

Topic: Bill 212, Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act, 2024

Name of Committee: Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy

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My credentials

I am a Professional Engineer and Registered Professional Planner with over 20 years experience working in the private sector in Ontario. I have my Road Safety Professional Level 1 designation.

The focus for my submission is on the municipal process. My entire career has been with private sector engineering firms whose clients are municipal governments. I have worked with communities of all sizes and compositions, from coast to coast to coast in Canada.

Point 1: At what point in a city's planning process would it be known that a travel lane would need to be removed as a result of adding a bike lane? When would a call be made to the Minister of Transportation?

There is a high probability that if a road is being looked at that at least one of the options under consideration would involve removing vehicle travel lanes. Why? Most likely a City would have an approved Official Plan, Transportation Master Plan and Road Safety Plan that would lead to at least one design solution under consideration involving less lanes. Removing lanes might be to deal with the changing land use context, to address an 'overbuilt' situation, to address a known road safety issue and/or as a means for traffic calming. The existence of approved municipal policy also lends itself to a high probability that at least one option would involve a

bike lane. Whether or not the potential removal of a lane is as a result of the bike lane is a whole other matter.

After ruling out projects where there are no lanes to remove (two-lane roads), that is a large number of calls to the Minister of Transportation. Now, do the number of calls decrease if the focus is on 'main streets'? If so, what constitutes a 'main street'?

Actual decisions by a City for roadway changes can happen in anything from an asphalt resurfacing project, to a road rehabilitation project to a full reconstruction project with new sewers and watermain. The conversation at the City level builds from the Transportation Master Planning process through capital works planning and asset management. A roadway can be looked at a conceptual, functional, preliminary and detailed design level. What is the right time to make the call? And how does making that call not bump a project off a city's construction planning cycle?

The material available thus far provides no information on what approvals would be based on. A "set of specified criteria to be set out in guidance and/or regulation" will come later. The question I am asking comes before applying this criteria - when would the approval process be triggered in the first place?

Point 2: The proposed legislation in Bill 212 will slow down all types of roadway improvement projects in Ontario (in communities of all sizes), regardless of whether a bike lane is proposed or not.

The above statement is based on how roadway improvement projects advance in a municipal setting.

A city plans its roadway works in a number of categories – sometimes, it is a resurfacing project where the roadway will get new asphalt but the lane configuration (think roadway markings) stays the same. Sometimes, getting a new surface of asphalt will result in a slight change in how the lanes are laid out. When a watermain or sewer is being fixed or replaced, the project

can be classified as a road rehabilitation project. In some cases the curb line stays the same along with where the catch basins are positioned and sometimes it is a full reconstruction where the full roadway is dug out and everything is put back in a new position. This is often done when the sidewalk was too narrow to meet current accessibility standards and/or the whole area is getting a facelift (think main street renewal).

The big picture planning for roadway works is done at the network level and related to capital improvement initiatives. Provincial approval for various works is through the Municipal Class Environment Assessment (MCEA) process; a system that has been in place for 30 years. It provides a mechanism to classify where provincial involvement is required for different types of roadway improvement projects. An additional layer of complexity for Ministerial approval for specific situation will factor in how cities plan their roadworks, even the most straightforward type. This is because of how cities plan their work.

I also want to explore this underlying idea circulating that ‘you won’t slow down the process if you don’t propose a bike lane in the first place.’

My intention is to build a list as it relates to municipal process. Here is a start (in no particular order of weighting):

- i) Developments have been approved with assumptions around multi-modal travel and they need to move forward
- ii) It will be unclear how the approval process with the Minister of Transportation would be triggered in the first place considering how roadway projects unfold at the municipal level (refer to the discussion in point 1). The workload of managing this will impact all project types
- iii) Grants from other levels of government are often tied to other municipal objectives (like active transportation) which in turn mean an integrated road renewal project could be impacted if not advanced with a bikeway option (think watermain replacement with road surface changes)
- iv) Cities have multiple approved municipal plan policies where proceeding with a roadway

improvement project without at least an option that includes a bike lane would go against such policies (including commitments to improved road safety, network development, modal shift, etc.)

With respect to subpoint i) above - It will be a challenging balance to rationalize the lower parking rates. Even those being directed by the province in MTSA's require robust network of options. The affordability afforded by not building parking without building out that active transportation network will be impacted both in fringe development and infill.

Point 3: Why do vehicle lanes on your roadways ever get removed? And why can it be a good thing that people are asking for?

With the proposed legislation requiring Ministerial approval where a bike lane replaces a motor vehicle lane, it is helpful to think about the various reasons why existing vehicle travel lanes get removed. And, to consider how removing travel lanes is something often requested by residents at a local level to deal with safety concerns in their neighbourhoods.

It is not uncommon for existing roadways to be "overbuilt" for the current context. An area could have a known road safety issue with the need for drivers to operate their cars at a more appropriate speed for how the neighbourhood is today. Picture a park or community centre near a multi-lane road where cities have tried to slow cars down using signage and small flex posts in the roadway. Or picture a main street with shops where the existing sidewalk or boulevard space is limited and there is a desire to improve these conditions along with the frontages near businesses.

Even if you see yourself as someone that does not use a bike lane, why should you care about this legislation? It will slow down much needed road safety and community improvement projects – something that is a common request at the local level.

Point 4: What analysis is used in the transportation engineering/planning profession to demonstrate no impact on vehicle traffic?

The proposed legislation would require municipalities to get provincial approval before building any new bike lane that reduce lanes of vehicle traffic. Municipalities would need to demonstrate any proposed bike lane will not have a “negative impact on vehicle traffic.”

There is no shortage of auto vehicle impact analysis at the municipal level. Often projects start with an intersection capacity analysis using Synchro to establish a baseline of current traffic conditions. Traffic data is collected and other elements such as growth rates and approved development are factored in. After options for the roadway are developed, the impact on traffic operations is evaluated for the various alternatives. These tools look at delay at signals, the storage length of a turn lane, etc. While techniques and analysis tools have changed over the years, the overall process for Traffic Impact Studies is a cornerstone of the planning and design process.

The question is more around what “no impact on vehicle traffic” means?

A City is already asking this question through the use of Traffic Impact Studies during the planning process. By doing this at the municipal level, there is also the opportunity to factor in related municipal goals and objectives around transit improvements, goods movement and local conditions. If this question is to become one for the Minister, how would it be determined and evaluated? How would the data be different to warrant additional analysis? It has to be acknowledged that this would in no way be an efficient use of resources at the provincial or municipal level.