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Toronto

## Bike Share Toronto set to beat 2023 ridership record by October

As traffic and rerouted transit lines complicate commutes, the service is working to grow its fleet

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Bike Share Toronto riders are on pace to take more than six million trips combined in 2024, which would set a ridership record. Last year's record is expected to be broken by next month, according to director Justin Hanna. (Michael Wilson/CBC)

As Toronto grapples with growing gridlock and rerouted transit routes, Bike Share Toronto is experiencing record demand, with the total number of trips in 2024 expected to pass last year's ridership by October, according to the service's director.

Ridership has grown substantially each year since 2015, when 665,000 trips were recorded. So far this year, riders in Toronto have taken 4.7 million Bike Share trips, already overtaking total ridership in 2022 and fast approaching the 5.7 million mark set in 2023, according to Bike Share Toronto director Justin Hanna.

He expects more than six million trips on Bike Share by the year's end.

"I think the popularity of bike share is because we're offering an easy and simple way for people to get around a complicated city," Hanna said.

Bike Share is more immune to the construction and congestion affecting motorists and transit riders in the city, and Hanna says growing frustrations with cars and TTC delays could be encouraging ridership.

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The recent addition of bikes and stations around the city could have something to do with it too.

Toronto Parking Authority (TPA), which oversees Bike Share Toronto, has been expanding services as part of a four-year growth plan that ends next year. Hanna says the service is on pace to hit its goals of 10,000 bikes, 2,000 of them electric, and 1,000 stations across all 25 city wards by the end of 2025.

## 'When you build it, they will come'

Alison Stewart says she's already seeing a difference. The director of advocacy for Cycle Toronto says this year is the first time she's been able to use Bike Share to get across town to southwest Scarborough.

"Last year, that wasn't an option," Stewart said.



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Growing ridership reflects a "latent demand" for people who've wanted to bike in Toronto, but couldn't easily access Bike Share, she says. She calls Bike Share Toronto's growth over the past

decade a success story, and would like to see further investment in expanding the service outside the downtown core and electrifying more bicycles.

"When you build it, they will come," Stewart said.

TPA also began offering more affordable fares to low-income Torontonians and people in community housing this year, which Stewart says has likely made Bike Share more accessible to more people.

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In that spirit, she says she'd also like Bike Share to become part of the city's one fare program, which allows for free transfers between TTC and GO Transit.

## E-bikes expected to be big part of future growth

Hanna says there are no concrete details yet on how the service will expand beyond 2025, but he expects ridership numbers to keep growing through the decade and Bike Share Toronto is already struggling to keep up with demand.

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He says Bike Share's busiest times are Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays between 7 a.m. and 9:30 a.m., when an average of 7,000 trips are taken from the edges of the city to the downtown core.

The service currently has only 8,500 bikes in its rotation. As a result, many bike docks downtown are now staffed with valets on those days to ensure riders can drop off their bikes easily at busy times.

He says the city will need to keep adding more stations and bikes to its fleet beyond next year.

As well, he adds, e-bikes have helped make Bike Share more popular with people who otherwise wouldn't consider cycling an option, so future growth will also have to involve electrifying the growing fleet.

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