

Making a Better Connection to the Waterfront Trail

By Adam Smith

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Introduction:

The city is about to embark on another extreme solution to transportation infrastructure in the Triangle area of the Beach. I previously submitted a [report](#) to city council on the over-building of the Woodbine-Norway intersection, and it seems about to happen again. The city is planning to add yet another set of lights on Woodbine at Dixon Ave, and replacing a crosswalk with lights at Lockwood and Queen.

This was announced by the city yet there has been no consultation with residents on either the design or the impacts.

The most logical solution would have been to properly complete the Woodbine cycle track down to the Martin Goodman Trail instead of a convoluted back-tracking route through side streets, but opposition

is high and there seems to be little political will for that most obvious solution. However, much of the proposed plans are made unnecessary with a bit of reconfiguration. Below are recommendations that will save the city money and save residents from the loss of parking spots, the increase in side street traffic congestion, and more grey poles sprouting up in front of their houses shining new over-bright LED lights into their homes at all hours of the day.

Recommendations:

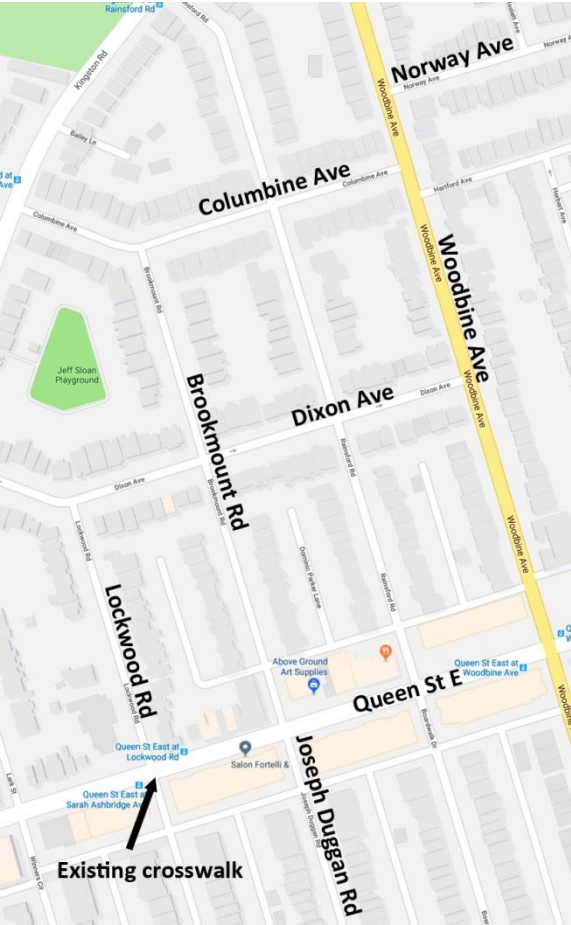
1. **Scrap the lights at Dixon and reroute the bike route from Dixon onto Columbine as was first proposed**
2. **Make the crosswalk at Lockwood a traffic light crosswalk instead of a full intersection**



↑ Before/After ↓



The poles in red are all the new poles added to the intersection. The leftmost pole is less than 6 feet from the existing wooden pole behind it. The blue pole was added barely a year later, and could have easily been combined with the pole to the right of it.



1. Scrap the lights at Dixon and reroute the bike route from Dixon onto Columbine as was first proposed

When the Woodbine-Norway intersection first was in there were plans on building a contraflow bike lane on Norway. Technical complications and residents’ opposition stopped those plans, but prior to that there was still an intention of linking bike routes near that intersection. The original Dixon contraflow bike route did not end at Woodbine and Dixon, but rather cut north, then east on Columbine, where it ended just south of the Woodbine-Norway intersection. This made more sense than ending at Dixon and Woodbine, as there are no lights there, whereas the lights at Norway would give a cyclist on Columbine opportunities to turn north on Woodbine safely. They also would have the option of getting off their bike and walking a very short distance to cross at the crosswalk.

As a resident living right at the intersection, when the lights at Norway went in I was appalled at the number of new poles that went up right beside existing poles, some with traffic lights positioned directly blocking people’s windows, so much so I wrote a [report](#) about it to city council.

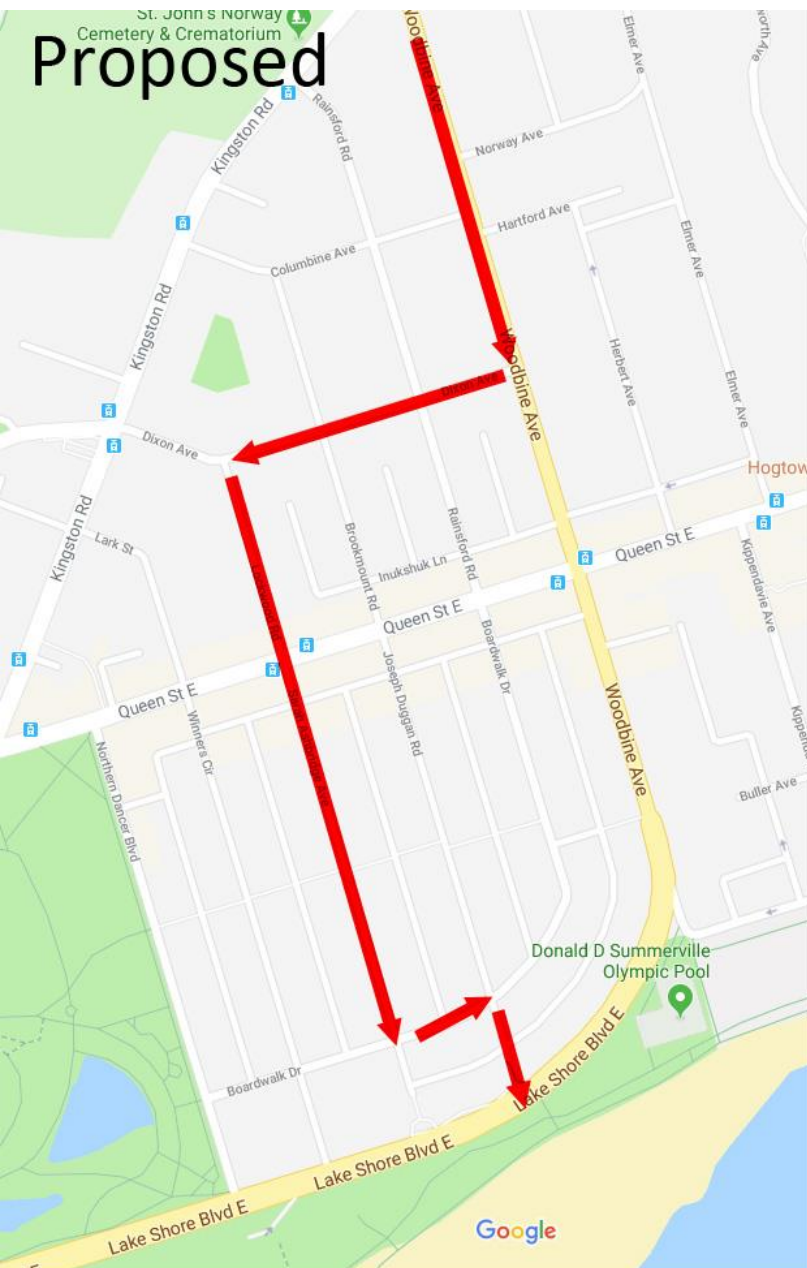
All residents wanted was a safe and legal place for pedestrians to cross Woodbine between Queen and Kingston, instead we got a full blown intersection that now holds up cars from turning south off Norway when it’s clear, which is all day outside of rush hour. However, the one thing that would make a whole intersection there logical is if it also gave opportunity for cyclists to safely turn north onto Woodbine.

But if the sole purpose of the Norway intersection was to create a pedestrian crossing, and now another set of lights is planned a short block south at Dixon, then what is the point of the Norway

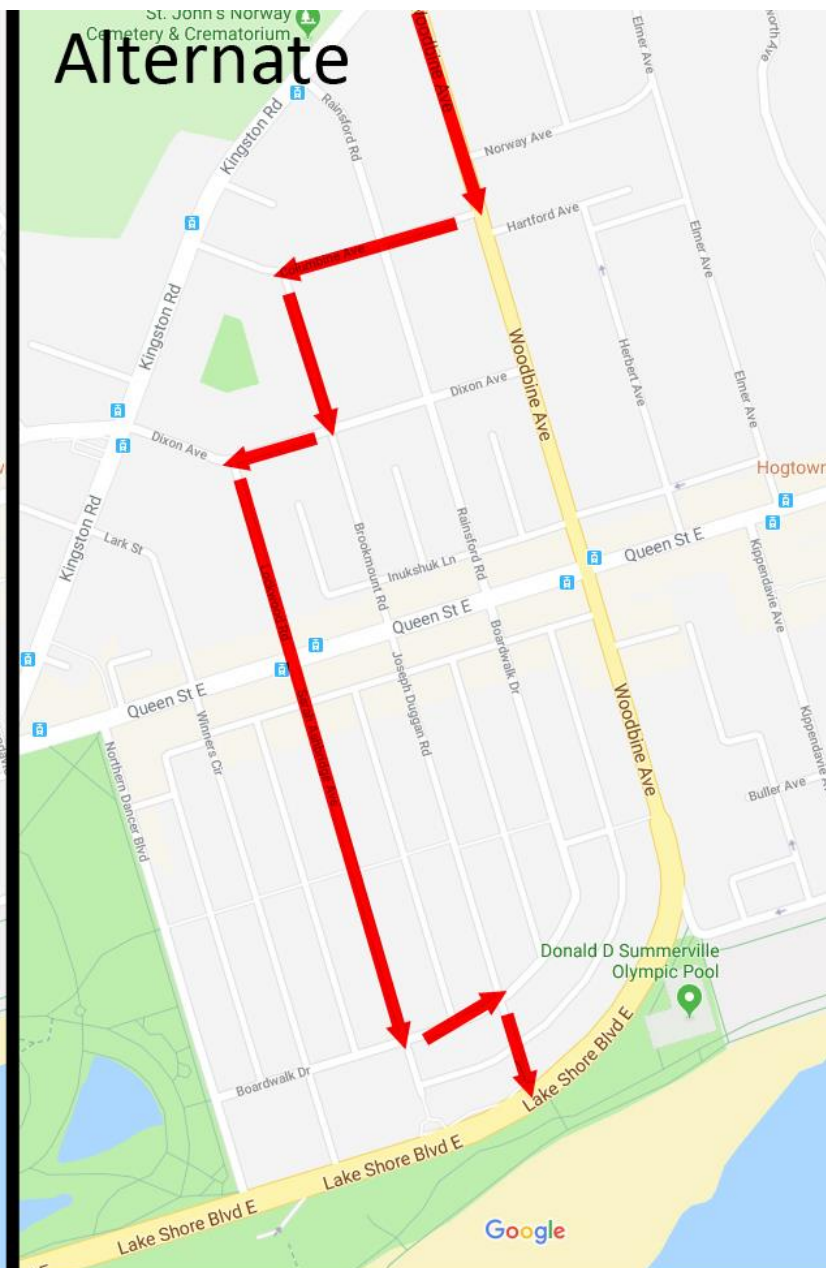


intersection? No one is requesting a second crosswalk and no cars have been held up using the Dixon intersection, the only purpose seems to be for cyclists, who have an alternative.

What makes more sense is to move the route back up to Columbine, negating the need for new lights at Dixon. Residents on Dixon have also complained that cars unfamiliar with the streets see the yellow line of the contraflow bike lane and occasionally turn the wrong way up the one-way street, begging the question if the last leg of the contraflow as it approaches Woodbine should be eliminated altogether, especially if encouraging cyclists to use Columbine so they don't end at Dixon and Woodbine.



As the city refused to extend the lanes the simplest most logical route straight down Woodbine, a convoluted route is unavoidable.



Aligning the route with Columbine negates the need for an intersection at Dixon, and removing part of the contraflow will solve other issues at Dixon and Woodbine.

2. Make the crosswalk at Lockwood a traffic light crosswalk instead of a full intersection

This does not require a full intersection; cyclists can easily use the crosswalk (I have on my bike many times, including to spread this petition), and it would actually be detrimental to traffic flow and would increase idling to make it a full intersection. These are small residential side streets, outside of rush hour it's very easy to turn off those streets. But to put in a full intersection means vehicles will have to wait to make left turns at times of the day when they could easily turn without having to wait, and because the streets are small, one person turning left will hold up every car behind them. In the case of Sarah Ashbridge cars will likely cut through the parking lots behind the condos to avoid the light. How does adding a full traffic light intersection make anything safer if cars will simply avoid the light to turn elsewhere?

In light of accelerating climate change it is not advisable to create more points where cars will have to idle waiting for a light. The Woodbine-Norway intersection has that issue, and initially the light favoured Woodbine for so long that drivers got out of their car to push the pedestrian walk signal in an attempt to speed up the changing of the light. This is also important if the city is considering banning right turns on red, as it means traffic going in any direction from a side street will be stuck waiting for the light as their car idles.

If a traffic light crosswalk can work on the busy and fast moving Lakeshore at Joseph Duggan it can surely be made to work on Queen St, negating the need for a full intersection.

Likely Side Effects of the new intersections:

Loss of Parking on Dixon:

There are also other consequences and knock-on effects to putting in a new intersection the city does not seem to have considered. Dixon at Woodbine is not very wide with the contraflow there, which means the city will likely remove some of the street parking to create both a left and right turn lane. As is common in most of the Beach, street parking is at a premium and the residents of the Triangle use nearly every spot available. To lose 2-3 parking spots in that short stretch will force those cars to park on other streets, and the displacement will simply worsen the crunch.

Increased traffic congestion and idling:

As mentioned above, the proposed plan would increase congestion and idling on Lockwood/Sarah Ashbridge, but similar effects will be felt at Dixon and Woodbine. With the extra narrow width due to the contraflow, people lining up to turn left from Dixon onto Woodbine could potentially also hold up anyone wanting to turn right (depending how many parking spots they eliminate to make a right turn lane). Dixon between Woodbine and Rainsford, being the short stretch it is, the lights could back

traffic up right to Rainsford, which will likely just drive traffic onto other streets to avoid the light, negating any increased safety the light offers.

More temptation to speed:

An unforeseen side effect I've witnessed on Norway and other small streets intersecting with major avenues is the temptation to speed up to make a light you know takes a while to change. When you know that a light favours a major avenue while you are stuck on a side street, and that rare, short-lived green light presents itself from a distance, it is very tempting to speed up to make that light. Part of this could be solved by better timing that takes into account lighter traffic outside of rush hour to give equal priority to side streets, but as it stands, side streets take a back seat to major avenues and it becomes frustrating for drivers living on those one-way side streets that have no alternative route.

While my experience with this is anecdotal, it would seem [new studies](#) are showing some truth to the notion, specifically regarding the psychological effects of the countdown timer. It would seem the timer has encouraged more speeding as drivers can calculate if it's worth speeding up to make a light. Adding two new intersections where the major avenue will have a long priority compared to the side streets will make the likelihood of speeding up to make the light greater.

Conclusion:

The solution proposed by the city is well-meaning for cyclists but is not considering the impacts to both livability and streetscape (by putting in more grey poles and lights) and the impacts to traffic (holding it up at new lights from small side streets that do not require lights to direct traffic) or that cyclists have alternatives. There also seems to be no measurement of cycling traffic on those routes.

With the money saved the city could put proper signage of the bike route on streets like Dixon, Columbine, and Brookmount, so it is more intuitively navigable for cyclists. Currently most cycling routes have very little signage on very small signs that are hard to notice and rarely located right at intersections. If the goal is to build a cycling network, that network must be obvious for those using it.

These solutions will not only make for a better route with less visual impacts, it will save the city a bundle of money, in the area of \$150K-\$200K if the price of the Norway intersection is any indication. I hope council considers these factors and decides to revisit the decision and design.

Thank you,

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