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I have not owned a car since 1977, and for 25 years my household was car-less. One of the advantages of living in Westmount is that you can walk downtown, take the metro or a taxi, and rent a car to go to the country.

I'm not an anti-car crusader; I just favour a less auto-craic society. Cars are tools made by and for humans that have to be employed judiciously. Which they often are not, if you will permit me a harrumph.

Car traffic, both *to* and *through* Westmount, has become almost intolerable in volume, speed and noise. The MUHC and the Turcot projects, both to become seven-year construction itches, will make things worse.

That Quebec has to spend \$3 billion to reconstruct the Turcot interchange, put up only 45 years ago during a paroxysm of improvident expressway building, is sad evidence of shoddy construction, design, and planning.

More expressways were and are not the solution. While the opening of the Ville-Marie expressway in 1973 did result in an immediate drop in east-west traffic through Westmount, we are now worse off than when we started.

This is proof of the iron-clad rule: the more expressways you build, the more they fill up and the more they eventually overflow. (This implacable logic led to the scrapping of Toronto's Spadina expressway way back in 1971.)

What to do, then? First, there's repression: that's the ticket. Since Westmount never gets enough police officers to ticket speeders consistently, and since the police brotherhood thwarted our attempts to give Public Security Officers the power to ticket moving violations, for nearly two decades I have been a big fan of photo radar.

Secondly, off-island suburban

development needs to be more dense (and off-island suburban politicians less dense) in order to boost mass transit. The proliferation of far-flung bedroom communities means every home has to have at least two cars, and walking becomes only a method of transportation between house and garage.

By contrast, Westmount is the most densely populated city in our region.

Thirdly, more immediate relief can come from narrowing our streets, which reduces speeds and therefore volume. One way to narrow streets is to put in bike lanes. But bike lanes can interfere with residents trying to get out of their driveways - just ask anyone living on de Maisonneuve.

Both bike lanes and bikes reduce car traffic; bike lanes by constriction, and bikes by substitution. It is true that, in 2006, only 2% of Montreal Island residents bicycled to work, but that is double the proportion in 1996. In the Plateau, 10% of the population bicycle to work.

Bikes are no panacea, though. For one thing, cycling is seasonal and two-wheeled winter commuting may never become mainstream.

Council will soon commission a Master Traffic Plan, it being 24 years since the last plan of any sort. Will it be possible to apply a tourniquet on arteries in Westmount? Since they are so designated by "higher" authorities, it will not be easy. But we have to do something.