

Concerns with the Draft Masonville Secondary Plan

Vision and Principles

We greatly appreciate the Vision and Principles underpinning the draft Masonville Secondary Plan. The idea of an “exceptionally designed” neighborhood balancing recreation and living spaces with shopping and working spaces is quite appealing and we greatly value convenient access to quality public transit. We are disappointed that the vision is not for “safe and convenient” access to public transit.

The most relevant principles for us are Principle 1: Build a connected community that encourages transit use and active transportation and Principle 3: Develop a pedestrian-oriented environment that is safe, comfortable, and animated at street level. We applaud the focus on—and prioritization of—active transportation and a pedestrian-oriented environment at street level. We are concerned about the lack of explicit mention that these principles extend to all users—regardless of age or ability—and that design features promote accessibility for all.

What we are most concerned about here is that we fail to see how these principles are actually providing guidance for the development of this draft Secondary Plan and the General Policies being offered through it. It is well-established—and this group has emphasized it many times—that a key element in prioritizing active transportation is designing road infrastructure around the concerns of the so-called Portland 60, the approximately 60% of road users who are “interested but concerned” about cycling within the urban environment. Their concerns are generally automotive density, speed, and proximity and they generally rate their comfort level and willingness to cycle according to the “weakest link” in their route. For example, a single, complicated and busy intersection where they are forced share the traffic flow with automobiles or are menaced by turning automobiles or being required to ride a single block along a busy, fast multilane street (or turn left off of) is often enough to dissuade them from riding at all regardless of how comfortable they are with the rest of the route.

The “gold standard” design that allows everyone regardless of age or ability to be comfortable cycling is a cycling track that is physically separated from non-cycling road users connecting them with their final destinations. Ideally, each of the major neighborhood destinations (transit hub, Farmers Market locations, primary retail spaces, and significant employers) would have such cycle tracks radiating outward from them. We, however, see no evidence of recommendations or plans for including such road infrastructure in any sections of this in the Masonville Secondary Plan. Indeed, it does not seem that there are any plans to provide streets prioritized in Schedule 5 of the Secondary Plan with painted bike lanes or signage. Given the benefits that cycling infrastructure has been shown to bring to retail districts, we want to emphasize the need to have physically protected, separated cycling infrastructure along with greatly decreased speed limits where such infrastructure cannot be built.

The prioritized streets in Schedule 5 also involved several complicated intersections crossing multiple-lane, high-speed streets with poor sightlines for automobile drivers and cyclists alike. There is no evidence of improvements such as cycling friendly signals or painted lanes through the intersections on Fanshawe or Richmond.

The absence of any real improvements to street infrastructure for cycling users is inconsistent with a prioritization of active transportation, an “exceptionally designed” environment, and valuing safe and accessible access for riders of all ages and abilities.

We also have some concerns with the planned use for private streets. In particular, we are unsure how private owners will be required to “implement the concepts of ‘complete streets’.” More information for how this would be handled and what timelines and resulting road infrastructure would be helpful. We would expect the results to be comparable to the road infrastructure and usability of the public roads. We are also concerned about how the enforcement of traffic laws (such as no parking/no stopping laws, especially where cyclists’ movements are impacted) will be conducted on private streets and the implications for incidents of road violence. We’ve seen at Dundas Place the issues that arise when new road or traffic regulations are placed without any plan for enforcement or educating drivers. We would like to hear more about this and the implications for cyclists being directed to use those streets as thoroughfares.

We are also hoping for clarification on the point that “sidewalks should be separated from the travelled portion of private streets by a buffer area comprised of landscaping, on-street parking areas and/or cycle lanes.” We hope that cycle lanes—and the cyclists who use them are not being looked at as a buffer between cars and pedestrians.

Though “on-street parking may be provided along public and private streets . . . where it does not conflict with pedestrian priority or constrain transit operation,” we are concerned that there is no mention of also prioritizing cyclist safety over on-street parking, especially considering the safety concerns that arise when cars need to cross over bike lanes to park and when car doors are being opened into bike lanes.