



# At the Forks

The Magazine of the Friends of the Don East

Volume 9

Fall 2002

Issue 3

## Wider DVP will increase traffic

*Guest Essay by Richard Gilbert*



It's a pretty safe bet that widening the Don Valley Parkway would increase the amount of traffic along and near its route. Here's why.

Building a road in a remote place doesn't cause traffic to happen. A highway running due north out of Yellowknife would be empty. But, in a large urban area, more roads mean more traffic because limited road capacity helps keep traffic under some kind of control.

Road traffic is primarily determined by the number of cars that are owned. It's a remarkable fact that in each

country the average number of kilometres driven per car hardly changes from year to year. Add 10 per cent more cars and you get about 10 per cent more traffic, and so on.

Within an urban region like the GTA, things are a bit more complex. In denser parts of the region, the car ownership rate is below the national average, and the cars that are owned are driven fewer-than-average kilometres.

One factor that causes the difference

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## Exploring the Moore Park ravine

*by Jurgen Braunohler*

Take the 88 bus along Moore Avenue past Mount Pleasant Cemetery, and you'll find a path almost hidden in the foliage. It's on the south side, east of Welland, where the bus turns the corner. Down the steep trail lies Moore Park Ravine. In it the path widens to resemble a road. On a bike, you can practically coast two kilometres down to the Don Valley Brickworks, where the phantom road becomes a path once more. In between there is no traffic, and history haunts the place.

There is some odd handiwork in a dirt path as broad as a two-lane road, and neatly levelled. In the 1890's this

was part of the Belt Line Railway that ran for 25 miles around the outside of Toronto – built as a better way to move freight than bringing it right through the city. It also gave people access to nature, and was hailed as an idea 30 years ahead of its time.

Not long before, the public had embraced train travel after the debacle of the first highways beset by political quarrels, tollgates and the miseries of stagecoach travel.

It's a mystery then why so few people made use of the Belt Line. It died out after a couple of years, and

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# More roads generate more traffic

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between denser areas such as the former City of Toronto and Borough of East York and less dense areas such as Markham and Richmond Hill is the amount of road space. Other factors are availability of transit and nearness of destinations. There's less car ownership and driving in and near the core of the region because it's easier to get to places in other ways.

Add road capacity, and you nibble away at one of the checks on car ownership and use. Both increase, and roads become congested again. The balance becomes restored, but at overall higher levels of automobile use, gasoline use, local pollution, and noise.

Thus widening the Don Valley Parkway would increase traffic overall not so much because more people would use it to drive downtown and back from the suburbs (although this could be a contributing factor), but because people who live along the

route would be slightly more inclined to own cars and slightly more inclined to drive their cars more. The combination of these small effects could mean a lot more traffic overall.

Other countries, notably the United States, are moving away from the 'predict and provide' practice of adding capacity whenever a route seems congested. They are trying harder to meet people's travel needs in ways that reduce adverse impacts on the environment and on the livability of communities. This usually means adding transit capacity, but it also means figuring out other ways of helping people live better without a car—or without a second car or a third car.

We need more of this kind of thinking in Toronto.

*Richard Gilbert is a Toronto-based urban issues consultant focusing on transportation, with clients in North America, Europe, and Asia.*

## At the Forks

Volume 9, Number 3

Editor: Don McLean

*At the Forks is printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper.*

*Views expressed are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the views of the editor or of the Board of Directors of Friends of the Don East.*



*The front yard of this cabbagetown home is enhanced by a naturalization that makes good use of the shade provided by mature Red Maple and Tamarack trees. The home is one of the nominees for an ecological gardening award in this year's "Another Yard for the Don" program. The program recognizes properties that avoid pesticide use, reduce water consumption, utilize native plants, install rainbarrels and composters, and take other steps to enhance wildlife habitat and protect the Don River watershed. Winners will be announced on Sunday, November 17 at Todmorden Mills Museum on Pottery Road, during the annual general meeting of Friends of the Don East. The ceremony begins at 7:00 pm and is open to the public. See page 7 for details.*

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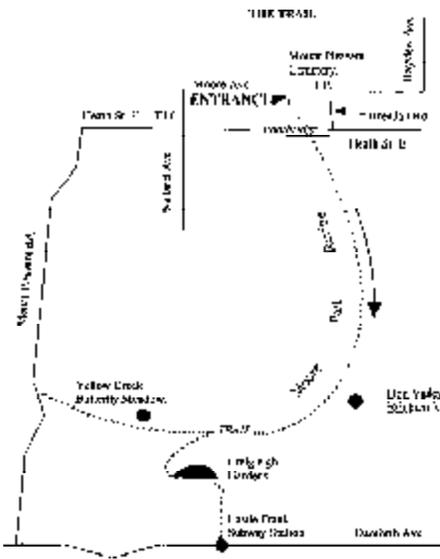
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# Exploring the Moore Park ravine

*Continued from page one*

shortly afterwards the Toronto to Parry Sound train started its regular run through the Don Valley. According to the late Charles Sauriol in *Remembering the Don*, work was begun in Moore Park Ravine on a traffic artery. It too died an early death, and instead the Don Valley Parkway and Bayview Extensions were built a few years later.



Ironically, we now have tracks and highways all over the city, while an unfinished ravine road that began as a strategy to re-route freight, leads nowhere today. It still serves the purpose of giving people access to unspoiled nature, only this time inside the city. Just how unspoiled it is you can judge for yourself.

Mud Creek emerges from the ground under Moore Avenue and zig-zags towards the Don River, sometimes disappearing underground. There is the odd sewer outfall, and the slopes show

signs of nakedness and erosion in places. One home built on the edge of a slope is beginning to show its foundations. But a footbridge spanning the ravine (accessible from

bus stops on either side of the entrance, or the ravine itself) affords a nice view of the leafy canopy.

There are regenerating ponds. This particular wilderness was once the boyhood haunt of naturalist Ernest Thompson Seton, in the 1870s. A park near the Forks of the Don was named after him, and Moore Park Ravine has figured in two of his books: *Two Little Savages* and *Trail of an Artist-Naturalist*.

A half hour walk brings one to the Brickworks, with at least a couple of paths leading into it. This defunct quarry has been re-worked into a nature preserve with ponds and trails everywhere. There is much history here too, human and natural, the subject of another exploration.

The main trail now curves out of Moore Park Ravine, past a highway ramp and a sign marked "designated area for unleashed dogs". Just beyond is a fork in the path. Turn left and within a quarter hour one reaches Craighigh Gardens and Castle Frank Road, which leads to the subway.

But if you keep right, the trail leads past the Yellow Creek Butterfly Meadow, on its way to Mount Pleasant Road. Marked by a sign and a large rock on your right, the meadow is home to Monarchs and swallowtails, Black-eyed Susans and asters.

*Note: Since there is no bus service on Mount Pleasant south of St. Clair, be prepared to walk south and west to Rosedale subway station. To reach the north entrance to Moore Park Ravine, take the 88 bus from Thorncliffe Park Drive or the St. Clair subway station.*

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# Pilot tree inventory warmly received

by L

East Torontonians opened their yards and their hearts this summer to a pilot tree inventory program run by Friends of the Don East. Volunteers with the Trees Count project visited hundreds of homes to measure tree sizes, identify species, and record data on a wide range of measures of tree health. Data was collected on over 400 public and privately-owned trees.

The teams of volunteers also identified over 100 locations where new trees could be planted. Along the way they provided advice and

encouragement to local residents. They were warmly welcomed by homeowners who were eager to protect their existing trees and learn how to obtain additional ones.

More than 60 people volunteered to take part in the test inventory, and some participated in three or more of the five separate inventories conducted in August and September.

“The response from concerned residents was overwhelming”, reported coordinator Allan Sinclair. “The unique opportunity to experience

**Information will  
be used to plan  
the urban forest  
in Toronto  
communities**

## Roots and pavement

by Peter Hare

One of the things being recorded by the Trees Count program is the amount of paved surface near trees. This is because paving can damage the roots of existing trees and reduce the rooting space for future trees.

When you look at a tree, what you see (the trunk, branches and leaves) is not the whole tree. The roots of trees often spread out underground further than the branches do. While the roots are not visible, as they are below the ground, they play a vital part in the tree's well-being. Not only do they physically support the tree, but they also pick up moisture and the minerals dissolved in groundwater that nourish the tree. If the roots are not able to do this job, the branches and leaves will sicken and die.

A tree living in a front yard that has been paved for a parking pad will not die immediately. It will take a few years, but eventually branches may start to die and in many cases the entire tree expires. The paving has killed the roots by robbing them of moisture and air.

While the upper parts of the tree always have a good supply of air, the roots depend on the air in the soil. Normally fresh air seeps into the ground from above, but if blocked by paving, the air in the ground goes stale and cannot provide the oxygen that the roots need to live. That is one reason why porous paving is recommended for driveways and parking pads.

Different species of trees react differently to these assaults. Birches are shallow rooted and react badly to disturbance; even a light layer of fill over their roots will kill them. Oaks, on the other hand, are deep-rooted and can often withstand a disturbance that will kill other species such as the maples.

Willows are equipped to withstand the shortage of air in waterlogged flooded land and so are found growing in flood plains.

Wherever possible, pavement and other impervious surfaces should not be placed within the dripline of a tree. At the very least, hard surfaces within this area should be minimized.



# ed in east Toronto neighbourhoods

cLean

## Volunteers record tree data in four neighbourhoods

different private properties and listen to the residents' concerns about the health of their trees made the inventory work very rewarding for everyone involved."

Trees Count uses the *Neighbourwoods* method developed at the University of Toronto to determine the health of the urban forest and help communities develop long-term management plans to protect and enhance tree cover in their neighbourhoods. The methodology allows the actual inventory work to be carried

out by lay volunteers who go through short training sessions that provide them with sufficient skills to collect essential information about the trees that make up our urban forest.

This summer's project was funded by the Toronto Atmospheric Fund. It was a test of the methodology, the willingness of homeowners to allow their backyard trees to be examined, and the responsiveness and ability of volunteers to do the work.

While the data has not yet been evaluated, it appears that the project was successful in all aspects. It also won warm support from councillors Layton, McConnell, Ootes, Pantalone and Pitfield, as well as extensive media coverage in the community papers and on CBC radio.

The tree information gathered by the project will be used to guide tree maintenance programs, support

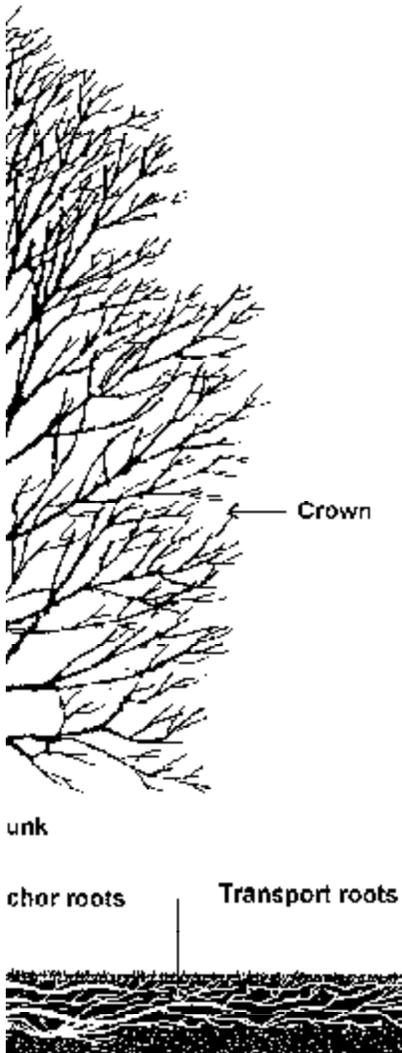


Allan Sinclair (left) and Joe MacInnes doing the inventory. Measuring the trunk diameter helps determine the age of the tree.

planting of new trees, and calculate the ability of the urban forest to store and sequester carbon and remove other air pollutants. A final report on the pilot project will be issued in November along with recommendations on a large-scale implementation next year.

Trees provide multiple benefits to urban neighbourhoods including improving poor air quality and reducing extreme summer heat. These conditions can also affect the health and longevity of our urban forest.

A particular emphasis of the Trees Count project is to protect existing trees and help communities take steps to enhance local tree cover. FODE has invited Dr. Andy Kenney, the initiator of the Trees Count project, to be our guest speaker at our November 17 annual general meeting and provide more information on our urban forest. See page 7 for info on this public event.



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# Road building at odds with community well-being

by Steven Peck, Chair of FODE

All over Ontario there are growing cries – more roads, more roads — touted as the solution to the growing gridlock which is tightening its grip on the Greater Toronto Area. The next decade promises to be filled with major conflict between those who would pave Ontario versus those who want to save our dwindling green spaces and protect our communities.

The battle is not a fair one to say the least. On one side are mostly powerful well-funded lobby groups and those with a direct, vested interest in the construction of new roadways. They are backed by some commuters who are frustrated by traffic jams on highways and traffic flow through their communities.

On the other hand, there are grassroots environmental groups such as FODE, the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and others who are working to save endangered green spaces across the province, including the Niagara Escarpment, Red Hill Valley, the Rouge and Don River Valley's and Crothers Woods – a treasured Environmentally Sensitive Area in South Leaside.

There is no quick fix to effectively deal with the problems of excessive auto use in Southern Ontario. Fifty years of sprawling auto-dependent development means we are stuck with a certain amount of the smog, water and land pollution as well as the negative social and economic impacts associated with gridlock and lengthy car journeys each day. It's hard to believe, but a 1.5 hour daily commute translates into a grueling 36 twelve hour days in a car each year – time not spent with family or volunteering in the community! Building more expressways is certain to encourage even more automobile use, subsidize even more urban sprawl, (witness the



*The Don River continues to recover from decades of neglect and abuse. Areas like these make an invaluable contribution to healthy communities.*

407), and provide only very short term traffic relief, until the demand once again exceeds supply and gridlock resumes – now on six lanes each way, instead of four.

There are solutions – tried and true – and many jurisdictions have turned the corner. Implementing Toronto's draft Official Plan is a good start! It seeks to increase our population through well-designed infill development in places such as the waterfront and along major arterial roads.

The more people that move to the Greater Toronto Area and live in well designed, transit-supported communities, the better. Low density, sprawling development must be checked in order to manage the growth of private auto use and to protect greenspace and dwindling prime agricultural lands.

Accommodating more growth in Toronto is part of the solution. Making it easier to walk, bike, roller blade is another. Building new communities that provide easy, walking access to shopping, leisure

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**Implementing the draft Official Plan is a good start to providing healthy communities**

*Steven Peck is Chair of Friends of the Don East and a consultant on Sustainable Community Development*



# No to Redway Road Extension

by Don McLean

**A September 2002  
FODE walk in  
Crother's Woods  
was attended by  
more than 70  
people.**

The draft Official Plan for the City of Toronto designates the extension of Redway Road to Bayview as a "planned but unbuilt road". Friends of the Don East have written to city officials suggesting that this reference mars an otherwise excellent document that is the most forward-looking Official Plan in Toronto's history.

The resurrection of this piece of the rejected Leslie Street Extension also flies in the face of the transportation vision to reduce car dependence in Toronto and protect the natural environment. If built, it would pass through the environmentally sensitive Crother's Woods, one of the finest hardwood forest habitats remaining in the central city.

The old knee-jerk response of

sacrificing another natural area to auto dependency must come to an end. More roads generate more traffic, and reasonable measures exist such as traffic calming to address problems such as cut-through traffic and congestion.

The Don Valley is a unique natural environmental feature of the eastern part of the City. Roads and built areas can never replicate the unique sense of place and community which this feature gives to residents of the City.

With the aid of thousands of volunteers and residents and the commitment and resources of the City and its staff, the Valley is slowly being rehabilitated after over a hundred years of abuse and neglect. Now is not the time for further abuse!

## Friends of the Don East Annual General Meeting

Sunday, November 17 at Todmorden Mills Museum, Pottery Rd. between Bayview and Broadway

Guest speaker: Dr. Andy Kenney on Protecting Our Urban Forest

6 pm Potluck – 7 pm Awards and Business – 8 pm Guest Speaker

**Traffic calming  
can allow  
communities to  
'take back' their  
streets and make  
them safer**

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facilities and green space is another important approach.

Increased long-term funding for public transit is another important policy measure. New people moving into Toronto must have access to efficient public transit and be able to utilize existing infrastructure – saving us money and improving air quality. In the existing suburbs, intensification of key nodal areas can help support public transit and relieve development pressure on remaining green space.

Policies that make it more difficult, not easier, for cars to travel into Toronto and through our neighbourhoods are all welcome steps. Traffic calming measures, such as speed bumps, can allow communities to 'take back' their streets, making them safer for children and pedestrians.

Providing financial incentives for employees to use public transit and

providing disincentives for auto use, such as higher parking charges and fewer spaces are other important measures.

Many of these measures may be politically unpopular in some circles and will require leadership. Yet shifting public policy firmly away from private auto use and the type of sprawling development that requires it, will be critical to ensuring the well-being of our existing communities and for that matter the province.

More of the same expressway and road-building will not only undermine the well-being of our existing communities and strain the public purse, but it will also cause irreparable damage to the precious remaining natural areas we now enjoy.

Supporting our efforts to stop proposals to extend Redway Road and widen the Don Valley Parkway are important steps in the right direction.



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# ESA threatened in North Leaside

by Andrew McCammon

Picturesque Burke Brook ravine – an Environmentally Significant Area (ESA) running east off of Bayview just north of Eglinton – provides both a refuge for wildlife and a pleasant walking area for local residents. Featuring steep slopes, mature woods, and a narrow valley floor with a gently winding brook, the ravine is a rarity in Toronto: a remnant of the Carolinian forest.

It was originally part of the former Sunnybrook Farm donated to the City in 1928 to become a public park “for all time”. A mid-1970s inventory by the Toronto Field Naturalists found 95 species of birds including Barred Owl, Pileated Woodpecker and Northern Waterthrush. This level of biodiversity may be diminished today, but Burke Brook remains one of the treasures of wildlife habitat in Toronto.

FODE has discovered that Burke Brooke faces an uncertain future, as most of the existing health-care facilities on the south side of the ravine are apparently heading for residential re-development and/or expansion.

Early information suggests that the chiropractic college west of Bayview may be sold for residential development. On the east side of Bayview, Mattamy Homes is seeking to build a small subdivision on the CNIB lands and the Hugh MacMillan Centre is pursuing the construction of a new building. Change may also be in the wind for the Donwood Institute.

Local sewers south of Eglinton are at capacity and back-ups can send sewage into area homes. Rather than repairing these or reducing the sewage volumes

by installing low-flow toilets and other water-saving devices, current plans call for expansion of the small sanitary sewer built through Burke Brooke ravine in 1963.

This expansion could seriously harm the ravine and require years of restoration work. FODE has learned that an environmental impact study being conducted for two of the developments indicates there is potential to both repair leaks in the existing sewer and introduce local storm water controls to an area where there currently are none.

However, we are concerned that inadequate local sanitary capacity will continue to put sewage into people's basements while natural areas are once again deemed appropriate for sanitary pipes which will inevitably leak into the Don watershed again in another 30, 40, or 50 years. This appears to be a lose-lose proposition.

FODE will continue to investigate this situation, sharing information with members and local residents. We are considering a Task Force to address both the impact of the proposed developments and to encourage local residents to visit, enjoy, and help protect this wonderful ravine.

We are also assisting local residents to monitor the wildlife, ecological features and stormpipes in the ravine as part of our Donwatchers program.

If you would like more information or are interested in helping protect the area, please contact FODE at (416) 466-9153 or at [fode@web.ca](mailto:fode@web.ca).

***Donwatchers is working to protect and enhance Burke Brook ravine and its wildlife and nature trails***



***Visit the website of Friends of the Don East at [www.web.ca/~fode](http://www.web.ca/~fode)***

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