



25 April 2016

Dear Presenters & Mathieu,

Thank you for the excellent presentation on March 30th on bicycle lanes on Somerset East. The ASH board has consulted carefully with neighbours to supply the following comments.

Background

- Somerset East will inevitably become a major bicycle thoroughfare in Ottawa thanks to the two bridges at each end which link Vanier/Overbrook, Sandy Hill and Centretown. Bike journeys along it will likely exceed those made by car.
- Cycling in Ottawa is growing hugely in popularity and infrastructure is necessarily being improved. Surprisingly, as reported in the Ottawa Citizen: “Ottawa ranked last in the number of cycling paths and bike lanes through the downtown, according to the study, Cycle Cities, released ... by the Pembina Institute. Researchers compared bike commuting in Toronto, Montreal, Calgary, Vancouver and Ottawa”. “What we found was that Ottawa really relies on its multi-use trail network — it’s an extensive network — and it’s expanding its on-street cycling facilities, but there’s still some work to do in connecting the gaps.”
- Somerset is a narrow road and, with increased bicycle traffic, safety improvements are vital. These need to take into account the needs of cyclists of all ages and abilities. For example, Francojeunesse and Viscount Alexander schools are each only one block from Somerset East and we can expect children to incorporate this as part of their route to school. Lisgar Collegiate and the University of Ottawa are located on either side of the Corktown Bridge.
- The City has received funds most recently from both the federal and provincial budgets for infrastructure improvements that can and should be made available for cycling.

Immediate Proposal

1. ASH is very much in favour of the rapid creation of short sections of advisory bicycle lanes, sharrows, and signage as proposed at the meeting as a short-term plan.
2. In addition, we request that as part of the short term (2016) improvements that solutions be found to the issue of roadway bulb-outs where they are not currently 'shading' parking, for example on the south side of Somerset. These act to force bicycles into the roadway, which is counter-productive and a significant safety concern. We would like to enter into discussions with City staff on how these can be modified so that cyclists could go over as opposed to around them. We understand this may require identifying additional funding but believe strongly that addressing the issue of these bulb-outs should be a priority. (We have attached a number of photos of the current bulb-outs). We understand that de-paving crews will already be working on Somerset East in May or June and we seek to use this as an opportunity to act on the bulb-outs at the same time, in anticipation of the possibility of achieving cost savings.
3. We also request that the “no parking” section of Somerset be extended from one block to two, from Henderson to Sweetland if it can be combined with allowing the extension of the westbound advisory bike lane to this block as well. This would result in the loss of only seven parking places. At the meeting this stretch was identified by City staff as the narrowest part of the road and attendees thought that it represented the greatest risk of “dooring”.

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4. We would also like to request that Somerset East be officially designated and posted as a 40km/hr speed limit street in support of it's being designated as a major City cycling route (route #3)
5. We would also like to advocate for some additional treatments at the Somerset intersection with King Edward to further highlight it as a major pedestrian and cycling crossing. These would include:
 - a. advanced signal timing for pedestrians/cyclist crossings: and,
 - b. painting of green thermoplastic bike lanes across the intersection. If this requires modifications to Somerset St E. on the UofO side of King Edward then we strongly support the City's efforts to convince the UofO of the importance of these changes.
6. We are not convinced that moving some of the car parking from the north to the south side of the street, (also raised as a possibility at the meeting), would be a net improvement as we are concerned this could be confusing and increase the possibility of accidents with cyclists.
7. Additionally we ask that, once the underpass through to the Corktown Bridge re-opens, the City conducts a bicycle traffic study along Somerset to count the number of bicycles on Somerset East and understand the need for longer-term improvements.

Longer-term Proposal

- Sandy Hill residents would like to see Somerset East treated as a Complete Street with improved bicycle safety.
- This would include a study to look at a variety of options such as making Somerset one-way, thus enabling dedicated bike lanes together with additional much needed greening of Somerset.

In conclusion, thanks to the new Adàwe Bridge, Somerset East has already shown clear signs that it will become a major bike route in Ottawa. A bikeway is an essential development which residents fully support. A two-step approach is recommended that will allow rapid implementation of interim improvements in 2016 while studying longer-term improvements. We request additional immediate funding to this year to support safety improvements regarding bulb-outs and the removal of seven parking spots between Nelson and Sweetland if that allows for a dedicated bike lane.

It should be pointed out that Somerset is an important hub of Sandy Hill which has become increasingly neglected over recent years and which needs significant improvements. For example, proper cement based sidewalks are missing on both sides of Somerset between Sweetland and Chapel, curbs are crumbling in places, a stone wall is slowly collapsing onto the sidewalk at the north-west corner of Nelson, etc. These have given the street an increasing air of dilapidation which needs City support to be reversed.

Thank you again for your very welcome proposal and for considering our feedback.

Best regards,



Chad Rollins
President, Action Sandy Hill