



PARKS AND RECREATION ONTARIO

Proposal Response:

Bill 212 – Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act, 2024 – Framework for
bike lanes that require removal of a traffic lane.

ERO #: 019-9266

Parks and Recreation Ontario Submission
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PARKS AND RECREATION ONTARIO

About Parks and Recreation Ontario

Parks and Recreation Ontario (PRO) is a non-profit association with over 6,500 members that delivers services to more than 85% of Ontario's population. We are devoted to advancing equitable access to quality parks and recreation services for all Ontarians. PRO champions the health, social, and environmental benefits of parks and recreation through evidence-based practices, advocacy, and collaborative cross-sectoral partnerships. Our work includes policy and research, education, training, and professional development opportunities, as well as our flagship quality standards program, HIGH FIVE®, which includes a stream called the *Principles of Healthy Child Development*. We envision a future for Ontario where every person has equitable access to vibrant communities, sustainable environments, and personal health.

Introduction

We are writing to express our concerns related to *Bill 212 – Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act, 2024 – Framework for bike lanes that require removal of a traffic lane*. PRO recognizes that reducing gridlock is a provincial priority, and we support initiatives that will save Ontarians time and lower greenhouse gas emissions. However, [research demonstrates](#) that eliminating bike lanes is not an effective approach in achieving either of these goals. Furthermore, PRO supports municipalities in their jurisdictional responsibilities to develop transportation plans that meet local needs. Transportation plans should be based on local knowledge, community input, and aligned with municipal planning priorities like active transportation, multimodal transportation, environmental conservation, and health benefits. As proponents of accessibility, physical activity, and environmental conservation, PRO cannot support this legislation.

The following sections outline arguments as to why this legislation should be reconsidered and reasons that the Province should support municipalities in implementing bike lanes and other forms of active transportation:

Bike lane removal is expensive.

Removing bike lanes is significantly more costly than installation. The City of Toronto has estimated that removing the bike lanes proposed in the legislation [will cost the city at least \\$48 million](#). The removal also means that the [city will lose the \\$27 million investment](#) it has already made in installing the infrastructure. If the Province moves forward with this legislation, municipalities should not bare the burden of the cost. The Province should not only finance bike lane removals, but also compensate municipal staff and planning time for the initial installation. Municipalities have dedicated significant resources towards planning and implementing this infrastructure, and therefore, should be compensated accordingly.

Bike lanes are good for business.

When on-street parking is replaced with bike lanes, businesses benefit. When compared to car-centric infrastructure, bike and pedestrian infrastructure is far more effective and efficient at safely accommodating large volumes of people. [A pilot project in 2016](#) revealed that after on-street parking spots were replaced with bike lanes on Toronto's Bloor Street, businesses saw an [increase in overall customer visits and spending](#).

Bike lanes decrease congestion.

Bike lanes help all Ontarians spend less time stuck in traffic. Studies from across North America and European cities have shown that [bike lanes have inconsequential effects on congestion and driving times](#). On the contrary, bike lanes have the potential to reduce congestion by accommodating more travelers. A typical driving lane for personal vehicles can accommodate [600-900 vehicles per hour](#). Comparatively, a standard two-way protected bike lane, which has lower space requirements than a car lane, can accommodate up to [7,500 people per hour](#).



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Bike lanes are safer for everyone.

Research has repeatedly demonstrated that having [dedicated infrastructure for cyclists makes Ontario's roads safer for everyone](#). [Studies have shown](#) that following the implementation of bike lanes, collision rates decrease in surrounding areas. The removal of bike lanes would jeopardize the safety of both cyclists and drivers. Bike lanes save lives.

Bike lanes create healthier cities.

Ontario is experiencing a physical inactivity crisis. Only [49% of adults](#) and [39% of children and youth](#) in Canada meet recommended physical activity guidelines. Health issues associated with physical inactivity [cost Ontarians millions of dollars each year](#). The design of communities – or built environments – shapes the way people travel. Put simply, [when neighbourhoods are bike-friendly, more people bike](#). [Over 44% of Torontonians use bikes](#) to get to school, work, shop, or visit friends. Bike lanes are critical to creating [complete streets](#) and a part of a larger network of active transportation options that provides [safe connectivity to parks, trail networks, and recreation spaces](#). Active transportation options help Ontarians integrate physical activity into their daily life. From a public health and economic perspective, it is in the Province's best interest to invest in infrastructure that enables Ontarians to safely engage in active transportation.

Bike lanes are better for the environment.

The transportation sector in Ontario is a significant source of air pollution. In the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area alone, traffic-related air pollution is responsible for [700 premature deaths and 2,800 hospital admissions](#) each year. Reallocating road space to active transportation is a proven [cost-effective way to reduce traffic volumes and greenhouse gas emissions](#), with minimal impact to traffic speeds.

Conclusion

While we acknowledge that the Province aims to improve traffic flow in Ontario's busiest urban centres, extensive evidence suggests that eliminating bike lanes will not achieve this goal. As the province continues to grow, municipalities must maintain jurisdiction over multimodal transportation planning to ensure that their communities remain safe and accessible to all citizens. Municipalities have extensive knowledge of local transportation needs, and therefore should be the primary governing body making decisions about local transportation matters. For these reasons, we urge the Government of Ontario to reconsider this legislation.

We are pleased to discuss our comments further with the Ministry, should any clarity be required. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this important proposal.

Sincerely,

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