



Illegal Trucks on Woodbine and Prioritizing Highway 2

By Adam Smith

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Introduction:

Unbeknownst to most people, Woodbine Ave south of Highway 2 (Kingston Rd) until Lakeshore and Coxwell is actually a “no truck” zone. Despite its width, Woodbine all the way to the Lakeshore is a residential street, comprised almost entirely of detached and semi-detached homes except for the apartments and condos at Queen, where the only commercial spaces are.

All day every day there are trucks driving illegally on Woodbine Ave, even on weekends and overnight. According to the city’s own traffic counts at Highway 2 and Woodbine Ave, over 100 trucks a day are illegally using this route, with more at night unaccounted for. And many of them race down Woodbine as quick as they can on their way to the Lakeshore. I live at Woodbine and Norway, when these trucks pass, my whole house rattles and shakes, the windows vibrate, and one has to pause any conversation or tv watching.

Trucks are supposed to be travelling on Highway 2, the designated truck route, to get to and from the Lakeshore, but many simply ignore the signs and take Woodbine because the city has inadvertently created incentive to do so. There is ample signage of where trucks are to go along Highway 2, but some of it is not placed too visibly, and signage along Woodbine itself is obscured in a few examples.

This paper details some of the offenders, the areas of signage, suggestions as to where more signage is needed, and recommendations for taking away the incentive for trucks to use Woodbine by prioritizing Highway 2.

Observing Illegal Trucks on Woodbine:

According to the city's own traffic studies, between 7:30am and 6:00 pm there are over 100 trucks illegally driving up and down Woodbine every day. That's 13.5 trucks per hour, or 1 illegal truck every 4.4 mins. Below is the city's traffic counts, the illegal trucks are highlighted in yellow.



City of Toronto - Traffic Safety Unit

Turning Movement Count Summary Report

KINGSTON RD AT WOODBINE AVE (PX 162)

Survey Date: 2016-Dec-13 (Tuesday)

Survey Type: Routine Hours

Time Period	Vehicle Type	NORTHBOUND				EASTBOUND				SOUTHBOUND				WESTBOUND				Peds	Bike	Other					
		Exits	Left	Thru	Right	Total	Exits	Left	Thru	Right	Total	Exits	Left	Thru	Right	Total	Exits				Left	Thru	Right	Total	
07:45-08:45 AM PEAK	CAR	397	0	325	239	564	620	41	380	3	424	817	1	535	359	895	1,141	279	782	31	1,092	N	29	2	0
	TRK	10	0	4	4	8	26	3	22	0	25	7	0	5	8	13	21	2	13	3	18	S	37	0	0
	BUS	9	0	7	3	10	15	1	12	0	13	7	0	7	0	7	13	0	13	1	14	E	29	2	0
TOTAL:		416	0	336	246	582	661	45	414	3	462	831	1	547	367	915	1,175	281	808	35	1,124				
17:00-18:00 PM PEAK	CAR	908	1	658	425	1,084	1,129	189	701	18	908	468	3	288	191	482	635	162	443	61	666	N	49	2	0
	TRK	12	0	2	0	2	13	8	13	0	21	4	0	3	5	8	14	1	9	2	12	S	30	0	0
	BUS	8	0	8	0	8	12	0	12	0	12	5	0	5	0	5	9	0	9	0	9	E	33	1	0
TOTAL:		928	1	668	425	1,094	1,154	197	726	18	941	477	3	296	196	495	658	163	461	63	687				
OFF HR AVG	CAR	446	8	302	201	511	599	96	345	7	448	414	53	253	142	448	479	154	329	48	531	N	13	0	0
	TRK	15	1	5	6	12	27	8	19	1	28	13	2	7	9	18	27	5	17	2	24	S	17	0	0
	BUS	5	0	5	0	5	7	0	7	0	7	5	0	5	1	6	8	0	7	0	7	E	15	2	0
TOTAL:		466	9	312	207	528	633	104	371	8	483	432	55	265	152	472	514	159	353	50	562				
07:30-09:30 2 HR AM	CAR	751	8	600	378	986	1,040	89	647	6	742	1,611	15	1,031	720	1,766	2,185	574	1,457	62	2,093	N	55	4	0
	TRK	21	0	8	6	14	44	10	38	0	48	19	0	14	24	38	56	5	32	3	40	S	59	0	0
	BUS	21	0	15	3	18	31	3	28	0	31	13	0	13	0	13	26	0	26	3	29	E	53	7	0
TOTAL:		793	8	623	387	1,018	1,115	102	713	6	821	1,643	15	1,058	744	1,817	2,267	579	1,515	68	2,162				
16:00-18:00 2 HR PM	CAR	1,914	2	1,379	850	2,231	2,218	417	1,361	22	1,800	919	7	580	351	938	1,191	317	838	118	1,273	N	88	2	0
	TRK	24	0	3	2	5	32	19	28	0	47	10	2	7	13	22	34	3	21	2	26	S	54	0	0
	BUS	15	0	15	0	15	25	0	25	0	25	13	0	13	0	13	20	0	20	0	20	E	58	1	0
TOTAL:		1,953	2	1,397	852	2,251	2,275	436	1,414	22	1,872	942	9	600	364	973	1,245	320	879	120	1,319				
07:30-18:00 8 HR SUM	CAR	4,450	41	3,188	2,030	5,259	5,651	889	3,387	57	4,333	4,188	234	2,624	1,638	4,496	5,288	1,507	3,609	373	5,489	N	194	7	0
	TRK	104	2	32	31	65	184	61	142	3	206	77	11	48	73	132	194	26	119	11	156	S	180	0	0
	BUS	55	0	49	3	52	84	3	81	0	84	47	0	47	3	50	75	0	72	3	75	E	171	14	0
TOTAL:		4,609	43	3,269	2,064	5,376	5,919	953	3,610	60	4,623	4,312	245	2,719	1,714	4,678	5,557	1,533	3,800	387	5,720				

Total 8 Hour Vehicle Volume: 20,397

Total 8 Hour Bicycle Volume: 33

Total 8 Hour Intersection Volume: 20,430

Comment:

I've also compiled a series of photo evidence. The problem is so rampant it's easy to observe many infractions in a short amount of time. The problem peaks on Fridays and Mondays.



These are some of the smaller trucks that pass through.



This truck doesn't even have a license plate on the front.

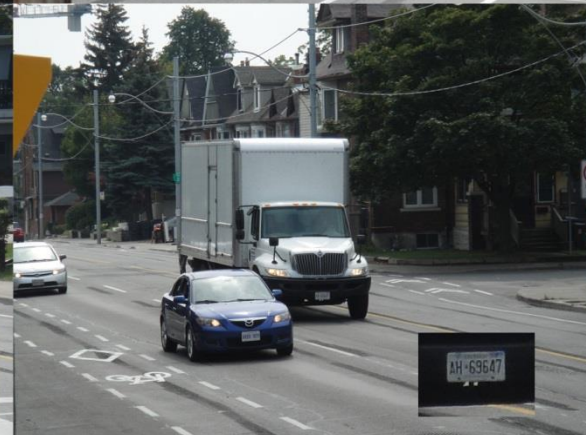
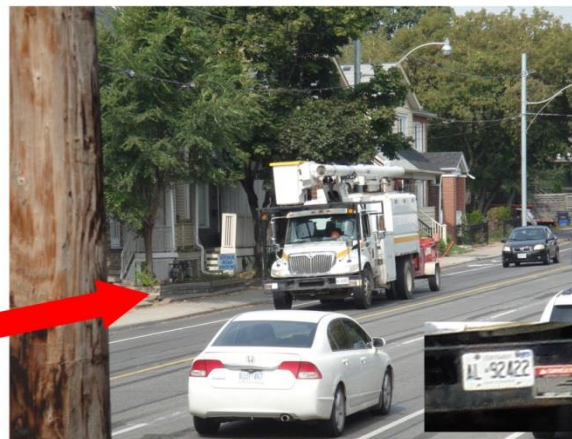
All photos shot within a half hour, between 11:30am and noon on Sept 18, 2017

These city trucks were just passing through on their way from A to B, using Woodbine as thoroughfare instead of following the truck route.



Between 9am - 9pm there are anywhere from 40-60 (15-25 on weekends) illegal trucks on Woodbine. There are also random offenders at all times of the night.

But the biggest offenders are the big rigs and semis that regularly race down Woodbine to get to the Lakeshore. The two upper trucks were both coming south on Woodbine and went straight through the right-turn-only lane at Kingston Road to get around a car turning left to go east on Kingston.



1. Regular Enforcement

Upon informing the councillor that Woodbine south of Kingston Rd is actually a no truck zone, she told me there would be a blitz. If it happened, it was not obvious, and it has not resulted in any change of behaviour.

There is a veritable gold mine of illegal behaviour to be ticketed here, and it is very easy for police to observe the behaviour and safely pull over trucks. On Lakeshore, trucks illegally coming east past Coxwell are easily spotted from Northern Dancer Blvd, and can be pulled over on Lakeshore just east of there. Illegally coming south on Woodbine from Highway 2 trucks can be spotted from Queen St, where police could be waiting to pull them over south of Queen.

2. Make Lakeshore/Woodbine east of Northern Dance Blvd 40km/hr

Part of what makes Lakeshore to Woodbine attractive is the speed limit. Trucks and cars can go the same speed they can taking the Highway 2 route, even though there is more residential (and now a bike lane) on Woodbine than there is on Highway 2 leading up to Woodbine. Reducing the speed limit would make the street safer, and less attractive to trucks and cars using it as a thoroughfare.

3. Better signage

It's hard to say if trucks are ignoring the existing signage, or if it's not obvious enough. The city has tried to put signage all along Highway 2 as the preferred truck route, and along Woodbine and Lakeshore indicating "no trucks".

Many offending trucks come southbound on Woodbine from farther north. Perhaps more would realize their violation if the "no truck" sign to the right were not completely blocked by a pole that should have been torn down when the new pole behind sprung up.

It also doesn't help that the sign telling drivers to turn right to get to the Gardiner is obscured.





Westbound Kingston between Haslett and Heyworth



Northeast corner Kingston and Woodbine



Kingston just south of Dundas

The city has done its due diligence well in labelling the truck route along Kingston Road, past Woodbine, along Eastern To Coxwell, and down to the Lakeshore and vice versa. The route is unambiguous and the Woodbine restriction is delineated.



Eastern and Coxwell

Kingston turning into Eastern

Eastern Ave. just before Alliance lot





The truck route starts off very obvious at Coxwell and Lakeshore, with a massive truck sign guiding them north on Coxwell to follow Highway 2 eastward.

Even though no trucks should even be at Woodbine and Queen, as they are guided away at both Woodbine & Highway 2, and Lakeshore & Coxwell, the city still adds more "no trucks" reminders both southbound and northbound.



northbound



southbound



Even Queen St east of Highway 2 is a no truck zone.



The signs telling trucks where they are allowed to go are very clear and unambiguous, with arrows to guide the trucks in the right direction.



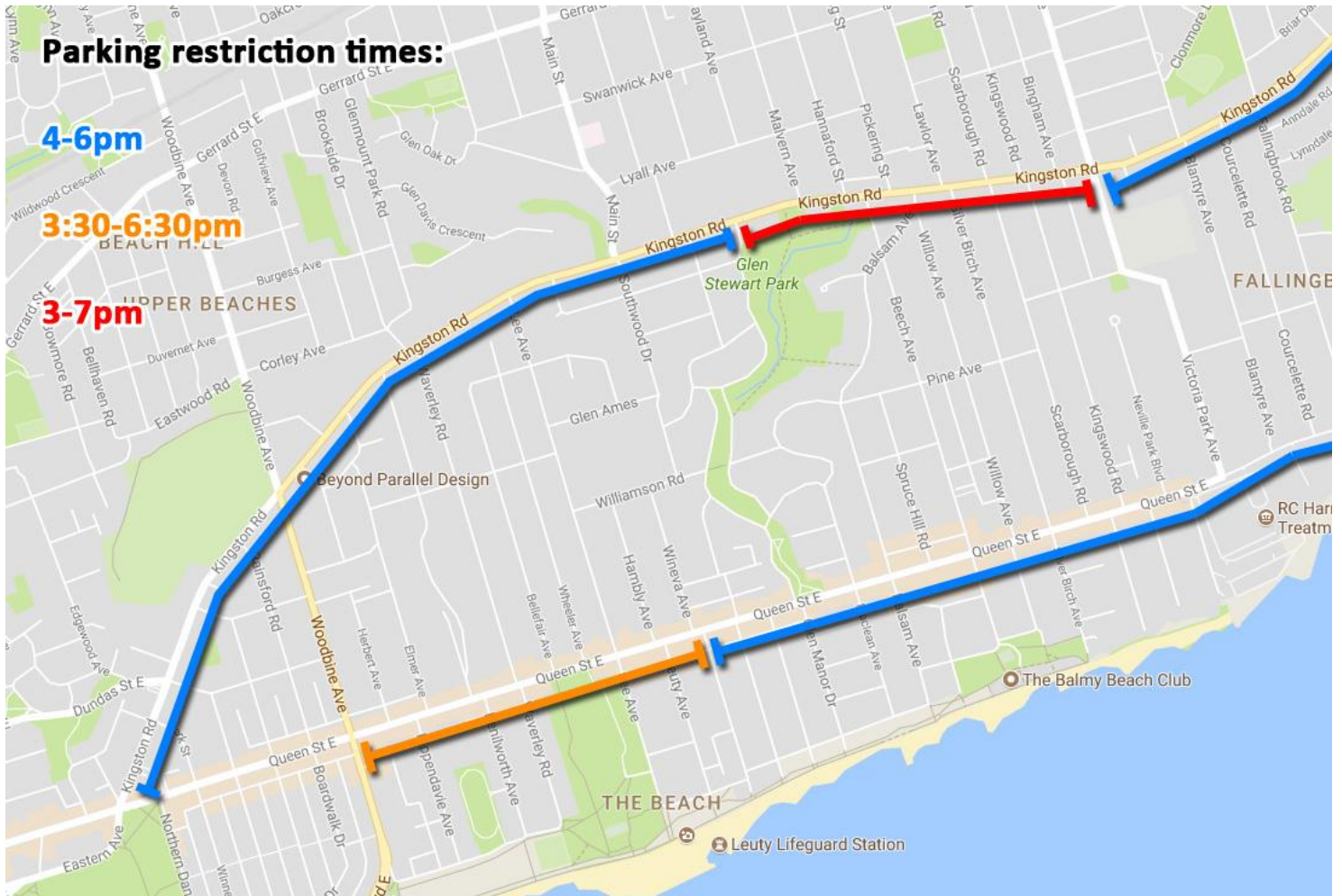
The signs telling trucks where they are forbidden however have no directional arrows, sometimes using words that are near impossible to read on such a tiny sign while driving by, or in the case of Lakeshore and Coxwell, it's not clear if the arrow refers to the truck sign or the Highway 2 sign (the Highway 2 sign and arrow should be green, not white).

The city should start placing new "no truck" signs with arrows on them, starting in problem areas like Highway 2 and Woodbine, where according to the latest traffic counts, 26 trucks per day make that illegal left turn. The signs also need to be a bit bigger, they are easy to miss.



4. Consistent parking restrictions on Highway 2

This aspect ties in to the anecdote about changing rush hour parking restrictions on Queen mentioned in the accompanying report “Improving the Woodbine Bike Lanes”. When the city changed parking restrictions on Queen to improve transit times, they also did so on Highway 2, and with the same narrow logic. So where transit moves slowest, they put in a 3-7pm restriction, but it is boxed in by 4-6pm restrictions.



Again, this takes an overly simplistic approach to the problem, and is a bandaid solution that affects businesses from losing parking. It's hard to say which variables were affecting transit in that stretch of Highway 2, especially as early as 3pm, but there are three high schools on or near that route. The Bingham Loop for transit is also there, requiring transit to compete with traffic waiting to turn left on Victoria Park to get into the loop. And that exact area, starting at Beech, there is a wall-to-wall commercial strip, both north and south side. But a likely large contributor to the slowdown is the traffic using Queen as a thoroughfare, then cutting north to go farther east on Highway 2. It must be acknowledged, very little of the traffic congestion is due to local traffic, it's mostly vehicles passing through on their way farther east.

If parking restrictions were consistent on eastbound Highway 2 all the way from Queen to Victoria Park it would allow for a smoother, more predictable route of travel for vehicles. It would also take pressure off Queen and most importantly, off Woodbine. Other than a small strip at Highway 2 and Southwood, there is not a single commercial space on the south side of Highway 2 until east of Malvern, so further restricting parking in that area would not have much of a negative economic impact.

Parking restrictions on eastbound Highway 2 from Queen to Victoria Park should be 3-7pm the whole way, with periodic checks on transit times on Queen. Making Highway 2 a more viable route may redirect much of the through traffic on Queen enabling it to have a less restrictive time.

5. Prioritize Highway 2 as the preferred route

This recommendation can be split into a few different sub-recommendations that can be implemented individually, or for maximum effect, all together.

- A) Increase the timing of the advance left turn signals at Eastern & Coxwell and Coxwell & Lakeshore
- B) Reduce the timing of the left turn advance from westbound Highway 2 onto southbound Woodbine
- C) Add a left turn advance from eastbound Highway 2 onto northbound Woodbine
- D) Reconfigure lanes at Eastern & Coxwell to prioritize Highway 2 traffic
- E) Add an extra left turn lane from eastbound Lakeshore onto northbound Coxwell

The Google map of Woodbine says it all. The left side is the existing Google map, showing Woodbine as the yellow minor highway route to Lakeshore, while Highway 2 is relegated to white. It should be noted, other than this stretch of Woodbine, Highway 2 is the ONLY yellowed street in all Toronto, because it is a minor highway. Woodbine is NOT a minor highway, the right map is how it should look.



- A) Increase the timing of the advance left turn signals at westbound Eastern & Coxwell and eastbound Coxwell & Lakeshore

The main reason trucks would rather use Woodbine to or from Highway 2 is because using the Coxwell-Eastern connection they would have to wait to make left turns that do not have advances outside of rush hour. At Lakeshore turning north onto Coxwell, and at Eastern turning south on Coxwell, the advance lefts only activate during rush hour, whereas the advance from westbound Highway 2 onto southbound Woodbine runs all day long, and at the same time there is an advance right turn from northbound Woodbine onto eastbound Highway 2. This timing of the light at Woodbine and Highway 2 prioritizes Woodbine as the route to take, instead of Highway 2, the designated truck route.



- B) Reduce the timing of the left turn advance from westbound Highway 2 onto southbound Woodbine

This advance left turn light (and the accompanying right turn advance) is the other main reason that trucks and other traffic prefer Woodbine as the route to the Lakeshore. The advance here runs all day long, as late as 9pm, possibly later. It clearly prioritizes Woodbine as an easier, faster route, as it makes turning on Woodbine more convenient.

It is also peculiar this advance runs during evening rush hour when the bulk of traffic is going the other way. According to the city's traffic study, from 4-6pm westbound left and through traffic are 317 and 838 respectively, whereas eastbound it is 417 (32% higher) and 1361 (62% higher). Yet the advance light still favours westbound.

This light should be reduced in the length it shows an advance, and outside of morning rush hour the advance should be eliminated at most other times, especially during evening rush hour.

- C) Add a left turn advance from eastbound Highway 2 onto northbound Woodbine

This idea comes from a resident on Woodbine who has witnessed many car accidents from this direction. Turning left here the streets intersect at an odd angle, making for possible conflicts with oncoming traffic if the left turning car angles themselves too much. As previously mentioned, traffic volumes do support giving priority to eastbound traffic, the advance would not only make it easier to turn left, but having a longer eastbound light will encourage more traffic to use Highway 2 instead of Woodbine, easing the congestion that the city argues makes left turn lanes untenable.

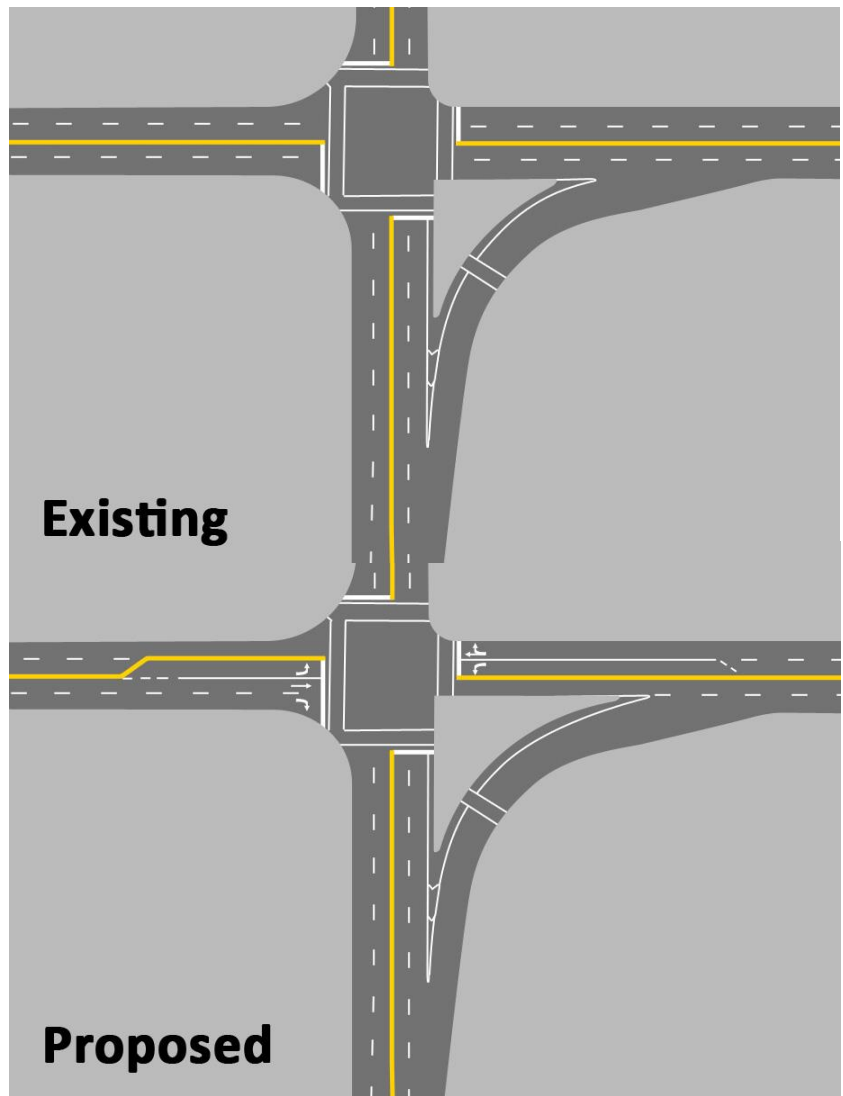
D) Reconfigure lanes on Eastern and Coxwell to prioritize Highway 2 traffic

Here's where the ideas get a bit more radical. If commercial trucks concerned about an easy efficient route are to be convinced without enforcement that the Coxwell-Eastern connection is preferable to the Lakeshore-Woodbine connection, the route must be as stoppage-free as possible for them.

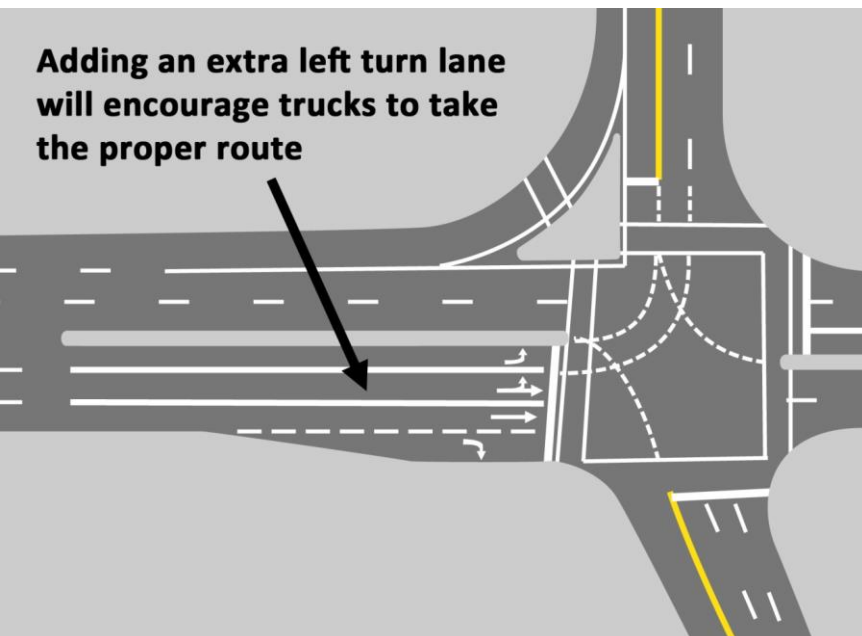
Eastern Ave pinches down to one lane at the Greenwood TTC yard, so it's already primed to remain one lane as it approaches Coxwell.

Adding a dedicated left turn lane on westbound Eastern, and a northbound right turn lane that does not require vehicles to yield to eastbound through traffic, would make for much smoother flowing traffic. Barring any pedestrians, traffic turning east from Coxwell will actually find this easier than turning east from Woodbine.

This would have little effect on traffic on Eastern, as through traffic is usually down to one lane because of someone making a left.



E) Add an extra left turn lane from eastbound Lakeshore onto northbound Coxwell



It's not enough to extend the advance left turn light if trucks are truly going to favour turning here, adding another left turn lane (that also goes straight through) will further incentivize trucks because it makes it easier for them to not get stuck trying to make that left turn.

Conclusions:

Highway 2 is a viable transportation corridor not being used to full potential. With a few tweaks to prioritize its use it can ease congestion, move traffic faster, discourage trucks from illegal behaviour, and even improve transit times.

Some of these suggestions are backed by evidence, some are just a vision of creating a better functioning, more efficient transportation network. But not everything can be driven by evidence, sometimes the evidence for the potential success of an idea does not exist until the idea has been implemented. The city understood this when it came to putting in the Woodbine bike lanes. Previous bike counts are irrelevant to what building the bike lanes might result in. Richmond and Adelaide lanes proved if you build it they will come. The same can be for prioritizing Highway 2 to lure illegal trucks and move traffic. Daily enforcement cannot be expected, so decisions must be made to make the illegal route less favourable, because right now the designated truck route is not appealing.

As always, please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions, or to give me feedback.

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