

Cycling Myths Debunked

If cyclists want bike lanes, they should pay for them!

Cyclists already pay for them. Anyone who pays rent or property tax in Toronto is paying for municipal roadways. Furthermore, bike lanes are cheap. Portland, OR calculated that their entire system of cycling related infrastructure - around 300 miles of bike lanes - cost approximately \$60 million, the equivalent to the cost of one mile of new freeway.

That new bike lane is going to put me out of business!

Cycling is actually great for business. A recent study by the Center for Active Transportation (TCAT) conducted in The Danforth and Bloor West Village counters the misconception that removing on-street parking is bad for business. The report concludes that: Merchants on The Danforth overestimated the proportion of customers that drive. The survey showed that over 80% of people arrive on The Danforth versus those that arrive by transit, foot, or bicycle. Local residents tend to visit more often and spend more each month than people who don't live nearby.

The majority of people surveyed, merchants included, (58%) preferred to see street-use reallocated to widened sidewalks or a bike lane, even if on-street parking was reduced by 50%.

No one cycles in the winter!

The Netherlands and Denmark routinely experience very cold winters but good management of conditions, including clearing snow from major cycle routes, ensures that cycling remains practical as a mode of transport for most people. People still walk when it's rainy, or cold, or hot and they still cycle too. In fact, counts taken on the Bloor bike path in the winter months of February and March 2018 and January 2019 reveal that there were 108,313 trips taken by people on bicycles*.

*Source: Traffic Data Collection & Analysis, Traffic Safety Unit, Transportation Services, City of Toronto.

Cycling causes congestion

In general, congestion has nothing to do with cycling, but is a direct function of volume of car traffic. Reallocating space on roads for cycling will actually make roads more efficient at moving people: a typical vehicle lane can carry around 2,000 people per hour, but the same space allocated for cycling infrastructure could carry around 10,000 people per hour. Driving is the least efficient method for moving people on city streets.

Cyclists should be licensed!

The City of Toronto has decided four times that licensing cyclists is more of an administrative burden than an effective tool for reducing bicycle infractions, or as a revenue generator. In fact in the few places that have licensed cyclists in the past, such as L.A., the program has been scrapped because of a waste of police resources and an inability to enforce. Cyclists are already subject to the law and can get ticketed like any other vehicle operator. In order to

reduce infractions and improve roadways for everyone, we should focus on education and infrastructure.

Cycling should require insurance like driving does

This fallacy suggests some sort of parity between cycling and driving, but the danger posed by driving a motor vehicle is far greater. As a mode of transport, cycling does not present substantial risk to people or property, which is what mandatory insurance is designed to mitigate. This is why driving commonly requires some form of minimum third-party liability insurance the risk of causing property damage or serious bodily harm to others in the event of a collision is so high.

I saw a crazy cyclist the other day, who swerved in front of me, talking on a cell phone, and still managed to tell me off. You cyclists are so disrespectful!

We all have a responsibility to share our roads safely and respectfully. Delinquent cyclists are not representative of the average commuter or recreational cyclist in Toronto. Thousands of people travel by bicycle safely and without incident every day. Bike lanes and public education about road sharing responsibilities and best practices serve all Torontonians, regardless of travel mode. We are all in this together.

Toronto isn't Copenhagen or Amsterdam

The Netherlands and Denmark have a high cycling participation rate. Some claim that this is because they are temperamentally different from us or don't have a strong car culture. Both are untrue. The Dutch and Danes are not different from any other people, and car ownership is high in both countries. Cycling is popular because they live in places where cycling routes are well designed and integrated into the overall transportation system, making it a convenient, safe, and obvious way to get around. Many major cities around the world have already followed their lead, such as Paris, New York and Montreal.

Why should I ride a bike?

A bicycle lets you travel where you want to go, when you want to go and is often quicker than public transit or a car. And it is undoubtedly cheaper: when you own a bicycle your travel costs are hundreds of dollars less than the cost of transit and thousands of dollars less than a car. Exercising regularly on your bike will improve your mental and physical health and has no negative impact on the environment. Cycling also offers an alternative for many TTC riders - especially as we try to maintain social distancing during these difficult times.

and besides . . . cycling is fun!