

Bike Ottawa Annual Report **2019**



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Introduction: Everyone Can Ride a Bike

Bike Ottawa's vision is that everyone can ride a bike. Let's talk about that. Because right now, not everyone can ride a bike. Look around and ask, "Who is missing?"

First of all, a huge proportion of our population is missing. Two thirds of Ottawa residents say they would ride a bike more often, but are waiting for safer places to ride. The world's most bike-friendly cities show us that most people will ride a bike if they feel safe. We also know that the number one concern in Ottawa is the fear of riding on roads with cars and trucks. You shouldn't need to be brave to ride a bike.

This is why Bike Ottawa is often focused on separated, protected cycling facilities. There's a massive, pent-up demand for more and better biking infrastructure. Build a new cycletrack, pathway, or car-free bridge, and it's an instant success. Ottawa residents love to ride their bikes.

But there are still people missing. Have you noticed?

They're missing when the conversation is about reducing congestion for downtown commuters. Not everyone works downtown. Not everyone works.

People are missing from the pathways after dark, because cars aren't the only thing to be afraid of, especially if you're a vulnerable person travelling alone.

People aren't making longer trips by bike and staying active in old age because our city has sprawled to make space for cars, and e-bikes are expensive. There are children who aren't riding to school, residents whose low-income neighbourhood is an island cut off from the paths that connect the rest of the city, people who don't feel safe from bike theft with no secure bike storage options, people who are hassled for riding their bikes (or worry that they will be) because of their ethnicity or some aspect of their physical appearance. There are people who simply can't afford a bicycle, the most affordable mode of transportation there is.

Age, geography, gender, socialization, income—there are too many factors to try to list, but the result is this: many people are missing.

Ottawa is making progress on building those safe routes that are needed to help more people try cycling, especially in the high-density downtown. And that is fantastic. But when the focus is on the

core, on the commuter, and on the needs of the people who are already biking, it becomes far too easy to lose sight of everyone else. All those people who are missing. What do they need?

Our challenge now is to build a truly inclusive city. Sometimes, that will mean hard choices that put the needs of disadvantaged groups ahead of the status quo of convenient car usage. It will mean thoughtful consideration of how we can make the city work for all. It will mean finding ways to bring dignity and respect to people who are travelling by bike, so that everyone feels welcome. There are many possible barriers to riding a bike. Bridging those gaps won't be easy, but if we can help everyone ride a bike, especially those with the greatest challenges, wouldn't you be even more proud to call Ottawa home? I think we can get there.

Ask yourself, "Who is missing?" Then ask yourself, "How can I include them?" Help us achieve our vision that everyone can ride a bike.

Heather Shearer
President, Bike Ottawa

About Bike Ottawa

Bike Ottawa is a not-for-profit, member-based organization founded in 1984. We are run entirely by volunteers who are dedicated to promoting cycling as a safe, fun, and practical form of transportation.

With over 400 members, we give a voice to the cycling community through the media, and we run public cycling-related events throughout the year. Our volunteers spend countless hours poring over city plans, reading through the city budget, attending open houses and consultations, and meeting with elected officials and staff to advocate for cycling safety.

<https://bikeottawa.ca>

Board Of Directors

info@bikeottawa.ca

Bike Ottawa's activities are overseen by a nine-member, volunteer Board Of Directors elected by the membership.

Advocacy

advocacy@bikeottawa.ca

The Advocacy Working Group monitors transportation projects in Ottawa. We attend stakeholder meetings and consultations and provide feedback on proposed infrastructure and policies.

Data

data@bikeottawa.ca

The Data Group researches and analyzes cycling and transportation data to inform our advocacy efforts. We create tools to help people learn more about cycling in Ottawa.

Events

events@bikeottawa.ca

Bike Ottawa organizes and attends events to promote our work and to help people make the choice to cycle.

Bike Vocab!

Not everyone is a trained transportation planner, and sometimes even our experienced volunteers use vocabulary that might be unfamiliar. But there's no need to be intimidated! Look for these boxes throughout the report for a crash course on some common terms.

Our Advocacy Working Group

The Advocacy Working Group (AWG) continues to monitor cycling projects in the City of Ottawa with the goal of improving cycling infrastructure and policies. Here are some highlights of our work in 2018:

Holland Avenue

With hard work and perseverance, an AWG member (and now Bike Ottawa board member) improved cycling along Holland Avenue between Kenilworth Avenue and Byron Avenue by convincing the city to implement temporary bike lanes on this route during the Harmer Bridge replacement after the city cancelled its initial plans to do so. Érin Cunningham launched a successful petition that received over 800 signatures and organized a group advocacy bike ride along Holland Avenue that was reported in the Ottawa Citizen.

Elections Survey

During the 2018 municipal election, the AWG asked candidates running for councillor or mayor to answer a survey on their positions on cycling and road

safety. 74 of 111 candidates responded and their answers show that cycling is increasingly recognized as a viable transportation option and also that safe cycling infrastructure is an important election issue for Ottawa residents.

Montreal Road

As the city develops its revitalization project for Montreal Road, the group has been attending public consultation meetings and providing feedback to the city, requesting improved cycling provisions. You can still get involved in this ongoing revitalization project by joining the Advocacy Working Group, or by contacting your city councillor.

Bike Box

A bike box is a defined area (often painted green) at an intersection where cyclists can get ahead of waiting traffic at the front of a lane. Bike boxes make cyclists more visible and allow them to safely move into position to make a left turn.

Our Advocacy Working Group

A person with short brown hair and glasses, wearing a dark hoodie and blue jeans, is sitting on a grassy area with fallen leaves. They are holding an open book or map and looking at it. A bicycle is lying on the ground next to them. In the background, there are bare trees and a clear sky.

Fisher-Baseline Intersection

In November, the AWG sent a letter to the City of Ottawa suggesting improvements to address missing links in the area of the Fisher Avenue and Baseline Road intersection. The city acknowledged these issues but currently has no plan to address them. Contact your councillor if you share these concerns.

Nepean Trail

The group has been monitoring the long-awaited completion of this route. The city has recently finished a bi-directional multi-use pathway (MUP) connecting the area paths south of the railway tracks over Merivale Road to the areas north of it. The city also added a MUP behind the shopping malls between Meadowlands Drive and Capilano Drive, providing an alternative for cycling on Merivale.

Bay Street Cycling Facility

The AWG submitted comments to the city in support of its plans to upgrade the

existing bike lane along Bay Street between Wellington Street and Laurier Avenue to bidirectional, grade-separated cycle tracks, and suggested additional improvements.

Carleton University Cycling Study

AWG members supported valuable local cycling research by participating in a study measuring air and noise pollution along common cycling routes in Ottawa. The research team took time to consult AWG members prior to initiating the study, allowing us to help ensure the research will be meaningful, and with data collected from relevant locations.

LRT Access

One of our AWG members has been actively working with regional organizations to ensure cyclists can easily and safely access the new LRT stations. The good news: in Bike Ottawa's 2018 elections survey, 96% of respondents said they support safe cycling infrastructure near transit stations.



Our Advocacy Working Group

Maitland Overpass

The province is gradually replacing the overpasses on Highway 417 as they reach the end of their service life, which should be an opportunity to improve cycling safety. While the on and off ramps for Maitland Avenue will see improved cycling infrastructure, the proposed design is far from ideal. We sent a letter to the city with far reaching modifications to make it truly safe, but the province was not willing to make further changes.

If you have cycling infrastructure concerns, we encourage you to contact your ward councillor. It is important that more of us raise our hands when we have a concern so that city staff recognize how many people use bicycles in Ottawa, and that we all need a safe network to get around town.

If you have concerns, information or thoughts on cycling projects in Ottawa, or if there are projects you think the Advocacy Working Group should be involved in, let us know! We rely on volunteer power to continue to monitor and advocate for improved cycling infrastructure and policies in 2019, including the City of Ottawa's budget and the city's Transportation Master Plan. We meet monthly and always welcome new participants, whether you want to be involved in advocacy or simply learn more about cycling projects going on in the city. You can also check Bike Ottawa's website for tips on how to get involved in advocacy of your own.

To join the Advocacy Working Group, share info, or find out more, contact advocacy@bikeottawa.ca.

Slip Lane

A slip lane is where a road is divided by a concrete island (sometimes called a pork chop!) creating a turn lane where cars avoid entering the intersection. Slip lanes can often be dangerous to pedestrians and cyclists because of inattentive drivers turning quickly.

Our Data Group

The Data Group has continued to improve the Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) mapping tool released in 2018, and has introduced a few new crowdsourced maps to collect information for future projects.

LTS Map Report

The LTS mapping tool was made possible partly through funding from the office of Councilor Jeff Leiper, and part of the project was a report describing the methodology and possible uses of the maps. We completed case studies on cycling to transit, to school, and to leisure destinations, and reviewed the relevant academic literature to see how Ottawa stacks up. Councilor Leiper has kindly made the report available to the public through his Kitchissippi Ward website, <http://kitchissippiward.ca>.

Desire Paths

<https://maps.bikeottawa.ca/desire/>

Desire lines, goat tracks, cow paths: whatever you want to call these informal pathways created by repeated use, they provide a good indication of where

people want to travel. They tend to appear where the “proper” route is indirect or unintuitive or where there is a missing link. We are looking for all of the shortcuts that people take to make their cycling trip a little safer or more convenient so that we can propose these locations to be included in the cycling network.

Winter Cycling

<https://maps.bikeottawa.ca/winter/>

Ottawa boasts of providing 40 km of winter-cleared cycling facilities, but many of the low-stress routes people rely on are not included. On the other hand, some pathways which are not part of the designated winter network see regular snow clearing! This crowd-sourced map wants to know what the actual practice is on pathways throughout the city to help you plan your route and to help us advocate for increased clearing.



Our Data Group

Updated Collision Map

Using information provided by the Ottawa Police Service, the city publishes an annual dataset of traffic collisions. This allows for a powerful analysis of where collisions occur, under what conditions, and involving which road users. Together with data from bike counters, this can help us understand whether cycling is getting safer. In future, we could build on this further by overlaying traffic patterns to show how many people are cycling, and get a picture of which locations are the most dangerous on a per-trip basis.

If you have ideas for cycling-related research projects, or want to contribute to an ongoing project, join the Data Group! Everyone has something to contribute, even if you don't think of yourself as a data expert. We need diverse people with diverse points of view, to help us ask interesting questions, and to help us do the legwork of finding the answers.

To join the Data Group, or receive notifications about upcoming meetings, contact data@bikeottawa.ca.

LB/LPI (Leading Bicycle/Pedestrian Interval)

A LB/LPI gives cyclists and/or pedestrians a few seconds to start moving at a traffic signal before the light turns green for drivers. This helps cyclists and pedestrians to be seen and reduces conflict, especially at intersections with a high number of turning vehicles.


Fact Sheet

- 12** months in the cycling season!
- \$4.4M** 2019 City of Ottawa cycling facilities budget
- 1030** average daily bike trips across Adawe Crossing in 2018
- 3056** bike trips on the busiest day, June 19th
- 33%** percentage of Ottawans who are interested in biking but waiting for safe infrastructure
- 26%** percentage who do bike but prefer segregated facilities
- 1.5 m** minimum unidirectional bike lane width per OTM Book 18
- 1.8 m** City of Ottawa recommended bike lane width
- 2.5 m** minimum width for sociable, side-by-side cycling
- 16 km** length of the SJAM Winter Trail, parts of which are open to fatbiking
- 402** Bike Ottawa members at the end of 2018, and growing!

Revert Red

A revert red is when a signal changes from green to red, but then changes right back to green without the other direction being given a chance to go. This may happen if a car activates a sensor, but then moves away. Revert red can be a dangerous surprise when biking.

Budget 2019

A woman with short blonde hair, wearing sunglasses, a black tank top, and a purple patterned skirt, stands next to a green bicycle. She is smiling at the camera. The background shows a festival booth with a sign that says "Blue!" and a banner for "Free Supervised Bicycle Parking".

The City of Ottawa budget for 2019 is business as usual, maintaining roughly the same spending levels for cycling initiatives established under the last council. Since we now have a number of new councillors who support active transport, including some from outside the urban core, hopefully council will be more ambitious in the coming years.

Cycling Facilities Program

Direct funding for cycling facilities continues with \$4.4M in the 2019 budget, an increase from the \$4.0M provided in each of the last two years. \$2.2M of that is allocated for two big projects from the 2013 Ottawa Cycling Plan: the extension of the O'Connor Street Bikeway from its current limit at Laurier Avenue up to Wellington Street; and the connection of cycling facilities on Booth Street from the Pimisi LRT Station to the Ottawa River Pathway.

Unfortunately, for 2019, council has elected to use \$1.0M of the cycling facilities budget to offset a portion of the debt financing for projects covered by the federal Public Transit Infrastructure Fund. While this funding is still going to support

cycling projects, it's disappointing that it couldn't be directed toward additional construction.

Integrated Roads Projects

Various road and water/wastewater renewal projects will include small improvements for cycling. For instance, McLeod Street will gain a counterflow bike lane between Percy Street and Bay Street (\$30k on a \$7.9M project), and a bike lane will be painted on Presland Road near the Vanier Parkway (\$70k on \$3.3M). Funding is provided in 2019 to begin work on Montreal Road between North River Road and St Laurent Boulevard, and on North River itself north of Montreal. This multi-year project will include cycletracks and a multi-use pathway and is in the final design phase.

The overall road resurfacing budget sets aside \$1.9M for paved shoulders, which improves the design life of the surface and provides space for cyclists and pedestrians off of the main roadway. This is up from \$0.8M in 2018 and \$0.5M in 2017 and will make rural communities more accessible by bike.

Budget 2019

Planning and Services

There are also budgeted items which will be of benefit to cyclists, but aren't construction projects. In 2019, \$865k will go toward the updated origin-destination survey for the National Capital Region, which studies transportation patterns and will inform the upcoming renewal of the Ottawa Transportation Master Plan. The O-D survey data includes transportation mode and we hope the significant increase in cycling trips since the last survey in 2011 will encourage planners to increase the priority of cycling facilities in the transportation network.

Cycling-related planning also includes the Active Transport Missing Links program (\$193k), which designs connections based on community need, and the Transportation Management Implementation Plan for Richmond Road/Westboro (\$509), which is intended to prepare the transportation network for intensification related to LRT2. Various safety programs continue in 2019, such as Safer Roads Ottawa (\$420k) and the Cycling Safety Improvement Program (\$105k), which review collision data and make targeted recommendations for safety improvements.



Infrastructure Update

2018 saw slow but steady improvement in cycling facilities with the completion of some small, strategic projects. Here are some highlights of new or improved infrastructure that opened last year.

McArthur Avenue

Separated bike lanes were installed on McArthur Avenue from Vanier Parkway to St Laurent Avenue using temporary concrete curbs. Despite the failure to connect the lanes to North River Road and the Rideau River Eastern Pathway, they provide a low-stress east-west route through Vanier/Overbrook. To realize their full potential, however, the lanes will need to be winter cleared.

Trillium Phase 3

With the completion of Phase 3, the Trillium (O-Train) Pathway now extends from the Ottawa River to the Rideau Canal Western Pathway at Dow's Lake. Though the connection across Prince of Wales Drive could be improved with a full crossride, Phase 3 fills in an obvious gap in the cycling network.

U of O Colonel By Crossride

As part of the LRT works, the crossing of Colonel By Drive at the University of Ottawa has been modified to include a raised crossing for pedestrians and cyclists. Cyclists are now directed to the

north side of the tunnel to reduce conflict at the entrance to the LRT station and to connect to the ramp into campus.


Reopened LRT bridges

After being closed for LRT construction, the MUP segments on the bridges over the Rideau River and over Riverside Drive have reopened. These low-stress routes create an important link between Sandy Hill/Old Ottawa East and the Trainyards and Coventry Road commercial areas, destinations which are geographically close, but separated by Highway 417, Riverside Drive, and the VIA Rail corridor.

Three Yellow Dots

The three painted yellow dots on the ground at intersections mark the most sensitive portion of a metal-detecting loop embedded in the pavement. The loop will detect when a vehicle, like a bike, has stopped at the intersection and triggers a signal change.

Progress Since 2014



In 2014, Bike Ottawa made 10 recommendations to improve cycling in our city. Five years later, what progress has been made?

Cycling Access To Lansdowne Park

Cycling to Lansdowne Park remains difficult. Bank Street lacks any bicycle infrastructure, and the crossing from the canal MUP to Princess Patricia Way at the east end of the development is uncontrolled. The bike lane along O'Connor Street improves access from downtown, but none of the entrances from Holmwood Avenue are formalized cycling routes. To the positive, bike parking is plentiful and high-quality.

O-Train Pathway To Dow's Lake

The Trillium Phase 3 multi-use pathway opened in 2018, connecting the Ottawa River Pathway to the Rideau Canal Western Pathway at Dow's Lake, providing safe access to Little Italy and completing an important link.

Merivale-Hunt Club Intersection

We recommended making efforts to increase the visibility of the bike lanes at the intersection of Merivale Road and Hunt Club Road. However, there has been no change to the intersection, and the slip lane remains a source of close calls. The opening of the Nepean Trail helps cyclists avoid Merivale Road, but does not cross Hunt Club.

Route Signage on NCC Pathways

Wayfinding on the National Capital Commission's pathways is still minimal. While map boards are provided at some locations, these are poorly-suited to cycling, as they are not readable without stopping. Encouragingly, the NCC's 2018 consultations for the update of the Capital Pathways Strategic Plan identified the need for better signage and for integration of wayfinding between the city and NCC pathways.

Progress Since 2014

Fund The Ontario Cycling Strategy

The original Ontario Cycling Strategy “#CycleON” was implemented and followed-up in 2018 with “#CycleON 2.0”. However, with the change of government in 2018, funding for the program has been eliminated.

Encourage Provision Of Bike Parking

The city has introduced a program to provide ring-and-post bicycle parking when requested by businesses. However, there is no ongoing effort to encourage existing shopping areas to install bike parking on private property.

Yellow Dots Awareness Campaign

We asked that the city improve the effectiveness of the yellow dots at intersections by conducting a survey to determine which intersections have them, and running a public awareness campaign to inform Ottawans about them. Information signs have been provided at some intersections, but in most places the purpose of the dots remains unclear.

Implement Book 18

The City of Ottawa has started including best practices from *Ontario Traffic Manual Book 18: Cycling Facilities* in new designs of cycling infrastructure. We hope that this trend continues after the upcoming refresh of the design guidelines.

Billings Bridge

Bank Street near Riverside Drive is one of the highest collision areas for cyclists and other travelers in the city, and we asked for improvements to the intersection. Upcoming improvements south on Bank will make that street safer,

but the intersection and Billings Bridge itself will remain untouched.

Cycling Detours For LRT Construction

Detours along Scott Street and around Bayview Station were generally well-marked, and included temporary paths to keep the route open; a detour during the closure of the Nicholas Street underpass forced cyclists onto busy Laurier Avenue; and for the Transitway bridge at Riverside Drive (reopened in late 2018), no alternate route was provided at all. We had hoped for better accommodation for cycling given the comparatively large expense of widening Highways 417 and 174 for bus detours.

Counterflow Lane

A one-way street for general traffic may offer additional lanes for buses or bicycles to travel in a direction counter to main flow of traffic. These lanes are called counterflow lanes, and they can be used to fill in gaps in the bicycle network.

Recommendations For 2019



To improve the safety and enjoyability of cycling in the city, Bike Ottawa recommends the following realistic and achievable policies for 2019:

Enforce The Existing Detour Policy

The troubled process of constructing temporary bike lanes on Holland Avenue during the closure of the Harmer Avenue pedestrian bridge, and the complete loss of eastbound cycling facilities on Scott Street for a private construction project near McRae Avenue, demonstrate the city's inconsistent adherence to its existing safe detour policies. Ottawa's guidelines for accommodating cyclists during construction require that alternate facilities are provided, even if that means diverting a bike lane within the right of way. The city needs to ensure that detours are arranged before allowing bike infrastructure to be blocked for any reason.

Ambitious Complete Streets Policy

The City of Ottawa has adopted a complete streets policy which "balances service levels, risk, and affordability"

between modes of transportation. The city should instead embrace a more ambitious definition, in line with the spirit of the complete streets design approach, which requires that infrastructure be designed to provide safe travel for all modes, ages, and abilities.

Winter Clearing Of New Infrastructure

The city should introduce a policy that all new cycling infrastructure should be winter-cleared by default. New streets for motor vehicles are not subject to an additional bureaucratic hurdle to be usable in winter, and neither should be new cycling infrastructure. If the city is making investments in active transport, it is counterproductive to limit the usefulness of new infrastructure by restricting it by season.

Recommendations For 2019

Lower Complete Streets Threshold

Not only should Ottawa be more ambitious with its street design, any construction or repair works should be an opportunity to review the layout of a street. The city's policy of designing complete streets should apply even in the case of a simple resurfacing, since the additional cost of planters, temporary curbs, or traffic-calming elements is small compared to the overall project cost. We should make small interventions whenever possible rather than wait for big, infrequent rebuilds.

No Sharrows!

While some experienced and confident cyclists find sharrows help emphasize their right to use the road, sharrows do not generally improve the safety or comfort of the average person. They are not a suitable substitute for cycling infrastructure for people of all ages and abilities. Painted sharrows and thermoplastic "super sharrows" are therefore not a good use of our cycling infrastructure budget, and we should simply stop using them.

References

Sources

Fact Sheet:

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