

Re: Integrated Master Plan (Report No. PW-35-25)

To Chair Carr and Members of Council,

Safe Streets Halton appreciates the extensive work that has gone into developing the Integrated Master Plan and the opportunity to provide feedback on this important long-term strategy for our region.

We are pleased to see several positive elements in the transportation strategy. The commitment to a "protected-by-default" approach for active transportation facilities represents a meaningful step forward for pedestrian and cyclist safety. We are particularly happy to see the inclusion of protected intersections, which are crucial for creating safe, connected active transportation networks. We also welcome the decision not to proceed with widening Upper Middle Road, which demonstrates the region's willingness to reconsider conventional approaches to capacity management.

However, we have significant concerns about aspects of the plan that require council's attention.

Road Widenings and Transit Priority

The plan identifies three new road widenings: Neyagawa Boulevard, Trafalgar Road, and Ninth Line. Our position is clear—we cannot support road widenings that primarily serve general automobile use. If widenings are necessary, they must be designed from the outset to accommodate transit priority measures and enhanced active transportation facilities.

We must also note that "6 lanes" understates the pedestrian experience at intersections, where additional turning lanes can create crossings of 9 or more lanes. While protected intersections with staged crossings can mitigate this challenge, the better approach is to avoid creating such hostile pedestrian environments in the first place by prioritising transit and active transportation over additional general-purpose lanes.

The recent reconstruction work on Trafalgar Road and ongoing work on Dundas Street serve as cautionary examples. These corridors are being rebuilt without the transit priority and protected infrastructure that the plan now acknowledges they will need, representing a missed opportunity and inefficient use of public resources.

Unacceptable Timelines for Transit Priority Corridors

We are extremely disappointed by the proposed seven-year timeline for implementing even basic High Occupancy Vehicle lanes on key corridors. This is unacceptable. These measures should have been included when these roads were originally built or reconstructed, as they were identified in previous environmental assessments. While we understand the plan's phased approach—HOV lanes first, then Bus Rapid Transit later—the timelines are far too relaxed given the urgency of our climate, safety, and congestion challenges.

Trafalgar Road and Dundas Street, identified as core BRT corridors, exemplify this problem. These roads have recently been reconstructed or are currently under construction without transit priority measures. Beyond the fiscal inefficiency of building infrastructure twice, experience from other jurisdictions demonstrates that converting existing general traffic lanes to transit priority later generates significantly more public opposition than including these measures during initial construction. Building complete corridors from the outset is not only more cost-effective but also more publicly acceptable than retrofitting them years later.

Equity and Modal Balance

While the plan states a commitment to "balanced consideration of all travel modes," true equity requires accelerated investment in active transportation infrastructure, not perpetual delay. We are encouraged that the plan acknowledges the need to

prioritise and update walking and cycling facilities, but this must be reflected in accelerated timelines and adequate funding.

Public Engagement Process

We must also raise concerns about the consultation process for this master plan. The entire engagement process was conducted virtually, with no in-person public meetings or appearances. This falls short of the standard that local municipal councils routinely require for their own master plans and represents a significant barrier to meaningful public participation, particularly for residents less comfortable with digital platforms.

The limited awareness of this plan was evident in the lack of effective advertising. Even local reporters covering municipal affairs were unaware of key developments in the plan. Local municipalities typically invest more effort in public notification and awareness-building for plans of this significance.

Furthermore, when our organisation offered to support engagement efforts – including gathering contact information from interested residents at community events to add to the region's consultation email list – we were told that residents should simply remember to email the region later. This approach misses a fundamental principle of effective engagement: you capture people's attention and input when they are present and interested, not by asking them to take additional steps at a later date. A 25-year infrastructure plan deserves a consultation process that actively facilitates public participation rather than creating barriers to it.

Implementation Recommendations

We urge council to:

1. Direct staff not to implement road widenings unless they include dedicated transit priority measures and protected active transportation facilities from day one.
2. Accelerate the timeline for Transit Priority Corridor implementation, particularly on Trafalgar Road and Dundas Street, where recent reconstruction represents missed opportunities.

3. Require that any capital projects on corridors identified in the Transit Priority Corridor network include the necessary infrastructure, rather than waiting for future reconstruction cycles.
4. Establish minimum standards for public engagement on major infrastructure plans that include in-person consultation opportunities and proactive outreach to facilitate participation.
5. Ensure the plan explicitly references and implements the region's future intersections design standards for all capital projects.
6. For rural areas where "paved shoulders" are proposed, consider separated parallel trails similar to those used successfully in Ottawa.
7. Implement temporary safety improvements using tactical urbanism approaches (such as bollards or painted buffers) where permanent infrastructure will be delayed, rather than waiting for capital lifecycle timing.

The Integrated Master Plan represents an important step forward in several areas, particularly around protected active transportation infrastructure. However, its success will depend on accelerated implementation timelines and a firm commitment to building transit and active transportation infrastructure as part of initial construction, not as expensive afterthoughts.

We ask that council adopt the recommended strategies with the expectation that staff will return with revised implementation timelines that reflect the urgency of our transportation challenges and ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent efficiently by building complete streets from the start.

Sincerely,

Nick Morrison
President – Safe Streets Halton