



Ontario Society of Physical Activity Promoters in Public Health

November 18, 2024

Environmental Policy Office
438 University Ave, 12th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1N3

Attention: Katerina Downard

RE: OSPAPPH Response to Bill 212 – Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act, 2024 – Framework for bicycle lanes that require removal of a traffic lane, ERO# 019-9266

Dear Ms. Downard,

The Rural Active Transportation Collaborative (RATC), a working group of the Ontario Society of Physical Activity Promoters in Public Health (OSPAPPH) is writing to express our concern about Bill 212, Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act, 2024 – Framework for bicycle lanes that require removal of a traffic lane, ERO number 019-9266. OSPAPPH public health professionals work across the 34 Public Health Units in Ontario to elevate physical activity as a public health priority through advocacy for healthy public policy, capacity building, engagement, and collaboration.

OSPAPPH is compelled to respond to ERO #019-9266 because Bill 212 will likely restrict and complicate the installation of bicycle lanes in municipalities across Ontario. Well designed bicycle lane networks are essential to moving all Ontarians safely, efficiently, and affordably. This legislation would have detrimental effects on public health, injury prevention and safety, chronic disease prevention, health equity, and the sustainability of our transportation networks (1–6).

Injury Prevention & Safety

Easing traffic congestion is about giving people more transportation options, not fewer. We must prioritize the most efficient types of transportation (public transit, cycling and walking) that move the greatest number of people in the least amount of space which increases street capacity and reduces traffic congestion (1). Well-designed bicycle lanes improve safety for people on bicycles and reduce excessive speeding in cars, organize traffic flow and protect pedestrians (1). Following the installation of bicycle lanes, research has found an increased number of cyclists, reduced motor vehicle volumes, and generally reduced or unchanged travel times (7,8).

Improvements to bicycle infrastructure with protected and separated bicycle lanes is significantly associated with fewer fatalities and better road safety outcomes for all road users (9). The removal of



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bicycle lanes would likely increase the risk of injuries and fatalities and undermine efforts to create safer streets (1,9).

Chronic Disease Prevention

Active transportation, particularly cycling, is a convenient way to meet physical activity targets, reduce risk of chronic disease, and derive mental health and social benefits (2). Safe and separate bicycle lanes encourage physical activity by providing a secure space for cyclists (1). Numerous studies have shown that regular physical activity can significantly reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and certain types of cancer (2). Bicycle lanes improve community health by promoting social interaction and community engagement (3). Bicycle lanes can help reduce social isolation and improve mental health because they create an inviting public space where people are more likely to engage with one another and spend more time outdoors (3). By making cycling a safer and more attractive option, we promote healthier lifestyles among our citizens and help fellow Ontarians meet the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines, leading to reduced healthcare costs and improved overall well-being (2,4).

Health Equity

Bicycle lanes are not just a luxury for a few; they are an essential component of a modern, equitable, and healthy transportation system (5). Bicycle lanes promote transportation equity by providing affordable and accessible transportation options for all residents, including people with low-income and those who may not have access to a car (5). This inclusivity fosters a more equitable society where everyone, regardless of socioeconomic status, can benefit from safe and reliable transportation (5).

On a community level, we believe the implications of Bill 212 could be especially detrimental to rural and smaller communities (10). The provincial government's continued investment in transit equity, especially for rural populations, is crucial. Bill 212 could hinder the development of cycling infrastructure, slowing smaller municipalities' ability to implement bicycle lanes that best serve their residents and make their streets safer for everyone.



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Sustainable Transportation

Investing in bicycle lanes is a key mitigation strategy to the growing threat of climate change (1,6). Sustainable active transportation infrastructure improves air quality and reduces vehicle traffic and greenhouse gas emissions which is directly linked to improved population health (1,6). Supporting sustainable transportation networks, including bicycle lane implementation is integral to combat climate change (1,6).

Requiring provincial approval prior to the development of new bicycle lanes may slow the progress that communities have made toward building a healthier, safer, and more equitable society. We encourage you to continue to support initiatives that enhance the province's sustainable active transportation networks. By investing in bicycle lanes, we invest in the future of our communities and the well-being of our residents.

On behalf of the Rural Active Transportation Collaborative of the Ontario Society of
Physical Activity Promoters in Public Health,

Kathryn Allwright-Casselden
OSPAPPH RATC Co-chair

Monica Bovett
OSPAPPH RATC Co-chair



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