

City Council

Notice of Motion

MM36.11	ACTION			Ward: All
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Stopping Bike Theft in Toronto - by Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, seconded by Councillor Mike Layton

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to referral to the Infrastructure and Environment Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, seconded by Councillor Mike Layton, recommends that:

1. City Council direct the General Manager, Transportation Services, in consultation with the Chief of Police and the Toronto Police Services Board, to meet with 529 Garage and request that they provide a demonstration and presentation on how their app deters and eliminates bike theft, to the Infrastructure and Environment Committee meeting on October 26, 2021.

Summary

Since 2014, Toronto has had over 22,000 bike thefts reported to the Toronto Police Service. The actual number of bikes stolen is likely much higher, as the majority of victims do not report this type of crime, recognizing the well-known fact that investigations rarely take place and most stolen bikes are never returned to the owner.

By 2020, the total number of reported bike thefts was approximately three times higher than 2014. Bike theft is an ongoing and serious concern City-wide that the City of Toronto and its partners can do more to address this disturbing trend.

Neighbourhoods all across Toronto are seeing huge increases in reported bike thefts including: Bayview Village (up 411 percent), Birchcliffe-Cliffside (up 180 percent), Broadview North (up 169 percent), Englemount-Lawrence (up 230 percent), Forest Hill South (up 187 percent), Lawrence Park South (up 190 percent), Mount Pleasant West (up 123 percent) to name a few.

Downtown neighbourhoods have continued to experience steady bike thefts with only slight changes, but the numbers are still staggering: Bay Street Corridor (over 240 thefts), Church-Yonge Corridor (over 200 thefts), Kensington-Chinatown (over 100 thefts), Niagara (over 140 thefts), Waterfront Communities-The Island (over 300 thefts).

In 2017, the Toronto Police Service reported 1,042 bike recoveries and returned only 6 percent of those bikes to their owners. The current bike registration system owned and operated by

the Toronto Police Service is outdated, inefficient and ineffective in deterring bike thefts and helping recover stolen bikes.

Bike thefts are also contributing to other safety and crime indicators such as secondary crimes, drug trade, and the black market.

Taking meaningful action means fewer secondary crimes, more successful bike and owner reunions, increased bike sales and ridership growth, better utilization of city cycling infrastructure, and increased confidence in our reporting and enforcement mechanisms.

Across Canada, major cities are working together to share best practices to implement new integrated bike registration systems. They are also working with their local communities and police agencies to jointly reduce bike thefts and increase stolen bike recoveries.

By partnering with 529 Garage, the largest community-powered bike recovery service with over 2,000,000 searchable bikes and trusted by law enforcement across North America, Canadian cities such as Abbotsford, Burnaby, Regina, Vancouver[1], Ottawa[2], Peterborough, Guelph, Halton Region, Kingston, and London have all implemented a cross-jurisdictional bike registration and recovery system. In Vancouver alone, they have experienced a 43 percent decline in bike theft since launching their partnership with 529 Garage in 2015.

In 2018, as part of the bicycle parking strategy, the City of Toronto's Transportation Services staff researched and recommended 529 Garage to the Toronto Police Service. However, due to a number of issues including Toronto Police Service staff turnover and work prioritization, the process has stalled.

In order for us to renew efforts to reduce and eliminate bike thefts, the City of Toronto and the Toronto Police Service need to ensure that modern strategies and the use of new technology should be guided by three principles:

1. cross-jurisdictional integration;
2. ease of use; and
3. adoption for end-users.

Toronto's approach to reducing bike theft must be community-supported.

With the City of Toronto's support, Cycle Toronto has also committed to providing outreach support for this initiative by building partnerships in bike theft prevention and recovery with community organizations, riding clubs, retailers, local media outlets, and the public at large. In partnership with the City's Transportation Services division, their online and on-street outreach will dedicate resources to registering bikes across the city, and teach safe locking techniques and theft prevention at public engagements.

The data is clear. Criminals do not operate on jurisdictional boundaries and it's time for Canada's biggest city to modernize its approach to stopping bike theft.

[1] <https://vancouver.ca/streets-transportation/register-your-bike-to-reduce-theft.aspx>

[2] <https://www.ottawapolice.ca/en/safety-and-crime-prevention/529-garage.aspx>

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM36.11

(<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2021/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-171169.pdf>)