

# Propelling Change

A Guide to Effective Cycling Advocacy

# Ward Advocacy Program (WAP)

The Ward Advocacy Program is at the heart of the bike union. Its goal is to connect individuals who are motivated to improving cycling infrastructure and offering education in their ward. The vision of the program is to build a movement of grassroots advocacy in local wards which will improve cycling for everyone in the city. The Ward Advocacy Program is meant to engage cyclists, and non-cyclists alike, to support activities that promote the everyday use of bicycles by improving infrastructure, facilities and the public perception of cycling as a valid and vital mode of transportation.

## Toronto Cyclists Union

The Toronto Cyclists Union is a membership-based organization that brings together cyclists from all across Toronto. We are a strong, unified voice advocating the rights of cyclists of all ages and from all parts of the city. We aim to shift the political culture that has resisted the changes that are needed to ensure safe streets for cyclists. We are a vibrant and amplified voice calling for the common goals of safe, legitimate and accessible cycling in Toronto. The bike union coordinates city-wide advocacy on behalf of our members and provide resources for cyclists to be effective advocates themselves by participating in the Ward Advocacy Program.

## Our commitment to you

The bike union and ward groups work together in trust and for mutual benefit to improve cycling conditions across the city. We recognize that to realize our vision of a united, cyclist friendly city, we must support our ward groups! We commit to:

- » providing ward captains with effective tools to ease communication with local bike union members
- » co-ordinating ward groups to ensure that goals and activities are not in conflict
- » co-operating with city staff to provide information and resources for each group
- » contacting municipal councillors to ensure groups have access to elected officials to discuss their projects and goals
- » providing groups with materials, including ward maps and information on cycling developments



# WAP Goals

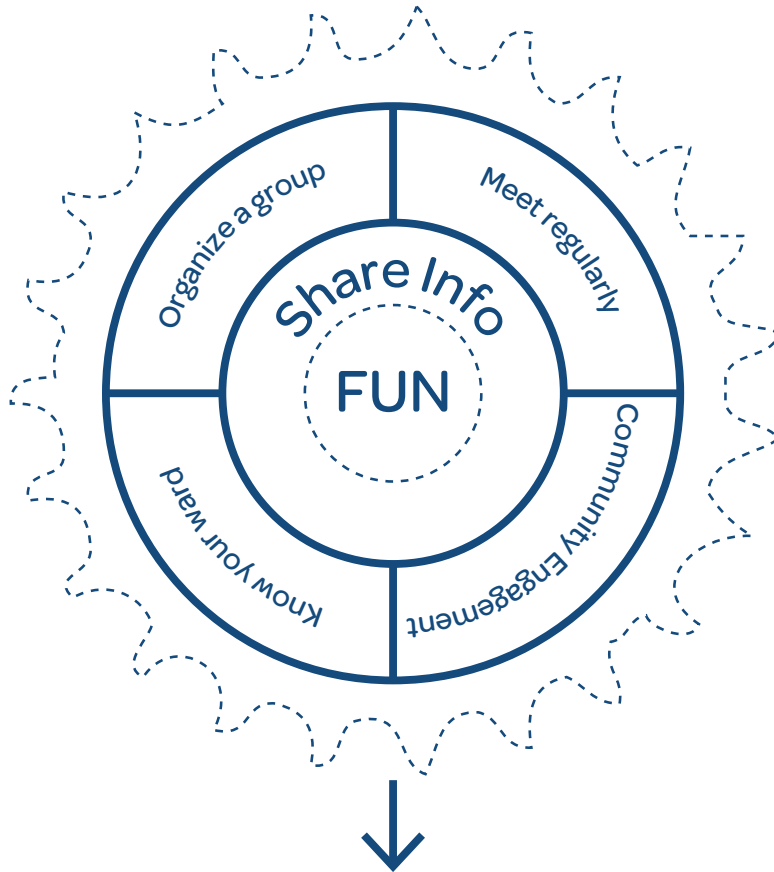
- Advocacy** To encourage civic engagement among cyclists.
- Coordination** To organize cycling advocates into ward groups in order to achieve local goals that are synchronized with broader bike union initiatives.
- Education** To teach members about the role of municipal government in cycling advocacy.
- Communication** To maintain active lines of communication between ward groups and bike union staff.
- Assistance** To support ward groups by providing resources for local advocacy efforts.
- Partnership** To develop mutually beneficial relationships between ward groups, city staff and councillors.
- Outreach** To engage ward groups in their local communities and build support for the bike union.

# WAP Structure

Each group has at least one ward captain - an individual who organizes meetings and has an essential role in communicating with local bike union members and staff. Often, the ward captain initiates the group so he or she is also responsible for recruiting members with help from bike union staff. There is no limit to how many co-captains a group may have since every group determines its own priorities. The structure of each ward group may vary, depending on the particular ward and group size. Since groups are run by volunteers, we encourage co-captains to divide the responsibilities!



# So you want to start a Ward Group?



Change the world!



# Getting Started

Now that you know who we are and what we can do for you, you can use the following checklist to help you start a ward advocacy group!

- » Contact the bike union to express your interest.
- » Craft a friendly introductory e-mail for your ward announcing the birth of the group.
- » Schedule the group's first meeting at a venue with a social atmosphere. Coffee shops work well!
- » Conduct a ride/audit using our "Group Ride Checklist" as a guiding tool.
- » Brainstorm! Based on your ward audit, choose one to three goals on which to focus your efforts. This step involves some creative back-and-forth. City staff, adjacent ward groups, councillors and other relevant community groups, with the assistance of bike union staff, will consider and comment on your preliminary goals. Once you are happy with your goals, make it official by completing the "Ward Group Goals and Objectives" sheet.
- » Advocate!

For the Group Ride Checklist, go to:  
[www.bikeunion.to/checklist](http://www.bikeunion.to/checklist)

For the Ward Group Goals and Objectives form, go to:  
[www.bikeunion.to/objectives-form](http://www.bikeunion.to/objectives-form)



# From Arguing to Advocating

Now that you know how to establish your ward group, your next step is to begin advocating! So how do you do this? Below is a list of basic tips for effective advocacy. You can find more detailed information on each point throughout the remainder of this guide!

For the ward survey template, go to:  
[www.bikeunion.to/survey-template](http://www.bikeunion.to/survey-template)

**Establish Goals** - What are the issues that you want to address? Do they involve infrastructure, maintenance, safety or ridership? Clearly define goals and then develop a plan to achieve them.

**Understand the Process** – Learn how the city is organized and get to know the chain of command. This is helpful when you're looking for allies. If you know the chain of command, it'll be easier to escalate your issue.

**Identify Decision Makers, Allies and Obstacles** – Develop an understanding of potential allies and adversaries. You should work with groups that support your goals. Try to appreciate the point of view of potential opponents and work to understand and resolve objections when possible.

Tips: Establishing Goals

Talk to neighbours and reach out to the general community to identify the issues. Always remember not to create goals in isolation, which is important for gathering support for your issues. Pick the top three issues; any more than this and you'll have too much to handle successfully. Research your issue thoroughly because a solid factual base gives you credibility. You want to be seen as a resource on the issue in your community and extensive research will put you in this position. You also want to be able to offer solutions.

**Understand Timing** – Understand the time-line of the political process, such as when elections are held and when council and committees meet. You have to know when opportunities will arise, and time your efforts accordingly.

**Build Constituency** – Politicians react to constituent interests. If you generate a network of people who support your goals, you will be much more successful than if you acted alone, no matter how worthy your project may be.



# The Municipal Structure of Toronto: Understanding the Process

In order to effectively advocate your goals, a clear understanding of municipal governance and the mechanics of how specific issues are addressed by council and committees is important.

- » Improving Toronto’s infrastructure starts with an idea. This idea can originate with the public, the mayor, city councillors, advisory committees or city staff. This idea is then explored by city staff who research it, consult with the public and try to make it work. If it can work, staff transforms the idea into a report. **Under the current system, the Toronto Cycling Advisory Committee (TCAC) is the gateway for the public’s ideas on cycling projects.** TCAC can refer ideas from the public to city staff to research or refer petitions to council and other committees.
- » Staff reports are taken to one of the city’s committees, which debates it and hears comments from the public. At committee, the report can be approved (as is or amended), deferred (until the next meeting), received (for information only), referred (back to staff or another committee for more information) or recommended (goes to council with recommendations as is or amended). **Under the current system, all bike lane projects go to the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee before council.** If the majority of committee members approve the report, it becomes a recommendation and goes to city council for final approval.
- » When a recommendation is made to council, it can be approved, referred, deferred, received or amended. If the majority votes in support of an item, then it becomes a by-law and city staff is responsible for implementation.

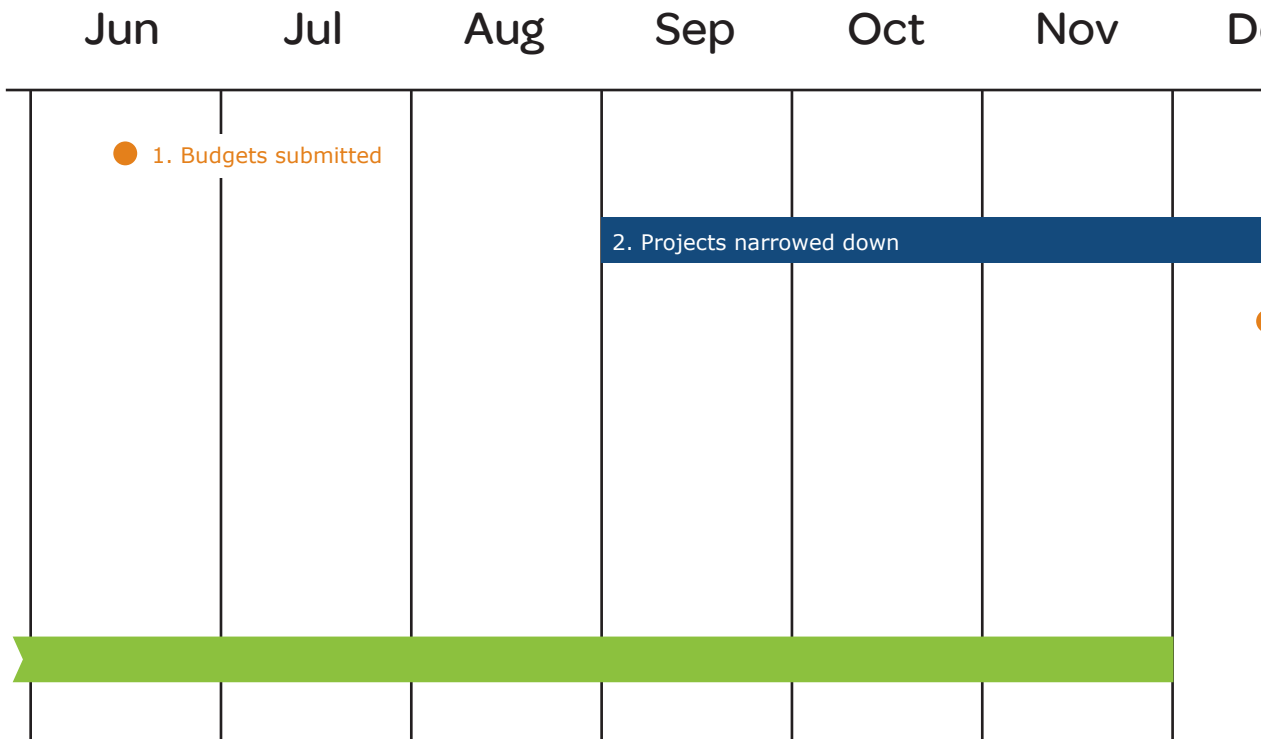
Committees of Council:  
[www.toronto.ca/committees](http://www.toronto.ca/committees)

Get involved at City Hall:  
[www.toronto.ca/civic-engagement](http://www.toronto.ca/civic-engagement)



# The Importance of Timing

The Annual Cycle of Bike Projects



1. Staff submit proposed Operating and Capital Budgets for the following year - the budget amount determines **how many and what type of projects can be delivered** in the coming year.

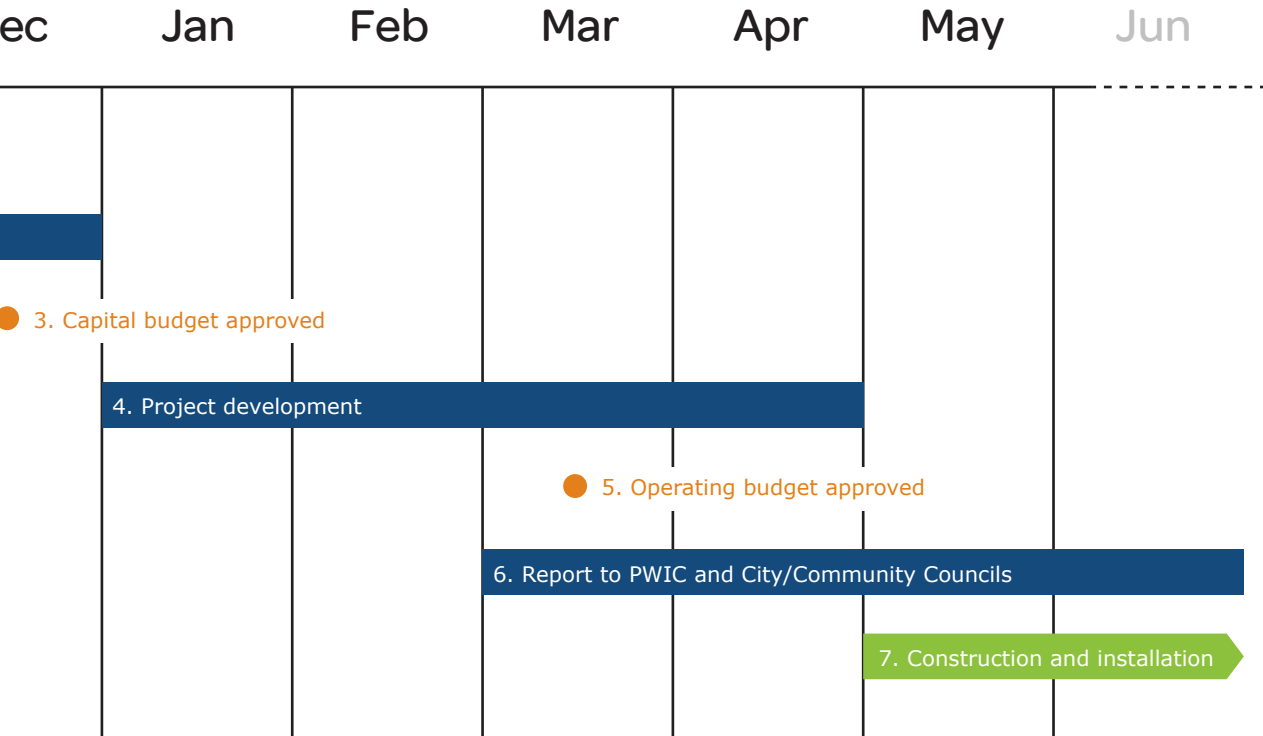
2. Staff **narrow down** which projects will be focused on as part of the following year's bike project report.

3. Capital budget is reviewed, amended and approved by Council. **Revisions are made** to the project list and implementation plans based on the

approved budget. (Note: following a municipal election the Capital Budget may be approved as late as the following March)

4. Staff focus on projects which will be included in the Bikeway Network Project report to PWIC and City Council. If a project has made it to this point, then the **design and operational issues have been resolved** to the general satisfaction of agency stakeholders, Ward Councillors, and affected communities - including residents and





businesses. Projects which do not have the Ward Councillor’s support (for any number of reasons) will likely be deferred or rejected by Council.

5. Operating budget is **approved**.

6. Staff generally submit one Bikeway Network report to PWIC and Council to **obtain approval to install several bicycle lane projects**. The timing of this report can be closer to June if it means a few more projects can be included. Traffic signals and roadway

narrowings required for trail-road crossings are reported to PWIC or Community Councils.

7. Transportation Staff **coordinate crews**, issue construction notices to the public and media, monitor installation, conduct post-implementation evaluation for some projects, etc. Most of the line painting is done overnight when the roads are generally not obstructed by traffic. Later in the season as overnight temperatures drop, the line painting has to be done during day time.



# Project Types and Approvals

The bikeway network in the Toronto Bike Plan is the starting point for identifying individual projects for implementation. Projects are selected each year based on several factors, including:

- » If a project extends or connects to an existing route, or completes a gap in the network,
- » If a project is on a street scheduled for resurfacing or reconstruction,
- » If there is strong community/councillor support for the project.

There are always exceptions, but assuming there's funding, here is a breakdown of what the approval process generally looks like for different kinds of projects.

Approval Level	Project Type
<i>City Council</i>	<p><b>Bicycle Lanes</b></p> <p>What is generally misunderstood about bike lanes is that they are “reserved lanes,” similar to bus-only lanes or high occupancy vehicle lanes. As such, by-laws need to be enacted by City Council to designate the bicycle lanes, as well as codify all of the associated parking and stopping regulations necessary to implement the bicycle lanes.</p>
<i>Local Councillor support + funding</i>	<p><b>Multi-use trails</b></p> <p>Generally speaking, multi-use trail projects do not need to be approved by City Council provided there is sufficient funding to build them.</p> <p>If the trail project requires a feature such as a new signalized crossing of a road, then this would have to go to council.</p>
<i>Local Councillor support</i>	<p><b>Shared Roadway Routes</b></p> <p>Bike routes which use sharrows or signage do not require City or Community Council approval.</p>
<i>Community Council or City Council</i>	<p><b>Bike Boxes</b></p> <p>“No Right Turn on Red” regulations need to be implemented for a bike box to function properly. These by-laws require Community or City Council approval.</p>



Approval Level	Project Type
<i>Dependent on the project driving the lane width change</i>	<p><b>Lane Widths</b></p> <p>Often lane widths are adjusted when bicycle lanes or sharrows are introduced on a roadway. Narrow lane widths can help reduce traffic speed and helps make room for cycling infrastructure. Sometimes lanes are widened in order to make sharrows feasible. Lane width adjustments do not require specific approvals from City Council. However, their implementation is tied to the approval of the projects (e.g. bike lanes installation) that are driving the lane width changes.</p>
<i>Community Council or City Council</i>	<p><b>Traffic Calming</b></p> <p>Physical measures such as speed humps, raised crosswalks, chicanes or curb extensions can help to reduce the speeds of motor vehicles. There is a clear process for the community to initiate a traffic calming study. Traffic calming requires Community or City Council approval, and is subject to meeting technical warrants and a polling process. For more information on this topic, please see the following link: <a href="http://www.toronto.ca/transportation/traffic/traffic_calming.htm">www.toronto.ca/transportation/traffic/traffic_calming.htm</a></p>
<i>Community Council or City Council</i>	<p><b>Signing special provisions for bikes</b></p> <p>In some cases, it will make sense to give bikes different privileges than motor vehicle traffic. One example of this is cases where cyclists are exempted from certain turn restrictions.</p>
<i>Approval of City Staff</i>	<p><b>Post and Ring Bicycle Stands</b></p> <p>The City installs post and ring bike stands on City owned property, such as sidewalks. Post and rings can only be installed where there is sufficient space to maintain an appropriate pedestrian clearway. The rules surrounding spacing for installing post and ring stands is summarized in the Vibrant Streets guidelines on the City of Toronto website.</p>



# How to Build Membership

As is the bike union's adage, "Strength in Numbers!", by working together our greater numbers increases our influence over local decisions. This is why it's important to have a mutually beneficial relationship, one in which ward groups recruit Torontonians to the bike union and the bike union recruits members to ward groups. To facilitate recruitment, check out our tips for tabling below!

- » Before beginning your shift manning a table, check out our website and read the Newsroom and Campaigns sections. If you are unsure of any of our campaigns or recent news, contact us and ask questions!
- » Take a good look at our materials and read the membership forms on the clipboards – make sure you know how to fill it out!
- » The best asset that you can bring to the table, is a sincere belief in the need to expand our union. If you speak to everyone with truth and candour, and look people directly in the eye, you will go far in attracting new members!
- » There are a number of ways to approach prospective members in a low key and friendly way. In the first few minutes, send a message that you are interested in learning about them as cyclists, so you want to find out: Do they cycle? In what capacity? Where do they cycle?
- » Some sample openers: "Have you heard about the Toronto Cyclists Union?" or "Would you like a bike map?"
- » Tell them briefly that we are a member-based advocacy group that works to make cycling conditions better and safer for all cyclists all over Toronto. Establish that they understand what cycling advocacy means. Ask them what their concerns and needs are as cyclists. Listen to what they say; really listen, have an idea of their needs and mention something we have accomplished that relates to it.
- » Finally, ask them the question: "Would you like to join?" or "Would you be interested in becoming a member?" Remember to look them in the eye with as friendly an expression as you can muster!

To learn about cycling events in your area, go to:  
[www.bikeevents.to](http://www.bikeevents.to)



## Spotlight: Ward 29

Local ward groups are making a difference! The Ward 29 advocacy group produced a 2008 report asking the city to improve the bike lanes on the Bloor St. Viaduct. The city listened by widening the bike lanes and by making changes to the cross-over points at the on-ramps to the Don Valley Parkway to make it easier for cyclists to change lanes and continue on to the Danforth. So, how did the Ward 29 group accomplish this? Check out the process it followed below and see how your ward group can successfully advocate your project!

### ***Establish your Goal and Build Constituency:***

- » With the goal of gaining community support for cycling, the group found ways to connect with people in the neighbourhood to increase its membership.
- » The group discussed the needs of the ward with a specific focus on infrastructure to narrow its goals.
- » Once the group had identified a safety issue on the Bloor St. Viaduct with respect to bike lanes, a report was written that identified the problems, offered possible solutions and gave examples, alternative solutions and best practices already working in other cities.

### ***Identify Decision-Makers/Allies and Understand the Process/Timing:***

- » The report was published with the endorsement of various cycling groups.
- » The group surveyed cyclists in the ward and found there was a demand for increased cycling safety that related to willingness to ride.
- » The report and survey were presented to the Toronto Cycling Advisory Committee (TCAC), which referred city staff to develop a design to address safety issues on the Bloor St. Viaduct.
- » The Ward 29 group collaborated with city staff to determine the best solution to safety problems identified in the report.
- » In July 2010, the lanes on the Bloor St. Viaduct were repainted.
- » When the work was completed the next month, the Ward 29 advocacy group celebrated its success!

### **Tips: Meeting with decision-makers**

Find out who is going to make a decision affecting your issue and meet with them. At the beginning, place an emphasis on personal meetings – you can't educate someone until you get to know them first! At your initial meeting, bring a list of ideas and ask a lot of questions! For example: Process questions on timeline and money. Send a brief e-mail reminder before the meeting without any attachments and include a short agenda. Always send a thank you note afterwards and include a summary of any action items and deadlines that arise from the meeting – this keeps your issue on the radar!



# Don't get caught off guard!

Talking points for effective cycling advocacy

Below are some talking points you can use, but we encourage you to be creative. Personal responses make a better impact than canned comments. Keep your responses positive and forward-looking.

**“If cyclists want bike lanes, they should pay for them.**

Cyclists already do pay for them. Anyone who pays rent or property tax in Toronto is paying for our municipal roadways. Furthermore, bike lanes are cheap! A quick look at Portland, OR confirms this. They calculated that their entire system of cycling related infrastructure – approximately 300 miles of bike lanes – cost approximately \$60 million; the equivalent to the cost of one mile of new freeway!

**“That new bike lane is going to put me out of business!**

Cycling is actually great for business. A recent study by the Clean Air Partnership conducted in Bloor West Village counters the assumption that removing on-street parking is bad for business. The report concludes:

- » People who arrive by transit, foot or bicycle visit more often and report spending more money than those who drive.
- » People who preferred to see street use reallocated for widened sidewalks or a bike lane were significantly more likely to spend more than \$100 per month than those who preferred no change.
- » The majority of people surveyed, merchants included (58 percent) preferred to see street use reallocated for widened sidewalks or a bike lane, even if on-street parking were reduced by 50 percent.
- » In Bloor West Village, the majority of merchants predicted that reducing on-street parking in favour of widened sidewalks or a bike lane would either not impact or increase their daily customer numbers, and therefore do not believe it will negatively affect commercial activity.

To learn more about bike lanes and business, read the Clean Air Partnership's report here:

[www.cleanairpartnership.org/pdf/bike-lanes-parking.pdf](http://www.cleanairpartnership.org/pdf/bike-lanes-parking.pdf)



**“ *Cyclists should be licensed!* ”**

The City of Toronto has decided four times that licensing cyclists is more of an administrative burden than an effective tool for reducing bicycle infractions, or as a revenue generator. In fact, in the few places that have licensed cyclists in the past, such as L.A., the program has been scrapped because of a waste of police resources and an inability to enforce. Cyclists are already subject to the law and can get ticketed when they act unsafely. In order to reduce infractions and improve roadways for everyone, we should focus on education and infrastructure.

**“ *I saw a crazy cyclist the other day, who swerved in front of me, was talking on his cell phone and still managed to tell me off. You cyclists are so disrespectful!* ”**

We all have a responsibility for respect and cooperation on the roadway. Delinquent cyclists are not representative of the average commuter cyclist in Toronto. We shouldn't forget the thousands of people who travel safely and without incident every day. Bike lanes and public education about road sharing responsibilities and best practices serve all Torontonians regardless of travel mode. We're all in this together. Let's not let a few bad apples spoil the bunch, and instead, focus on education, cooperation and respect.

For talking points on cycling safety, check out our Cyclists Handbook here: [www.bikeunion.to/handbook](http://www.bikeunion.to/handbook)

**“ *What's the big deal anyway? Why should I ride a bike?* ”**

A bicycle lets you travel where you want to go, when you want to go and is often quicker than public transit or a car. When you own a bicycle your travel costs are almost free – hundreds of dollars less than the cost of transit and thousands of dollars cheaper than a car. It's also a great way to stay healthy. Exercising regularly on your bike will improve your mental and physical health. Cycling is also fun!



# Fun Facts

- » More than 60% of Toronto households own bicycles.
- » During summertime, Torontonians make more than 3 million bicycle trips every week to shop, meet friends or commute to school or work.
- » One-in-ten Torontonians travel to work or school by bicycle.
- » In Toronto, cycling to work is most popular among people aged 25 to 44, and is more popular among males than females.
- » Between 2001 and 2006, the greatest increases in the percentage of people riding a bicycle to work were among females aged 45 to 54 (+136.8%) and males aged 55 to 64 (+147.2%).
- » More than 50 per cent of all TTC bus routes are equipped with bike racks. All routes will have bike racks by 2012.



Brought to you by the Toronto Cyclist Union  [www.bikeunion.to](http://www.bikeunion.to)

Compilation: Andrea Garcia  
Editing assistance: Jane Story  
Design: Fei-Ling Tseng

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