

March 22, 2016

Re: Bike Lanes on New Street – speaking notes for delegation to D&I committee

Dear Chair Craven, Mayor Goldring, Members of Committee, City Staff and Burlington citizens,

I am pleased to delegate today on behalf of BurlingtonGreen regarding the proposal to include improved bike lanes on New Street.

BurlingtonGreen fully supports the recommendation by Mayor Goldring to have staff consider incorporating enhanced cycling infrastructure as part of the New Street reconstruction between Martha and Cumberland streets. It is never too late to consider all modes of transportation as society responds to the impacts of climate change and evolving modes of transportation and mobility.

Consistent with our Greenprint for the Future transportation campaign, we suggest the City needs to integrate effective, sustainable transportation opportunities into all key planning policies to create a healthier environment and quality of life for the citizens of Burlington. 'Getting there' should work for everyone – including the environment.

Burlington has the highest per capita car ownership rate in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. According to the city, residents use motor vehicles for 90 per cent of their trips during the week and 40 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions produced in Burlington are from cars.

Even with congestion, increased commute times, residential parking challenges, and programs to promote active transportation, we still choose our vehicles for even the shortest trips. Why? In part, because our city was designed that way. Development is still centred on 'The Car' for access, impact, and planning. It's time to think AND act outside the car. Changing transportation habits is going to take more than awareness. Active transportation, including cycling, has to make sense for how people get to where they need to go. Effective planning and the required infrastructure need to be in place.

Creating and advancing infrastructure opportunities that support a healthier community, such as the proposed New Street cycling initiative allows you as our City's leaders to walk the talk, or in this case "bike the talk", consistent with your vision and objectives captured in the recently drafted strategic plan. We ask that you think long-term and consider that all levels of government need to change their perspective on modes of transportation within their jurisdiction.

Take this opportunity to advance a cycling infrastructure that has the best chance of use, for being safe and thus successful. Consistent with Brent Toderians' recommendations, BurlingtonGreen believes the best option to achieve this is with the creation of segregated cycling lanes.

New Street is a major east-west corridor that is well positioned to be shared - not just reserved for cars. The existing Centennial bike path is a diagonal pathway that takes one away from the shopping and amenities. Cycling is more than a recreational activity. Effective design and planning will incent Cyclists

to travel to and from work, to shop or to attend meetings and functions, thereby reducing car traffic congestion, benefiting everyone, including those driving cars. Given safe, direct alternatives, cycling will increase and reduce single-occupancy vehicular traffic – extending the life cycle of existing street infrastructure, while creating cleaner air, a healthier environment and healthier citizens.

While we acknowledge the segregated bike lane option comes at a higher expense, we believe it serves as an important and timely opportunity for you to demonstrate your ‘shift’ in priority setting and decision -making, moving away from spending that supports the car to investment in a more sustainable future.

As stated in the City’s draft 25-year Strategic Plan, one of Burlington’s goals is to achieve the ‘Gold Standard for Bicycle-Friendly’ status, up from the current Bronze level (as per the Share the Road organization). One could ask ‘why not aim for Platinum or Diamond status in the span of twenty-five years? Creating the optimum in cycling lanes would help achieve that goal.

The power for positive change is in your hands. We hope you will take hold of it, be bold and advance this cleaner, healthier transportation opportunity.

Lawson Hunter,
Interim Chair, Advocacy Team,
BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association
