To: Mayor and Members of Council
City of Markham

Date: November 19, 2024

CC via Clerks:
Loy Cheah, Senior Manager, Transportation
Laura Chong, Project Manager, Transportation

COUNCIL MEETING: of November 20, 2024.

Item 7.2.1: Recommendations for Enhancing the Cycling Facility Selection Tool

Dear Mayor and Members of Council,

I am a bike-rider (mixed road/downhill/trail use) regularly riding on our regional roads, cycle-ways and trails. My regular cycle-facilities use occurs from *mid-April to late-November* and spans from the lower Toronto waterfront, northwest to Holland landing, northern runs to Keswick, and northeast Durham regions.

I'm *writing in support* and to provide my feedback on the proposed Cycling Facility Selection Tool, recognizing it as an adaptable Urban Standard and vital strategic contribution to Markham's Active Transportation Master Plan (ATMP). This adaptable tool formalizes an important standard toward sustaining a safe, sustainable, inclusive and growing alternative transportation network, aligning with the City's strategic priorities and provincial guidelines.

Recognizing that we've been *advancing Markham's cycle-facility infrastructure successfully for years* and staff will have been using a similar tool, this adoption proposal formalises a provincial standard framework for selecting cycling facilities based on roadway and use characteristics. I believe it will also benefit significantly from publicising/branding its use in planning and achieving regular updates that *incorporate staff observations*, public feedback, and evolving transportation trends.

Below, I outline key points and recommendations for Council's consideration as *varied design improvements of our cycle-ways increase public confidence and a safer user experience*.

Key Strengths of the Cycling Facility Selection Tool

1. **Traffic-Based Design:**
   Using *accurate and regularly updated data*, the tool effectively identifies appropriate cycling facilities based on traffic volumes, lane counts, and roadway speeds, ensuring that high-risk corridors are matched with higher-protection infrastructure such as cycle tracks or multi-use paths (MUPs).
2. **Alignment with Provincial Guidelines:**
   By adhering to the updated *Ontario Traffic Manual (OTM) Book 18*, the tool integrates best practices to prioritize safety, consistency, and accessibility.
3. **Support for Strategic Goals:**
   The tool supports Markham's objective of creating an all-ages-and-abilities (AAA) active transportation network, promoting sustainability, and improving connectivity.

Recommendations to Staff for Tool Enhancements

To ensure the Cycling Facility Selection Tool remains a dynamic and effective instrument, I propose the following to staff:

1. **Incorporate Staff-Supervised Measurements of Usage:**
   - Regular *data collection on facility utilization* is essential for identifying trends and areas for improvement. Metrics could include staff-supervised but college-programed and led summer-student measurements and analysis of:

        - Cyclist counts across different cycle-facilities.
        - Seasonal and time-of-day variations.
        - Safety data such as collision and near-miss reports.
    - These findings should inform periodic updates to the tool, ensuring infrastructure investments align with real-world needs.
2. **Engage the Public and Cycling Committee:**
    - Cycle-facility-user consultations and collaboration with the cycling committee are critical to ensuring the tool reflects the needs of the community. Efforts should include:
        - Workshops and surveys to gather feedback from cyclists, pedestrians, and micro-mobility users.
        - Addressing concerns about winter maintenance, accessibility, and safety.
    - This approach will foster greater public trust and support for the active transportation network.
3. **Adapt to Immediate and Emerging Trends:**
    - As the use of micro-mobility devices and e-bikes grows, the tool must accommodate these developments to maintain safety and functionality.
    - It may be that the tool requires and early update as to cycle-way devise-use now.
    - Collaborate with the cycling committee to monitor trends and update facility designs, such as wider paths or shared-use lanes, where appropriate.
4. **Regular Reviews:**
    Authorize the Director of Engineering, in consultation with the Director of Operations and City Treasurer, to oversee regular reviews and updates of the tool, ensuring it remains aligned with evolving guidelines, device-type use and community needs.

Key Benefits of Regular Updates

1. **Enhanced Effectiveness:**
    By leveraging staff data and public input, the tool can ensure cycling facilities are designed and maintained to meet current and future demands.
2. **Cost Efficiency:**
    Regular updates will identify underused or ineffective facilities, enabling smarter allocation of resources and reducing unnecessary operational and maintenance costs.
3. **Increased Public Buy-In:**
    Transparent updates and community involvement will strengthen public trust in the City's active transportation planning and increased public use will result.

The Cycling Facility Selection Tool is a significant step forward for Markham's cycling infrastructure, but it's true potential lies in its adaptability. By committing to data-driven updates and meaningful public engagement, Markham can lead the way in building a safe, sustainable, and inclusive cycling network.

Thank you for your review and I look forward to seeing how the City of Markham continues to advance its active transportation initiatives.

Best of success,

Barry Nelson
Thornhill Resident and Advocate for Sustainable Infrastructure