



Improving the Woodbine Cycle Track: Updated Recommendations

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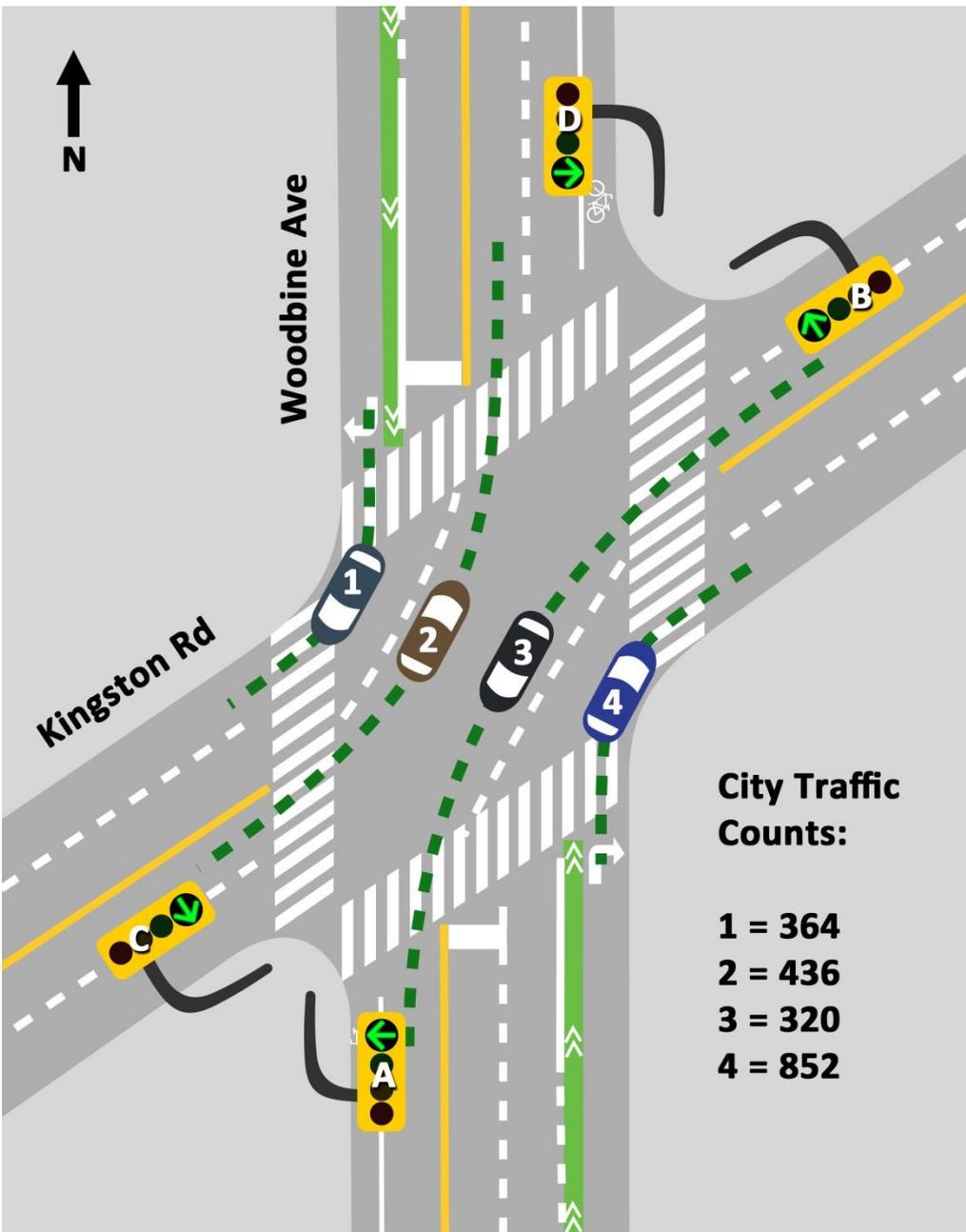
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Introduction:

This report is a follow-up to the “Improving the Woodbine Bike Lanes” report that was distributed to city staff and the councillor, and to residents via social media. After meeting with city staff and residents, the updated recommendations seem the most likely the city would agree to if there’s enough support from residents. The recommendations are not in any particular order, and can each be implemented independently of one another. As a context to this report, it may be useful to familiarize yourself with the city’s rules on bike lanes:

https://www.dropbox.com/s/y6sja4sm704rleg/Understanding_bike_lanes_FINALweb.pdf?dl=0

1. Add an eastbound left turn signal and a southbound right turn signal at Kingston and Woodbine



There is much greater eastbound traffic on Kingston during evening rush hour, yet the westbound side gets a full advance every single light, and observations at the intersection show there are times there is no westbound traffic at all. The city's reasoning is not about the westbound or south-turning traffic, but rather the right turn advance (D) from northbound Woodbine onto eastbound Kingston that runs at the same time as the left turn advance from westbound Kingston onto southbound Woodbine (C). There's a lot of traffic coming up Woodbine from the Lakeshore to turn east on Kingston, but according to the city's latest traffic counts there is only 32% less traffic waiting to turn west on Kingston (1) and north on Woodbine (2), than there is turning south on Woodbine (3) and east on Kingston (4). This creates inefficiency at the intersection that could be improved by enabling other directions to advance at the same time.

Adding a southbound right turn signal (A) and an eastbound left turn signal (B) at Kingston and Woodbine to run concurrent with the westbound left turn signal (C) and northbound right turn signal (D) during evening rush hour would greatly improve traffic flows. The volume of eastbound traffic is considerable, higher than any other direction at that time. Allowing more eastbound left turns will aid eastbound traffic in moving through the intersection, and due to lighter volumes in the other direction westbound will not have a negative impact. In this case it is not a zero sum game because the westbound timing is not needed. Lastly, while the argument can be made that because there are no dedicated left turn lanes on Kingston the left turn advances might not have the intended effect if a person wanting to go straight through ends up at the front,

observations at the intersection show that cars anticipate the need to turn left and tend to line up accordingly, not to mention left-turning cars (especially eastbound) that get stuck at the light waiting to turn.

2. Make the signage and ground markings at intersections consistent and clear

Our previous report went into great detail about how confusing, convoluted, inconsistent, and contradictory the signage and ground markings of the cycle track are, and the city fully agreed. According to staff, the confusing signs telling cars to make right turns from the driving lane (incorrect) instead of sharing the cycle track where it is dashed (correct) is a provincial sign and the city had no hand in its design. Considering city staff agreed without reservation how confusing it is, and therefore unsafe, we ask that the city implement all the recommendations regarding signage and ground markings contained in the original report:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/djbp4zdlrrkf3tk/Improving%20the%20Woodbine%20Bike%20Lanes.pdf?dl=0>

3. Reduce Woodbine to 40km/hr

One of the unforeseen difficulties arising from the design of Woodbine is the blind corners created by parked cars when exiting from side streets, in particular the east side of Woodbine between Kingston and Gerrard. The difficulty is increased because previously there was more space between parked cars and the driving lane, now that space has been taken up, and with parked cars having less of a buffer between them and the driving lane, there is less of a buffer for an exiting car to creep into as it nudges out in the intersection to make a turn north or south on Woodbine.

Reducing the speed limit on Woodbine would not only make it easier for cars exiting side streets to safely turn onto Woodbine without having to worry as much about a car zooming into them, it would also reflect Woodbine's new status as a safe complete street with a bike lane, improving safety for all road users. Also, reducing Woodbine to 40km/hr negates the need for a cycle track, which brings us to the next recommendation.

4. Downgrade the cycle track to a bike lane

Meeting with the city and discussing the inconsistent ground markings it came out that the Woodbine lanes are not bike lanes, they are supposed to be cycle tracks, a protected/separated bike lane with stricter rules. The major difference is who is allowed to stop in a cycle track or bike lane; in a bike lane a car can legally occupy the lane to actively pick up or drop off a person with a disability, school buses are allowed to occupy the lane to drop off and pick up kids, and taxis are allowed to drop off and pick up passengers. In a cycle track on the other hand, only Wheel Trans are allowed to legally occupy the track.

Also, you are allowed to invade bike lanes at intersections to make a turn, but not cycle tracks. For all the rules see here:

https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/municode/1184_886.pdf

The last point, about making turns at intersections is important to note. While the city says Woodbine is a cycle track, I asked them what the expectation was at intersections like Woodbine and Danforth when a car wants to turn right, are they allowed to share the bike lane or do they turn from the driving lane? The city said they are supposed to share the lane to turn right, that's why the line is dashed there. I have already documented that drivers are unsure what they are supposed to do, and it seems that's because of the misleading signs:

<https://vimeo.com/240173408>

A cycle track is supposed to be separated in some way, like bollards, an extra thick line, a median, a line of parked cars, or a raised curb, and you are not supposed to be able to share them to turn right. But there are more stretches on Woodbine that do not have those features than do. Southbound Woodbine is more bike lane than cycle track, and even though visually there are many long stretches that do not look like a cycle track is supposed to look, the city said the rules of the cycle track apply to the entire stretch and people are just supposed to somehow know that. I asked the city why they weren't able to make the cycle track consistent from top to bottom and they said parts of Woodbine just didn't have the width to make the proper cycle track markings and separation the entire length, not to mention they intended it not to be a cycle track where the line is dashed and cars can share it. It is not fair to admit that Woodbine wasn't wide enough to include all the proper features of a cycle track for long stretches, but then expect people to know it's a cycle track and abide by its stricter rules. If Woodbine wasn't wide enough to properly be a cycle track from top to bottom, it shouldn't be a cycle track at all, it should be a bike lane.

As an added bonus, we could eliminate the increasingly ugly and beat up bollards, they were only ever a psychological barrier. Less than a year old and they look like they're from a war zone. Why? Because garbage trucks drive right over them to do their route. One after the other, some of them getting scuffed, others have the tops shredded, all of them looking dirty and beat up. One option is to use the rubber curbs in use on Bloor.



5. Relocate or better signage for the Bike Share station at Woodbine Station

The Bike Share station closest to Woodbine Station is not very intuitively located, it's around the corner on a side street and completely out of sight of the station. There is space just north of the bus station where the fence is, or perhaps using some of the new space on the west side of Strathmore and Woodbine. Anywhere closer to the station than it is now would be an improvement.

6. Add planters/bumpouts/bollards to bookend the permanent parking spaces

One of the ongoing confusing elements of the lanes is the unfamiliar way parking spaces interrupt the northbound driving lane, which is compounded by the driving lane zigzagging around left turn lanes. Other bike lanes separated by parked cars, like on Gerrard between Yonge and Church, have attractive bumpouts bookending the parking spaces. I'm not suggesting something so elaborate or imposing as full curb bumpouts, but small planters could be effective and attractive, or at the bare minimum a better use for bollards that would not get destroyed by garbage trucks. This is not applicable to every row of parking, and is really only necessary on the south side of a row of parking.

The Woodbine Bike Lanes have been contentious since their inception. While we welcome new protected cycling infrastructure, the design leaves too many confusing and unsafe conditions, and improvement is needed. It is understood in some ways the Woodbine lanes are an experiment, and are not quite like other bike lanes in the city, but that also means if the experiment proves to have shortcomings it must be adjusted. We hope for the sake of the city and safety of residents that you will consider implementing these recommendations in some form. Thank you for your time.

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