# Bike Lanes, On-Street Parking and Business

## Year 2 Report: A Study of Bloor Street in Toronto's Bloor West Village

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Clean Air Partnership (CAP) is a registered charity that works in partnership to promote and coordinate actions to improve local air quality and reduce greenhouse gases for healthy communities. Our applied research on municipal policies strives to broaden and improve access to public policy debate on air pollution and climate change issues. Our social marketing programs focus on energy conservation activities that motivate individuals, government, schools, utilities, businesses and communities to take action to clean the air.

# Foreword

By Eva Ligeti

Executive Director, Clean Air Partnership

It is with great pleasure that Clean Air Partnership presents the findings of our second study of Bike Lanes, On-Street Parking and Business.

Common public perception is that on-street parking is vital to business along Toronto's major arterials such as the Bloor-Danforth corridor, and that bike lanes and other infrastructure for active transportation will hurt commercial activity if introduced at the expense of parking. This perception is not born out by the two research studies we have conducted to date. Nevertheless it is often used as a justification for choosing not to make the changes to our streets that could provide greater space, comfort and increased safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

Our research demonstrates that bike lanes and other infrastructure for active transportation is a benefit to local commerce and support for active transportation infrastructure is high among both merchants and city residents.

As the City of Toronto moves forward with the implementation of its Bike Plan and Walking Strategy, and as communities work towards more complete streets that balance the needs of all roads users, we hope that this research sheds much needed light on perceptions and misconceptions about the contributions of bike lanes, pedestrians and on-street parking to the vitality of neighbourhoods along major arterial streets.

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# Executive Summary

The reallocation of street use from on-street parking to active transportation infrastructure such as widened sidewalks or bike lanes has become a controversial issue in many cities over the past several decades. Opposition to such changes is often based on the assumption that on-street parking is vital to business and that removing on-street parking will decrease customer numbers and therefore commercial activity. However, cities are becoming increasingly interested in providing space for active transportation, citing the health, safety and environmental benefits as primary catalysts.

Bike Lanes, On-Street Parking and Business was conceived as a research study to investigate the attitudes of merchants to the reallocation of street use from on-street parking to active transportation infrastructure, to test assumptions about modal share and economic activity, and to gauge merchants' and residents' preferences for changes in street use allocation.

This report presents the findings of surveys of 96 merchants and 510 visitors in Bloor West Village. Among the findings:

- 4 out of 5 people surveyed do not usually drive to the area
- Merchants overestimated the percentage of people who drive to Bloor West Village and yet more than half of merchants surveyed believed that reducing on-street parking by 50% and adding a bike lane or widening sidewalks would either increase or have no impact on their daily number of customers
- People who arrive by transit, foot, and 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 (58%) preferred to see street use reallocated for widened sidewalks or a bike lane, even if on-street parking were reduced by 50%

In this neighbourhood, 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. The large percentage of visitors arriving by transit, bicycle or foot, combined with their spending habits and preference for widened sidewalks or a bike lane, suggests that changes in the use of street space may not necessarily have a negative impact on commercial activity. Both results contrast the common perception that removing on-street parking is "bad for business".

This study was conducted as a follow up to similar research conducted in the summer of 2008 in the Bloor Annex neighbourhood in Toronto. Overall support for changes in street use allocation was greater in the Bloor Annex neighbourhood than Bloor West Village. However in both neighbourhoods, the majority of merchants believed that changes to accommodate an increase in pedestrian or cyclist infrastructure would increase or would not change their daily number of customers.

In both neighbourhoods, walking is the dominant mode of travel (46% of the visitors surveyed in both study areas). Bicycling is more common in the Annex, and driving is more common in Bloor West Village. In terms of preferences in street use allocation changes, bike lanes are preferred over widened sidewalks in both neighbourhoods. In Bloor West Village, the preference of change to no change is almost equal, whereas in the Bloor Annex neighbourhood, surveyed visitors preferred change by a ratio of nearly 4 to1.

# 1. Introduction

Main streets in urban areas serve many different functions, and deciding on the best way to allocate space is a complex balancing act. Toronto's Bloor-Danforth corridor (Bloor Street and Danforth Avenue) is no exception. The Bloor-Danforth corridor is an east-west transportation artery stretching more than 20 kilometres that provides city residents and visitors with access to diverse neighbourhoods which are characterized by numerous businesses, schools and cultural institutions.

One of the current allocations of street space along the Bloor-Danforth corridor, and on most major arterials in downtown Toronto, is for on-street parking. While many merchants and city residents believe that on-street parking in commercial districts is vital to the economic success of business, there is a growing body of research to suggest that the importance of and desire for on-street parking has been overestimated. Moreover, removing sections of on-street parking would increase the amount of space available for active transportation infrastructure such as bike lanes and widened sidewalks.

The City of Toronto's Bike Plan (City of Toronto, 2001) and Walking Strategy (City of Toronto, 2009) are policy documents built upon the principle that encouraging residents to cycle and walk more often will contribute significantly to achieving Toronto's public health and greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and will improve the liveability of the City. "Achieving the vision will involve some difficult trade-offs, but will also yield significant environmental, economic, social equity and health benefits to individuals and to the City as a whole." (City of Toronto, 2001, 1-2).

An increase in the amount of space allocated for other forms of active transportation may also lead to increased comfort and safety for cyclists and pedestrians. According to the Toronto Bicycle/Motor-Vehicle Collision Study (2003), the most frequently reported type of bicycle/motor-vehicle collision in central Toronto involves a motorist opening a vehicle door into the path of a passing cyclist. Almost all cases of "dooring" occur on arterial roads in central Toronto that have high-turnover curb-side parking. The resulting injuries sustained are often more severe than other bicycle/motor vehicle collisions (City of Toronto, 2003)

The reallocation of street space to accommodate a bike lane and to increase the safety of cyclists may require the removal of some on-street parking. To date, many proposals to introduce a bike lane on major arterials such as College/Carlton Street and Annette Street, have met with opposition, sometimes by merchants who fear the loss of on-street parking spaces to a bike lane.

At the time of writing, the City of Toronto is proceeding with the implementation of the Bike Plan, and has issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a Bloor Street/Danforth Avenue Class Environmental Assessment Study for "the establishment of a new bikeway on Bloor Street and Danforth Avenue from Resurrection Road (west of Islington Avenue) to Kingston Road". It is timely, therefore, to conduct an investigation into the perceived importance of on-street parking to business and the preferences of both merchants and visitors for alternative street use allocations along major transportation corridors where bike lanes and other active transportation infrastructure are being considered.

In the summer of 2008, Clean Air Partnership conducted an assessment of the modal share and consumer behaviour of patrons, and the perceived importance and preferences for on-street parking in the Bloor Annex neighbourhood, a neighbourhood along the Bloor-Danforth corridor where the introduction of a bike lane would require the removal of sections of on-street parking on Bloor Street. The research revealed some surprising results: only 10% of patrons drive to the Bloor Annex neighbourhood; patrons arriving by foot and bicycle visited the most often and spent the most money per month; and 75% of merchants surveyed thought that a bike lane or widened sidewalk would improve or have no effect on business (Clean Air Partnership, 2009).

In the summer of 2009, Clean Air Partnership repeated the study, this time in Bloor West Village, another neighbourhood along the Bloor-Danforth corridor, about 6.5 kilometres west of Toronto's downtown core. In this case study, on-street parking on Bloor Street is provided in parking bays on the south side, and in a travel/parking lane on the north side. The width of Bloor Street in this area is sufficient to accommodate a bike lane without the removal of on-street parking, however travel lanes would be impacted. This second study continues to test the common assumption that merchants are opposed to changes in street use allocation that remove on-street parking because they perceive doing so will negatively impact their business. This study also contributes to understanding the travel patterns and street use preferences of merchants, visitors and residents along this important transportation corridor.

## 1.1 Study Purpose

The purpose of this study was two-fold: first to determine the current assumptions of merchants in Bloor West Village about the travel modes of their customers, and their perceptions of how changes in street use allocation might impact their business; and second, to determine the actual modal share and consumer behaviour of visitors and residents in Bloor West Village, and their preferences for changes in street use allocation such as widened sidewalks or a bike lane.

## 1.2 Study Description

This study was initiated as a follow-up to a 2008 research study in Toronto's Bloor Annex neighbourhood, which produced the report *Bike Lanes, On-Street Parking and Business: A Study of Bloor Street in Toronto's Annex Neighbourhood* (Clean Air Partnership, 2009). Data collection for this follow-up study involved two surveys, one for merchants and one for visitors. The survey design and administration followed a similar procedure as that used in the Bloor Annex neighbourhood study, which drew on 2006 research documenting the importance of various modes of transportation on Prince Street in New York City (Transportation Alternatives & Schaller Consulting, 2006).

The surveys were designed to collect data about:

a) the assumptions of Bloor West Village merchants about the modes of transportation used by their customers, and about the potential impact of changes in street use allocation to accommodate active transportation on their daily number of customers; and

b) the modes of travel that visitors in Bloor West Village usually use to access the area, their consumer behaviour in the neighbourhood, and their preferences for different types of street use allocations on Bloor Street in the area.

Additional data about merchants' business types and visitors' postal codes were also collected. On-street parking capacity and private parking capacity in Bloor West Village were estimated during a site visit in February 2010, and municipal pay-parking lot capacity data were retrieved from the Toronto Parking Authority's website.

## 1.3 Study Area: Bloor West Village

Clean Air Partnership's initial proposal to Transport Canada in 2007 recommended a two-part research study in one location, Bloor Street West in the Bloor Annex neighbourhood. The proposal was a before-and-after study design. Data collection in the first year would be similar to that outlined above. Assuming that the City would install a bike lane on Bloor St. in the interim, data collection in the second year would measure the differences in transportation modal share and would test perceptions about the impacts on business activity after the intervention. However, at the time of the second study, the City of Toronto had not yet installed a bike lane on Bloor Street, and therefore the impacts on businesses of a new bike lane could not be studied.

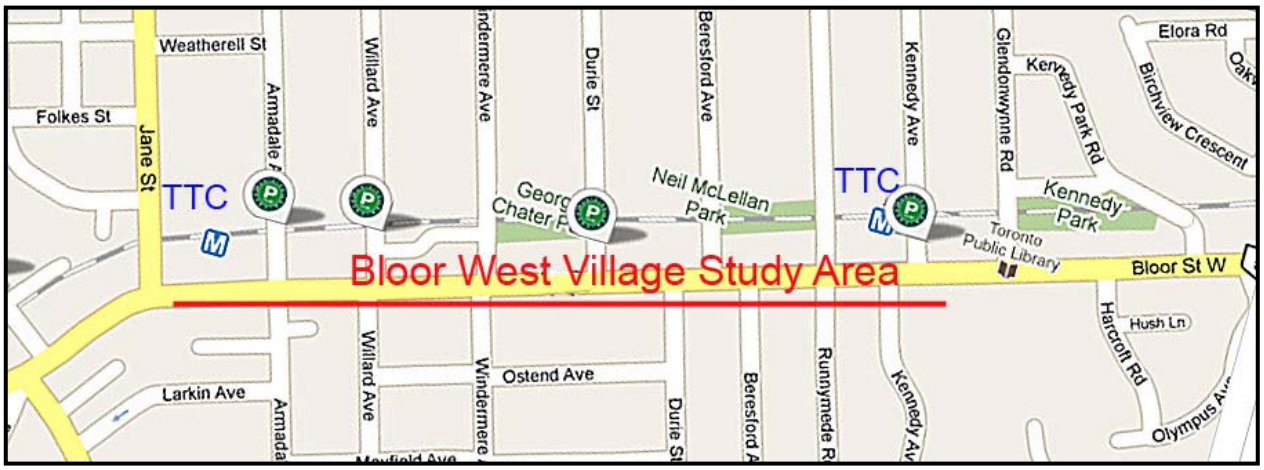
Consequently, Clean Air Partnership decided to replicate the first study in a new study area. The study team looked for a location with a comparable level of commercial activity to the Bloor Annex neighbourhood, similar on-street and off-street parking capacity, access to public transit, and pedestrian and cycling activity. This proved to be quite difficult as no single location stood out as ideal. Following deliberations among

advisory committee members and Clean Air Partnership staff, the Bloor West Village was selected as for the second study. The replication of the study enabled the testing of the prevalence and validity of the assumption that removing on-street parking is, or is perceived as, "bad for business" in a different context along a proposed route for a continuous bike lane.

The Bloor West Village study area was defined as the section of Bloor Street between Kennedy Avenue and Jane Street (Figure 1). This area is located in Toronto's Ward 13 (Parkdale-High Park), and straddles the High Park-Swansea and Runnymede-Bloor West Village neighbourhoods. The average household in Ward 13 is composed of 1-2 persons, with an average income of $97,091 (City of Toronto, 2006a). The travel habits reported by Ward residents involve a smaller percentage of work trips made by car than by Toronto residents as a whole (55% versus 62%), and greater percentage of work trips are made by public transit (38% versus 30%). However, Ward residents make the same percentage of non-work trips by car (71%) as the average Torontonian (City of Toronto, 2006a).

Described by the local Business Improvement Association as "A Small Village in a Big City", Bloor West Village is a diverse neighbourhood with Central and Eastern European immigrant roots. The street-level businesses are a mix of retail stores, services and restaurants.

**Figure 1: Bloor West Village Study area, Green P Municipal Parking Lots and TTC Subway Stations, modified from Google Maps**




The typical layout of Bloor Street in the study area is illustrated in Figure 2; from north to south it is composed of a sidewalk fronting the buildings, a westbound travel/parking lane, a westbound travel lane, an eastbound travel lane, an eastbound travel/parking lane, a parking bay (in some sections), and a sidewalk fronting the buildings. The typical street width (including the parking bays on the south side) is 16.5 metres.

**Figure 2: Typical Bloor West Village Streets Layout, from Google Maps**

The study area is located on Toronto's main east-west subway line. The Jane and Runnymede subway stations, and seven bus routes provide public transit access to the study area. According to a survey conducted by the City of Toronto Traffic Data Centre & Safety Bureau, prior to this study, the total 8-hour pedestrian volume entering and exiting the study area at the intersection of Bloor Street and Jane Street on Thursday June 25, 2009, was 3482 pedestrians.

Cycling infrastructure in the area surrounding the study area consists of a north-south bike lane on Runnymede Road north of Bloor, and shared roadway on Runnymede Road and Kennedy Avenue (Bikeway number 19) south of Bloor. There is currently no bike lane on Bloor Street in the study area. However, ring and post bicycle stands are installed along both the north and south sides of the street.

For those who drive to and park in the study area, Jane Street (north of Bloor Street), South Kingsway (south of Bloor Street), and Runnymede Road (north and south of Bloor Street) are the major north-south roads, and Bloor Street provides the major east-west access. As a major arterial road, Bloor Street is designed to carry an average daily motor vehicle traffic volume greater than 20,000 vehicles per day (City of Toronto, 2007). According to a survey conducted by the City of Toronto Traffic Data Centre & Safety Bureau, the total 8-hour vehicle volume through the intersection of Bloor Street and Jane Street on Thursday June 25, 2009, was 19,029 vehicles.

Parking infrastructure in the area consists of on-street parking in parking/travel lanes and parking bays, municipal pay-parking lots, side street parking and private parking in laneways, boulevards and private parking lots. On-street parking on the north side of Bloor Street is located in a travel/parking lane, requires payment during daytime hours, and is subject to rush hour restrictions from 4-6 pm. On-street parking on the south side of Bloor Street is located in parking bays and designated sections of the travel/parking lane, and requires payment during daytime hours. The maximum on-street parking capacity in the study area is approximately 100 spaces. Free one-hour parking between 10:00am and 10:00pm and 24-hour permit parking for neighbourhood residents is available on most of the side streets running north and south of Bloor Street. During a site visit in February 2010, researchers estimated that there are an additional 190 private parking spaces located in boulevards, alleys and adjacent to or behind buildings on Bloor Street in the study area. Researchers were unable to determine how these private parking spaces were allocated among ground floor businesses, upper floor businesses, and private residences.

Within the study area there are four municipal pay parking lots ("Green P" lots) which are managed by the Toronto Parking Authority (Figure 1), and one large private pay parking lot at the south-east corner of Jane St and Bloor St. The total capacity of the four municipal pay parking lots is 447 spaces, and the estimated capacity of the private parking lot is 50 spaces.

# 2. Methodology

## 2.1 Surveys

Data collection for this study employed two surveys administered over a ten day period, from July 20 through August 01, 2009: firstly a survey of ground level businesses along Bloor Street between Kennedy Avenue and Jane Street; and an additional survey of visitors walking on Bloor Street between Kennedy Avenue and Jane Street.

Surveyors from the University of Toronto were hired and trained to carry out the surveys. Merchant survey data collection took place Monday July 20 through Wednesday July 22, 2009. Visitor survey data collection took place Monday July 20 through Saturday August 01, 2009. The merchant and visitor surveys are included as Appendices A and B.

### 2.1.1 Merchant Survey

Surveyors approached 158 ground floor merchants located on both the north and south sides of Bloor Street between Kennedy Avenue and Jane Street during off-peak shopping/dining hours from July 20 through July 22, 2009. The surveyors were instructed to interview only the business owner or manager, and if neither were available, to inquire about an appropriate time to return. Surveyors made up to 2 visits to each business.

In total, 96 of the 158 ground floor merchants (60%) completed the survey. Of those who did not complete the survey, 30 refused and 32 were unavailable. Those who did not complete the survey included businesses that were closed during off-peak hours, closed for vacation, owners or managers who were unavailable or on vacation, owners or managers who were too busy, or who had English language barriers. The majority of completed surveys (85 of 96) were conducted on Monday July 20 and Tuesday July 21, 2009.

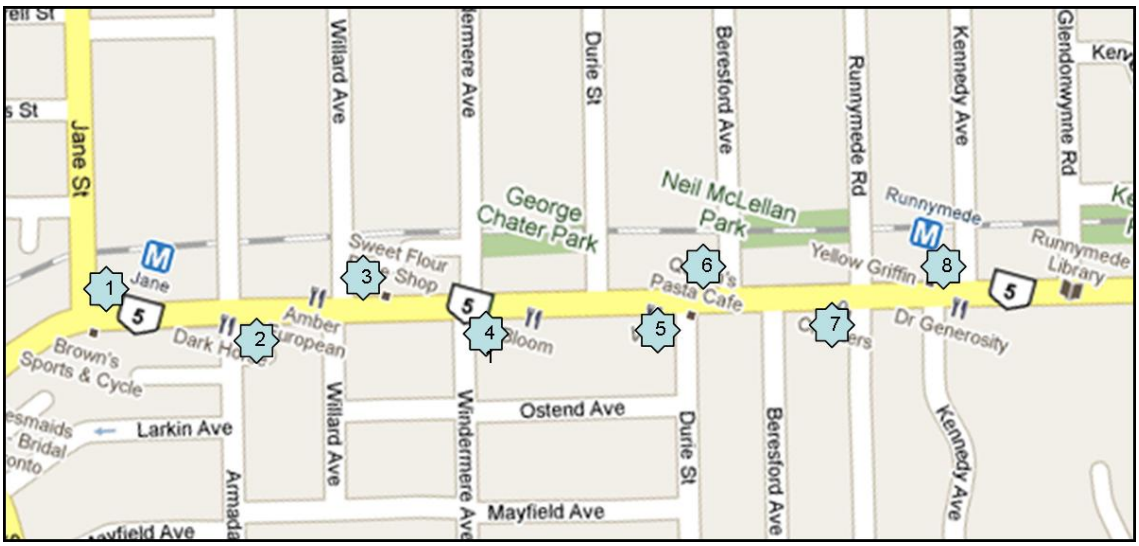
### 2.1.2 Visitor Survey

The visitor survey targeted people walking along Bloor Street between Kennedy Avenue and Jane Street (Figure 1) between the hours of 10:00am and 8:00pm, from July 20 through August 01, 2009. Eight locations were selected throughout the study location at which to intercept visitors (Figure 3). Surveyors were assigned one side (north or south) of Bloor Street and were instructed to rotate hourly among the 4 locations on that side. Some effort was made by the surveyors to approach a balance of different genders and ages. In total, 510 visitors were surveyed over the 10 day period.

Visitor surveys were conducted on eight weekdays and two Saturdays. Between 24 and 56 responses were completed on weekdays, with the exception of Thursday July 30 when 124 visitors completed the survey. On Saturday July 25, 2009, 45 visitors completed the survey, and 60 respondents completed the survey on Saturday August 1.

The distribution of the completed visitor surveys amongst the interception locations was relatively even, with no less than 8% (43) and no more than 16.5% (85) of the total number of responses gathered at each of the eight locations.

**Figure 3: Bloor West Village Visitor Survey Intercept Locations, modified from Google Maps**




## 2.2 Study Limitations

There were a few limitations to the data collection in this study. First, the study was conducted over a period of ten days in July, one of the most popular months for walking and cycling. While merchants and visitors were asked to estimate average or typical behaviour, there are potential seasonal variations in travel and consumer behaviour that may not have been captured in this study. Second, because visitors to the Bloor West Village were intercepted at street corners, visitors who drove and were able to park immediately in front of or behind their intended destination may not have been captured by the survey. This may lend a slight bias of the visitor survey towards visitors who did not drive. Third, unlike the Bloor Annex neighbourhood study, this study does not include an analysis of the use of on-street or municipal pay parking lots during the study period. Therefore, conclusions about the capacity of side street and pay parking lots to accommodate the demand for parking in the case of the removal of on-street parking were not made.

This study followed the protocol set forth in its predecessor study *Bike Lanes, On-Street Parking and Business*. One recommended improvement for future studies of this kind is to ensure that questions asked of merchants and visitors collect data that is more easily compared. For example, visitors should be asked to indicate not only their preference in street use allocation, but also how a reallocation would change their frequency of visits and the amount of money spent in the area.

# 3. Findings

## 3.1 Businesses in Bloor West Village

### 3.1.1 Business Types and Response Rate

Of the 158 businesses approached more than half were retail stores (91 of 158 or 58%), 24 (15%) were restaurant/bars, 27 (17%) were services, 10 (6%) were a combination of store and service, and 6 (4%) were a combination of restaurant and store (Table 1).

The distribution of completed merchant surveys (96) amongst the types of businesses reflects this composition; 62 (66%) of the completed surveys were from retail stores, 10 (10%) were from restaurants/bars, 11 (11%) were from services, 8 a combination of store and service, and 5 a combination of restaurant and store (Table 1).

**Table 1: Response Rate by Merchant Type**

| Merchant Type | Total Number Approached | Total Survey Response | Response Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Store** | 91 | 62 | 68% |
| **Restaurant** | 24 | 10 | 42% |
| **Service** | 27 | 11 | 40% |
| **Store/Service** | 10 | 8 | 80% |
| **Store/Restaurant** | 6 | 5 | 83% |
| **Total** | **158** | **96** | **100%** |

### 3.1.2 Number of Weekday and Weekend Customers

Merchants were asked to estimate how many customers they served on weekdays and on weekend days. Almost 70% (64 of 93) of merchants reported that they served less than 100 customers on a weekday; just over 30% (29 of 93) reported that they served more than 100 on a weekday. Three merchants did not estimate weekday customer numbers (Table 2).

On the weekends, the number of customers served by each merchant generally increased and nearly 50% (41 of 91) of merchants reported that they served more than 100 customers on a weekend day. Five merchants did not estimate weekend customer numbers.

| Table 2: Number of Customers Served, by Weekday and Weekend | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Number of Merchants** | |
| **Number of Customers** | **Weekday** | **Weekend** |
| **<25** | 17 | 14 |
| **25-49** | 25 | 14 |
| **50-99** | 22 | 20 |
| **100-199** | 11 | 18 |
| **>200** | 18 | 25 |
| **Total** | **93** | **91** |

## 3.2 Merchant Perceptions of Customer Travel Behaviour

Merchants were asked to estimate the percentage of their customers that drive to, and park in, the Bloor West Village area. Nine merchants did not estimate their customers' travel behaviour.

According to the survey data, 69% of merchants (60 of 87) believe that 20% or more of their customers drive to and park in Bloor West Village and 31% of merchants (27 of 87) believe that 20% or less of their customers drive to and park in the Bloor West Village (Table 3).

| Table 3: Merchant Estimates of % of Customers Who Drive to Bloor West Village | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Percentage of customers that drive to and park in Bloor West Village** | **Frequency** | **Percent share of response** |
| 0-20 | 27 | 31% |
| 21-50 | 38 | 44% |
| 51-75 | 11 | 13% |
| 76-100 | 11 | 13% |
| **Total** | **87** | **100%** |

## 3.3 Merchant Perceptions of the Impacts of Street Use Allocation Changes

Merchants were asked to project the impact of changes in the street use allocation, including the removal of half of the on-street parking, on their daily number of customers. In the Bloor West Village, the removal of on-street parking is not necessary in order to accommodate either a bike lane or widened sidewalks, making the framing of this question a 'worst-case' scenario consistent with the Bloor Annex neighbourhood study.

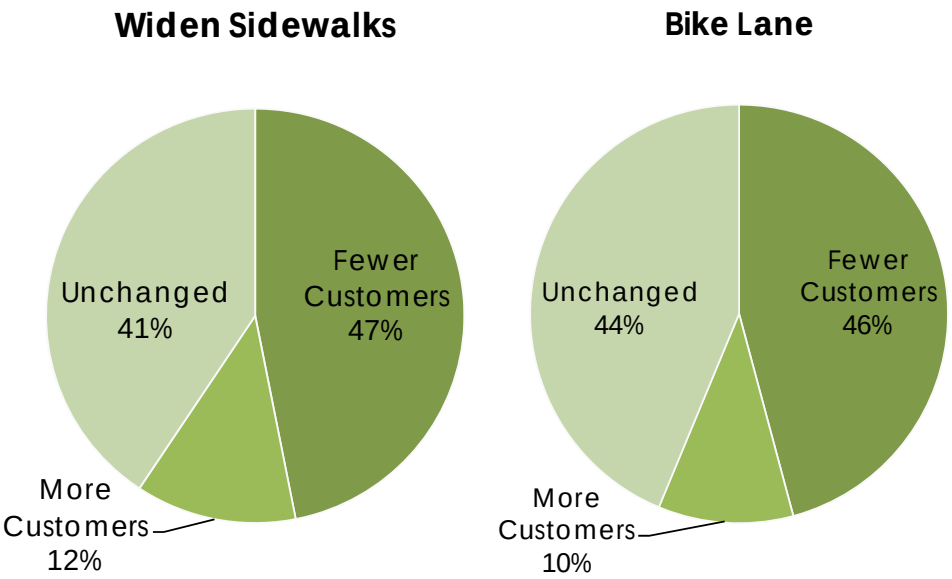
Merchants were also asked about the possible impact of including a bike lane on Bloor Street and reducing the on-street parking to half the current number of spaces. Of the merchants who completed the survey, 44% (42 of 96) believed there would be no impact on their daily number of customers, 10% (10 of 96) believed that they would see an increase in the daily number of customers, and 46% (44 of 96) believed they would experience a reduction in the daily number of customers. Therefore, more than half of merchants surveyed (54%) believed they would experience no change or an increase in their daily number of customers if a bike lane were added to Bloor Street in Bloor West Village (Figure 4).

Merchants were asked about the possible impact of widening the sidewalks and reducing the on-street parking to half the current number of spaces. Of the 96 merchants who completed the survey, 41% (39 of 96) believed that there would be no impact on their daily number of customers, 13% (12 of 96) believed that they would see an increase in the daily number of customers and 47% (45 of 96) believed they would experience a reduction in the daily number of customers. Therefore, more than half of merchants surveyed, 54% (51 of 96), believed they would experience no change or an increase in their daily number of customers if sidewalks were widened on Bloor Street in Bloor West Village (Figure 4).

## 3.4 Visitors in Bloor West Village

Between July 20 and August 1, 2009, 510 visitors in Bloor West Village completed the visitor survey. Visitors were asked to specifically identify where they lived, by postal code or major intersection. If respondents asked how the Bloor West Village was defined, the surveyors were instructed to describe it as Bloor Street between Kennedy and Jane Street. Of those surveyed, 358 (70%) reported that they lived or worked in the Bloor West Village area, and 152 (30%) reported that they did not live in the Bloor West Village area.

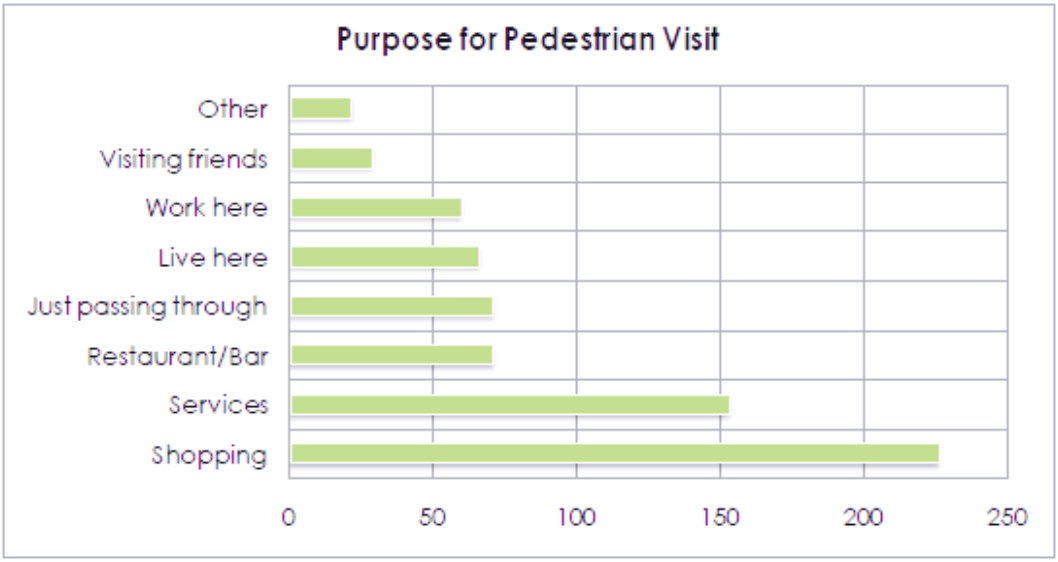
**Figure 4: Merchants' Perception of the Impact on Business of Reduced Parking on Daily Number of Customers**




## 3.5 Visitor Consumption and Travel Behaviour

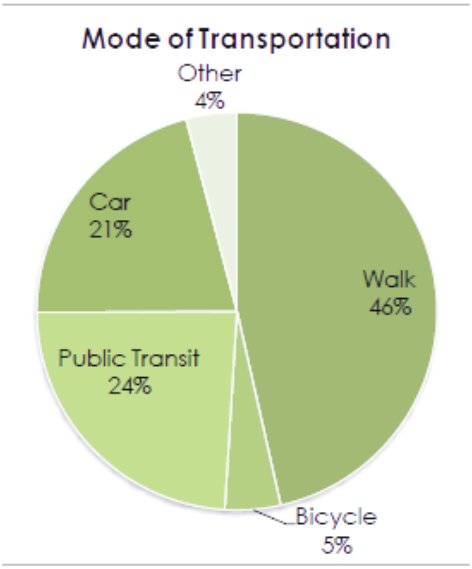
Visitors were asked the purpose(s) of their visit to Bloor West Village. The most common purpose of visit was shopping (226 responses), followed by services (153 responses), restaurants (71 responses), and 'just passing through' (71 responses) (Figure 5). In total, 88% of survey respondents (450 of 510) were in the Bloor West Village to purchase goods or services.

**Figure 5. Visitor Survey Respondents' Purpose of Visit to Bloor West Village**



Visitors were asked to generalize about their travel and consumption habits in Bloor West Village, and were then asked how they usually get to Bloor West Village. For the most part, the visitors surveyed do not usually drive to Bloor West Village; 46% (237 of 510) reported that they usually walk, 24% (122 of 510) take public transit, and 5% cycle (23 of 510). Only 21% (107 of 510) reported that their usual mode of transportation to Bloor West Village was by car (Figure 6).

**Figure 6. Transportation Mode Share of Visitor Survey Respondents in Bloor West Village**




Visitors were asked to estimate how many days in a typical month they visited Bloor West Village. Overall, 69% (350 of 510) of visitors surveyed reported visiting Bloor West Village more than once per week; 31% (160 of 510) visited up to once per week. In a typical month, 30% of visitors surveyed visited Bloor West Village daily (Table 4). A chi-square analysis was performed, revealing that visitors who usually do not drive to Bloor West Village are significantly more likely to visit the area 3 times or more per week than those who usually drive ($p<0.000$).

**Table 4: Frequency of Visits to Bloor West Village**

| Visits per month | Usually Drive | Usually Do Not Drive | Total Number of Responses |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Up to once per week** | 57 | 103 | 160 |
| **2-3 times per week** | 28 | 67 | 95 |
| **3-5 times per week** | 16 | 87 | 103 |
| **Daily** | 6 | 146 | 152 |

Visitors were asked how they usually get to Bloor West Village. Overall, the most common mode of transportation for visitors who responded to the survey was walking (47%), followed by public transit (24%), and by car (21%) (Table 5).

| Table 5: Typical Travel Mode to Bloor West Village | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Travel Mode** | **Frequency** | **Percentage of Responses** |
| **Walk** | 237 | 47% |
| **Bicycle** | 23 | 4% |
| **Public Transit** | 122 | 24% |
| **Car** | 107 | 21% |
| **Other** | 21 | 4% |
| **Total** | **510** | **100%** |

Visitors were asked to estimate how much money they spent in Bloor West Village in a typical month. Two respondents did not answer the question. The majority of survey respondents (296 of 508 or 58%) estimated that they spend over $100 per month, and 42% (221 of 508) estimated that they spend less than $100 per month (Table 6).

| Table 6: Estimated Monthly Spending in Bloor West Village | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Estimated Monthly Spending** | **Frequency** | **Percentage of Responses** |
| **Less than $25** | 82 | 16% |
| **$26-99** | 130 | 26% |
| **$100-499** | 244 | 48% |
| **More than $500** | 52 | 10% |
| **Total** | **508** | **100%** |

The travel mode survey data were combined into 2 categories: visitors who drive and therefore are likely to require parking, and those who do not drive to Bloor West Village. The estimated monthly spending data were also combined into two categories: less than $100 per month and more than $100 per month (Table 7). A chi-square analysis was performed, revealing that visitors who usually do not drive to Bloor West Village are significantly more likely to spend more than $100 in a month than those who usually drive ($p<0.000$).

| Table 7: Monthly Spending by Travel Mode | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Estimated Monthly Spending** | **Usually Drive** | **Usually Do Not Drive** |
| **Less than $100** | 66 | 40 |
| **More than $100** | 146 | 256 |

## 3.6 Visitor Preferences for Street Use Allocation Changes

Visitors were asked to indicate which, if any, changes in street use allocation on Bloor Street they would prefer in Bloor West Village. Visitors were given the choice of widened sidewalks on Bloor Street, a bike lane on Bloor Street, or no change. In order to be consistent with the Bloor Annex neighbourhood study, visitors were informed that either change would require the removal of half of the on-street parking. However, it should be noted that the Bloor West Village section of Bloor Street would be able to accommodate either widened sidewalks or a bike lane, without the removal of any on-street parking, although peak hour traffic lanes would be impacted.

Overall, given the choice between no change and an expansion of pedestrian or cyclist infrastructure (with reduced parking), 58% of survey respondents (293 of 509) preferred changes to be made. Of the 509 visitors who answered the question, 15% (75 of 509) preferred widened sidewalks, 43% (218 of 509) preferred a bike lane, and 42% (216) preferred no change (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Visitor Survey Respondents Preferences in Changes to Street Use Allocation**

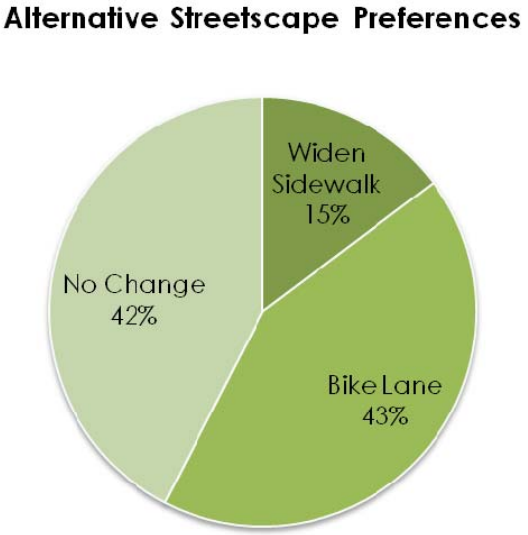


Table 8 presents visitors' preferences for change according to usual travel mode. Of those visitors who reported walking to Bloor West Village, 15% indicated that they would prefer widened sidewalks, 43% would prefer a bike lane, and 42% would prefer no change. Of those who bicycle, 91% indicated that they would prefer a bike lane and only 2 reported that they would prefer no change.

Of those who reported taking public transit, 16% indicated they would prefer wider sidewalks, 43% would prefer a bike lane and 41% would prefer no change.

Of those who reported that they usually drive to Bloor West Village, nearly half (48%) stated that they would prefer to see a more pedestrian- or cyclist- oriented street, in spite of the fact that they were told that this choice would remove half of the on-street parking.

**Table 8: Travel Mode by Preferences in Changes to Street Use Allocation**

| | Widen Sidewalks | New Bike Lane | No Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Walk** | 35 | 102 | 99 |
| **Bicycle** | 0 | 21 | 2 |
| **Public Transit** | 20 | 52 | 50 |
| **Car** | 15 | 36 | 56 |
| **Other** | 5 | 7 | 9 |
| **Total** | **75** | **218** | **216** |

The travel mode survey data were combined into 2 categories: visitors who drive and therefore are likely to require parking, and those who do not drive. The street use allocation preference data were also combined into two categories: widen sidewalk or new bike lane, and no change (Table 9). A chi-square analysis was performed, revealing that visitors who usually do not drive to Bloor West Village are significantly more likely to prefer widened sidewalks or a new bike lane than those who usually drive ($p=0.02$).

**Table 9: Preference in Change to Street Use Allocation by Travel Mode**

| Preference in Changes to Street Use Allocation | Usually Drive | Usually Do Not Drive |
|---|---|---|
| **Widen sidewalks or new bike lane** | 51 | 242 |
| **No change** | 56 | 160 |

The estimated monthly spending data of the travel mode groups was compared with the preferences for street use allocation changes (Table 10). A chi-square analysis was performed, revealing that visitors who usually spend more than $100 per month in the Bloor West Village are significantly more likely to prefer widened sidewalks or a new bike lane than those who usually drive (p=0.037).

**Table 10: Preference in Change to Street Use Allocation by Estimated Monthly Spending**

| Preference in Changes to Street Use Allocation | Less than $100 per month | More than $100 per month |
|---|---|---|
| **Widen sidewalks or add bike lane** | 110 | 183 |
| **No change** | 101 | 115 |

# 4. Discussion

## 4.1 Merchant Perceptions versus Reported Travel Modes of Visitors

One of the interesting findings of this study is the difference between merchant perceptions of their customer travel modes and the travel modes reported by visitors in the neighbourhood. According to the visitor survey data, nearly 80% of visitors to Bloor West Village do not usually drive to Bloor West Village. Only 21% of those surveyed reported that they usually drive, and yet most of the merchants believe the opposite; the majority of merchants who responded to the survey, 69%, believed that more than 20% of their customers drove to Bloor West Village.

As noted earlier, some visitors may be able to find parking immediately in front of or behind the stores or offices they are visiting, and therefore may not have been intercepted by the surveyors. However, the visitor intercepts were conducted at the intersections nearest to 3 of the 4 municipal pay parking lots in the study area with the explicit goal of including those visitors who drove to the area in the survey.

## 4.2 Merchant versus Visitor Preferences in Street Use Allocation Changes

Although merchants and visitors were not asked precisely the same questions about their preferences in street use allocation changes, some generalization based on merchants' perceptions of the impact of street use allocation changes and visitor preferences can be made.

Almost 60% of visitors preferred street use reallocation to create a more pedestrian- or cyclist- oriented street. Merchants, on the other hand, were not explicitly asked about their preferences with respect to changes in street use allocation. However, more than 50% of merchants believed that changes to the street use allocation in favour of a bike lane or widened sidewalks would result in no change or an increase in their daily number of customers. It is reasonable to infer that merchants would support changes in street use allocation that would result in an increase or no change in their daily number of customers, particularly if they were informed that the majority of their customers also supported such changes.

The majority of visitors who indicated a preference for a change in street use allocation, preferred bike lanes over widened sidewalks. Merchants, however, anticipated similar impacts from either a bike lane or widened sidewalks on their daily number of customers, indicative of no preference between the two choices.

## 4.3 Comparison with Bloor Annex Neighbourhood Study (2008)

This study was conducted as a follow up to similar research conducted in the summer of 2008 in the Bloor Annex neighbourhood in Toronto. The two study areas are notably different in terms of streetscape and characteristics of the local population. In the Bloor Annex neighbourhood, the width of Bloor Street is typically 12.2 metres, and on-street parking is provided during off-peak hours in the curb side travel lane. Reallocating street use for widened sidewalks or a bike lane in this section of Bloor Street would require the removal of some on-street parking. However, in the Bloor West Village, the width of Bloor Street is typically 16.5 metres, and on-street parking is provided during off-peak hours in the curb side travel lane on the north side, and in curb side parking bays on the south side. Widening sidewalks or adding a bike lane would not necessarily require the removal on on-street parking, although in order to maintain parking, travel lanes would be impacted.

The population characteristics of the two Wards in which the study areas are located are also different. Average household income, percentage of work and non-work trips made by automobile are higher in Ward 13 which includes Bloor West Village, and household density is lower (City of Toronto, 2006a,b)

A summary of similarities and differences of merchant and visitor survey results is presented in Tables 11 and 12.

Overall support for changes in street use allocation was greater in the Bloor Annex neighbourhood than Bloor West Village. However in both neighbourhoods, the majority of merchants believed that changes to accommodate an increase in pedestrian or cyclist infrastructure would increase or would not change their daily number of customers.

A smaller percentage of Bloor West Village merchants expected that the removal of on-street parking in order to widen sidewalks or to add a bike lane would increase their daily number of customers than in the Annex neighbourhood. This difference is not unexpected, given that 25% of Bloor West Village merchants believe that more than 50% of their customers drive to the area, as compared to only 4% of Annex merchants.

A few differences and similarities between the results of the visitor surveys conducted in the two neighbourhoods stand out (Table 12). First, in both neighbourhoods, walking is the dominant mode of travel (46% of the visitors surveyed in both study areas). Bicycling is more common in the Annex, and driving is more common in Bloor West Village.

| Table 11: Comparison of Annex and Bloor West Village Merchant Perceptions of the Impacts of Street Use Allocation Changes on Number of Customers Served (reported as percent merchant response) | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Annex** | **Bloor West Village** |
| **Number of Completed Surveys** | 61 | 96 |
| **Widen Sidewalks** | | |
| Increase Customers | 35% | 13% |
| No Change | 40% | 41% |
| Decrease Customers | 25% | 46% |
| **Bike Lane** | | |
| Increase Customers | 30% | 11% |
| No Change | 44% | 44% |
| Decrease Customers | 25% | 46% |

In terms of preferences in street use allocation changes, bike lanes are preferred over widened sidewalks in both neighbourhoods. In Bloor West Village, the preference of change to no change is almost equal, whereas in the Bloor Annex neighbourhood, surveyed visitors preferred change by a ratio of nearly 4 to1.

| Table 12: Comparison of Annex and Bloor West Village Visitor Survey Results (reported as percent response) | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Annex** | **Bloor West Village** |
| **Number of Surveys** | 538 | 510 |
| **Live or Work in Area** | | |
| Yes | 55% | 70% |
| No | 45% | 30% |
| **Mode of Travel** | | |
| Walk | 46% | 46% |
| Bicycle | 12% | 5% |
| Public Transit | 32% | 24% |
| Car | 10% | 21% |
| **Preferences in Changes to Street Use Allocation** | | |
| Widen Sidewalks | 16% | 15% |
| Bike Lane | 62% | 43% |
| No Change | 22% | 42% |

# 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study was initiated to understand the current assumptions of merchants in the Bloor West Village about the travel modes of their customers and the potential impacts of changes in street use allocation on their businesses, and to determine the actual modal share and consumer behaviour of visitors and residents of Bloor West Village, and their preferences for changes in street use allocation such as the addition of a bike lane or the widening of sidewalks.

The data presented in this report indicate that in the Bloor West Village neighbourhood there is both visitor/resident and merchant support for changes in street use allocation to support active transportation such as installing a bike lane or widening sidewalks, and that the removal of half of the on-street parking to accommodate such changes would be unlikely to negatively impact commercial activity.

The dominant mode of transportation in the Bloor West Village is walking, followed by public transit. Only 1 in 5 of visitors surveyed reported driving to the neighbourhood and parking there. The visitor survey data indicate that the majority (58%) support changes to the street use allocation. Curiously, cycling is the least frequent mode of transportation in this neighbourhood, and yet nearly 75% of those visitors who preferred a change in street use allocation would prefer the addition of a bike lane.

Visitor survey respondents who reported that they usually drive, were found to visit less frequently and spend significantly less money per month in the neighbourhood than those who did not drive. Visitors who preferred changes in street use allocation spend significantly more in the neighbourhood than those who prefer no change.

In terms of merchant perceptions of the impacts of changes in street use allocation, 54% of merchants in Bloor West Village indicated that they would expect no change or an increase in their number of daily customers as a result of either a bike lane or widened sidewalks, even if half of the on-street parking were to be removed in order to accommodate the changes.

The results of this study, combined with the results of the previous study in the Bloor Annex neighbourhood, suggest that the assumption that reducing on-street parking to accommodate active transportation is “bad for business” may not be true for at least two different neighbourhoods along the Bloor-Danforth corridor.

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## Appendix A – Merchant Survey

1. On average, about how many customers do you serve per day? (Choose one per question)

| (1) Weekday: | (2) Weekend: |
| --- | --- |
| ☐ [1] Less than 25 | [1] Less than 25 |
| ☐ [2] 25-49 | [2] 25-49 |
| ☐ [3] 50-99 | [3] 50-99 |
| ☐ [4] 100-199 | [4] 100-199 |
| ☐ [5] 200 or more | [5] 200 or more |

3. What percentage of your customers or clients would you estimate drive to the Bloor West Village area and park in the area?

[1] ____%

4. If Bloor Street had wider sidewalks and half the on-street parking was removed, would you expect to have: (choose one)

☐ [1] Fewer customers or clients daily?

☐ [2] More customers or clients daily?

☐ [3] A similar number of customers or clients daily?

5. If Bloor Street had a bike lane and half the on-street parking was removed, would you expect to have: (choose one)

[1] Fewer customers or clients daily?

[2] More customers or clients daily?

[3] A similar number of customers or clients daily?

## Appendix B – Pedestrian Survey

1. Do you live or work in the area?

- ☐ [1] Yes
- ☐ [2] No

2. In a typical month, how many days do you visit this area of Bloor Street?

_____

3. About how much money do you spend in Bloor West Village in a typical month?

- ☐ [1] Less than $25
- ☐ [2] $25-99
- ☐ [3] $100-499
- ☐ [4] $500-999
- ☐ [5] $1,000 or more

4. What is the purpose of your trip to the Bloor West Village today? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ [A] Shopping
- ☐ [B] Restaurant/Bar
- ☐ [C] Services (e.g., copy centre, medical or legal)
- ☐ [D] Visiting friends
- ☐ [E] I live here
- ☐ [F] I work here
- ☐ [G] I'm just passing through
- ☐ [H] Other _____

5. How do you usually get to the Bloor West Village? (choose one)

- ☐ [A] Walk
- ☐ [B] Bicycle
- ☐ [C] Public Transit
- ☐ [D] Taxi
- ☐ [E] Car: Where did you park? [intersection/block or Green P lot] _____
- ☐ [F] Other _____

7. If the City was considering changes to the street, which of the following would you prefer? (choose one only)

- ☐ [1] Widened sidewalks on Bloor Street even if that means less on-street parking;
- ☐ [2] A bike lane on Bloor Street even if that means less on-street parking.
- ☐ [3] No change

8. Where do you live?

- ☐ [A] Nearest intersection_____
- ☐ [B] Postal Code _____

Date: _____, 2009

Time: ___:___

Survey Location Number: _____

Interviewer: _____