

Updated NCC Policy for Parkways, March 2014

Comments by the Champlain Park Community Association

Introduction:

The Champlain Park Community Association represents some 400 City of Ottawa households within the following boundaries:

- ▶ Premier Avenue / Transitway (South)
- ▶ Pontiac Avenue / Sir John A. MacDonald Parkway corridor (North)
- ▶ Northwestern Avenue / Tunney's Pasture (East)
- ▶ Island Park Drive (West)

In other words, our community is bounded by a large municipal transit corridor on one side, and federal land on the other three sides, including not one, but **two NCC parkways identified under this policy**. Policies and decisions regarding these parkways have a direct, lasting, and potentially dire impact upon the community.

The Sir John A. Macdonald Parkway to the north, a “waterfront parkway”.

This corridor acts as a dangerous and difficult-to- navigate barrier to the North of our neighbourhood. The four lanes of fast-moving and noisy traffic separate our community – which was once a beachfront cottage community called "Riverside Park" – physically from the Ottawa River. We can access the waterfront via a single underpass at the foot of Carleton Avenue. It provides the one safe point of access for pedestrians and cyclists to the river, and is currently shown on maps as a cycling link between Scott Street and the Ottawa River. Our community places considerable value on this resource, but the width of, and the volume of car traffic carried by, the John A. Macdonald Parkway are serious concerns.

We call upon the NCC to strongly prioritize the pedestrian, bicycling, and recreational nature of this corridor over its current use as a virtual commuter expressway for cars.

Island Park Drive to the west, an “urban parkway”.

Island Park is unique among NCC parkways – as the only one of the four proposed “urban parkways”, it has local residences with driveways and front lawns along its entire length. It also faces greater traffic volume and gridlock than any of the other urban parkways. As such, it has distinct characteristics and unique challenges that set it apart from the other parkways under the proposed “urban parkway” rubric.

We call upon the NCC to recognize that the old 1950s vision of a continuous, recreational Sunday drive must be abandoned, and thus to ensure that this road is designed primarily to meet the needs of the community, pedestrians, and cyclists, with a much lower priority on its current primary users – commuter vehicles.

Updated NCC Policy for Parkways, March 2014

Comments by the Champlain Park Community Association

Background:

Champlain Park residents face increasing traffic and safety issues, largely due to traffic problems and congestion. With increasing congestion on the Champlain Bridge, the situation is exacerbated by the lack of alternative north-south routes across the Ottawa River, as well as the rapid urban development that has occurred and continues to occur on both sides of the river.

Notwithstanding the recent traffic calming measures implemented by the City of Ottawa within the community, there is considerable cut-through traffic as motorists try to avoid the serious congestion on Island Park Drive. This congestion is no longer limited to the few rush hours in the morning and afternoon; the traffic is relentless. Illegal turns from both sides of Clearview Avenue north towards the Champlain Bridge during the afternoon rush hour are routine, and cause more congestion and contribute to safety problems. With the planned Phase 2 LRT construction, we foresee even more cut through traffic, as Scott Street will likely become even more congested.

The Island Park/Clearview intersection has the highest volume of north-south traffic along any stretch of Island Park Drive. Notwithstanding this, it has no signalized traffic light. This is the only four-way intersection on Island Park Drive without one. This intersection is one of the few that the residents in the adjoining neighbourhoods of Champlain Park and Westboro Beach can use to access and exit their respective communities. Without a four-way controlled crossing, this intersection has become a daily challenge for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers alike.

- ▶ Children who live to the west of Island Park Drive are routinely bused to St. George's Elementary School (on the east side at Clearview and Keyworth/Patricia) or are driven by their parents because it is too dangerous to cross the intersection by foot or on a bicycle.
- ▶ School bus drivers have written to the municipal Councillor expressing safety concerns about this corner.
- ▶ Our understanding is that city bus drivers have also complained about the traffic and safety issues at this intersection.
- ▶ Emergency personnel who attend to the all-too frequent accidents at this corner and RCMP officers stationed here have repeatedly told residents that the intersection needs to be made safer.
- ▶ It is rare for motorists driving north/south to stop to allow pedestrians, cyclists and other motorists travelling east/west to cross the street.
- ▶ Nearby residents on Island Park Drive routinely face challenges when exiting their driveways, and often are forced to detour within (i.e., cut through) the community rather than just heading south.

Updated NCC Policy for Parkways, March 2014

Comments by the Champlain Park Community Association

Recommendations:

- ▶ **Strongly prioritize pedestrians and cyclists over automobiles.** The new Policy should strongly state that the old idea of "Sunday Drive Parkways" has been a failed experiment over the past 60 years on all parkways. Preservation of parkland and greenspace demands that a much lower priority be placed on, and much less space devoted to, cars.
- ▶ **Install a four-way traffic signal at the corner of Island Park Drive and Clearview.**
A two-way light was installed at Iona and Island Park Drive a few years ago, even though there was far less north-south traffic there (see the 2010 Genivar Report commissioned by the NCC). Traffic conditions at Island Park Drive and Clearview are somewhat similar to those at Island Park Drive and Iona but they are also different in several key ways. These include: greater congestion, more traffic backing up, use by both city and school buses, the need to enter the intersection blind to oncoming traffic, no close safe alternative crossings, etc.).
- ▶ **Ensure stronger enforcement of current traffic regulations,** for example by installing bidirectional cameras (at the east and west sides of Clearview) to operate during prohibited hours and ticket offenders making prohibited turns on Island Park Drive. Consider adding graduated fines for regular offenders and post this information at the intersection. The current situation, where dozens of motorists every day feel free to flagrantly ignore posted rules, is longstanding, and to residents, unacceptable.
- ▶ **Formally adopt a "complete street" policy for urban parkways.** Take all reasonable measures to prioritize and enhance cycling and walking, and provide a safe and calm environment for pedestrian, cyclists, and residents. Some suggestions include:
 - Build wider bike lanes with greater separation from traffic.
 - Ensure a smooth, dry surface and fix potholes in bike lanes
 - Segregate the bike lanes to modify driver behaviour and reduce speeding.
 - Ensure the street is engineered to protect cyclists, and to prevent cars from routinely veering into the bike lanes at some of the curves.
- ▶ **Coordinate landscaping and road design of both Parkways** to create a more textured or meandering look, to force drivers to slow down and consider their surroundings.
- ▶ **Improve pedestrian and cycle crossings at all intersections,** but particularly the intersection of Island Park and the John A. MacDonald Parkway:
 - Improve North-South pedestrian and cycling links between the Champlain Bridge / river pathway across to Island Park Drive.
 - Provide a safe way for cyclists and pedestrians who use the East/ West pathways on the South side of the John A. MacDonald Parkway to cross Island Park Drive.

Updated NCC Policy for Parkways, March 2014

Comments by the Champlain Park Community Association

- Explore redesign of this entire intersection to reduce crossing distance and remove off-ramps.
- Strongly consider removal or restriction of East-West lanes.
- ▶ **Places, not corridors: prioritize community access to waterfronts, and promote much greater usage of waterfronts as urban destinations.** Parks along these corridors have few public amenities. Give people a *reason* to visit and stay by the waterfront – so they begin to think of parkways as important recreational destinations, not just blank spaces between home and work.
 - **Strongly encourage, in policy, the development of several waterfront "destination nodes"** where public washrooms, concessions, patios, and other public-benefit (including for-profit commercial) services could enliven different areas.
 - **Prioritize new waterfront playgrounds for children.** We could identify not a single play structure, splash pad, or even swing set on NCC parkway land.
- ▶ **Strongly improve signage and way-finding on pathways.** Provide distance markers at every kilometre and work with the City to develop directional signs that meaningfully point to nearby urban destinations, and back to the pathways.
- ▶ **Build more bridges across the river as soon as possible** – particularly in the West End of the City. Add language to ensure that Parkways are seen as inter-provincial assets as well as serving linear corridors along rivers. We have been dismayed at the length of time and the turmoil involved with the decades-long process of bridge site selection – particularly for a new East end bridge that will not alleviate Champlain Bridge pressure.
- ▶ **Prioritize the Prince of Wales Train Bridge:** This bridge needs to be identified in this plan. Work to ensure that the unused bridge is renovated as soon as possible, at least to serve cyclists and pedestrians, but also, preferably as quickly as possible to accommodate inter-provincial transit services - such as an O-Train extension or cross-river Light Rail.
- ▶ **Champlain Oak Forest:** Give more prominence to the wooded area on the south side of the Sir John A. Macdonald Parkway that stretches from Island Park Drive to Tunney's Pasture and re-establish trees in the woods, following the losses of the ice storm and invasion of buckthorn. (See Appendix.)
- ▶ **Upgrade the underpass at Carleton and the Parkway,** by improving the landscaping wayfinding.

○

Updated NCC Policy for Parkways, March 2014

Comments by the Champlain Park Community Association

Conclusion:

We recognize there is no easy solution for the traffic on Island Park Drive.

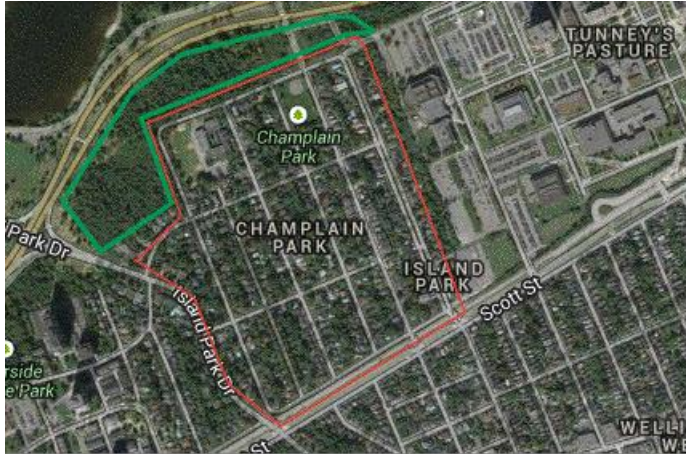
However, implementation of the measures recommended above would contribute over the short term to enhancing the experience and safety of all those who use the street, be they pedestrians, cyclists, motorists and/or residents.

Island Park Drive is a long ribbon of asphalt that cuts through the communities on both sides of the street. We urge the NCC to find ways to enhance, not detract from the shared urban experience and the sense of community for this section of the parkway system.

Updated NCC Policy for Parkways, March 2014

Comments by the Champlain Park Community Association

Appendix: The Champlain Oaks Forest



The wooded area pictured above acts as a buffer between the Champlain Park neighbourhood and the Sir John A. Macdonald Parkway. It is accessed frequently, and in some cases daily, by the residents and others in the surrounding communities for walking, dog-walking, bird watching and cross country skiing. The students at St. George's School use the woods for nature trips.

As part of the City of Ottawa's *Cleaning the Capital*, Champlain Park residents perform an annual spring cleanup of the wooded area. The residents would like adopt this wooded area, to become custodians for its care and preservation, with oversight and leadership from the NCC.

Giving the woods an official name, such as the "**Champlain Park Woods**" will have a positive impact on the overall feel of living in this community. By doing so, the woods become part of the community's landscape, whereas currently it is just a place up the road with trees and bushes.