

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] London sidewalk policy

Please include this note on the agenda for the March 23rd council meeting.

Dear City Council,

I learned with dismay of the City Works Committee's decision to continue to enforce London's unfortunate policy of including new sidewalks with every road project.

I read the text of the presentation from the chair of the city's Accessibility Advisory Committee, and while it sounds like he made an impassioned speech about ableism, inclusivity, and barriers, it appears that he failed to explain how ableism applies, how disabled community members are being excluded from the already safe streets, and what barriers to accessibility are being removed by confining street users of all abilities to a narrow, bumpy band of real estate next to the main road. In fact, the committee heard from more than one wheelchair user who pointed out why such a structure is a poor alternative to a safe, well-paved roadway. My own wife has a history of limited mobility due to multiple joint problems, and like most other people, she finds London sidewalks to be a distant second-best option in good weather, and utterly unusable in the winter.

As for safety considerations, it is a well-understood phenomenon among traffic engineers that drivers respond to visual cues in the environment, and alter their behaviour accordingly. By removing mature boulevard trees and expanding the visual space, and placing a separated space for pedestrians next to the main roadway, the average driving speed on these streets will undoubtedly increase, making the street and surrounding neighbourhood **less safe, not more safe**. Pedestrians, disabled and otherwise, will then have the unenviable choice between the narrow, bumpy path, and the smoother and wider, but now more dangerous roadway.

This policy will **not** make London's streets safer, but it will serve to cement the supremacy of the automobile in London's neighbourhoods for decades to come, and London will be poorer because of it. I urge you to abandon this misguided policy, and return to considering the safety and accessibility implications of each road works project on its own merits.

Thanks for your time and consideration,  
Mike Cole  
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