

Regarding IE6.11 CultureLink Deputation: Newcomers asking for cycling infrastructure

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To:Infrastructure and Environment <iec@toronto.ca>;



New Canadians on bikes especially vulnerable, CultureLink says. Agency urges bike lane extension

CultureLink calls on City of Toronto to extend Bloor St bike lanes by 2020 to increase transportation options for newcomer Canadians

Serving more than 25,000 newcomers last year, CultureLink Settlement and Community Services is today announcing its full support for extending the Bloor St bicycle lanes to High Park. Located near Dundas St W and Bloor St W, CultureLink has 30 years of experience in serving newcomers and believes the bicycle lanes will improve the lives of newcomer Torontonians.

"We know that newcomers come to Canada with healthy lifestyles but forego those to integrate into our society by adapting to unhealthy habits such as buying a car and driving everywhere to fit the Canadian lifestyle. We are stopping that cycle and have success by promoting active sustainable modes of transportation. The last piece that is out of our hands is the barrier of safe cycling infrastructure. We are here to ask the city to extend the Bike Lanes on Bloor west toward High Park by 2020 and break that barrier," said Ibrahim Absiye, Executive Director of CultureLink.

Bicycle lanes improve safety for cyclists and drivers alike. After the Bloor St bike lanes were installed, the number of conflicts between motorized vehicles and cyclists decreased by 71%. Before the bike lanes, 14% of motorist respondents reported feeling comfortable driving next to cyclists on Bloor Street compared to 66% after installation. 85% of cyclists surveyed feel safe or very safe riding a bicycle on Bloor Street, compared to 3% surveyed before installation.

"I started my bike-riding journey three years ago, and have never looked back. I continue to encourage others to bike to work and advocate for safer road conditions for bikers in Toronto, like the sustainable community staff at Culturelink has continuously done for me," said Nour Abu-Shaaban a youth worker at CultureLink.

CultureLink's call for a bike lane extension comes as a key City committee debates cycling infrastructure this week. On Thursday, the Infrastructure and Environment committee will be looking at a proposed update to Toronto's cycling network plan. CultureLink hopes newcomer voices will help convince the committee that a Bloor bike lane extension should be part of the plan's near-term strategy.

“My wife Rahaf and I came to Toronto as newcomers and didn’t know anything about Toronto streets and ride regulations until we discovered the city through this amazing program called Bike Host. We got confident riding our bikes in Toronto, and feel safe when we are riding in bike lanes and feel stressed when riding in the streets without bike lanes with other cars. I wish now to extend the bike lane to high park to be able to bring my daughter behind me on the bike trailer and make sure that she is safe and protected,” said past Bike Host participant, Esmaeel Sharafadin Abofaker

Luis Filipe, a teacher at a secondary school on Bloor said “While running a cycling program with a group of newcomer students, our transition to riding on the road from our safe practice space on school property, was made possible by the availability and accessibility of Eglinton West’s protected bike lanes. But the reality was that most roads weren’t accessible to us. Now, working on Bloor, I see firsthand the way in which Bloor street has been transformed by the protected bike lanes just east of us. I have witnessed the impact that safe infrastructure has on student’s ability to cycle. I have seen the barriers students face when that infrastructure is not in place, when there are gaps and sections of their ride which are not safe.”

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