

Purpose

To provide feedback to the Government of Ontario on the proposal to prohibit municipalities from installing bike lanes if it requires the removal of a motor vehicle lane, and to outline why such a measure would undermine safety, local decision-making, and transportation efficiency.

Key Messages

- The proposed policy risks increasing injuries and fatalities for cyclists, pedestrians, and motorists by preventing cities from implementing proven safety measures.
- Evidence from Toronto shows that protected bike lanes improve safety and do not significantly increase vehicle travel times when properly implemented.
- Municipalities, not the Province, are best positioned to make street design decisions based on local context and community needs.

Background and Evidence

- **Safety:** Protected bike lanes reduce injury risks by up to 90% compared to mixed-traffic conditions. Data from Toronto's Vision Zero program shows reduced collisions on corridors where bike lanes and speed management strategies were implemented.
- Toronto's Bloor Street and Danforth Avenue bike lane projects increased cycling volumes by 50–100%, while vehicle travel time impacts were minor and largely mitigated through signal timing adjustments.
- Person-throughput increased on these corridors, meaning more people—not just cars—were moved efficiently.

Concerns with Provincial Overreach

Municipalities under the Municipal Act, 2001, are responsible for local roads, traffic operations, and public safety. A province-wide ban would override democratically elected councils and professional transportation planning based on local data and community consultation.

Impacts of the Proposed Policy

- **Safety setbacks:** Without the ability to reallocate road space, cities lose one of the most effective tools to prevent road deaths.
- **Contradiction of existing provincial goals:** The proposal conflicts with Ontario's CycleON strategy and commitments to climate action, public health, and complete communities.
- **Reduced flexibility:** A one-size-fits-all rule does not reflect the unique needs of urban streets like those in Toronto.

Recommendation

The Province should allow municipalities to retain authority over street design decisions, including the ability to reallocate road space for bike lanes where supported by evidence. Instead of banning these projects, the Province should support municipalities through funding, design guidance, and data-sharing to improve safety for all road users.