

NOVÆ RES URBIS TORONTO

FRIDAY,
APRIL 20, 2018

Vol. 22
No. 16



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POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY UPDATE

CYCLING DISCOUNT

Maryam Mirza

To reduce poverty in the **City of Toronto**, a councillor is saying the city can do more to further transportation equity. One suggestion is to encourage residents of the city's neighbourhood improvement areas to use bicycles by providing free Bike Share program fobs.

Ward 21 St. Paul's councillor **Joe Mihevc** told *NRU* that along with the Fair Fare Pass that was implemented earlier this month to enable some of Toronto's most vulnerable residents to use transit, the city should provide these same residents with free access to Bike Share. Given the strong correlation between poverty and a lack of mobility options, he says the city must address transportation equity if it is to move forward on breaking the cycle of poverty.

The suggestion comes as part of the transportation equity panel—of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Speaker Series—that was held at city hall on Monday. The

series is intended to engage the public and generate new ideas, which will be used to update the Poverty Reduction Strategy, a 20-year plan adopted by council in 2015.

"The issue we're discussing is what kind of programs can be put in place to help people access transit better," Mihevc said. "If people had a greater way to access cycling then they might have more access to appointments, jobs and opportunities."

Currently about 150,000 Toronto residents participate in the Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Program, and are now eligible for the Fair Fare (TTC) Pass. While all participants may not want to cycle as a means to get around the city, Mihevc says discounting the Bike Share program would make active transportation options, such as cycling, more accessible.

The city is building more cycling infrastructure, such as cycle lanes, to allow

access to essential everyday appointments, Mihevc says. However, he says there is more to do, and council should prioritize cycling infrastructure projects in the city's 10-year cycling network plan to improve connectivity for residents of neighbourhood improvement areas.

Engineering and construction services spokesperson **Cheryl San Juan** told *NRU* that two of the 31 designated neighbourhood improvement areas—Thornclyffe Park and Flemingdon Park—have been identified in the 10-year cycling network plan as

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Photographer Lorie Slater takes photos all around Toronto, capturing still scenes of urban change. She prints her photos on wood and metal. See page 3

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LORIE SLATER PHOTOGRAPHY
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CYCLING DISCOUNT

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needing cycling facilities.

Next week council will consider a staff report recommending cycling routes be constructed in the Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park neighbourhoods. If approved at council's April 24-26 meeting, this cycling infrastructure will be constructed this summer, said San Juan.

Mihevč says the city's installation of bicycle lanes in these neighbourhoods is a positive step forward in improving cycling connectivity across the city. However, Bike Share doesn't provide service to Thorncliffe Park or Flemingdon Park.

Scarborough Cycles bike hub coordinator **Marvin Macaraig** agrees with Mihevč. He explains that having free access to Bike Share would only be useful if the network

of cycling infrastructure is located close to where people live and need to travel.

"This issue may not be apparent in the downtown core, where there are many docks nearby and there is a better network of infrastructure," he said. "But this is definitely an issue in suburban areas, where the location of the Bike Share docks are further apart, and where there is even less cycling infrastructure."

Bike Share program manager **Sean Wheldrake** told *NRU* the priority for growing the program is to install docks in mixed-use areas such as along King and Queen streets, which have higher rates of ridership.

"Thorncliffe doesn't have that component—it's primarily standalone residential buildings, and then it's a giant

mall—so there's very little reason to have lots of trips," he added.

However, the neighbourhood has a lot of residents, and he says, that makes it an attractive area to serve. While plans to install Bike Share docks in Thorncliffe Park is not part of this year's budget, it could be he added.

"We're having meetings with city planning ... because [of] some huge projects going on—for example the

downtown relief line," he said. "These long-term planning projects will foresee changes to these areas, and [then] Bike Share will become a really viable operation in these areas."

#TacklePovertyTO is a five-part panel series that concludes next Monday. 🌱

These long-term planning projects will foresee changes to these areas, and [then] Bike Share will become a really viable operation in these areas.

- Sean Wheldrake

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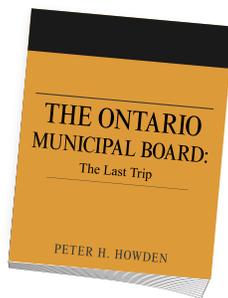
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