



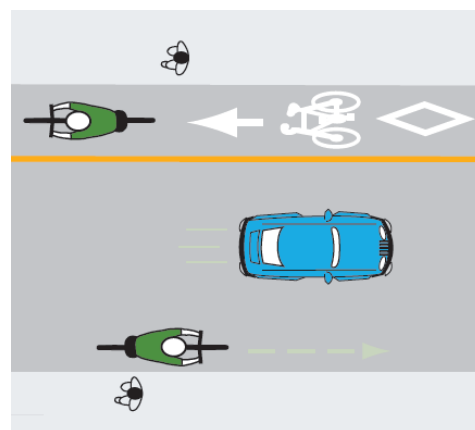
October 31, 2012

Dear Chair and Committee,

I would like to request that the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee direct City Council to request clarification from the Ministry of Transportation on Contra-flow bicycle lanes.

About Contra-Flow Lanes

Contra-flow bicycle lanes are installed on streets which are one-way and have insufficient width to carry motor vehicle traffic in two directions. Because bicycle lanes are typically 1.5 metres narrower than standard traffic lanes, it is possible for some smaller residential streets to carry bicycle traffic in two directions, where the space is not available to carry motor vehicle traffic in both. Travelling one direction the cyclist shares the lane with the car, but in the other, the cyclist uses the contra-flow bicycle lane.



Toronto has Contra-Flow Lanes

A number of contra-flow lanes exist in Toronto. One is in Ward 19 on Montrose Avenue. Others exist across the city including on Knox Avenue, Logan Avenue, Strathcona Avenue, and Chester Hill Road.

Contra-flow bicycle lanes exist not only in Toronto and municipalities across Canada, but also throughout the United States and Europe.

More Contra-Flow Lanes Approved, Not Installed

Many of the roads in west-end Toronto's residential areas have short sections of one-way streets that make it difficult to create links and various east-west options for cyclists. Routes to connect the use of contra-flow bicycle lanes are necessary.

It is for this reason that in June 2008 and August 2009 City Council approved the installation of a total of 13 contra-flow lanes (PW15.8 2008, PW17.9 2008, PW25.20 2009). None of these lanes have been put in place. In many cases, pieces of cycling routes exist, but stop where contra-flow has not been installed, creating disconnected routes through the west-end of the city.

The Province is the Source of Delay

The City needs clarification from the Province on the Highway Traffic Act (HTA). The HTA, prohibits any vehicle from traveling in two directions on a street designated as a one-way street. Since bicycles are considered to be vehicles under the HTA, it has been argued by some that contra-flow lanes would not be recognized and cyclists would be going the *wrong way*, even within their lane on the street. However, all bicycle lanes including contra-flow lanes are reserved lanes and restrictions are placed on them in terms of what type of vehicle may occupy them (just as is done for High Occupancy Vehicle lanes, transit priority lanes for buses, etc). This means that all bicycle lanes in Toronto already have a bylaw, according to the schedule for Municipal Code Chapter 886.

I have attached to this letter correspondence from MPP Jonah Schein regarding contra-flow bike lanes. While the HTA may not be clear on contra-flow lanes, the Ministry's "Transit-Supportive Guidelines" (2011) suggest contra-flow lanes, arguing that they are an effective strategy to connect gaps in the bikeway network. MPP Schein also points out that the Ottawa Cycling Plan (2008) states that "Highway Traffic Act section 154(1)(c) permits a municipality to designate a contra-flow bike lane."

The Ministry of Transportation has been reviewing the HTA and the Ontario Traffic Manual, Book 18, *Bicycle Facilities* to allow for newer approaches to road configurations, such as contra-flow lanes. They have recognized the need to update the HTA. I understand that policy changes, especially at the level of the Province take time, but the City has now been waiting close to 5 years for clarification.

This confusion has resulted in a delay of close to 5 years of the implementation of these lanes. The City has been asking the Province for clarification throughout this period and kilometres of our bikeway network have remained disconnected. Contra-flow lanes are an affordable means to expand our bikeway network and the contra-flow lanes approved by Council provide safe alternatives to arterial roads. The Province's delay in providing clarification on this has held up the City's ability to connect our bikeway network and provide safe cycling infrastructure for Torontonians.

Recommendation:

1. City Council request that the Minister of Transportation make clear the position of the MTO on contra-flow bicycle lanes and (1) whether the Ministry agrees with the Municipality of Ottawa that Section 154 of the HTA applies to contra-flow bicycle lanes and allows municipalities to install contra-flow lanes on streets that are designated one-way streets; and/or (2) that the Ministry will be proposing changes to the HTA to allow for contra-flow bicycle lanes.
2. City Council requests clarification on this by the end of 2012 so that we may begin to work with local councillors to connect our cycling network.

Sincerely,

Mike Layton
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