

December 16, 2005

To: Planning and Transportation Committee

From: City Clerk, Toronto Cycling Committee

Subject: **Sidewalk Riding Counter Measure: A Bicycle Safety Education Plan**

**Recommendation:**

**It is recommended that:**

- (1) the draft report (November 15, 2005) from Brigitte Nowak, Member, Toronto Cycling Committee, entitled "Sidewalk Riding Bicycle Safety Education Plan (Draft 3)", be endorsed; and**
- (2) the Chair, in consultation with Brigitte Nowak, finalize and make any stylistic changes he may deem appropriate to the report and submit to the Planning and Transportation Committee on January 9, 2006, with a request that the Planning and Transportation Committee consider the allocation of \$100,000.00 for the proposed Education and Awareness Program.**

**Background:**

The Toronto Cycling Committee on November 21, 2005, considered a draft report (November 15, 2005) from Brigitte Nowak, Member, Toronto Cycling Committee, entitled "Sidewalk Riding Bicycle Safety Education Plan (Draft 3)", regarding the issue of Cycling on Sidewalks.

A copy of the final report, as revised by Councillor Adam Giambrone, Chair, Toronto Cycling Committee, in consultation with Brigitte Nowak, Member, Toronto Cycling Committee, and now entitled "Sidewalk Riding Counter Measure: A Bicycle Safety Education Plan", is attached for consideration by the Planning and Transportation Committee.

City Clerk  
Toronto Cycling Committee

Frank Baldassini/fb

Item 003

Attachment

c: Councillor Adam Giambrone, Chair, Toronto Cycling Committee  
Director, Transportation Planning, City Planning Division  
Brigitte Nowak, Member, Toronto Cycling Committee  
Bicycle Safety Planner, Transportation Planning, City Planning Division  
Manager, Pedestrian and Cycling Infrastructure, Transportation Services Division

20051121-it003(1)

**December 15, 2005**

**Sidewalk Riding Counter Measure: A Bicycle Safety Education Plan**

**A Report from Brigitte Nowak,  
Member, Toronto Cycling Committee**

Recommendations:

The Toronto Cycling Committee request the Planning and Transportation Committee to:

- (1) approve the Sidewalk Riding Counter Measure: A Bicycle Safety Education Plan program for 2006;
- (2) allocate an additional \$100,000.00 to the Transportation Planning, City Planning budget to carry out the Sidewalk Riding Counter Measure: A Bicycle Safety Education Plan, program in 2006; and
- (3) request the assistance of Toronto Police Service - Traffic Services Division, in developing and implementing the Sidewalk Riding Counter Measure: A Bicycle Safety Education Plan program.

Summary

All road users deserve safe and effective transportation options. Sidewalks are intended to provide a safe travelling environment for pedestrians and child cyclists. However, as bicycles are considered vehicles under Ontario's Highway Traffic Act, many municipalities establish bylaws which regulate the use of bicycles on sidewalks. The City of Toronto prohibits bicycles with a wheel size larger than 24 inches from using the sidewalk. This bylaw allows young children to develop their skills before requiring them to ride with traffic on the road.

Adult cyclists are deemed to have the skill and knowledge to travel with other vehicles on the road. While on-road bicycle lanes provide cyclists with transportation alternatives, they are not universally available, or may be avoided for other reasons, or by individuals, such as senior cyclists. Adult cyclists who ride on the sidewalk do so for many reasons, primarily for perceived safety and convenience. Child cyclists who use the sidewalk also need to be educated about proper cycling procedures (speed, yield to pedestrians) and the dangers posed by cars exiting from driveways. Although not limited to a single demographic group, cyclists aged 15 - 24 are more likely to be observed riding on the sidewalk. Concerns about this practice have been raised by pedestrians, politicians, the public and police. To address the issue, a comprehensive public education plan, which includes both short and long term strategies, and focused and broad-based initiatives, has been developed.

## Proposal

Recognizing that cycling is a healthy physical activity and environmentally sustainable transportation alternative, programs to address sidewalk riding must focus on the reasons for the practice, and provide comprehensive countermeasures. Such measures will include:

- safe, convenient cycling facilities, e.g. on-road bicycle lanes and off road trails;
- cyclist education and awareness and media supports;
- measures to address excessive motor vehicle speed and unsafe passing; and
- safety education for legal sidewalk riders.

Although this plan notes a number of factors associated with illegal sidewalk riding, many, such as police enforcement of traffic speed, enhanced infrastructure, i.e. bicycle lanes, and enhanced media exposure, are outside the responsibility of the safety subcommittee, which is proposing this plan. This plan will focus on the public education and awareness elements, referencing other components as required. Research has shown that public education and awareness strategies, combined with enforcement and infrastructure improvements, are effective in changing behaviour. For example, provincial seat belt campaigns and smoking cessation programs have been successful when implemented in a comprehensive manner.

This plan focuses on public education and awareness, recognizing that infrastructure and enforcement elements are ancillary to the scope of the proposal.

## Issue

The sidewalk is intended for use by pedestrians, child cyclists and other legal users, with adult cyclists and motorists sharing the roadway. Adult cyclists sometimes choose to ride on the sidewalk for reasons of perceived safety or convenience. Collision data indicates that sidewalk riding is a contributing factor in car-bike collisions, especially for cyclists aged 16 to 24. Pedestrians and a number of local politicians have raised this as a matter of concern in their neighbourhoods, and have tasked the Toronto Cycling Committee to develop solutions.

## Objective

To raise awareness, and propose a range of safety education and effective countermeasures to curb the practice of illegal sidewalk riding while promoting cycling as a viable transportation choice.

## Target

- All cyclists;
- Cyclists aged 16 - 24, who are more likely to ride on the sidewalk and be involved in collisions;
- ESL communities; and
- Municipal politicians, the public, media: key to raising awareness.

## Research

The extent of the problem, reasons for its occurrence, and locations where it is most prevalent, should be determined, in order to aid in the development of effective countermeasures. Public education countermeasures developed in other jurisdictions should be reviewed, with a possible view to adapting such material with permission. Research should also focus on any correlation between incidents and the availability of bike lanes.

The 2003 City of Toronto Bicycle/Motor Vehicle Collision Study found that “in almost thirty percent of all collisions, the cyclists were riding on the sidewalk immediately prior to the collision. Young cyclists were much more likely to have been riding on the sidewalk than were adults. In fact, over half (53%) of the collision-involved cyclists under age 18 were riding on the sidewalk, whereas only 21% of those 18 and over were. Forty-six percent of collisions in the outer areas of the city involved sidewalk riding (522 cases), compared to only thirteen percent of the central area collisions (188 cases). This suggests that, in outer areas, either sidewalk riding is much more prevalent or it is much more likely to lead to a collision than it is in the central area

## Rationale

Younger cyclists, riding smaller bicycles, can legally ride on the sidewalk, so public education for cyclists beginning to ride independently and their parents should identify appropriate sidewalk riding practices, such as riding at pedestrian speed, as well as the dangers that sidewalk riding poses (e.g. cars backing out of driveways). Research has shown that cyclists aged 16 to 24 are more likely to ride on the sidewalk, in order to stay away from traffic, for convenience, and as a conscious choice, possibly related to fear of traffic. These cyclists, as well as senior cyclists, may have limited experience in driving, and may feel uncomfortable in sharing the roadway with traffic, especially where that traffic moves quickly, for instance on arterial roads with higher speed limits. Cyclists of all ages may also be concerned about the condition of the roadway, including litter, potholes and obstructions in their driving lanes. Cyclists who ride on the sidewalk are more likely to do so in areas where pedestrian traffic is limited. This age group may also be more likely to disobey laws by choice.

Because traffic speed has been identified as a factor in sidewalk riding, efforts to curb sidewalk riding need to address traffic speed as one component.

In order to be effective, appropriate resources, including manpower and financial resources, must be allocated to the program.

### Timelines

An effective sidewalk riding public education program includes both short term initiatives and longer term strategies. Melding these elements will result in greater saturation than could be achieved with either an exclusively short term or long term program. Co-operation from other partners, including the police, politicians, safety professionals and cycling advocates, will also be necessary.

While some efforts can be undertaken on a short term basis, using available staff time and resources, to develop an effective campaign, both staff time and financial resources will need to be enhanced. The majority of the elements of this campaign are dependent on the availability of budget resources, necessitating program development over a period of several years.

### Program Elements

#### *Broad-based*

Sidewalk riding can best be addressed by eliminating the reasons for the practice: implementing appropriately sized bike lanes, especially on arterial roads outside the core area, and ensuring that these additional routes effectively link destinations.

Police should be involved in developing a STEP program (Selective Traffic Enforcement Program), which should focus on motor vehicle speed and unsafe passing on a route where sidewalk riding has been identified as a problem, followed by enforcement of sidewalk riding. This program should be repeated regularly in order to gain compliance by both motorists and cyclists.

An effective poster should be developed with wording that can be translated into the languages prevalent in the area. A flyer that references this poster with related graphics should be developed as well. A bus shelter ad should also be included. Distribution for the poster, flyer and ad would include local schools, libraries, and businesses, including malls. Where possible, this poster should also be distributed to parks and community centres, and local police divisions. This poster should be attractive and relevant to the target audience, primarily those aged 16 to 24. The artwork for the flyer should be provided to local councillors for distribution through their constituency offices and local events.

A one page activity sheet aimed at 10 to 12 year olds (grades 5/6) should be developed in conjunction with educators and provided to all local schools providing information on sidewalk riding: appropriate practices, focusing on speed and sharing, avoiding dangers associated with sidewalk riding and preparing cyclists for future on-road travel by outlining educational opportunities such as CAN-BIKE.

Small ads should be placed in local newspapers, especially those focusing on ethnic audiences. These should be placed on a five week basis from April to October (first week in April, second week in May, third week in June, lowering the frequency as the cycling season progresses.) A “Cycling Guide” published in conjunction with a major newspaper, would provide information on safe cycling, including sidewalk riding, to a broader audience than would normally be captured through educational initiatives.

Since the issue of sidewalk riding is not limited to Toronto, other jurisdictions should be canvassed to identify effective strategies that could be adapted.

#### *Focused*

As well, increasing and expanding the availability of cycling education is likely to have a positive effect. This should include:

- (a) the CAN-BIKE program, a comprehensive cycling education program - currently CAN-BIKE has limited uptake by all but the most committed of cyclists; and
- (b) a more general program focusing on traffic interaction, particularly focused on young people.

For cyclists who may legally ride on the sidewalk, and where it is not feasible to implement bicycle lanes, public education on the hazards inherent in sidewalk riding, and effective strategies for sharing paths and trails, should be delivered.

Injury prevention advocates should be asked to participate in efforts to reduce sidewalk riding. These include local (public health), regional and national (SmartRisk, SafeKids) organizations.

#### *Local Programming*

In conjunction with a focus group of ESL teachers, a one-hour curriculum/ teaching unit should be developed to raise awareness of the issues around sidewalk riding, focusing both on the prohibition and on the safety issues for younger cyclists. This should be developed into a teaching unit and provided to all ESL teachers in the GTA. When effective cycling public awareness materials are available to the general school population, these materials should include information to curb sidewalk riding.

Safety and Education subcommittee will develop a letter to be sent from the Toronto Cycling Committee outlining the safety issues associated with sidewalk riding, inviting the councillor to work with the committee to develop effective public education solutions, and outlining how support for bike lanes can effectively reduce illegal sidewalk riding.

Prior to the development of public education materials, Cycling Ambassadors, city staff and members of the safety subcommittee will solicit invitations with councillors to discuss local solutions to sidewalk riding in their communities, and jointly develop some strategies that address the issue on a local level, and address possible reluctance to support bicycle lanes.

Community Police officers should be provided with information on how to address sidewalk cycling to the groups of students with whom they work.

Celebrities and politicians who participate in Bike Week can be encouraged to discuss sidewalk riding in interviews they conduct with the media. City staff can work with local television and radio stations, including those targeting ethnic audiences, to develop public education messages to address sidewalk riding and associated safety issues.

## Budget

In order to implement an effective sidewalk riding public education program, the City of Toronto should allocate one full time staff person to co-ordinate the program, including liaison with councillors, police, and outside service providers. This position should be funded for a period of two years. Subsequently, a half-time position should be required.

Increasing bicycle infrastructure for the City of Toronto has been identified as a priority in the City's Bicycle Plan. The construction of bicycle lanes should be focused on areas where illegal sidewalk riding is a problem.

Cycling instructors, especially those with second language skills, should be identified and information on availability of CAN-BIKE courses provided to police and schools in the area.

An ad agency should be brought on board to develop an effective and innovative public education program, and working with the city staff person, to manage the delivery of the program. The public education budget could break down as follows on an annual basis. Costs are annual estimates.

Research (best practices / focus testing)	\$10,000.00
Development of poster / flyer/ radio PSA	\$10,000.00
Printing	\$12,000.00
Bus shelter ad (development / distribution)	\$7,000.00
Community newspaper ads	\$5,500.00
Translation	\$3,000.00
Evaluation	\$7,500.00
FTE to manage and implement program	\$40,000.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$100,000.00</b>

## Evaluation

An effective campaign should be budgeted at \$100,000 for the first two years, including staff allocations and excluding infrastructure improvements. Program maintenance should be budgeted at about 1/3 to 1/2 of this, depending on evaluation outcomes. Secured program funding is essential. These investments are a small percentage of health care costs associated with injuries resulting from sidewalk riding. A single individual with a brain injury may require medical and convalescent care that costs more than \$1 million annually. The Sidewalk Riding plan includes a number of initiatives which have the promise of success, if implemented in a comprehensive manner. Piecemeal approaches are unlikely to achieve significant safety benefits.

The effectiveness of the messaging, the reach of the program, and any reduction in sidewalk riding needs to be measured to determine if the program is effective, and how its effectiveness can be improved. This should be undertaken on an annual basis, with a focus on the first year. Councillors should also be canvassed to determine their awareness of, and level of satisfaction with, the program. Police should be asked to provide information on their sidewalk riding STEP programs.