as geothermal technologies that could be integrated into their products and new developments.”

Anson’s fourth and fifth combined co-op term placed him with the team he works with now as a transportation planner in Sustainable



Transportation and Urban Design with the Regional Municipality of York.

“It’s been an interesting journey and I’m very grateful for where I am now,” he says.

One of the key reasons he enjoys transportation planning is the nature of the projects.

“I love seeing projects from start to finish,” he says. “I’ve had the opportunity to work on projects starting in the planning phase, through to the design, delivery and construction phases. One of my favourite parts of working on the active and sustainable transportation projects is that they’re typically a little bit smaller scale and more agile than some of the larger urbanizing and widening projects that happens at the region.”

In addition to transportation being an area his strengths lean into, there are other boxes these projects tick for him.

“You really get to take ownership of projects, and I enjoy that they involve a lot of stakeholders and a lot of coordination,” he says.

As for RPP certification, Anson says that while it is almost essential as a career stepping stone, the process has even deeper meaning.

“It is something you should really take your time with and find value in,” he says. “There are lots of readings and lots of ways that you can reflect on your approach to planning or how you can grow and evolve your perspective around planning. I think it is important to understand how your experience and perspectives are going to be affected and changed during the RPP process.”

Choosing your mentor is a crucial step in the process, he adds.

“The time spent with my mentor was extremely valuable, as it helped me deepen my understanding of different areas in planning and discuss the developments and ongoing changes in the planning realm. The mentorship process also gave me an opportunity to reflect on my experiences and better understand and learn from what other people have been through as well during their planning career. I think those opportunities and experiences are why I wouldn’t necessarily rush through the process.”

Take your time, do the work, engage with your mentor, reflect on your experiences, and get as much value out of the RPP certification process as you can.

“It’s definitely worth your while,” he says.

OPPI'S NEWEST RPPS

Each year, OPPI is pleased to welcome new Registered Professional Planners (RPPs) as Full members. In 2024, 97 individuals passed their examinations and received their RPP designation. Welcome and congratulations to you all! We applaud your achievement, dedication, and commitment.

Elnaz Abotalebi, City of Vaughan
Alexander Adams, Wood Bull LLP
Iftekhar Ahmad, Credit Valley Conservation Authority
Sana Ahmed, Pinemount Developments Ltd.
Mitchell Baker, UP Consulting
Graham Barrett, Bousfields Inc.
Alexis Beale, Weston Williamson + Partners
Ruth Belay, City of Toronto
Kristina Brcic, Town of LaSalle
Narisha Erica Calder, Region of Waterloo, Community Planning
Marilyn Cameron, J L Richards & Associates
Diana Chang, City of Toronto
Aaron Chau, City of Markham
Wendy Chen, Town of Milton
Ian Clendening, City of Kingston
Aaron Clodd, Dream Unlimited
Victoria Colantonio, Urban in Mind, Professional Urban Planning, Land Development & CPTED Consultants
Shayne Connors, MHBC Planning
Christopher Conti, EcoVue Consulting
Noel Cubacub, City of Brampton, Planning & Development Services Department
Michelle Cuomo, The Firelight Group
Ben Daub, LHC Heritage Planning & Archaeology Inc.
Emma De Melo, Township of Muskoka Lakes
Thomas Dysart, Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury
Andrew Edwards, Town of Pelham
Dale Egan, RFA Planning Consultant
Tim Eisner, JFSA Canada Inc.
Rebecca Elphick, J.L. Richards & Associates
Dan Eylon, ERA Architects Inc.
Jillian Fazio, City of Thunder Bay
Thomas Fehr, Township of Rideau Lakes
Eric Forhan, City of Ottawa
Kate-Issima Francin, National Capital Commission
Adam Fraser, Region of Waterloo Grand River Transit

Robert Freedman, Freedman Urban Solutions LTD. (FUSL)

Thomas Freeman, Fotenn Planning + Design
Alexander Gatien, City of Ottawa
Sarah Giacomantonio, WSP
Dafne Gokcen, Innovative Planning Solutions
Fadwa Hamdan, McIntosh Perry
Arya Hejazi, County of Peterborough
Erika Hennebury, City of Toronto
Jeff Henry, Arcadis Canada
Kate Hill-Montague, City of Burlington, Community Planning Department
Becky Hillyer, Grey County
Keziah Holden, County of Peterborough
Matthew Howatt, Halton Region Conservation Authority
Saadia Jamil, WSP Canada Inc
Anthony Jas, Municipality of Chatham-Kent
Ashlyn Kennedy, EcoVue Consulting Services Inc.
Anthony Lalingo, Regional Municipality of York, Economic and Development Services
Matthew LeBlanc, Urban Solutions Planning & Land Development Consultants Inc.
Laura Lee, City of Waterloo
Raymond Lee, Arcadis Professional Services (Canada) Inc.
Titus Lee, RFA Planning Consultant Inc.
Ting Wai Leung, 1000199122 Ontario Ltd.
Kristin Lillyman, Dillon Consulting
Deborah-Ann Liske, Township of Springwater
Richard Martin, Town of Caledon
Brady McGlade, Township of Drummond/North Elmsley
Robyn McIntyre, MHBC Planning Ltd.
Jesse McPhail, Re:Public Urbanism
Patrycia Menko, Region of Peel
Andy Tsz Wai Mok, Mainline Planning Services Inc.
Lucas Mollame, City of Guelph
Vaishnan Muhunthan, City of Oshawa
Holly Newitt, FOTENN Planning + Design
Jessica Nguyen, Perkins & Will
Jean-François Obregón, The Urban Hulk
Sarah Ovens, City of Toronto
Andrew Payne, Corporation of the Municipality of Grey Highlands
Steven Pham, Weston Consulting
Matt Rapke, Wilson Developments
Ricardo Razao, Region of Peel, Public Works (Planning and Development Services)
Hugo Rincon, Corporation of the Town of Milton

Benito Russo, County of Bruce
Liam Ryan, AECOM
David Sasaki, University of Toronto
Darya Sauchanka, Spire Consulting
Genevieve Scott, Cuesta Planning Consultants Inc.
Kenneth Scullion, Municipality of Port Hope
Adam Shipowick, Borden Ladner Gervais LLP
Jillian Simpson, FOTENN Planning + Design
Emily Stanley, Bessant Pelech Associates Inc. (BPAinc)
Holly Stemberger, GEI Consultants
Karla Tamayo, Bousfields Inc.
Rui Tong, City of Guelph
Diana Tse, WSP Canada Inc.
Justin Tso, Metrolinx
MacKenzie Van Horn, Tulloch
Miranda Virginillo, Novatech
King Wo Wan, City of Toronto
Danielle Waters, Township of Clearview
Colin Westerhof, Town of Oakville
Tomasz Wierzba, Town of Midland
Anson Wong, Regional Municipality of York
Haydi Wong, York Region

Information correct according to our records as of Feb 13, 2025.

A CAREER WITH A FUTURE

Informed, inspired decisions don't just happen — they are the result of careful analysis and information gathering that bring a diversity of perspectives to the table. Good decisions come with actionable, realistic paths forward and lead to a sustainable future. Providing this supported guidance is what RPPs are educated to do.

RPPs work in government, private practice, universities, and not-for-profit agencies in the fields of urban and rural development, community design, environmental planning, transportation, health, social services, heritage conservation, housing, and economic development. It's an in-demand profession with a future — and for a better future.

**LEARN MORE AT
WWW.ONTARIOPLANNERS.CA**

Contributors

Decisions about how to move people and products efficiently around the province are about far, far more than just vehicles. Planners understand all the angles and work to ensure the best solutions for Ontario communities, now and into the future. Here, three contributors to this issue of *Y Magazine* offer their perspectives on where they are seeing progress with transportation and mobility and where they would like to see more attention.



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Armi De Francia, MCIP, RPP
ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION COORDINATOR
AT THE TOWN OF AJAX



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Aaron Baxter, MCIP, RPP
FOUNDER AND CHIEF NERD
AT BAXTER ANALYTICS



Page 32

Megan Salvucci, MCIP, RPP
SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER
AT THE CITY OF HAMILTON

For me, major signs of progress are the increases in the number of municipalities adopting plans and policies supporting active transportation, providing direction for investing in active transportation infrastructure and other initiatives. Research and interdisciplinary collaboration advancing the mobility equity discourse is creating an increased understanding of how our planning and transportation systems contributed to colonialism and systems of oppression.

Mobility is more than the built environment. We also need a cultural shift towards expanding our mobility options and building a collective understanding of the costs, risks, and harm from forced car dependency. This involves collaborating with community leaders and supporting community-level initiatives — especially those led by equity-seeking groups — that use active transportation and e-mobility as tools for social cohesion, belonging, and freedom.

I was recently very inspired when introduced to the concept of “Complete Networks,” which is beginning to be applied in Canada and is rooted in the principles of the Dutch sustainable safety approach. I have grown familiar with the term “Complete Streets,” where we design streets that serve multiple modes and the multiple overlapping social, environmental, and transportation needs of a healthy community. But an excellent node on its own is nothing without all the various pathways that connect them.

Complete Networks categorize streets based on their primary function and prioritize separating modes based on their function and traffic speed/volume to minimize conflicts between users. Let’s move beyond Complete Streets and connect them all with Complete Networks!

From my perspective, an area that has experienced significant progress is the development of tools to quantitatively assess the needs of transportation modes beyond personal vehicles. Tools such as a multi-modal level-of-service analysis now ensure that walking, cycling, and taking transit are considered and analyzed to the same extent as vehicular facilities. Thorough consideration of all modes improves safety and accessibility for all road users.

In the future, I would like to see more attention given to incorporating equity into transportation system planning. Planners are typically aware of the demographics for their project area, but there is currently no standard practice to directly tie demographic data into transportation investments or to quantitatively assess equitable benefits that come from transportation infrastructure.



Be ready for the future: Get a Registered Professional Planner on your team

Major issues such as climate change, aging populations, and the implementation of artificial intelligence show no signs of stopping — and they affect every sector. The only way to be ready for inevitable change is with sound planning. Hiring a Registered Professional Planner (RPP) is a pivotal step in building actionable plans in preparation for the future.

Ontario's RPPs gather and analyze information from every side of an issue and provide the critical unbiased perspective and expertise necessary to help guide the crucial decision making that will shape the future of our communities. The more than 4,000 members of OPPI work in government, private practice, universities, and not-for-profit agencies in the fields of urban and rural development, community design, environmental

planning, transportation, health, social services, heritage conservation, housing, and economic development.

RPPs are the only professionals with the experience and specialized skill set required to fill the very specific role and title of Planner. RPPs who are certified by OPPI have met rigorous entry-to-practice standards and follow the Professional Code of Practice.

Find the RPP who meets your exact needs in OPPI's Consultant Directory at [**ontarioplanners.ca/hire-an-rpp**](https://ontarioplanners.ca/hire-an-rpp).

action

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