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The significant problems we face cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them. -- Albert Einstein

Toronto's 2004 New Mobility Week New Mobility Jamboree a First for North America

Over the week of 20-24 September a number of groups and actors concerned with the mounting challenges of transport, environment and the economy the City of Toronto, are getting together to rethink how we can improve the way we get around in our daily lives. Think of it as a New Mobility Jamboree, and you're invited.

At the core of this first New Mobility Week is the city's fourth Car/Free Day on Wednesday the 22nd, being marked this year by a number of activities in many parts of the city. A Car/Free Day, by way of reminder, is not an occasion to shut down the transportation system of the region or even to lock all the cars off the roads. To the contrary it is proposed as a day of creative pause from and wide public reflection about our usual transportation arrangements, and in particular the congestion and pollution caused by driving alone in our vehicles, a "system" which is increasingly showing it's limits.

It is widely recognized that we have to start thinking, and doing, different in terms of our mobility arrangements. If we were to continue to press on like virtually every major city in North America, and indeed much of the world, without any major underlying alternative to our mainly car-based transportation system, the city and the region will become increasingly unworkable. It will take more time to get you to where you need to go. Your transportation costs will continue to sky-rocket. And no, we will never come even close to achieving more livable and sustainable communities -- or achieving the environmental targets of the Kyoto Environment Treaty that Canada has so piously signed on to.

This year's New Mobility Week, the first ever for the Toronto region, and indeed for any city in North America, is being led by a wide consortium of public, private and volunteer groups. New Mobility Week is being coordinated by the Sierra Club of Canada (Ontario Chapter), and New Mobility Agenda from Paris has joined as an international partner in order to bring in additional international input. The City of Toronto has agreed to lend its support to some of the events and to monitor progress with an eye to the future. But it is the contribution of the community as a whole that holds the key.

The intent is to use this first Week to reach out and support their efforts to create an active citizen/government network as a necessary first step in creating the new mobility arrangements that our city so badly needs. The Toronto New Mobility Consortium is already bringing together several dozen groups and agencies, including local government from across the region, and an increasingly wide range of transportation providers. The goal of this year's Week is dual. First we want to have a cleaner, safer, more efficient Toronto. In order to achieve this goal we will use this first occasion to create a region-wide network of people and groups who will join in the longer term rethink and active overhaul of our mobility system.

The second objective is to prepare for a greatly expanded series of events in 2005, including our second New Mobility Week and a celebratory fifth Car/Free Day. Assuming that sufficient progress has been made in the year ahead, the 2005 events will be the occasion of bringing together a number of cities from across North America and in particular the developing countries, to see if we can both share our experience and, surely, learn from each other as well.

Toronto New Mobility Week 2004: We have some ideas, and so do you! Let's share them.

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