



# Pedaling into High Gear for Bicycle Policy in Canada:

## Lessons from Bike Summit 2008 in Toronto



"The tide is changing. There are much fewer negative, pessimistic sentiments. Instead people want to know how to build bike facilities faster."

– Jeff Olson  
Alta Planning

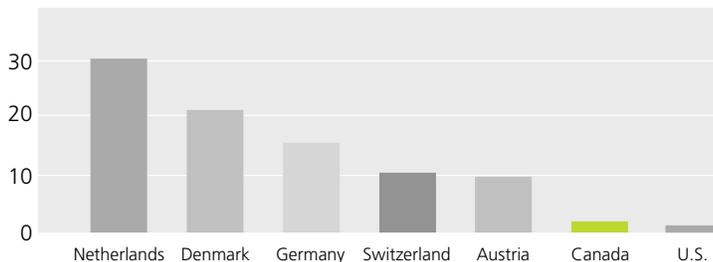
"Ten years ago cycling was seen as a militant, on the edge activity, and for low-income groups. That's changed."

– Koy Thomson, London Cycling Campaign

### The timing is right

Bicycling as a legitimate form of urban transportation is hitting the mainstream. It's up to advocates – inside government, in business, and in the community – to push for widespread change and spur massive public investment in bicycling.

On average, 2% of trips are taken by bike in Canada, compared to 30% in the Netherlands.



# BIKE 2008 SUMMIT

On April 25, 2008, the Toronto Coalition for Active Transportation brought together leading thinkers, practitioners and decision-

makers for Bike Summit 2008 in Toronto. The purpose of this inaugural Summit was to share international and Canadian best practices and perspectives on putting policy into action, and to build local, regional and provincial momentum and leadership for bikeable communities.



Over 180 government employees, private sector consultants, cycling advocates and other community members attended the one-day Summit and various media outlets covered the event.

This report describes the wise advice given by those who have achieved great success worldwide. It is hoped that this document will serve to assist those working in communities across Canada and beyond to improve conditions for cycling and to help generate a cultural shift. Bike Summit 2009 will continue the legacy, sharing new stories, connecting more people, and further entrenching bicycle policy and planning in our future urban development.

## The Pressure and Support to do More

### Economic Savings

Cycling creates incredible value for the initial investment. As shown in London's approach on the back page of this report, cycling infrastructure is much more affordable than major public transit or roads infrastructure. There are also important savings in healthcare costs if enough of the population adopts a healthier lifestyle by bicycling regularly, and thus requiring less public health services. Having a bicycle-friendly community is also a quality of life issue, and is important for economic development. Many people want to live near bike trails, so businesses that want to attract employees will locate where they have those options. Finally, the high cost of fuel is causing commuters to spend more on gas, leaving less to spend on consumer goods and therefore impacting many businesses. By cycling more and using the car less, consumers will have more money in their pockets to contribute to the local economy.

### Congestion Alleviation and Inter-Modal Connections

The lost productivity and loss of family time due to congestion could be regained by shifting some private motor vehicle trips to alternative transportation. However,



"With fuel prices increasing, bikes are going to help people stay mobile."

– Usman Valiante  
Bicycle Trade Association  
of Canada

just like road expansion, public transit investments alone cannot solve our growing demand for urban transportation infrastructure to move goods and people comfortably and efficiently – the costs are just too great. Bicycle trips can replace some transit trips, serving to alleviate over-demand on some heavy transit routes. In addition, some transit trips may need a bicycle connection in order to make them feasible – for example, accessing rapid transit in suburban areas where local transit is infrequent or indirect.

### Health Rewards

Obesity and sedentary lifestyles are a growing public health concern across Canada. Almost one-quarter of adults are obese and another 35% are overweight. Regular exercise, through cycling for transportation or recreation, can be a part of a healthy lifestyle that controls weight gain.

Research has shown that individuals are more likely to exercise regularly if the exercise is of moderate intensity (like cycling or walking) and is incorporated into daily activities such as commuting or running errands (rather than being a specific activity like going to a gym).



"Cycling investments give the best bang for buck."

– Koy Thomson  
London Cycling Campaign

## Environmental Protection

Motor vehicles are a significant contributor to urban air pollution – accounting for about 60% of common smog-causing pollutants and 35% of Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Taking motor vehicles off the road, by reducing trips and using alternative forms of transportation – like bicycling – are key ingredients to any urban air quality strategy.

“You cannot build your way out of traffic problems.”

– Rebecca Anderson, *Trek Bicycle*

## Next Steps: Infrastructure, policies and programs

More bikeways = more cyclists = safer cycling

density is increased, motor vehicle traffic speeds typically fall, making cycling in mixed traffic safer.

### Complete Streets



“Complete Streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and bus riders of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across a complete street.”

– National Complete Streets Coalition



“Never build a building that doesn't have housing in it.”

– Peter Lagerwey, *City of Seattle*

Above all else, if a municipality can adopt a Complete Streets policy, all the other work involved with creating a bike-friendly city will follow. For example, implementing a bicycle master plan – much more challenging than developing the plan – is much easier if city-wide road redevelopment follows a Complete Streets ethos. However, a complete street does not necessarily mean having a bike lane on every street – it is context sensitive. Complete Streets policies are especially important for suburban areas where bike volumes are less likely to warrant dedicated facilities. Streets still need to be safe for cycling to encourage local trips and connections to public transit by bicycle. In London, cycle network development in the suburban outer zones is expected to account for 70% of the city's cycling growth, since it is the largest untapped market of travelers.

### The Land Use Connection

Building housing on top of commercial buildings is feasible, since people want to live in urban areas yet also be above street level, with views of the city – it's just a matter of having the right incentives to achieve this.

Increasing densities is also important to reduce distances between destinations. The added bonus is that when

### Seattle's Complete Streets

In Seattle, where a Complete Streets policy exists, when it's time to reconstruct a street that's in the Bike Plan, the City hosts a complete streets meeting, bringing together various municipal departments like transportation, forestry, signals, utilities, parking, and others. If the route is in the Bike Plan then the bike lane project happens – there is no further debate or opportunity to defer work. Under this system, installing bicycle infrastructure becomes much more routine so that a public debate is not needed for every bike lane installation. This enables the Bike Plan implementation to happen much faster and at a minimal cost since fewer reports and meetings are needed. However, in order to get to this point, the Bike Plan development needs to be more rigorous since it effectively designs the majority of the city's road network.



## Road Diets

Lane width reductions and road diets, whereby one or more motor vehicle travel lanes are eliminated, help to reduce speeds because drivers are forced to pay more attention while driving. In the case where there is only one lane of travel in each direction, traffic flows at the speed of the slowest vehicle.

“Managing speed is the best way to improve safety.”

– Peter Lagerwey, City of Seattle

## Public Bike Sharing Programs

One of the most popular programs communities are exploring worldwide is public bike sharing. Public bikes are available for rent at a variety of kiosks around the city and are suitable for long or short trips and links with public transit. Grabbing the biggest headlines is the *Vélib* system in Paris with 20,000 bikes stationed at 1,400 stations. The program was modeled after the successful system in Lyon, France, where bicycle mode share doubled overnight with the introduction of that system. The key to the success of a public bike sharing program is massive investment – bikes in good working order have to be readily available throughout an urban area at all times. London is planning to have 6,000 bikes by 2010; accounting for 10-15% of the city’s cycling growth. Toronto, Montreal, Philadelphia and Washington, DC are all planning to launch their systems incrementally starting in 2008/2009.



“The key to success for public bikes is massive investment – they must be ubiquitous, everywhere.”

– Randy Neufeld  
Chicagoland Bicycle Federation

## Bike Boulevards

The typical bike boulevard – like those found in Portland and Vancouver – is on a quiet side street, is well signed, and has bike-activated and prioritized traffic signals at major intersections. The purpose is for longer-distance,

On St. George Street in Toronto, the City removed two lanes of traffic, installed bike lanes, changed the road texture in some sections, and planted trees. In general, the character of a street changes with only two lanes of traffic instead of four – all the traffic slows down, there is no passing, and overall it’s a less stressful drive.

un-interrupted bike commutes away from busier motor vehicle traffic. Bike boulevards serve cyclists well if designed correctly, but they should not be the only approach cities take. In many cities, arterials are usually where the most direct routes and major destinations are found, so planners should still work to make cycling on arterials safe. In London, cycle arterials are expected to account for 10-15% of the city’s cycling growth when fully installed.



“Side streets are already safe – we need bike facilities on arterials.”

– Randy Neufeld, Chicagoland Bicycle Federation

## Bike Stations

Bike Stations have sprung up around the United States. They usually incorporate secure, enclosed and monitored bike parking with shower, change and locker facilities.



They’re often located at major transportation hubs – such as a rapid transit or commuter rail station – thus facilitating seamless and convenient inter-modal travel. Other services like bike repair, bike rental, café, and trip planning are also incorporated in some instances. Simply providing secure bike parking, without other amenities, can still go a long way toward encouraging more cycling and should be pursued. Bike stations generally require some sort of public subsidy to operate – usually in the form of in-kind donated space.



## Toronto Case Study: Bike Racks on Buses through Political Will

For years, Toronto lagged behind other cities installing bicycle racks on its surface transit vehicles – a missing link in the inter-modal transit equation. Through the political leadership of the Toronto Transit Commission's Chair, the system now has a plan to rollout bike racks for the entire bus fleet – that's almost 2,000 buses! In addition, the TTC's order for new low-floor streetcars will also accommodate bicycles easily.



## Bike Train

Launched in the summer of 2007, the Toronto-Niagara Bike Train filled a gap in cycling tourism and recreation for the Greater Toronto



Area: How to access the calm and serene bike routes of the Niagara wine region from Toronto without driving a car? Operating on most weekends throughout the summer, passengers can load their bike on a dedicated car on a train leaving from downtown Toronto bound for Niagara Falls. Niagara-area residents can also load their bikes and ride the train to explore Toronto by bike.



## Inter-City Trails – Recreation and Tourism

The predominant target market for converting new bicycle commuters are recreational cyclists. In Toronto, almost 50% of the population are recreational cyclists, while less than 20% ever cycle for utilitarian purposes (school, work, errands, etc.). People who enjoy cycling as a sport or social activity are the most likely to consider an attempt at cycling to work, school or the grocery store. That is why it is just as important for governments to continue developing their off-road and recreational trail systems, and other programs to encourage bicycle tourism. In Quebec, the Route Verte is taking the lead on developing a province-wide network of on-road and off-road cycling routes, connecting communities and facilitating bicycle tourism.

## Route Verte

The *Route Verte* was developed jointly by the province-wide advocacy organization Vélo Québec, the Quebec Government, and the 1,000 partners across the province. It currently has 4,000 km of implemented network – 40% of which is off-road. In its development, the government involved a variety of ministries beyond Transportation – Tourism, Municipal Affairs, and Parks, to name a few – showing that a true bicycle policy or plan requires coordinated inter-department consultation and cooperation.



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# Keys to Success - Spark Political Will

"The only way to fight politics is with politics. Politicians need to hear about cycling from more than just regular advocates; they need to hear it from their average constituent, their friends, and their family."

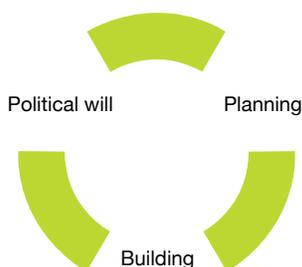
– Randy Neufeld, Chicagoland Bicycle Federation

## Get the 'Unusual' Suspects

As cycling has gained popularity, politicians have grown accustomed to hearing frequently from dedicated cycling activists at City Hall. Together with these advocates, different voices are also needed. Newly converted bike commuters, businesses with an eye to environmental sustainability and social responsibility, and concerned parents are all strong allies. The same goes for City staff – it's important for non-traditional departments besides Transportation and Public Health to also be pushing for more bike-friendly policies and development at the bureaucratic level.

### Incremental Execution:

Start small, **show results**, and build support for more. This leads back to political will.



## Piggy-Back on Other Important Issues

The greatest cycling investments worldwide are coming on the heels of broader public policies. The disadvantage to this strategy is that since cycling is not the highest priority, it can easily get lost in the process. Keep a sharp eye on the cycling investment aspect of the plans, and the related returns that will result. Timing is also important, so don't waste energy at the wrong time, if other unrelated political issues are currently taking centre stage.

The most visible of issues is **Greenhouse Gas Emission** reduction plans. Since transportation makes up such a large portion of urban CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, investing in cycling is a smart emission reduction strategy – part of a larger menu of strategies. **Population Growth** is another key issue facing our cities, and since we cannot absorb all of this growth in transportation demand with private motor vehicles or public transit, some of it will have to be accommodated through bicycles. **The rising price of fuel** is another allied cause to cycling investment.

## Make Cycling Cool for Everyone

It's important not to focus only on the commute trip for attracting new cyclists, since those trips account for only about 25% of trips. Instead focus also on the multi modal, non-commute, easier-distance trips, like picking the kids up from school, running errands or visiting friends.

### The Lance Effect

The growth of recreational cycling and racing has helped to make cycling in general more popular. Advocates can build on this to promote cycling as transportation and convert new utilitarian cyclists.



## Social Marketing

To get people to want bikes more than cars, create a brand for cycling. Focus on how much fun cycling can be, and how it is a much better way to see and experience places – much more than driving in a car. A cultural shift can start with someone deciding to one day cycle to run errands or visit friends. A snowball effect is started as others see these people out riding. Through this process, we can achieve a cultural renaissance!

It's crucial to avoid stereotyping cyclists, and reach out to the elderly, minority populations, and low-income groups. Whenever possible, provide promotion and education materials in multiple languages.

## London Case Study – Congestion Charging

London introduced congestion charging in 2003, and charges motor vehicles £8 to enter the downtown core. The goals were to fight congestion, improve the public realm, and raise money to build infrastructure. The plan originally faced significant political and public opposition, but strong leadership from London's Mayor prevailed. The charge yields £123 million per year. These funds can go a long way to help build cycling infrastructure. Following the launch of the program, traffic went down 25%, Londoners made 65,000 fewer daily car trips, and cycling levels increased between 30 and 50%.

## Safe Routes to School

Most kids in Canada cannot ride a bike to school – either because their parents perceive the trip to be too risky, or the school does not allow it or does not provide adequate parking facilities. Safe Routes to School programs are helpful, but they need to be permanent and not reliant on volunteer time. The policy to encourage walking and cycling to school should be engrained at the school board level and supported by individual school administrators. Vélo Québec's Safe Routes to School program includes both en-route and in-class activities.



"Parents don't want their kids biking to school because of their fear of motor vehicle traffic."

– Peter Lagerwey  
City of Seattle

## Big Events

Various headline events can serve as the first link to cycling for many new cyclists. The excitement and enjoyment that these events provide can help build the mass of cycling support for future policies that promote cycling. These are also critical times to invite politicians and key decision-makers to participate and experience how much fun cycling can be. Cities all over the world, including Chicago and New York City, are following Bogota's example with car-free Sundays or *Ciclovía*. The Toronto Criterium in downtown



attracted some of the countries best racers and packed Toronto's streets with enthusiastic fans lining the course. Vélo Québec's annual Tour de L'Île involves almost 50,000 cyclists each year, all touring Montreal to celebrate cycling.

## Bold and Daring Engineers

There are a lot of technical design standards that stand in the way of building cycling facilities – lane widths, turning radii, and parking requirements, for example. Engineers need our encouragement and support to be flexible and go against standards that don't accommodate bicycles. In order to 'retrain' engineers for cycling mode shift, try sending engineers in your community for cycling training and take them on rides to show them what is needed.

## Strong Advocates

All the world's major cycling cities have large, powerful advocacy organizations. These groups are financially stable, credible, and have good working relationships with government. The Chicagoland Bicycle Federation even has 4 of its employees embedded in the City's bicycle office, under contract to help design bikeways. The London Cycling Campaign was very influential in ensuring that each Mayoral candidate had a solid cycling platform as part of their campaign. Vélo Québec partners with civil servants in provincial and municipal governments on many of its projects, including developing the Province's bikeway design handbook.

## Partnering with the Bicycle Industry

The bicycle industry sits in a unique public appeal position because there are relatively few negative economic externalities from the business. Instead, when bike suppliers sell bikes, their customers get fitter, and more customers riding can help to fight pollution. However, it is only recently that the bicycle industry has realized this unique position, and is starting to shift its marketing focus from racing and recreation to bikes as transportation.

The bicycle industry can advocate simply by letting people know what's available in the bicycle marketplace. Bike shops are often the first connection new cyclists make to cycling, and so it's important to make them less intimidating and more novice-friendly.

Bicycle manufacturers can help by funneling some of their profits to local advocacy groups, since they have a mutual interest in seeing more bikes on the road. Trek Bikes donates \$1 from every bike helmet sold – \$1 million annually – to the Bicycle Friendly Communities Campaign in the US.

In Canada, the Bicycle Trade Association of Canada (BTAC) took on advocacy starting in 2007, and wants to be the central hub of advocacy by supporting the work of local groups across the country. So far, BTAC has worked to eliminate the Provincial Sales Tax on bicycles and accessories in Ontario. This initiative is partially a savings to the consumer, but more symbolically it communicates the value that the government is placing on bicycling – it's a good, not to be taxed.

"Cycling is democratic! Cycling is fun! Cycling is easy!"

– Marc Jolicoeur, Vélo Québec

## Get a Bike Plan

A good Bike Plan is more than just a bikeway network; it is also about promoting cultural change. Most Bike Plans start with the same two goals:

- 1 Increase bike ridership; and
- 2 Improve cyclist safety.

However, London has chosen to focus on bike trips mainly.

“Have a target for mode share and everything else will flow from there.”

— Koy Thomson, London Cycling Campaign

In 2004, Mayor Ken Livingstone released London's Cycling Action Plan, with targets to increase cycling by 80% by 2010 and 200% by 2020. Today the target has been increased to 200% by 2012 and 400% by 2020.

There are two ways to measure cycling growth:

- 1 Number of trips made by bicycle; and
- 2 Bicycling mode share.

## Toronto's Bike Plan Goals:

- 1 Double the number of bicycle trips made, as a percentage of total trips
- 2 Reduce the number of bicycle collisions and injuries

## Chicago's Bike2015 Plan Goals:

- 1 5% of short trips (under 5 miles) by bike
- 2 Cut traffic crashes by 50% for cyclists

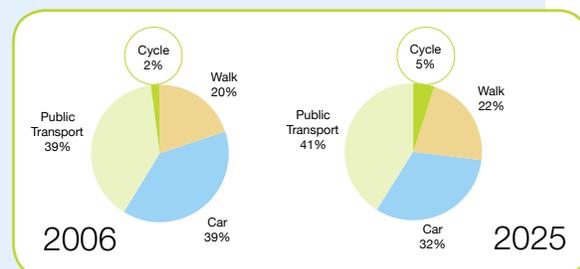
## Seattle's Bike Plan Goals:

- 1 Triple bike ridership
- 2 Cut bike crashes by one-third



## London's Approach to Mode Share Targets

In London, the target is to reduce motor vehicle mode share from 39% to 32%. For comparison, the current motor vehicle mode share in the Greater Toronto Area is approximately 70-80%. To accomplish London's goal, the City will more than double bicycle mode share from 2% to 5% - a 150% increase, while public transit will increase from 39% to 41% - a 5% increase. While both modal shifts are beneficial, the cost savings associated with each are vastly different. The cost of increasing public transit mode share – increasing capacity by building new transit infrastructure and adding vehicles – is much more costly than increasing cycling mode share by adding bike lanes, installing bicycle parking, and implementing other policies and programs. London's planned budget to improve cycling conditions is only 0.5% of the total transportation budget and, more importantly, will save the City millions by minimizing the demand for public transit and road expansion.



## Thanks very much to the Bike Summit 2008 Presenters:

- Rebecca Anderson, Trek Bicycle Director of Advocacy
- Daniel Egan, City of Toronto Manager of Pedestrian and Cycling Infrastructure
- Briana Illingworth, Metrolinx Transportation Policy & Planning Advisor
- Marc Jolicœur, Vélo Québec's Research Director
- Justin Lafontaine, Bike Train Project Lead and Founder
- Peter Lagerwey, City of Seattle Senior Transportation Planner
- David MacIsaac, Transport Canada Environmental Initiatives Senior Advisor
- Randy Neufeld, Chicagoland Bicycle Federation's Chief Strategy Officer
- Jeff Olson, Alta Planning Principal
- Dwight Richardson, Town of Markham Cycling and Pedestrian Advisory Committee Chair
- Koy Thomson, London Cycling Campaign's Chief Executive
- Usman Valiante, Bicycle Trade Association of Canada's Director of Advocacy

For more information on BikeSummit 2008 please visit <http://torontocat.ca/main/bikesummit2008>