

# LONDON BIKES

ISSUE  
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## Our Cycling Master Plan

# Let's Talk Cycling

## Sidewalks

As part of the process to **create a new Cycling Master Plan**, the project team is talking with Londoners on a variety of cycling issues. The use of sidewalks by cyclists is a topic of interest for many residents.

### WHAT ARE THE CURRENT RULES?

Cycling on sidewalks is legislated by provincial as well as local municipal policies and by-laws.

#### PROVINCIAL

The Ontario Traffic Manual for Cycling Facilities (Book 18) defines a sidewalk as a travelled way intended exclusively for pedestrian use.

Provincial law prohibits cyclists from riding on a sidewalk unless authorized by a specific municipal by-law and/or directed by traffic signs or traffic control devices. *The Ontario Highway Traffic Act* (HTA), states that vehicles (which includes bicycles) shall be operated in a traffic lane.

#### MUNICIPAL

The City of London Streets By-law (2014) prohibits cyclists from riding on sidewalks with the exception of those under the age of 14.

This was implemented in 2012 after a review of policies regarding bicycles on sidewalks in other Ontario municipalities. The review determined that some municipalities don't allow bicycles on sidewalks, some do, and others provide exceptions based on wheel size, age of cyclist, location, or a combination of these.

When the by-law amendment was before Council, the Civic Administration was asked to report on the possibility of also permitting individuals over 65 years of age to ride bicycles on sidewalks with associated restrictions in Business Improvement Areas where there may be many pedestrians.

Several municipalities in Ontario have recently reviewed their policies and by-laws relating to cycling on sidewalks. Markham and Peterborough have both recently debated this issue but we understand they still do not permit adults cycling on sidewalks because of a number of concerns including those relating to risk and liability.



## WHAT HAVE WE HEARD?

The London ON Bikes team has heard strong opinions on this topic.

Some Londoners feel sidewalks should be for people who walk. Many of these individuals are concerned cyclists moving at higher speeds present a hazard to pedestrians.

Others express concern for the safety of cyclists sharing the road with motor vehicles. Some motorists prefer cyclists to be off the roadway. Some parents would like to cycle on sidewalks when accompanying young children who are cycling.



## IS THERE ROOM FOR BIKES ON SIDEWALKS?

A bicycle takes up 1.2 to 1.5 metres. A pedestrian requires about 1 m of space. This means that a cyclist passing a pedestrian needs at least 2.5 m of width and ideally 3 m.

Most sidewalks in London are 1.5 m wide. This width meets the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, but does not meet the requirements to accommodate a passing cyclist.



## WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

A common perception is that it's safer to cycle on sidewalks. However, **Cornell University safety research** suggests cycling on sidewalks, especially where there are frequent driveways and intersections, may put cyclists at higher risk compared to cycling on the road.

The Cornell study reported that cyclists on a sidewalk incur greater risk than those on the roadway (on average 1.8 times as great), likely because of conflicts at intersections. Sidewalk sightline conflicts are of less concern for pedestrians because of lower walking speeds. Sidewalk sightline conflicts are a much greater risk to cyclists because of higher speeds and the lack of anticipation by drivers unaccustomed to bicycles on sidewalks. Wrong-way sidewalk cyclists are at even greater risk, and allowing bicycles on sidewalks appears to increase the incidence of wrong-way travel.

## The City of Toronto Bicycle / Motor-Vehicle Collision Study (2003)

concluded that cyclists who frequently use sidewalks tend to have higher crash rates than cyclists who ride on the road.

## REFERENCES

- Forcese, Craig. LaViolette, Nicole. Every Cyclist's Guide to Canadian Law (2014)
- Ontario Traffic Manual (OTM) Book 18: Cycling Facilities (2013)
- Chaplin, Lois. *Bicycling on Sidewalks*. Biological & Environmental Engineering Department, Cornell University. (2003)
- Toronto Bicycle/Motor-Vehicle Collision Study. Transportation Services Division (2003)

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?



Do you think the London bylaw restricting sidewalk cycling except for those under the age of 14 is appropriate? Or do you think changes are necessary?

Tell us at [www.londonbikes.ca](http://www.londonbikes.ca)!

or call  
City of London Transportation  
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This is one in a series.  
Look for other issues on relevant topics.