

Advisory Committee on the Environment Wharncliffe Road South expansion & 100 Stanley Street relocation

To: Members of the Advisory Committee on the Environment (ACE)
From: Mike Bloxam, ACE member
Re: "Wharncliffe Road South Improvements"

From the City of London's page on the project, located at <https://london.ca/projects/wharncliffe-road-south-improvements>:

The City of London is planning improvements for Wharncliffe Road South from north of the Thames River to Springbank Drive. One northbound travel lane will be added on Wharncliffe Road South between Horton Street and Becher Street.

The City also will rehabilitate the Wharncliffe Road Bridge across the Thames River, including enhancements to pathway connections for active transportation with wider sidewalks. Although the corridor is not currently considered a bike route in the Cycling Master Plan, the bridge design has consideration for future cycling lanes.

The current road bottleneck at the CN Rail Bridge creates safety and operational concerns for all road users, and results in traffic in the surrounding neighbourhoods..

Members of the Advisory Committee on the Environment are encouraged to put forward a recommendation to City Council as follows, explaining why road expansions to accommodate more motor-vehicle traffic is not a sustainable option for the future of Wharncliffe Road South nor the city as a whole for the reasons that follow:

1. **Widening roads does not decrease traffic.** Widening to six lanes as proposed only allows for more vehicles to use the road, and thus encourages more single-occupancy vehicles (SOVs) to use the corridor. London needs to go on a "traffic diet" (i.e. decrease or mitigate the increase of SOVs) as part of the solution. To use the same analogy: when one finds themselves putting on weight, they usually change their diet instead of going out and buying larger pants to permit a wider waistline. Adding another northbound lane to the road is only allowing the status quo to continue and permit more SOVs on the road, leading to further congestion of both Wharncliffe Road and other arteries that connect to it. More personal vehicles will use Wharncliffe

Road if it were to be expanded and will not reduce the congestion as desired. More vehicles in the traffic system will only produce more air pollution and further the effects of climate change. There are also a number of issues surrounding the natural environment with widening, such as increasing difficulty for residents to cross the road, impacts on waterways such as the Thames River, and loss of trees along the route.

2. **Much of the congestion happens during rush hour.** Increasing traffic flows during rush hour, through efforts such as better synchronization of lights, building roundabouts where appropriate, enhancing public transit (e.g. having a bus route that runs from Byron Baseline Road to Springbank Drive to Horton Street to Hamilton Road with appropriate connecting routes to run north/south all along Wharncliffe Road), and better infrastructure for active transportation (pedestrian sidewalks and bicycle paths).
3. **Install cycling infrastructure now, not in the “future”.** While the improved pathway connections at the Wharncliffe Road Bridge is laudable, stating that “the bridge design has consideration for future cycling lanes” goes against the declaration of a climate emergency (as passed by City Council in April 2019), and instead cycling lanes must be added at this stage. Wharncliffe Road, for most of its urban stretch, is the perfect example of a “stroad”, which is defined as “dangerous, multi-laned thoroughfares you encounter in nearly every city, town, and suburb in [North] America”¹. Rehabilitation of Wharncliffe Road to be an effective thoroughfare must include proper bike infrastructure, pedestrian walkways, and access for the many residences and businesses that line the road. We can start with this stretch from Springbank Drive to the Thames River as a shining example of eliminating stroads and building our city for the future, not for 1960s car culture.
 1. <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2018/3/1/whats-a-stroad-and-why-does-it-matter>
4. **100 Stanley Street must not be demolished.** The saying goes that the greenest brick is the one already in the wall. Demolishing buildings is a backward practice that simply throws a building in the garbage dump. This house is sound, has been well-maintained, and would easily survive a short move across Wharncliffe Road to rest at Evergreen Avenue. It would retain housing – something desperately needed in the city – and allow the City to sell the property to recoup the costs. Taking into account the embedded energy of constructing a house in the first place, demolition has a huge negative impact from

an environmental (and financial) standpoint. In Brantford, an historic 144-year-old brick cottage was recently moved with great success (minus a flat tire on the trailer).² Perhaps City staff should speak with the folks in Brantford about the process and get some insight on how easy it really is to move a house.

2. <https://kitchener.ctvnews.ca/not-so-fast-144-year-old-crystal-cottage-in-brantford-hits-road-bump-in-relocation-1.5656095>

The recommendations for ACE to put forward to Planning & Environment Committee is suggested as follows:

The ACE recommends that the *Wharnccliffe Road South Improvements* project explores every possible avenue to avoid road widening to provide more traffic lanes for motor vehicles, whereas there are a number of alternative methods that provide better traffic flow, improved options outside of driving one's own personal vehicle (public transit, cycling, walking, etc.), and making this stretch the first of many projects to turn a stroad into proper transportation infrastructure.

The ACE also recommends that City staff be directed to revisit the issue of moving 100 Stanley Street and direct staff to find a way to move the house across the street.

The ACE encourages that the fact we are in a climate crisis and have declared a climate emergency ourselves means we must do everything possible to mitigate negative environmental impacts: demolishing homes and making room for more motor vehicles is the exact antitheses to this declaration.

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