



Bike Ottawa

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VIA E-MAIL: Kelly.Crozier@ottawa.ca

For distribution to members of Transportation Committee

Subject: Unwarranted All-Way Stop Controls

Summary: Traffic -calming must be achieved through appropriate road design. Unwarranted AWSCs interfere with safe, lawful, and convenient cycling on quiet streets, and therefore discourage cycling. We encourage staff and councillors to discuss and implement alternatives to AWSCs when a community has a traffic concern than will not be solved by an AWSC.

Dear Members of Transportation Committee,

We are contacting you to explain why we do not support the installation of unwarranted all-way stop controls (AWSC), such as those proposed on the July 5, 2017 agenda. This is a general statement about our position on unwarranted AWSCs, since we have seen a few such examples approved in recent Transportation Committee meetings, and are concerned that city policies, staff advice, and best practices are not being followed on this issue.

Bike Ottawa represents a community of vulnerable road users, and we are extremely sympathetic to concerns about the dangers of motor vehicles on our roads. People on bikes tend to prefer protected infrastructure and low-speed, low-volume streets. As a result, people who bike make many of their trips mainly on residential streets. When unwarranted AWSCs are deployed, this has a disproportionate negative impact on people who bike, as follows:

1. **Reduced convenience, increased travel times.** Convenience is essential to the popularity of cycling. Unwarranted AWSCs at frequent intervals discourage cycling, and will divert some cyclists onto arterial roads over local streets. To promote cycling, there must be as few obstacles as possible. It's worth keeping in mind that higher rates of cycling pose much less danger to the community than if those trips were made by car, so encouraging cycling has safety benefits for other road users.

2. Less law-abiding behaviour, and a negative perception of cyclists. As staff correctly point out, AWSCs that do not meet warrant criteria are likely to have a low compliance rate. This could result in collisions, and contributes to an unsafe culture of rolling stops, where road users have learned that most stop signs can be treated more like yields. Like drivers, cyclists are also likely to disregard unwarranted AWSCs, but unlike drivers, people biking tend to be noticed and remembered for this behavior, resulting in the “criminalization of cycling”. It’s our experience that this stereotype of cyclists as flagrant lawbreakers, rather than as human beings who deserve safe and convenient transportation options, makes our advocacy work far more difficult.

Bike Ottawa believes that stop signs should not be used as traffic-calming, since better traffic-calming tools exist. These could include chicanes, channelized bulb-outs, mini-roundabouts, raised crosswalks, landscaping, and permeable traffic diversion. However, many residents are unaware of these options, and request stop signs when they are concerned about motor traffic. We understand that concern, and sometimes stop signs are the appropriate measure. However, when staff conclude that an AWSC is not warranted, we encourage councillors to seek staff advice on alternative traffic-calming measures that will work better in the circumstances, and to educate their community about options that would be more appropriate.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our position. We are hopeful that, going forward, Ottawa will take full advantage of the expertise of our city staff, and employ the many traffic-calming tools that are available to improve safety for everyone.

Sincerely,

Heather Shearer
Vice President, Bike Ottawa

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