

## **Public Consultation: Saint-Raymond Neighbourhood and the Area Surrounding the Future MUHC**

**March 12, 2013**

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**Westmount Walking and Cycling Association (WWCA)**

### **The MUHC Glen and Five Urban Planning Issues**

Good Evening,

My name is Roger Jochym and sitting next to me is Dan Lambert. We are representatives from the Westmount Walking and Cycling Association. On behalf of our organization I would like to express our gratitude on being heard in public. It is appreciated.

Our association is nearly four years old. We are an advocacy group for reduced traffic and increased active transport which we see as a key element of liveable communities and an essential vector for these same communities in their desire to become more sustainable.

Very briefly we would like to state that our organization knows that climate change is occurring and we also realize that it is beginning to accelerate. For us there is no ambiguity. We find the situation very worrisome.

We would also like to say that our mission statement is very similar to those of our sister advocacy groups in NDG and the SW, the NDG Cycling and Pedestrian Association and l'Association Pedestre et Cycliste du Sud Ouest. In fact our three groups meet on a regular basis.

It is not with pleasure that I sit here this evening. Our organization has spent innumerable hours in research, investigation, meetings, writing briefs, sending emails, and in other ways engaging members of the stakeholders of this megaproject, the MUHC Glen. Except with one exception, and a much mitigated one at that, we feel that we have not really been understood and our ideas have not been advanced so as to find viable solutions. Our desire is always to be proactive, not in being reactive.

Even though presentations are meant to focus on the St Raymond community of NDG, ours will go a bit further than that because we feel it is necessary to look at the problem holistically as well as specifically.

The five issues I will outline this evening concern urban planning. Our organization considers all five of these issues as critical to our communities and the MUHC Glen.

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## 1

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The first issue I bring to your attention has by all accounts been resolved. It is a dedicated second entrance from the Vendôme intermodal station to the MUHC Glen. Our organization was one of many voices which helped propel this issue to a certain resolution. I say a certain resolution for the following reason.

Although the dedicated second entrance preliminary design is complete, it is not funded. Early in 2013 at a Westmount public talk I had questioned Minister Jean François Lisée about committing the Quebec government to funding this project. He replied that the project would happen, he could not see it not happening, but that the funding of this dedicated second entrance had to be negotiated with the MUHC. Thus the resolution of this issue is still in limbo.

Being in limbo construction has not started, far from it. In fact this dedicated second entrance from the Vendôme intermodal station to the MUHC Glen will not be open at the most crucial time for mass transit success, that is when hospital staff establish their transportation patterns. It will not be operational on Opening Day.

This can be seen as a statement of disregard for the foremost intermodal station in North America, the Vendôme. It also can be interpreted to indicate the low priority given the primary means of access to the site, that of mass transit. In comparison 95% of all vehicular infrastructures will be operational on Opening Day. And when one considers the actual dollar value of all the vehicular access works for this project that will have been spent by the MUHC, the MTQ, the ATM, and the City of Montreal and compare that dollar value to the expected \$75 million dollar value for this dedicated second entrance it is very discouraging.

Even though we now realize that the dedicated second entrance will definitely not happen by Opening Day, we know of no construction schedule or any finish date for its completion. We are not even certain that it will happen.

On many occasions it has been stated that it is the MUHC Glen's intention to have 60% of its staff arrive at work by means other than a private vehicle.

It is incomprehensible to any citizen, not to mention any urban planner, how this dedicated second entrance from the Vendôme intermodal station to the MUHC Glen had not been the priority way of accessing this mega hospital from day one of planning given this stated objective of 60%. Why is financing being searched for at this point in time when it should have been one of the first constructions completed?

So although this issue is resolved on paper and in verbal agreement, no financing has been secured, no construction start date has been set.

Before leaving this issue I do want to thank publically the present members of the design team of the MUHC who responded to the many voices of concern over this issue and brought it to its present state of being resolved, although not actualized. We believe they inherited contractual constraints from the early period of this megaproject to which they would not have agreed if they themselves had been in position of making those contractual decisions. For this reason it is not now a reality.

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## 2

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The second issue concerns the De Maisonneuve cycling path. As you may know, it starts near Montreal West and continues all the way to Berri. It is the essential east-west axis of the cycling path network of Montreal. This key path is protected by either concrete dividers or bollards in residential areas along its full length except for the short dangerous zone between Decarie and Clarmenont, in front of the MUHC and Vendôme station. This stretch is the key to any success that urban commuting by bike will have among the communities of Cote St Luc, Montreal West, and NDG.

But when one considers the bike path design for the Decarie-de Maisonneuve intersection that what was proposed by the City of Montreal and the MUHC last November for this growing group of commuters, one is alarmed to see that this essential protected cycling path route is left completely exposed at its most vulnerable point between Girouard and Claremont. This is where car, bus, taxi, and pedestrian traffic volumes are at present very high with complex movement patterns. And all this will rise significantly on Opening Day of the MUHC Glen and also with the addition of emergency vehicles.

The November proposal will effectively be cutting Montreal West, Cote St Luc, and NDG from urban commuting by bicycle for mainstream citizens. We like to define mainstream cyclists as the young parent cycling with a trailer going to daycare before work, or the senior citizen getting exercise, or the student on their way to class. Paint on pavement without physical separation through such a dangerous zone will be too risky for most mainstream cyclists.

Considering the projected numbers and types of motor vehicles and their speeds, any proposal for cyclists must guarantee complete safety and free flowing passage. The present proposal does not provide for these.

It is important to keep in mind the growing number of citizens who are becoming urban cyclists. There was a 20% increase in the use of cycle paths from 2010 to 2011 recorded by the City of Montreal. We should also like to point out that the proportion of people using urban cycling as their preference for getting to work rose to 2,2% in 2010 as reported by a Vélo Québec and École polytechnique study. (see Note 1) This is a very encouraging trend for the communities around the MUHC Glen who all want less traffic and more active transport.

From these numbers it is possible to extrapolate that by year 2015 the modal share for commuting by bike should be over 5% and by 2020 will be over 11%. These extrapolations might be quite conservative as other cities have shown that there tends to be a real surge when excellent infrastructure investments for cycling are made.

Given all the above arguments it is a basic requirement that the cycling path design for the above mentioned blocks provide cyclists with physical protection from lethal danger. This is the major psychological deterrent for mainstream cyclists. Also extraordinary provisions for safety in traversing the intersections must be made. In other words mainstream cyclists should never need to worry about being hit by a car, truck, or bus, no matter the weather, the speed of traffic, and the volume of traffic. This protection for cyclists must be guaranteed by a physical separation wherever a cyclist could potentially come into contact with a motor vehicle.

Our association has done an analysis of four possible options for de Maisonneuve between Girouard and Claremont. By means of a numerical calculation in which advantages and disadvantages were assigned plus and minus values we have arrived at the following conclusions (see Note 2) :

The Bicycle Bridge With Path Adjoining Railroad Property Line Option : +12,  
The Protected Double Cycling Path on the Southside of de Maisonneuve : +2,  
The Protected Double Cycling Path on the Northside of de Maisonneuve : -9,  
Unprotected Split Cycling Paths Along de Maisonneuve : -12.

The major obstacle that has constantly been placed before us for the Bicycle Bridge Option is that of a possible future 4<sup>th</sup> Track of the ATM. We need to put this into perspective by asking a question of ourselves. Which clientele would a 4<sup>th</sup> Track serve? Our organization believes it would be serving distant off Island suburban communities and would actually be supporting urban sprawl. We would be encouraging families to move to distant suburbs and take on lifestyles that have a significantly higher ecological footprint; to move to areas where the costs to the public of supplying residential services are very high. Thus this 4<sup>th</sup> Track might preclude the best solution for urban cyclists in the vicinity of the MUHC while encouraging urban sprawl. It is a multiple Lose-Lose situation.

Our organization believes that the urban cycling path design must be of the highest standard in this critical area between Girouard and Claremont along de Maisonneuve so as to give safe protected passage to cyclists of all abilities and ages. Nothing less is acceptable.

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The third issue we would like to raise is the lack of an active transport connection of walking and cycling from the South West Borough to the MUHC Glen across the St Jacques escarpment. A new vehicular access route on the diagonal across this same escarpment was constructed last year. And although construction of this access route was a joint MUHC – MTQ project, almost the entire route is on MUHC land and the decision to disallow active transport from its design was a definite MUHC decision.

Through many channels our organization has tried to advance the idea of using the opportunity of a new access road as a means of solving the isolation of the South West from this megaproject. We have lobbied for a parallel pedestrian sidewalk and a parallel protected cycling path to adjoin this new access road. We were only partially successful.

Our on-site observations have noted that there is a sidewalk for pedestrians and a very wide sidewalk that could be employed for urban cyclists but that both are only partially built, being truncated part way up the escarpment along this new access route.

This lack of walking and cycling paths from the South West Borough up the St Jacques Escarpment is a major urban planning failure. We are quite discouraged that the solution to this problem was begun from the base of the Escarpment but never completed. Again it may have been because of inherited contractual constraints for the present design team of the MUHC from the early period of this megaproject that disallowed this obvious solution.

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The fourth issue is that of the blockage of Upper Lachine Road at Decarie. It is seen as necessary for the efficient processing of vehicles accessing the MUHC Glen site from south bound Decarie Expressway. We see it as essentially the isolation of an existing community, St Raymond, for the sake of car traffic to the MUHC. It is hard to see how this is in any way a good urban design decision. The Crowley proposal would be a permanent four-turn detour for this community.

Some may point to historical precedents in that the Upper Lachine train underpass did not exist when the Glen Yards were a train marshalling area. It is an unusual argument to advance since

the underpass was eventually built and the reason it was built was to help alleviate the urban isolation of the St Raymond community. This community should not be taken back to an historical state of isolation.

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## 5

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The fifth issue is a commentary on what is happening on the south side of de Maisonneuve between Decarie and Claremont. The recent purchase of these properties by the MUHC for purposes of a list of ambulatory services, a hotel, and conference centre will bring further traffic and environmental burdens to long standing communities.

These additional functions should have been part of the original planning for the MUHC Glen. The ambulatory services on this list are part of the services now provided by the hospitals that will become the pavilions of the MUHC Glen. It is again incomprehensible urban planning practise that they are being imposed on the surrounding communities after spending \$2.4 billion on the MUHC Glen campus.

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## Conclusion

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These five issues are of a critical nature for the successful integration of the MUHC Glen with the existing communities that are its neighbors. They must be resolved. All the stakeholders are jointly and severely responsible to find resolutions.

We have come to the opinion that the present design team of the MUHC Glen are very restricted in altering course because of contractual obligations that were drawn up early in the project. This has affected their manner of leading the other major stakeholders, the MTQ, the STM, the ATM, and the City of Montreal. To put it quite simply: the original team for the MUHC Glen which signed the contractual agreements within the PPP construction framework did not have a vision of urban integration that gave value to mass transit and active transport. Instead it was based heavily on the private vehicle as the means of access with all others as “add-on” s.

This opinion of ours has led our organization to ask of this consultation board to consider recommending that a special over-riding body be formed to co-ordinate resolution of these five critical urban planning problems amongst all the stakeholders. This body should orchestrate the stakeholders into a holistic solution. It should have authority. To have such authority it should control the financing and be seen as impartial and responsive to the existing communities surrounding this mega project. Given these requirements, we would suggest

that this body might be formed by Quebec government. As such this body could take form under the jurisdiction of Minister Jean-François Lisée, Minister Responsible for the Region of Montreal.

In our presentation you have heard about the five detrimental urban effects of this megaproject. But we would also like to leave you with the thought that the MUHC Glen also represents a tremendous opportunity to alter direction and thus become a flagship mega project in North America. The MUHC Glen and its major stakeholders can demonstrate how by excellent far-sighted urban interface infrastructure for active transport and mass transit that it can reach its stated goal of 60% of its staff arriving at work each day by means other than the private vehicle. And that this percentage can be continually increased through time.

It can demonstrate that mega projects do not have to be isolated islands but can be fully integrated with existing communities for mutual benefit. It can demonstrate that it values the human form, the liveability of communities, and the sustainability of Montreal. And North America needs such outstanding demonstrations of design will as we are moving into dangerous waters of accelerating climate change.

We make this presentation because we believe all this is possible and exciting.

We await to see the major effects of this consultation.

Thank you.

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## Notes

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### Note 1

Hausse de la fréquentation des pistes cyclables  
20% de 2010 à 2011

**Source: Ville de Montréal**

Proportion des déplacements à vélo vers le travail  
2,2% Montréal (en 2010)

**Sources: Vélo Québec et École polytechnique**

### Note 2

The following questions were used in our evaluation process for the four bicycle path options:

- 1- Is the physical separation from lethal danger better, the same, or worse than that which exists along de Maisonneuve east and west of the Vêndome station area?
- 2- Is the traversal of the dangerous intersections at Claremont and de Maisonneuve and Decarie and de Maisonneuve safer, the same, or more dangerous than that at a comparable intersection (Atwater and de Maisonneuve)?
- 3- Is there a continuity of cycle path design in its configuration that matches what is occurring along de Maisonneuve east and west of the Vêndome station area (or a differing configuration that could cause confusion)?
- 4- Does the proposed cycle path design provide easy access to the railroad tunnel connecting to the MUHC Glen?
- 5- Does the proposal facilitate access to the Bixi station at the Vêndome station?
- 6- In terms of subjective sense of security would our most vulnerable cyclists (young students, parents with daycare children in trailers, senior citizens) find this section of cycling path more secure, the same, or less secure than that which exists along de Maisonneuve east and west of the Vêndome station area?
- 7- How many potential breakages in free flowing cycling are presented by the proposed cycle path design?
- 8- Does the proposed cycle path design open the possibility of temporary vehicular parking interrupting its path causing unnecessary deviations?
- 9- Does the proposed cycle path design require cyclists to pass parked buses within a traffic lane?
- 10- Does the proposed cycle path design pose any problems to maintenance (debris clearing, snow clearing, etc.)?
- 11- Does the proposed cycle path design decrease potential conflicts with pedestrians, leave the same, or increase potential conflicts with pedestrians compared with the Westmount segment of the de Maisonneuve cycling path?
- 12- How many bus lines will traverse the proposed cycle path design (evaluate at each crossing point, i.e. at Claremont and de Maisonneuve, at the Vêndome station, at Decarie and de Maisonneuve)
- 13- At how many points will the proposed path be traversed by vehicles (more weight to major streets, less weight to residential streets)?
- 14- Will the proposed cycle path design be affected often, somewhat, not at all by ongoing City of Montreal underground collector work, by future ongoing MUHC de Maisonneuve expansion work?
- 15- How direct is the cycle path, or are there deviations?