Mobilising Business Communities to Support Safe Cycling Infrastructure

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Introduction

Cycling advocates lobby for bike lanes by praising the social/environmental virtues of cycling.

Business owners, however, worry that new street configurations may lead to a loss of valuable customers.
Introduction

Research is showing that street configurations that accommodate cycling may in fact be very beneficial for main street businesses.

The understanding of cycling’s role in increasing business revenues can be persuasive in encouraging small business owners to support cycling infrastructure.
Bike lanes: Good for business

Trend in share of workers commuting by Bicycle in North American Cities:

Adapted from Pucher et al. (2012)
Bike lanes: Good for business

In New York, some benefits of bike lane implementation include:

“Up to 177% increase in bicycle volumes” in First and and Second Avenues (buffered bike lanes were incorporated to both). Accompanied by “47% fewer commercial vacancies” compared to 2% more borough wide.

“49% fewer commercial vacancies” at Union Square (included widened sidewalks and a protected bike lane), compared to a 5% increase borough wide.

“Up to 49% increase in retail sales” in businesses located at 9th Ave. (where buffered bike lanes were added) compared to a 3% increase borough wide.

-New York City Department of Transportation, 2012
Why?

1. Cyclists spend more than other customers on a monthly basis. (Clifton et al., 2013; Forkes et al., 2010; Sztabinski, 2009; Transportation Alternatives, 2012)

2. The denser parts of North American cities predate the automobile.

3. Bicycle infrastructure can significantly increase access to destinations.
Why?
Why?

Cycling: 5 minutes
7 km²
Population: 52,710

Walking: 5 minutes
0.5 km²
Population: 3,765

Infographic: Daniel Arancibia
Share of drivers: Overestimated

Figure 1. Six independent studies show that shoppers are more likely to arrive using alternative modes of transportation rather than cars in urban North American neighbourhoods. Data from Stabinsky (2009) and Forkes et al. (2010) was used for the Toronto (Annex) and Toronto (Bloor West Village) graphs respectively. Data for Vancouver is from Stantec (2011). The Portland study numbers here are for all of Portland’s downtown (Clifton et al., 2013). The New York survey was carried out by Transportation Alternatives (2012). Note that the San Francisco study by Bent et al. (2009) was done after congestion pricing measures were in place.
Three independent studies show that merchants in urban neighbourhoods over-estimated by 100% on average the percentage of customers who drove to their stores. In all three studies, surveys show that drivers made up a relatively small percentage of all customers. Data from Stabinsky (2009) and Forkes et al. (2010) was used for the Toronto (Annex) and Toronto (Bloor West Village) graphs respectively. Data for Vancouver is from Stantec (2011).
Eglinton Connects
Eglinton Connects

In 2014 the Eglinton Connects public consultation process recommended an expansion of sidewalks and separated bicycle lanes along the length of Eglinton.

This direction was endorsed unanimously by the PWIC, and by a wide majority at Toronto City Council.
Knowledge Mobilisation

We could not attend most public consultations.

... 

But what if someone else with good training on this information could?
We partnered with Cycle Toronto and Charlie’s Freewheels, and applied for funding from the Heart and Stroke Foundation to carry out a community development project.
Community Development

We plan to propagate our success across the city through Cycle Toronto’s local ward groups.

We will bolster advocacy efforts with proven strategies using education and outreach to engage business communities.
Community Development

How are we doing this?
Specific Goals

1. Capacity Building
Specific Goals

2. Strategic Plans
Specific Goals

3. Enlisting of Stakeholders
Progress

How is the project progressing?
Conclusion

Picture: Daniel Arancibia
Thank you
References:


