



For Immediate Release

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Ontario's new Cycling Strategy: bold vision applauded; bold action still required

Toronto Centre for Active Transportation (TCAT), Cycle Toronto and the Toronto Cycling Think and Do Tank applaud the Aug 30th release by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) of #CycleON, Ontario's Cycling Strategy <http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/pubs/cycling-guide/pdfs/MTO-CycleON-EN.pdf>.

The Cycling Strategy is a 20-year vision that outlines actions to promote cycling across Ontario as a legitimate and practical mode of transportation. It aims to provide strategic direction to create an Ontario where cycling 'is recognized, respected, and valued as a core mode of transportation that provides individuals and communities with health, economic, environmental, social, and other benefits'.

TCAT, Cycle Toronto, and the Toronto Cycling Think and Do Tank were invited members of the Cycling Strategy Working Group formed by Minister of Transportation Glen Murray to provide advice and direction on the development of the first bicycle policy update in Ontario since 1992. Minister Murray and MTO have provided important leadership on this issue, but transformational change must be coordinated with other Ministries and stakeholders.

The new Cycling Strategy forms a solid and bold policy base to help shape a safer and more accessible transportation system for all Ontarians, regardless of mode of transportation. While we're thrilled to see such a bold vision in place, we need equally bold action to carry us there.

"This strong strategy to advance cycling in Ontario sets a clear direction to improve the conditions for cycling and to promote cycling as a positive transportation choice. We look forward to seeing implementation steps in the near future, to turn this great vision into a concrete reality for Ontario."

-- Beth Savan, Principal Investigator, Toronto Cycling Think and Do Tank,

University of Toronto

Below are four initial priorities we have identified to translate policy into action:

1. Funding commitment. A new coordinated and dedicated annual provincial cycling budget is needed to build cycling infrastructure projects across Ontario. The Cycling Strategy calls for a funding partnership with municipalities and the federal government. While this is important for the long-term, we encourage the Province to expeditiously create a dedicated annual budget for municipal cycling infrastructure projects. As an example, Britain recently created a cycling budget of £10 per person per year. <<http://www.britishcycling.org.uk/campaigning/article/cam20130424-Get-Britain-Cycling-report-policies--British-Cycling%E2%80%99s-take-0>>
2. Complete Streets provincial policy. All roads in Ontario need to be planned as Complete Streets, enabling people of all ages and abilities, regardless of their mode of transportation (on foot, bicycle, public transit or motor vehicle), to experience safe and comfortable travel. The Cycling Strategy calls for a partnership with municipalities to implement Complete Streets policies and develop cycling or active transportation plans as applicable. Clear provincial policy direction is required to ensure that a Complete Streets approach is adopted in every Ontario community, not as an afterthought but as an integral planning feature.
3. Formal cycling education in Ontario schools. The Cycling Strategy recognizes the importance of encouraging more road user education and cycling skills in schools and at the community level. We call on the Province to support children in using active school transportation by introducing cycling into the elementary school curriculum and by developing mandated school travel plans for every school in Ontario.
4. Strategy for reducing the number and severity of dooring collisions. In 2003, the City of Toronto released its Toronto Bicycle/Motor Vehicle Collision Study http://www.toronto.ca/transportation/publications/bicycle_motor-vehicle/index.htm which found that 'dooring' (when drivers inadvertently open their door into the path of an oncoming bicycle) results in more serious injuries than other types of bicycle/motor vehicle collisions and that there is a high incidence of this type of collision in Toronto. The Cycling Strategy notes that the new edition of MTO's Driver's Handbook includes the excellent recommendation for drivers to open their door with their right hand, forcing them to look over their shoulder and check for oncoming vehicles. We further recommend: 1) changing the provincial definition of a

‘collision’ to include the opening of a car door, 2) increasing the fine associated with opening a car door into traffic, and 3) developing a public awareness campaign to reduce the incidence and severity of ‘dooring’.

With a strong strategy in place, the time to act is now. We are collectively committed to continue our work with the provincial government to take this important document from policy to practice. Over the coming months we will work collaboratively with other stakeholders to develop multi-year action plans that translate the goals and strategic directions of the Cycling Strategy into specific projects and initiatives.

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The Toronto Centre for Active Transportation (TCAT), a project of Clean Air Partnership, conducts research and advances knowledge and evidence to build support for cities that are safe, convenient, and enjoyable communities to walk and bike.

Cycle Toronto is a diverse member-supported organization that advocates for a healthy, safe, cycling-friendly city for all and currently represents more than 2,300 Torontonians.

The Toronto Cycling Think & Do Tank is a multidisciplinary, multi-sector research project focused on increasing cycling as a primary transportation choice. It is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

