



Bike Ottawa

Citizens for safe cycling since 1984

How You Can Be An Effective Cycling Advocate

Speak up! Let your city councillor know when you support or oppose a transportation project. Funding decisions are based on community support.

Communicate with city staff. These people do much of the hard work without recognition and have more power than you may know.

Be proactive. Get involved early in the process of project design, so your recommendations can be incorporated. Be persistent, follow up and stay engaged throughout the process.

Focus on the positive. Policy makers will enjoy talking to you more if you are optimistic and collaborative. Show up with solutions.

Attend city meetings and consultations. Focus on areas that you know well.

Bring data, and lots of it! Bring examples and prepare to counter the “but what about” arguments.

Pay attention to the budget. Advocate for funding just as much as for the plan.

Have realistic expectations. Don’t expect you will get everything you ask for instantly. Change takes time. Be ready to settle for a pilot or the next best thing.

The media matters. Be judicious if reaching out to the media on an issue; maintain a positive and constructive position.

Be a good steward. Ride, walk, and drive with the consideration and patience you would like to see from others.

Support businesses that support cycling. Let the business know that you would like to see bike racks in front of their store, or that the completion of a bike lane would make it safer for you to bring your family.

Lead by example. Show up to cycling events and volunteer your time.

You have skills that are valuable. Advocacy benefits from skills in communicating, presenting, writing, public speaking, advertising, graphic design, researching, data analysis, accounting...be open to learning, as well.

You have experiences that are valuable. We want to involve as many types of cyclists as possible, to have an inclusive active transportation network. Whether you like to ride on pathways away from traffic or are a competitive cyclist, your experience is important. We all want to get home safely.

Celebrate the small wins. Spread the news when a new facility opens; you never know who may give the new route a try. Thank the city staff involved.

Advocate at your child's school. Ask your school board for cycling training at school. Build cycling as a habit from an early age. Let your child's school know that you would like a safe route to school that is protected from car traffic. Consider leading a cycling school bus of younger riders.

Develop future leaders and enable others. Mentor others interested in the area. Support youth who want to get involved. Share your resources.

Are you a business owner or manager? Support cycling in your organization by supporting policies that promote it.

Find allies and support from community associations and other organizations outside of the cycling community. Poor snow clearing on pathways means people who walk, use a wheelchair or push a stroller may also struggle to travel there. Reciprocate support for other mutually beneficial initiatives.

Engage the opposition. Invite resistant officials for a bike ride, try to build positive dialogue and empathy.

Be patient and be prepared to explain the same issue to each new audience. What seems obvious for some of us won't be to those for whom it's new information.

Be aware that advocacy can be tiring and it's okay to give yourself a rest from time to time.

Leverage the experience of Bike Ottawa's Advocacy Working Group members, who can provide feedback and ideas to support you when approaching municipal or provincial officials.

What advocacy issues will I focus on?

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2.

3.