

St Thomas Aquinas: Summary of Observations from the School Walkabout October 24, 2016, 2:15pm-4:15pm

The Route

Total distance: 1.7km



Start/Finish: St Thomas Aquinas Catholic School, 636 Glenholme Avenue, M6E 3G9



Check point 1: Eglinton Avenue W at Locksley Avenue



Check point 2: Livingstone Avenue at Marlee Avenue



Check point 3 + Observation: Glenholme Avenue, at school's designated bus drop-off area



In attendance at the Walkabout:

Christine Coveney-Hunter (Principal), Lisa McMillan (Vice-Principal), Councillor Josh Colle (Ward 15 City Councillor), Police Constable Melissa Kulik, Adam Brutto (Supervisor of Planning/Demographer, TCDSB), Elisa Ricci (Toronto Public Health), Lancefield Morgan (Metrolinx- Crosstown Community Office), Laura Zeglen (Green Communities Canada-STP Facilitator)

Positive Aspects in Surrounding Neighbourhood	Potential Problem issues in Surrounding Neighbourhood
<p>Checkpoint 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Crossing guard at Northcliffe/Locksley* - Crossing guard at Northcliffe/Vaughan* *Not observed during our walk, but noted by Josh Colle <p>Checkpoint 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are currently “Do Not Enter” signs at the plaza on north side of Eglinton, near offset intersection of Northcliffe/Eglinton and Locksley/Eglinton, to deter cut-through traffic - Sidewalks on both sides of Livingstone (parallel street to Eglinton) - Traffic-calming measures on Livingstone, including a curb bump-out and 30km/h speed limit 	<p>Checkpoint 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Library is a hangout for many students after school, but there is currently no supervised programming (kids get into trouble there) <p>Checkpoint 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Challenging pedestrian crossings at Northcliffe/Eglinton and Locksley/Eglinton, with dangerous driver behaviour often observed (i.e. cutting through plaza on north side of Eglinton, despite signage; turning right onto Eglinton from Northcliffe and then left onto Locksley, but treating it as if it is a single, connected street); City Transportation Department currently looking into what can be done about this intersection
	
<p>Checkpoint 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Crossing guard at Marley/Eglinton - North/south crossing at Oakwood/Eglinton being moved 90m east of intersection due to construction; this has previously been identified as a dangerous intersection, so this is an opportunity to pilot test a more permanent move of this crossing - Signalized crossing at Glenholme/Eglinton - Crossing guard at Glenholme/Eglinton <p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Area well-served by public transit; will be even better served once Crosstown construction is complete - Many one-way streets with traffic-calming measures in place (e.g. speed bumps) 	<p>Checkpoint 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oakwood station is a “mined” station, which means there will be less road disruption but more construction-related truck traffic - Also, station construction will be taking place at Dufferin (will have impacts on local traffic) - Sidewalk along Eglinton will become narrower during construction; at some points, pedestrians will have to cross the street to get around construction, or walk on the street (separated by barrier) - Lots of jaywalking crossing Eglinton - Lots of westbound traffic observed along Eglinton (beginning of afternoon rush)

Positive Aspects at School Site	Potential Problem issues at School Site
<p>Access to school site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Easy pedestrian access to the school from all directions (students can enter the school from behind to the west, or from the front to the east) <p>Staff parking lot (back of school):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School staff are getting parking tags to display in their window, to discourage non-staff parking and other traffic in the lot behind the school (many children access the school from the west) 	<p>Access to school site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many strangers hang around near the school site (it is close to other public buildings, school site is a natural cut-through point for pedestrians between Glenholme/Northcliffe) <p>Staff parking lot (back of school):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clearer signs may be needed in staff parking lot to discourage non-staff parking during school hours - Sidewalk for pedestrians through parking lot, preferably fenced, would make this access point to the school much safer for students
	
<p>Undeveloped land southwest of school site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential future positive: undeveloped parcel of land southwest of the school has potential to be developed into more welcoming public space (as raised by Josh Colle) <p>Proximity to other community spaces:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Close to public library (potential for future programming) and church (currently has youth group meeting on Fridays) 	<p>Undeveloped land southwest of school site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undeveloped parcel of land at southwest access point to school is currently unwelcoming/feels unsafe <p>School bus access to school site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With increased construction on Eglinton, buses approaching the school from the north (currently all of them) will likely get stuck in construction traffic on Eglinton; potential for delays

Other notes:

- Christine noted that this school has a unique catchment, in that many students live outside of walking distance and a majority are bussed; therefore, our school travel planning for this school will need to keep this in mind
- It was discussed that involving the priest of St Thomas Aquinas Church (next door to school) in our committee would be a good idea
- After-school programming at local library would help reduce delinquent behaviour of students who spend time there after school

Potential Action Items

These potential action items were identified during the walkabout or in the discussion following. As a school travel planning committee, we will work to identify additional approaches, and to discuss the merit, timing and responsibility (i.e. who would be best to take it on) of each.

1) Keeping school community updated about construction updates where it will impact

traffic/pedestrian routes: Christine asked if Metrolinx can keep the school up to speed on all upcoming construction activities before they happen. Lancefield said that he will add Christine and the school secretary to the mailing list, once he has Christine's email address. Laura also explained that she will send out all construction updates to the STP committee (so that people get the message more than once/have a greater chance of seeing it). Adam explained that school buses will be rerouted when there are changes to the roads with construction.

2) Map of Safe Walking Zones: Adam offered that he can bring this to our next meeting, to outline the areas that have been identified by the school board as potentially dangerous for students walking/cycling to school.

3) Monitor new pedestrian crossing 90m east of Oakwood: The north-south crossing at Oakwood has previously been identified as dangerous for pedestrians, so this is an opportunity to pilot test a more permanent move of this crossing.

4) Addition of fenced sidewalk around parking lot behind school: To make the parking lot safer for children walking through, particularly if the lot becomes a 'Green P' lot, there must be a dedicated (and ideally protected) pedestrian walkway so that students are not dodging cars in the parking lot.

5) Development of vacant lot by southwest access point to school: Josh explained that he has previously raised the possibility of this land being developed into park space, to make it more welcoming to the community. In the past there was resistance to this idea, with concerns about encouraging loitering in the space; but it may also have potential to make the space more welcoming for families and students walking to school.



*Our Walkabout Team.
(Missing from the photo:
Councillor Josh Colle, and
Laura Zeglen)*