

## **Amendment to the Sign By-law to Regulate Bike Share Signs outside of the Public Right-of-Way**

**Date:** January 8, 2025  
**To:** Planning and Housing Committee  
**From:** Chief Building Official and Executive Director, Toronto Building  
**Wards:** All

### **SUMMARY**

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This report recommends amendments to the City of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 694, Signs, General ("Sign By-law"), to include new regulations for signs associated with Bike Share docking stations ("Bike Share Stations") located outside the public right-of-way. Placing Bike Share Stations on lands beyond the public right-of-way is crucial for advancing the City's goals of developing a comprehensive cycling network as part of the overall transportation system.

Currently, signs within the public right-of-way, such as those affixed to Bike-Share Stations operated as part of Bike Share Toronto ("BST"), are excluded from the Sign By-law, however, signs for Bike Share Stations outside the public right-of-way are subject to the Sign By-law. Locations outside of the right-of-way where these signs and Bike-Share Stations may be located include transit stations, Park Roads, Bicycle Paths, Cycle Tracks, and other areas that align with the City's transportation network.

To accommodate signage at Bike Share locations outside the right-of-way and avoid the need for sign variances and site-specific amendments, staff have reviewed the Sign By-law to identify changes that align with the City's objectives for bike sharing, cycling, and transportation networks, while also meeting the goals of the Sign By-law. The regulations proposed in this report will support the City's bike share initiatives and cycling network, permitting signage at Bike Share Stations that is functional, compatible with its surroundings, and enhances Toronto's visual appeal for residents, businesses, and visitors.

Due to the uniqueness of signs on Bike Share Stations, the Sign By-law does not contain regulations that are suitable for these types of signs. The amendments proposed in this report will permit "Bike-Share Signs" (signs displayed on or attached to Bike Share Stations) on private property, integrate these signs into the permit application and approval processes, and establish specific regulations for their size, orientation, content, and illumination. Signs displayed on Bike Share Stations in the right-of-way will continue to be out of scope of the Sign By-law.

These changes will make it easier to add Bike Share Stations, with appropriate signage, to the city's infrastructure and help create a more attractive and unified public realm while supporting Toronto's goal of sustainable transportation.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Chief Building Official and Executive Director, Toronto Building, recommends that:

1. City Council amend the City of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 694, Signs, General, to adopt regulations applicable to signs affixed or attached to structures related to Bike Share Stations, substantially in accordance with the draft by-law attached as Attachment 1 to this report.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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There are no current or known future year financial impacts arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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On May 11 and 12, 2010, City Council adopted item PW32.8 Proposed Public Bicycle Program

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2010.PW32.8>

On November 13, 14, 15 and 18, 2013 City Council confirmed that the delegation of authority to the Toronto Parking Authority shall include the approval of sponsorship and third party advertising on the bike station panels, subject to such negotiations with Astral Media for advertising on the right-of-way as may be required.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.EX35.8>

On July 16, 17 and 18, 2019 City Council requested the General Manager, Transportation Services to work with Bike Share Toronto to develop a co-ordinated plan to install Bike Share infrastructure across Toronto.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2019.IE6.11>

On December 17 and 18, 2019, City Council requested the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to circulate all development applications in the study area to the relevant staff at Toronto Parking Authority for consultation on opportunities to incorporate Bike Share Toronto facilities into new developments.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2019.TE11.4>

On January 29, 2020, City Council authorized the General Manager, Transportation Services, to negotiate and enter into an advertising agreement with the Toronto Parking Authority and Astral Media Outdoor L.P.

At its July 19, 2022 meeting, City Council endorsed the Community Benefits Charge Strategy, dated April 2022 and Community Benefits Charge Strategy Addendum, dated June 2022 included as Attachments 2 and 3 to the Growth Funding Tools – Community Benefits Charge report dated June 27, 2022, from the Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer, and Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2022.EX34.2>

## ISSUE BACKGROUND

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Toronto's Official Plan recognizes bike share facilities as a vital part of the city's transportation network, aiming to promote cycling growth. To reduce congestion, energy consumption, and pollution, the City encourages fewer and shorter vehicle trips through Travel Demand Management measures. New developments are encouraged to include publicly accessible bike share facilities. The City is also expanding bicycle parking and public bike share programs, especially in high-demand areas such as higher-order transit stations and stops.

Currently, signs affixed to Bike Share Stations within the public right-of-way, including the BST, are excluded from the Sign By-law, however, signage for Bike Share Stations outside the public right-of-way must, like all other signs in the city, comply with the Sign By-law.

Given the absence of regulations for signs at Bike Share Stations outside the public right-of-way, staff have reviewed the Sign By-law and determined that establishing specific regulations for these signs is in the city's best interest. This approach would avoid the need for sign variance and amendment processes, which can be both costly and time-consuming. The recommendations for these regulations are outlined throughout this report and further detailed in Appendix 1.

## COMMENTS

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Currently, Bike Share Toronto, operated by the Toronto Parking Authority (TPA), is the only bicycle-sharing service authorized to operate within the public right-of-way in Toronto. This service is part of the City of Toronto's transportation strategy, as outlined in Chapter 2 of the Official Plan.

Throughout the city, the number of Bike Share Stations has been increasing. As a result, the City needs to explore locating these stations outside of the public right-of-way, on private property and within City Parks. Staff have reviewed these Bike Share Stations, both within and outside the public right-of-way, and examined the City's existing sign regulations to determine necessary amendments to the Sign By-law.

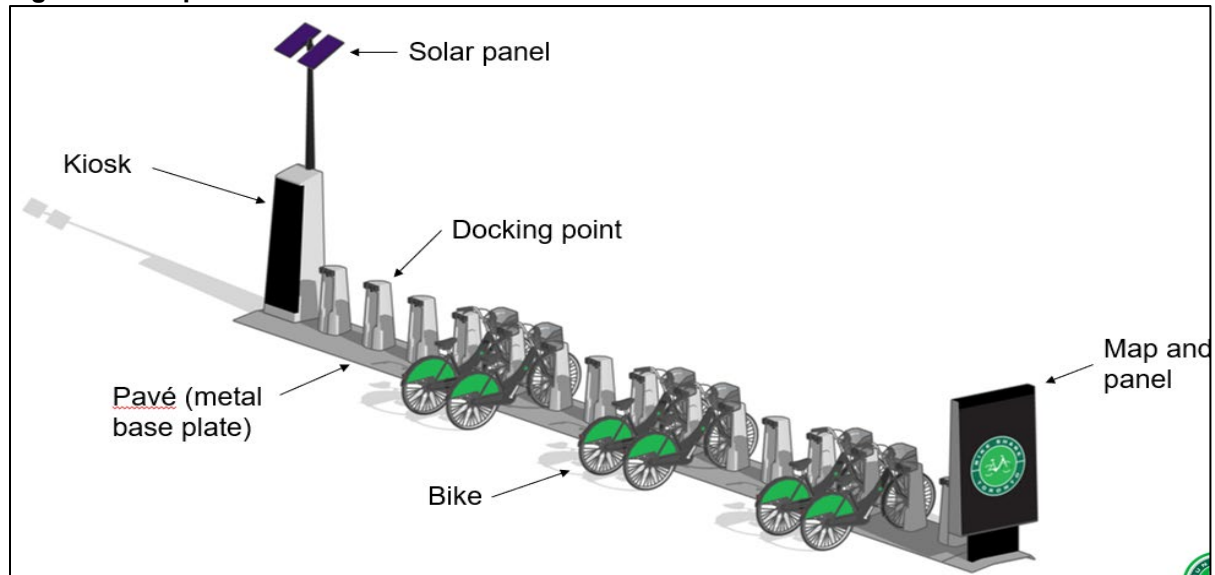
Following this review, and after consultation with the Toronto Parking Authority and Parks, Forestry and Recreation, staff are proposing regulations to permit signs

associated with Bike Share Stations outside the public right-of-way that are consistent with the City's overall signage objectives.

### *Overview of Common Signage Elements Associated with Bike Share Stations*

The amendments proposed in this report would apply to all Bike Share Stations, allowing them to have signage similar to the signage shown in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1: Sample Bike Share Station**



Specifically, this report proposes the following amendments to the Sign By-law:

- To permit first party, well as limited amounts of third-party signage on Bike Share Stations in accordance with Table 1 below.
- To include new definitions related to Bike Share Signs and their locations, ensuring clarity and consistency.
- To introduce a new provision specifying the conditions under which Bike Share Signs are excluded from being classified as ground signs for Chapter 694 compliance. This aims to streamline the regulatory process and address the unique nature of Bike-Share Sign.
- To add a new schedule detailing the description of permitted Bike Share Signs, providing information on their characteristics and requirements.

### *Conditions for Displaying Bike-Share Signs Without a Permit*

The proposed amendments will allow Bike Share Signs located within 6.0 meters of Park Roads, Bikeways, or the public right-of-way to be displayed without a sign permit (4.0m is the approximate width of a Bike Share Station), subject to the following:

- The sign is non-illuminated and displays static content only.
- The sign is not located within a visibility zone (the area within three meters of where a driveway or entrance meets the street) or within 100 meters of another Bike Share Sign.

- Similar to other signs in the Sign By-law, where the sign is within 30 meters of a signalized intersection, authorization from Transportation Services is required.
- When located on City-owned land, written authorization from the Division Head with jurisdiction over the location will be required.

**Table 1: Summary of Proposed Sign Faces and Sign Types associated with Bike Share Stations**

Element	Permitted Sign Face Area (max)	Permitted Sign Type
Kiosks	0.8 square meters	First-party copy only (maps, pass options, pricing, usage guidelines, Bike Share branding).
Bikes	0.45 square metres per bike	First-party copy, Bike Share sponsorship and ownership information, and non-commercial messaging
Docking Points	1.0 square meters	First-party content only.
Map and Panel	1.5 square meters	Up to two sign faces: first-party content (maps, pass options, pricing, usage guidelines) and non-commercial messaging.

Except for the Bike elements, third-party sign copy is not being proposed for the Bike Share Stations. This is due to the fact that third-party signs may not be permitted in places that Bike Share Stations could be located (e.g. city parks), as well as the possibility that Bike Share Stations on private property may be placed near street furniture in the public right-of-way, which often contains third-party signage.

### *Bike Share Stations in Public Parks*

Under Chapter 179 of the Municipal Code (Parking Authority), the Toronto Parking Authority (TPA) is permitted to place Bike Share Stations outside the public right-of-way. Signs on these structures are currently required to comply with the Sign By-law. Through the current review, staff identified lands that function similarly to the public right-of-way, including lands within City Parks, referred to as "Park Roads," which are suitable for bicycle infrastructure and bike-sharing services (see Figure 2).

In the context of the City's cycling network, Park Roads function similarly to the public right-of-way. Staff have also identified several right-of-way analogues within the municipal park system, designated for pedestrian and bicycle travel, as outlined in Municipal Code Chapter 886, Footpaths, Pedestrian Ways, Bicycle Paths, Bicycle Lanes, and Cycle Tracks (collectively "Bikeways").

Although Park Roads and Bikeways are not classified as "highways" for defining the public right-of-way under the Sign By-law, their purpose and nature are functionally similar. Therefore, it is appropriate to treat these areas similarly to the public right-of-way for Bike Share Stations and associated signage, with specific modifications given their proximity to sensitive land uses. The amendments proposed in this report will allow Bike-Share Signs on Park Roads that are consistent with the City's objectives while still contributing positively to Toronto's visual character and land uses.



**Figure 2: Example of streets' classification based on Road Classification System Map**



*Bike Share Stations adjacent to the Public Right-of-Way*

Although the TPA typically installs Bike Share Stations within the public right-of-way, they may also be placed on premises adjacent to the public right-of-way when space is insufficient or when property owners request BST stations.

Toronto's public realm currently encompass both public and private property, and city regulations can facilitate the overlap of these areas to enhance the overall public realm. City programs (such as CafeTO) provide special permissions for lands adjacent to the public right-of-way, allowing restaurants and bars to expand their outdoor dining spaces onto sidewalks or curb lanes (See Figure 3). This demonstrates the City's flexibility in managing public and private spaces to benefit various programs and initiatives, which should include the Bike Share operations.

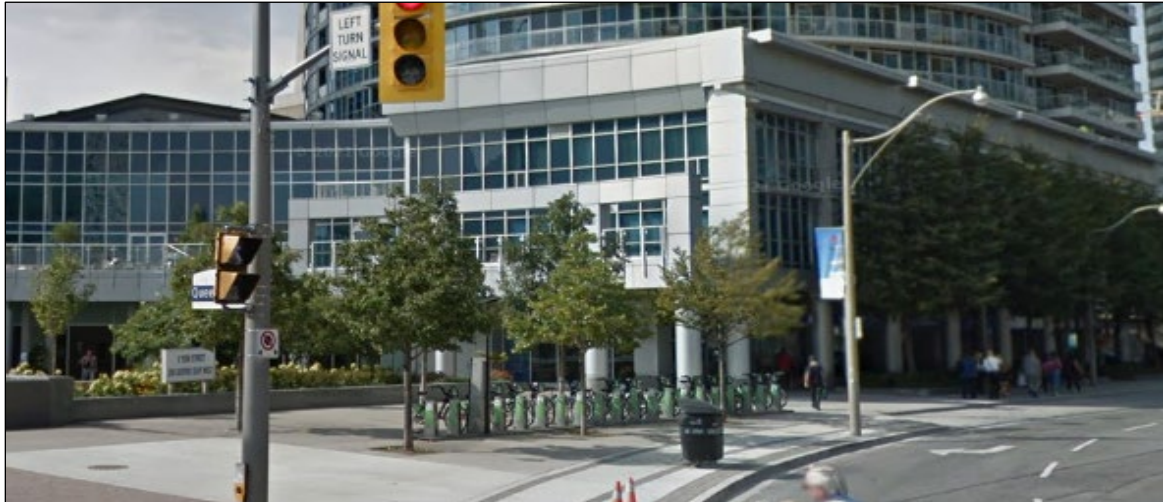
**Figure 3: Patio and Garden extending Beyond the property limits**



Staff believe that signage on Bike Share Stations installed within six meters of the public right-of-way should not present significantly different considerations from those installed within the public right-of-way. In many cases, these signs would be indistinguishable from BST locations inside the right-of-way due to the built environment, where the boundaries between adjacent premises and the public right-of-way are often not marked by tangible or visible barriers. As a result, the public right-of-way generally blends

seamlessly with private property, making these areas appear as one continuous space (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Plaza in Private Property / Bike Share Station on Public ROW**



If adopted, the Sign Bylaw amendments proposed in this report will facilitate the continued development of the Bike Share program and enable the public to clearly identify Bike Share Stations located on premises adjacent to the public right-of-way and in parks.

## **CONCLUSION**

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Based on the reasons outlined in this report, staff recommend adopting the proposed regulations for Bike-Share Signs. These amendments will ensure that the Sign By-law effectively regulates these signs in alignment with the City's goals for bike sharing, cycling, and transportation networks, as well as the objectives of the City's Sign By-law.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Sign By-law Amendment Regulating Bike Share Signs

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment 1 – Draft Amending By-law for Chapter 694