

At its Jan. 12, 2023 meeting, the Accessibility Community Advisory Committee passed a motion authorizing its chair to pen a response on its behalf to the Neighbourhood Connectivity Plan Update, for submission to the Civic Works Committee. The committee took this action as it would not be able to reconvene to endorse a letter in advance of CWC's next meeting. The letter is as follows:

The Accessibility Community Advisory Committee would like to lend its support to the proposed Neighbourhood Connectivity Plan approach as it pertains to the 2023 Renew London Construction Program – with a few caveats.

We appreciate the desire to integrate the broader community into discussions and to take a broad-spectrum look at neighbourhoods as a whole. However, we would like to ensure that the burden of responsibility for all parties adheres to both the letter and the spirit of the Diversity and Inclusion Policy for the City of London, wherein "The Corporation of the City of London commits to... removing system barriers to accessibility and access as experienced by our community by listening and responding to the voices of those who are marginalised."

We stand by our statement, which was submitted to CWC in March 2021, wherein we stated, "There is room for compromise. We don't need a sidewalk on both sides of every street. Some areas just don't make sense. But our stance is that unless there is a reason that puts people at significant critical risk for danger (e.g., adding a sidewalk would compromise the integrity of an area, resulting in residual damage), the expectation should be for universal accessibility."

We would ask that council as a whole and staff in its engagements ensure that we are looking at any sidewalk request through the lens of anti-ableism and work to both remove existing unintentional and prevent the maintenance or creation of intentional barriers to access.

We would ask that, when referring to destinations, that participants realize that it's not just about getting through a community, but rather those communities – and the homes that line these streets – are destinations in and of themselves. By perpetuating barriers through the lack of sidewalk support, these homes no longer become an option for people with disabilities (or other members of the community, like seniors, who require adaptive technologies and basic infrastructure) to purchase.

We believe strongly that London should be a community wherein equitable access to all parts of our community are maintained. Just as we work to minimize the impact of historical barriers to BIPOC, LGBTQ2S+, and other historically marginalized communities, so too do we ask that council and City staff view any discussion through the lens of ensuring that Ableism is not accepted.

We are quickly approaching 2025 and AODA mandates the province be fully accessible by that time. That includes the built environment. But beyond the legislation, our City's admirable commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion must be the foundation upon which any decisions are made.

While exceptions to Active Mobility Policy 349 may, in limited cases, be warranted, we strongly encourage staff and council to ensure the burden of responsibility is on those arguing against accessibility and inclusion to prove the catastrophic consequences of including sidewalk access in their communities. It should no longer be the burden of people with disabilities to prove why they want to commute through a community or, more importantly, why they should want infrastructure support to live in those communities.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter,

Jay Ménard  
Chair  
Accessibility Community Advisory Committee