

## **OCPM: Remembrance-Camillien-Houde**

**Jennifer Crane, 3 December 2018**

I will use this brief to elaborate on my perceptions of the pilot project from multiple perspectives.

### **Resident**

I have been a resident of the summit of Ridgewood Avenue in Côte-des-Neiges for ten years. The street has a very steep incline and is the equivalent of 15 stories in height from Côte-des-Neiges Road. I am fortunate to own a car because living where I live would be extremely difficult without it. The bus service can only be classified as infrequent and irregular. When Luc Ferrandez announced this in January, I was extremely concerned for a number of reasons and have expressed my dismay publicly on numerous occasions.

There was no consultation of local residents (CDN, Westmount, Outremont, Ville-Marie) as to how this through-traffic ban would affect our neighbourhoods. During the lead-up to the pilot project, residents spoke out against this at les Amis de la Montagne's information session in May, at both the OCPM sessions in the spring, as well as at the ateliers créatifs in held in Montreal and Westmount.

The three summits of Mount Royal constitute a 'natural', historic neighbourhood despite being under different jurisdictions. This decision succeeded in cutting the neighbourhood in two and eliminated an important 'bridge' between the west and east ends of the city.

During the course of the pilot project there was increased traffic on Decelles, Gatineau and Côte-des-Neiges Road to such a degree that I avoided the area between 3PM – 7PM when possible.

The pilot project seemed to embolden competitive cyclists; not only were more of them present on the mountain during the closure of CHR, they have started to use Ridgewood Avenue for training. This is extremely dangerous given the curves, parking on one side of the street, a bus and pedestrians frequently crossing. It is disturbing to have to add cyclists travelling at excess speeds to the list of what one has to watch out for when safely navigating Ridgewood.

### **User of CHR and Mount Royal Park**

I use CHR by car, bus or foot. As a consultant who works from home close by, I frequently brought lunch to the Camillien-Houde look-out for a change of scenery. When not blocked to through traffic, it is well-visited in all seasons by locals and tourists alike. During the course of the pilot project I visited the look-out numerous

times after visiting the Mount Royal Cemetery. Even in the height of tourist season, regularly visitors to the park noticed fewer people around, the parking lots emptier on sunny summer days than on inclement days in the fall or winter. It would be interesting to do a comparative analysis of parking receipts in the parking lots at Mount-Royal Park and at the Camillien-Houde lookout for equivalent periods going back several years. The same with sales receipts from the restaurant at the Beaver Lake Pavillion and Smith House.

Because CHR is the most direct route to access Outremont, le PMR and points in the east end I have used it with pleasure for years. It is not a 'shortcut' as claimed by the administration it is a local road for the thousands of residents who call Mount Royal their home. It is such a pleasant drive, sometimes I even go out of my way to take it just to take in the scenery. Montrealers and other people who love this drive have been told that this is not the 'correct' way to enjoy the mountain.

### **Cemetery rights holder**

I am a frequent visitor to Mount Royal Cemetery as rights holder with six members of my family interred near the Camillien-Houde gate. Under the CHR status quo I'm on the road a total of ten minutes when I visit the cemetery. When this pilot project was announced, I took the route that visitors to the cemetery would now be forced to take. I was on the road for forty minutes to access my families' graves at the CH gate. And I was departing from the neighbourhood. Visitors coming from further away would be on the roads for a considerable amount of time once they reach the vicinity of Mount Royal. This is both unsympathetic to grieving families, but also creates more emissions because of the detour.

I contacted the Director General David Scott of MRC to discuss my concerns. He shared my frustrations and mentioned that the cemeteries had not been consulted prior to Luc Ferrandez's announcement.

The city sent an unclear message to begin with i.e. no access problems to either cemetery. Clearly this was not the case: with Remembrance closed, residents from the west would not be able to access Mount Royal Cemetery, while residents from the east wouldn't be able to access Notre-Dame-des-Neiges Cemetery without major detours.

I raised these points with city officials at the OCPM in May. The official indicated a two-minute delay. When I explained my own road test, it became clear that the official was woefully unaware of the cemetery configuration on Mount Royal, perhaps being under the impression that there is only one cemetery on Mount Royal.

Thankfully when the pilot project was announced, visitors to MRC were able to access the Camillien-Houde gate from the west through the parking lots between 9.00AM - 4.00PM. This was a bit confusing once a visitor reached the Smith House

parking lot, but as a rights holder, I was nonetheless happy that Mr. Scott had been able to obtain that concession.

Despite the MRC access being marked with a small, yet visible sign, on a visit in August, a Stationnement Montréal agent tried to prevent me from going through, going so far as to say the SPVM would give me a \$160 ticket if I was caught. I indicated the sign and he indicated that he didn't believe I was going there. It was only when I asked if he was going to keep me from my grandparents that he let me through. This conversation took place entirely in French. If a unilingual English-speaking senior citizen was faced with the same resistance, it's unclear if they would have been permitted access. I tweeted about the incident, as well as reporting the Stationnement Montréal's attempt to thwart visitors from accessing the CH gate - despite the concession - to the MRC itself so they could take the necessary measures to ensure rights holders and other visitors weren't denied access.

## **Activism**

I took to social media to protest against the closure. I have used both Facebook and Twitter since the announcement to share pictures of Mount Royal before during and after the pilot project. I made use of my large network of contacts to promote a petition against the project, which has now garnered almost 38 000 signatures. ([https://www.change.org/p/valerie-plant-non-a-l-interdiction-de-traverser-le-mont-royal-en-voiture?recruiter=536952530&utm\\_source=share\\_petition&utm\\_medium=facebook&utm\\_campaign=share\\_petition&utm\\_term=psf\\_combo\\_share\\_initial.nafta\\_milestone\\_share\\_ask\\_victory.control&utm\\_content=ex57%3Acontrol](https://www.change.org/p/valerie-plant-non-a-l-interdiction-de-traverser-le-mont-royal-en-voiture?recruiter=536952530&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=facebook&utm_campaign=share_petition&utm_term=psf_combo_share_initial.nafta_milestone_share_ask_victory.control&utm_content=ex57%3Acontrol))

I did a series of media interviews in English and French between February and May, including Global Montreal, CTV Montreal, CBC Montreal, CJAD, TVA/LCN, and an hour-long debate on CJAD with City Councillor Craig Sauvé. It should be noted it took Projet Montréal and the Plante Administration several days to find an elected official willing to debate me on the CHR pilot project. Mr. Sauvé obfuscated when I asked him to confirm that - in addition to the pilot project - the Plante administration would be authorizing no fewer than 6 Cyclovia activities during the same period which would close down CH entirely on Sundays. This did come to pass. After the debate, I asked Mr. Sauvé why his administration was 'Plateauizing' the city. He said they were 'Copenhagenizing' it.

I participated in OCPM sessions downtown and in Côte-des-Neiges in May, as well as in an information session held by Les Amis de la Montagne. During this time I've connected with numerous other activists. During these sessions, there were very few people defending this other than a paid Vélo Québec employee and the individual organizing the Cyclovia Camillien-Houde. The on-line consultations were difficult to access with email accounts. The first time I went on the site it took several attempts before I was able to access the OCPM on-line consultation. The next time, I was unable to access the page and was forced to sign in through Facebook. I

was very determined to contribute so I persisted, but I imagine it would have been frustrating for people with no Facebook or who aren't 'tech savvy' and wanted to contribute.

## **Observations: Before, During and After the CHR Pilot Project**

### **Public transportation**

There was no improved bus service despite promises for an improved service on the 11 route. Traffic on CHR was blamed for irregular bus service yet the 11 bus was frequently cancelled or late despite the cars having no transit rights.

The 11 bus does not go up Ridgewood after 9.00PM; residents have to debark at the foot of the street and wait for the equally infrequent 166 coming from the Guy-Concordia metro. For some unknown reason, the 11 continues down CDN until it stops for the night. I mentioned this fact at the OCPM in May; fortunately a fellow resident of the mountain offered me a lift home.

The Plante administration placed more importance placed on the 711 bus which serves mostly tourists visiting the mountain and Oratory. An improved 711 service does nothing to help local residents living at the top of Ridgewood Avenue.

To compound matters, 6 Cyclovia activities forced 11 and 711 cancellations on six Sundays. This is unacceptable for local residents. There are residents of my street who use the 11 just to get down to CDN Road, yet the service was cancelled to accommodate cyclists on CH. This exclusionary activity should never have been permitted during the pilot project.

### **Impact on local residents**

There was considerable additional traffic on neighbourhood streets, a situation that became worse after the return to school at the end of August. Decelles was jammed between 3-7PM on weekdays; Gatineau Street and Côte-des-Neiges Road saw increased congestion. Thus, in addition to being unable to access other parts of the Mount Royal sector, our own district became difficult to navigate.

### **Anecdotal reports**

I have spoken to Montrealers at length and have heard no positive feedback about the pilot project. A major complaint from Montrealers living all over the island is that they were unable to take visitors on the iconic drive over the mountain.

The owners of the Shell station at the corner of Ridgewood and Côte-des-Neiges told me all of their customers were very angry about the pilot project.

Kayla Segal who is an Iron Man triathlete and long time user of CHR as a competitive cyclist and runner told me to please include her observation that this pilot project in no way made use of CHR safer for cyclists, but rather made it more dangerous.

### **Temporary Installations**

There is an English expression called 'Putting Lipstick on a Pig', which is what the Plante administration appeared to be doing with improvised installations to mitigate against the unpopularity of the pilot project, such as hammocks, wooden structures built around trees, not to mention the ramshackle Belvedere Soleil, ugly Café Suspendu and cheap-looking wooden signs at either entrance mentioning the pilot project, calling it Destination Mont-Royal.

The Café Suspendu's 'success' as reported by representatives of the City at the OCPM on 8 November is laughable. Claiming people walking by as visitors to the café is nothing short of ludicrous. Most Cafés in Montreal determine success by paying clients. The Café Suspendu eventually limited service to Friday – Sunday. This does not sound successful by any standards. Furthermore, it served to block the view from any cyclist, pedestrian, bus passenger, or driver passing by on Camillien-Houde.

The Belvédère Soleil was used mainly by cyclists and also blocked a nice view. It did not increase safety but rather the opposite, as people began parking on the side of the road. I witnessed four cars one day, all with different American license plates. There was no clear signage for non-francophone tourists. Prior to the pilot project and the erection of that structure, I had never seen people parking in that location.

### **Discrimination against most vulnerable?**

The pilot project hurt the most vulnerable by limiting accessibility to the mountain. Of particular concern is the impact on senior citizens and those with mobility issues. Many visitors to the two cemeteries are seniors and they were no longer able to get there. When this issue was raised, Montreal's mayor suggested they could rake a bus. Even if this suggestion weren't so laughable and insulting, on six Sunday mornings there was no bus service for them to use as the service was cancelled for Cyclovia events.

By limiting access to the two parking lots, much longer distances needed to be walked, thus further limiting people who are aged, with mobility issues or with young children.

### **Confused messaging from the Plante Administration**

There was no clear rationale ever given for the pilot project. In fact, councillors from Plante's political party frequently contradicted each other. Sometimes it was about

cyclist safety, other times it was to get rid of cars. Given the fact that Luc Ferrandez has been pushing for a removal of through-traffic on Mount Royal for 10 years, it seems that claims about safety were just a convenient excuse to fulfil a long held wish. This seems to be another ‘war on cars’ tactic of an ideologically driven administration.

When the project was announced, citizens opposed to this project were routinely insulted by Projet Montreal councillors on Twitter -including an exchange between CDN-NDG borough mayor Sue Montgomery and CHOM morning man Terry DiMonte, an early and outspoken critic.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the term *Social Engineering* as follows: ‘The use of centralized planning in an attempt to manage social change and regulate the future development and behaviour of a society.’ It seems clear that this pilot project is a prime example of this.

I changed my behaviour in response to this pilot project: I stopped my weekly shopping trips to Mount-Royal Avenue West and I boycotted the whole of the Plateau Mont Royal for the duration of the pilot project. I know many citizens stopped shopping on Laurier in Outremont and spots in the Plateau as they were no longer easy to access.

### **Some suggestions to improve co-existence and safety for all Mount Royal users**

- ✓ Do not make the pilot project permanent;
- ✓ Do not remove access from east and west;
- ✓ Consult local residents prior to engaging;
- ✓ Use evidence-based policy rather than social engineering;
- ✓ Improve public transportation;
- ✓ Do not close Mount Royal for Cyclovia events;
- ✓ Install barriers to prevent illegal u-turns all the way down CH;
- ✓ Use signage that all users can understand and respect;
- ✓ Do not discriminate against Montrealers based on how they choose to arrive at Mount Royal;
- ✓ Do not waste taxpayers’ money by using the SPVM as a security force during this type of project;
- ✓ Consult all stakeholders, including the cemeteries, the SPVM, the Canadian Forces and local residents;
- ✓ Do not favour certain types of users over others;
- ✓ Limit the speed for all users, including cyclists;
- ✓ Empower the SPVM to ticket cyclists exceeding the posted speed limit;
- ✓ Do not tell people HOW to enjoy our mountain – respect differences;
- ✓ Do not ignore a petition with 38 000 voices opposed.