

**Submission from the
Civic Hospital Neighbourhood Association (CHNA)
on the
Rehabilitation/Replacement of Ottawa Queensway Mid-Town Bridges
(G.W.P. 4075-11-00)**

1. The Civic Hospital Neighbourhood Association (CHNA) has a great interest in five of the bridges to be rehabilitated as they are adjacent to the Civic Hospital neighbourhood: Holland, Parkdale, Fairmont, Bayswater and CPR/O-Train. The underpasses associated with these bridges serve as important connections between the primarily residential Civic Hospital neighbourhood and the adjacent Hintonburg neighbourhood with its homes, shops and services. Unfortunately, the bridge underpasses are currently dark tunnels that are unwelcoming to pedestrians and cyclists and they encourage the passage of excessive, speeding, cut-through vehicle traffic through the residential neighbourhoods.

2. These bridges could be replaced or rehabilitated, as per the Notice of Public Information. The decision has been made that the bridges adjacent to the Civic Hospital neighbourhood will be rehabilitated. The rehabilitation of these bridges offers a wonderful opportunity to implement some urban planning opportunities and design more welcoming neighbourhood connectors. This opportunity should be used as an important strategic stage towards transitioning the streets into modern, complete, urban streets (such as Laurier Avenue) with safer and more pleasant environments. At the same time, this will help both the Hintonburg and Civic Hospital Neighbourhoods manage the traffic that uses the bridge underpasses.

3. CHNA has identified a number of issues with the existing bridges and is submitting its suggestions to mitigate these issues and enhance the experience of pedestrians and cyclists who pass under the bridges:

4. *Issue: The bridge tunnels are currently dark, claustrophobic and sinister corridors. While they should function as welcoming gateways for pedestrians between the Hintonburg and Civic Hospital neighbourhoods, they are now unwelcoming barriers.*

Mitigation:

1) Ensure that the tunnels under the bridges are designed to be as bright as possible (using both lighting and white/light construction materials). This will help make the bridge underpass sites safer, brighter and more open.

2) Consider innovative lighting such as lighted bollards.

3) Ensure that the refurbished underpasses will be “paintable” for community-sponsored mural work.

5. *Issue: Pedestrians and cyclists are subjected to excessive noise, fumes and spray from vehicles speeding through the tunnels.*

Mitigation:

- 1) Increase the size of the sidewalks through the tunnels to provide pedestrians with sufficient space to distance themselves from the speeding vehicles, while at the same time leaving sufficient room for dedicated cycling lanes. CHNA suggests that MTO work with residents (pedestrians, cyclists and drivers) to determine the appropriate height and size of the sidewalks. This would also serve to be a traffic calming measure for this local street.**
- 2) Design the tunnels sides/walls to easily accommodate murals or designs that would encourage vehicles to slow down. Residents have suggested waves of colour or a clothesline design as ideas to discourage graffiti and encourage residents to add their own creative pictures.**
- 3) Work with the City of Ottawa to design road surfaces under the bridges (alternate pavement, pavers, etc.) that encourage traffic to slow down and therefore improve the pedestrian and cycling experience under the bridges.**
- 4) Work with the City of Ottawa to fix the very poor drainage in the Bridge underpasses. The Bayswater bridge has been specifically identified by residents as a “flood” location that must be addressed.**
- 5) Consider designing sidewalks that are clearly distinguished from the road pavement using a greater height differential (make the sidewalks higher), different materials and bollards.**

6. *Issue: The bridges are located in residential communities, but they are currently industrial, poorly-designed eyesores and the noise and visual barriers (on the south side of the bridges) are inadequate. A noise reduction barrier was added to the north side of the Queensway between Loretta and Preston, but not the south side despite the fact that both sides of the Queensway are residential neighbourhoods. Residents south of the Queensway report that the noise from this cross-town highway significantly and negatively affects their quality of life.*

Mitigation:

- 1) Install more attractive and better functioning noise and visual barriers (natural barriers such as cedars are preferred for soft landscaping) on and around the bridges to protect the adjacent residents/homes from the noise and light pollution into the neighbourhood from the Queensway traffic.**
- 2) CHNA does not support clear barriers along the bridges as they would only increase the “visual pollution” from the Queensway traffic.**
- 3) Design the noise and visual barriers to allow for the potential of future signage (such as the Little Italy neon signs on Preston Street).**

7. *Issue: The landscaping around the bridges is virtually non-existent. The unmaintained lands around the bridges are frequently used as dumps for garbage and detract from, when they should enhance, the attractiveness of the underpasses. Improved landscaping should be a consistent feature for all bridges as it enhances the beauty of the neighbourhood and shows respect for residents in the immediate vicinity of the bridges. These lands can also contribute to a healthy urban tree canopy.*

Mitigation:

- 1) Use planned, innovative landscape design around the bridges that discourages the dumping of garbage. Before the last construction activity at the bridge, the south slope was filled with hollyhocks, a perennial flower.
- 2) Consider adding a soft landscaping “policy” that allows/accommodates community-sponsored public art in the future.
- 3) Ensure that maintenance and grooming of the greenspaces around the bridges is funded over the long term.

8. *Issue: Many of the streets under the bridges (such as Bayswater Avenue) are designated City of Ottawa cycling routes, yet cyclists are currently threatened by speeding traffic as they move through the tunnels.*

Mitigation: Ensure that the ratio of sidewalk / cycling lanes / road surface under the bridges is designed to accommodate future “complete streets”, including installing physical barriers to separate cyclists from vehicle traffic (see Laurier Avenue West as an example of a complete street).

9. *Issue: The Preston-Carling Secondary Plan, approved in 2014 by Ottawa City Council, included a Multi-use Pathway (MUP) on both sides of the O-Train Corridor (at the CPR/O-Train Bridge). Private developers have already committed to build segments of this path as part of Section 37 benefits. It is included in the Preston-Carling and draft Gladstone CDPs. The City of Ottawa is encouraging residents to consider cycling as a regular mode of transit, including approving a student residence on Champagne Avenue that does not include parking. However, the current design does not include a MUP on the west side of the CPR/O-Train Bridge.*

Mitigation: Revisit the design of the CPR/O-Train Bridge to include MUPs on both the east and west sides of the bridge. This is a commitment to residents by the City of Ottawa that must be respected.

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