

**Mississauga Cycling Advisory Committee (MCAC)**Agenda: January 8, 2019 - **Item 7.3****MCAC Website and Social Media Pages - Communications Subcommittee Report**

It has been interesting, listening to Phil Green give a history of MCAC from its roots of 25 years ago; clearly one person can make a difference for a generation! It is no wonder there is an award named after you, Phil.

This monthly Communications update will be a little different than in previous months, given the 7-month gap, and the extraordinary context of tonight's Agenda. In fact, there is a three-part context:

**1. 2018 CMPU:** At MCAC's last official meeting, in June 2018, we explicitly did NOT endorse the 2018 Cycling Master Plan Update (CMPU) for a great number of reasons, including:

- it was *at best* a 27-year rollout to complete the cycling network, which has already fallen way behind, and the case made for funding even that was weak. Note that the 95-year funding scenario is still in the 2019 Budget documents – can you imagine a 95-year network plan issued in 1905, say?
- it was a Plan to have a Plan – without priorities – we were told priorities would be set later. We want the most dangerous situations fixed first, and the network gaps connected where needed most;
- it put the focus on cycling for fitness and recreation over transportation, and did not urgently align with solving the City's mobility crisis.

It passed anyway. We used our communications platforms to inform the cycling community. Our chair Donnie Morris wrote a letter of disappointment to Council on December 16, 2018, largely triggered by that experience.

**2. SOCIAL MEDIA:** The future of cycling in this city is no longer in the hands of just a few activists, but in the virtual public square. With the accelerated use of social media, every cyclist in the City can now follow / participate in the conversation. This is how public engagement on cycling (*and every other issue*) will continue in Mississauga. The off-line world which existed when MCAC began has become an open, digitized network.

Social media has given *all* cyclists the means to learn over time (*and on their own timeline*) how successful cities act, how cycling infrastructure should be engineered, the difference between #VisionZero and #ZeroVision, and how quality of life is compromised in a city that caters to cars. It is now impossible to control or filter public response (or MCAC response) concerning civic mistakes made by omission, design, installation or operation. Responses are informed by personal experience, and shared best practices (world-wide).

**3. VISION ZERO:** It's about *more* than cyclists... pedestrian safety is a huge issue in this city as well. This very morning a pedestrian was struck at Mavis and Central Parkway. MCAC started advocating for Vision Zero years ago, and encouraged re-instatement of the Road Safety Committee which was disbanded in 2014.

The heightened focus on active transportation (AT) in this city may be attributed to many things: increasing traffic congestion, concern about carbon emissions and climate change, the desire for a better quality of urban life – *all of the above* – but retrofitting our car-based city is challenging and must be done safely for all Vulnerable Road Users (VRUs). The principles of #VisionZero are being well-promoted by @VisionZeroCA. #ZeroVision is the public's response when civic gestures towards Road Safety are seen to be inadequate.

Late in 2018 we started to see these three (3) contextual themes dramatically come together, when firstly, there was strong public pushback to Peel Regional Police blaming (*and seemingly excusing*) pedestrians' deaths as caused by their own mistakes rather than lack of protection: @PeelPoliceMedia tweet Dec. 9/18

Then, on Dec.13/18 @CityMississauga put out a pedestrian safety tweet (infamously known as the *fashion victim tweet*) that got **ratioed** - defined by Oliver Moore at the *Toronto Star*, in reference to this tweet specifically, as "When the number of replies far surpasses the number of likes and retweets", thus indicating a badly-received tweet. The tweet was inevitably deleted by the City; one tweeter called it a "win for the internet".

Thirdly, we have seen *continued* City promotion of the new signalized Crossrides as "safe", most recently using the *same model* as the deleted pedestrian fashion victim tweet (*but without the safety vest this time*). She is on foot incidentally, and not at all safe in her crosswalk which has been moved almost into the roadway – *no cyclist* is shown in the adjacent Crossride being promoted: [@CityMississauga](#) tweet Jan. 4/19

An MCAC reply was made to the latest City tweet regarding Crossrides – illustrating that rebuttal can be immediate, by anyone, and leave a warning for others. In addition, the Rockwood Homeowners' Association has the Fieldgate Crossride on their next Agenda -- this is a community safety issue, and not just for cyclists.

To close out this example, the City's Crossrides website provides complex instructions to cyclists including to "ride slowly [*through Crossrides*] so as to be able to stop when confronted by turning cars" – WOW the danger is baked right in! [ Ref: [www.mississaugabikes.ca/crossrides-and-bike-signals](http://www.mississaugabikes.ca/crossrides-and-bike-signals) ]

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Unfortunately, during the Summer of 2018, a number of safety issues come up after Council adjourned on July 4 for the election campaign. As said, MCAC has not met officially since June 2018. But using our website and social media platforms we were able to maintain communications with the cycling community during peak riding season, supported by considerable off-line discussions and test rides by MCAC citizen members. This is not "fun", this is not a laughing matter. Safety is a life or death issue and but one example of why MCAC exists.

MCAC's advice to the City over the past summer was specific (and public) on a number of topics. Using our platforms we drew attention to safety issues for which we had not been consulted beforehand. We sent emails to staff with photos and suggestions. Many issues have not yet been fully resolved months later, including:

- new trails in the Lakeshore Royal Windsor Hydro One Corridor, where multiple road crossings were unmarked and unsafe but yet the trails were opened to the public;
- new signalized Crossride installations, making cycling *more dangerous* than before;
- the new Winston Churchill Multi-Use Trail (MUT) where Councillor Pat Saito asked MCAC for support to install a physical barrier and other needed improvements despite staff's refusal to do so;
- the two-year detour plan for cyclists and pedestrians in City Centre because of the Burnhamthorpe Water Project (BWP) was, and still is, incredibly unsafe and not inspected nor maintained.

Any of these unsafe installations could trigger lawsuits in the event of harm.

Then, on **August 29**, I received a phone call from the Deputy Clerk, informing me that MCAC's website would be maintained by AT staff as of December 1, 2018. This should have gone through the Chair, of course, and waited for an MCAC meeting – guess we're having it now. Emails addressed to me in December directed that passwords to our social media accounts be surrendered as well. There had been no change to the MCAC Terms of Reference, nor a Council motion directing this policy change, that I was told.

But, not knowing if MCAC was to even continue as a committee of Council (*we half-expected to be merged with the Road Safety Committee*), we had our own subcommittee pare down and simplify the MCAC website; and the social media accounts were temporarily re-labelled on November 30 to set some distance from the City in the interim. Once Council affirmed (at GC: December 12) that MCAC would continue, it was wonderful to be able to use our social media as MCAC again and know our messages concerning cycling safety were branded as such. MCAC has received a lot of social media traction since then on the topics we continue to bring forward, even as recently as this afternoon.

**MOTION:** That control of the MCAC website and social media accounts be transferred to the appropriate citizen member of the next MCAC. Should City policy be changed in the short term to disallow this transfer, the accounts are to be archived. (Seconder: Donnie Morris, MCAC Chair)

Dorothy Tomiuk, MCAC Citizen Member