

Response to Lawrence Solomon “[Rip out the bike lanes – before more innocent people get hurt](#)”

**An abbreviated version of this response was printed in the National Post comments section on Saturday, Jan 14th, 2018*

“Cyclists are at high risk when they are on the road”. This is the opening statement in a recent article by Lawrence Solomon in which he argues against bike lanes because they are unsafe for cyclists. While I agree that getting around by bike can still be far riskier than it needs to be in many communities, my agreement with Mr. Solomon begins and ends with that first sentence.

The unnecessary vulnerability of people on bikes is a reason to build more safe spaces to cycle, not a reason to tear out bike lanes and ask people to bike in the same traffic lane as cars and trucks, as Mr. Solomon suggests. Making a case against bike lanes by citing road safety does not line up with the evidence.

In the last half of 2017 alone, two studies were released that indicated overall road safety increased on streets with bike lanes. In Ottawa, the [Laurier Ave Safety Audit](#) (conducted by Mobycon on behalf of the City of Ottawa) saw the collision rate for people on bikes decrease by 32% while the volume of cyclists increased by 330%. Even with more people cycling on Laurier, there were fewer collisions. The new design of the road increased safety for pedestrians as well, with a reported 50% decrease in collision frequency for people on foot.

Similarly, when the City of Toronto released [their report](#) looking at the Bloor Street bike lane pilot project, they found that overall road safety was improved with a 44% decrease in overall conflicts. The evidence doesn't stop there with other studies from Canada ([Teschke et al 2012](#)) and the United States ([Pucher and Buehler 2016](#)) concluding that separated bike lanes reduce the risk of injury for people on bikes.

If it's road safety you are after, bike lanes are proving to be a good investment.

Mr. Solomon concludes his article by writing that education and enforcement are the answers to reducing the risks inherent in cycling. But education and enforcement alone will not make cycling safer - these go hand in hand with building safe spaces to ride a bike.

The construction of new bike lanes in Ontario over the past few years has been paired with new laws that pose increased fines and penalties on both motorists and people who bike to ensure that proper lighting is used, etc. and people who bike are policed under the same Highway Traffic Act as motorists.

As new laws are enforced and innovative infrastructure built, there is a real need to improve the education opportunities offered to both motorists and people who bike. This has been a priority for our organization since our launch in 2008 and there have been some steps forward with additions to the driver training program and support for local cycling education initiatives. But it has not been enough to truly make our roads safer and we will continue to advocate for a more comprehensive cycling education program as imperative to improving road safety for everyone in the province.

Tearing out bike lanes won't make our roads safer, and it won't rid our roads of cyclists. We know from our own research that 54% of Ontario residents want to ride their bikes more. People want the freedom to choose how they get around their communities, and they want to arrive home safely at the end of the day no matter what mode of transportation they choose. Building cycle tracks, separated and conventional bike lanes helps to provide that choice, and they help make our roads safer for everyone in the process.

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