* Thank you Chair Ribiero and commissioners. I greatly appreciate your taking the time to consider the request that Alder Hurt and I filed last year, after Chris Lim was tragically killed in October while riding his bike through the York and S. Frontage intersection. We requested the middle lane turn arrow on York Street be removed, for a leading pedestrian signal, and for a bike lane starting at Howard Ave and continuing on through S. Frontage Road towards Downtown.
* I am guessing you are familiar with the York & S. Frontage St. intersection and how it is NOT designed for the safety of the large number of pedestrians and cyclists who cross there every day – and intersect with a high volume of often speeding vehicular traffic. I actually first met Director Hausladen in 2008, when both of us were advocating for traffic safety measures at this intersection after another individual, Mila Rainoff, was tragically killed in this same location.
* It is critical that the middle turn arrow is removed and so I appreciate that it will be removed under the plan Doug presented. Chris Lim would be alive today if that middle lane did not have a right turn arrow. I very much hope such double turn arrows get removed elsewhere in the city, before someone else is injured or killed.
* While myself and Alder Hurt were advocating that a bike lane be added, I appreciate that because of Downtown Crossing construction, the roadway landscape, at least for five months, will be very different than it was when we filed our request and when almost 900 people signed a petition supporting our request, which you all should have received.
* And I understand that with the proposed three lane configuration – to allow for two-way traffic and a right turn lane - there is not room to safely include a bike lane, because five feet are needed for a bike lane.
* Two-way traffic does slow traffic, so that is positive.
* However, I want to emphasize that the large number of people signing that petition show how people are demanding the York and S. Frontage intersection be made safer for vulnerable road users. It is very hard to know what the road use will be like during the construction. It is possible few vehicles will turn right from York onto S. Frontage, since it no longer provides easy highway access. I appreciate Director Hausladen saying they will monitor its use and I ask that if it is low after one-month, serious consideration be given to removing the turn lane and turning that into a bike lane.
* I also appreciate Director Hausladen suggesting our request should be kept open and I ask that if on October 20, York is turned back to one-way, you reconsider Alder Hurt’s and my request for a bike lane – because in that configuration a bike lane would safely fit and I, as well as about 900 people, strongly believe it is necessary to keep cyclists safe.
* Finally, I want to emphasize the urgency of making change at this intersection. I am appreciative of Rep. Lemar’s bill that hopefully eventually will allow for a speed camera at York and S. Frontage and for the city seeking state funds for infrastructure to slow traffic along S. Frontage. But it is critical to push on all fronts before more lives are lost. For example, while the bollards placed on the corners of S. Frontage and MLK Blvd and York St. in Jan. 2020 are a valuable safety improvement, they were installed three years after Melissa Tancredi was killed when a car went onto the sidewalk. We cannot slowly and reactively address our traffic safety crisis. We must be proactive and act with urgency.
* Again, thank you for your consideration.