



REPORT FOR ACTION

Bike Share Toronto - Review of Age Eligibility Requirements

Date: May 1, 2025

To: Board of Directors, Toronto Parking Authority

From: President, Toronto Parking Authority

Wards: All

SUMMARY

Bike Share Toronto is a convenient, affordable, and sustainable mobility option that is an integral component of Toronto's transportation network and one of North America's largest bike share systems. The program has experienced tremendous growth, expanding from a system of 80 stations and annual ridership of 400,000 in 2011, to a network of over 850 stations, 9,000 bikes (including 1,900 e-bikes) and a total ridership of 7 million in 2024.

The purpose of this report is to outline the Toronto Parking Authority's (TPA) response to a request made by City Council on July 24, 2024 seeking to expand Bike Share Toronto access by lowering the age of consent for classic (non-electric) bike riders in the 14-15 years of age cohort (with parental consent or approval), and allowing riders aged 16-17 to use classic bikes and e-bikes without parental accompaniment.

Management has reviewed the request from Council and has determined that expanding access to younger users does not introduce any significant operational, safety, reputational, or financial risks. While research indicates limited consumer demand for this change, enabling broader access aligns with TPA's commitment to inclusive mobility and is consistent with regulations at other bike share systems in Canada. Risk factors related to cycling infrastructure and user safety have been reviewed, and Management is confident that they can be managed within existing frameworks. As such, management recommends adoption of the changes described herein.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The President, Toronto Parking Authority recommends that:

1. The Board of Directors of Toronto Parking Authority direct the President, Toronto Parking Authority to implement the necessary changes to the Bike Share Toronto user terms and conditions that will allow users aged 14 to 15 to ride classic bikes when supervised by a parent or guardian; and
2. The Board of Directors of Toronto Parking Authority direct the President, Toronto Parking Authority to implement the necessary changes to the Bike Share Toronto user terms and conditions that will allow users aged 16 to 17 to ride classic bikes and e-bike without being accompanied by a parent or guardian.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact resulting from this report.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of March 4, 2025, the TPA Board of Directors deferred item PA13.10 "Bike Share for Everyone: Allowing Young Torontonians to access Safe, Sustainable Commutes" to its May 2025 meeting.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.PA13.10>

At its meeting of July 24, 2024, City Council adopted MM20.7 the "Bike Share for Everyone: Allowing Young Torontonians to access Safe, Sustainable Commutes." The motion requested TPA to change the age structure for its riders, enabling younger riders to use Bike Share Toronto.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.MM20.7>

COMMENTS

In response to City Council's request, TPA has conducted a comprehensive analysis of the risks and opportunities associated with expanding bike share's age eligibility requirements.

The table below provides an overview of the current and proposed age eligibility requires for the Bike Share Toronto program.

Table 1 - Bike Share Toronto Current and Proposed Age Eligibility and Permissions

	CURRENT		COUNCIL PROPOSED	
Bike Type/Age	14-15	16-17	14-15	16-17
Classic Bike	Not permitted to use	Permitted to use with parental supervision	Permitted to use with parental supervision	Permitted to use
e-Bike	Not permitted to use	Permitted to use with parental supervision	Not permitted to use	Permitted to use

Management's analysis examined peer bike share systems, bike share equipment, applicable regulatory and legislative frameworks, customer insights, cycling infrastructure, growth plans and priorities, as well as legal and insurance considerations. These factors were assessed collectively to determine whether lowering the minimum age for classic bike riders with parental supervision, from 16-17 to 14-15 years of age, and for riders aged 16-17 to ride classic bikes and e-bike without being accompanied by a parent or guardian would be a prudent and responsible course of action at this time.

A jurisdictional scan of age requirements for bike share programs revealed significant inconsistencies across systems, highlighting the absence of an industry standard. For example:

- Vancouver: Users must be at least 12 years old to ride classic bikes without parental supervision but must be 19 years old to operate e-bikes.
- Montreal: Classic bike riders can be as young as 14 years old, with no parental supervision required for older teens using classic bikes.
- Hamilton: Hamilton's bike share program allows minors to ride independently once they reach the age of 16.

These findings highlight that each jurisdiction independently assesses and manages the risks associated with younger riders based on its own risk tolerance, regulatory environment, infrastructure, and operational considerations. The absence of a uniform standard reinforces the need for a cautious, jurisdiction-specific approach that carefully weighs operational, legal, reputational, and safety risks before making policy changes.

Bike Share Toronto has a fleet of uniform-size bikes with standards that require users to have a minimum height of 1.47 metres (4'10") and maximum weight of 120 kilograms (265 pounds). The uniformity of the fleet is a necessary consideration to run a sustainable bike share program. This practice is similar across all major bike share systems in North America and Europe. The manufacturers establish these restrictions for bike safety reasons, and therefore any person riding a Bike Share Toronto bike must meet these criteria.

Under the Bike Share Toronto user terms and conditions, minors (under the age of 18) must be subscribed to Bike Share Toronto under the financial responsibility and legal liability of a parent or guardian. In accordance with the provincial *Highway Traffic Act* (HTA), helmets are required for minors riding classic bikes, and for e-bike riders of all ages. This distinction under the HTA reflects the higher potential risks associated with e-bikes, which can travel at faster speeds and require enhanced handling than classic bikes. Bike Share Toronto's policies are designed to encourage responsible cycling behavior while prioritizing the safety of riders and the community.

However, TPA has no practical means to independently verify a rider's height, weight, acceptance of user terms and conditions, or compliance with HTA helmet requirements at the point of use. As such, implementing a minimum age requirement remains as the most effective and operationally feasible proxy for managing user safety risks. Establishing an age threshold helps support safe usage, aligns with industry practices, and ensures a balanced approach to operational feasibility and risk mitigation.

TPA is currently engaging stakeholders to inform the development of the 2026–2030 Bike Share Toronto Strategy. This strategy is focused on advancing Bike Share Toronto as a sustainable, accessible, and integrated first- and last-mile mobility solution that complements and enhances the broader public transit network. Expanding access to younger users at this time aligns with this vision by promoting early adoption of active transportation, fostering long-term ridership growth, and supporting more inclusive access to mobility options across Toronto.

While some comparable jurisdictions, such as Montreal, permit younger riders (i.e. under 14 years old) to access bike share systems without parental supervision, the context in Toronto presents unique challenges. With the recent passage of provincial *Bill 212, Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act*, concerns about youth safety have increased, particularly in areas lacking dedicated cycling infrastructure. Given this uncertainty and the ongoing review of measures that directly impact cyclist safety, expanding Bike Share eligibility to allow youth aged 14-15 to ride classic bikes unsupervised by a parent or guardian is not recommended at this time. A cautious approach is warranted until clearer infrastructure and safety guidance is established.

Under TPA's arrangement with Shift Transit (Shift), Shift is responsible for holding its own insurance coverage for bodily injury and property damage to third parties. TPA is only responsible for property-related insurance and maintains the appropriate coverage in this regard. Engagement with Shift as well as the City's Insurance and Risk Management team did not identify material increases in risk as a result of expanding the program to youth. Both noted, however, that this change could potentially result in the frequency of claims or the severability in paid losses, which could impact (raise) insurance rates that would then be passed on to TPA to absorb.

Based on the factors identified above and TPA's current organizational risk appetite, Management supports the recommendation to lower the minimum age and supervisory requirements for both classic bikes and e-bikes at this time. A risk-based assessment concluded that expanding access to younger riders does not present any significant operational, safety, reputational, or financial risks. While customer research indicates limited direct demand for this change, broadening access aligns with TPA's commitment

to inclusive mobility and supports the long-term growth and sustainability of the Bike Share Toronto program. Risk factors related to infrastructure and user safety have been carefully reviewed, and Management is confident these can be effectively managed within existing operational and policy frameworks. As such, the proposed changes represent a prudent and strategically aligned step consistent with TPA's mobility objectives and overall risk tolerance.

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SIGNATURE

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