

For Immediate Release

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New research finds strong support on Bloor Street to remove on-street parking for bike lanes

TORONTO – The Clean Air Partnership is pleased to announce a research report *Bike Lanes, On-Street Parking and Business Year 2 Report: A Study of Bloor Street in Toronto's Bloor West Village*. 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. This perception is not borne out by the research.

The study – conducted in July of 2009 – surveyed the opinions and preferences of 96 merchants and 510 visitors in Bloor West Village in Toronto. The research demonstrates that bike lanes are a potential benefit to local commerce and support for bike lanes and wider sidewalks is high, among both merchants and city residents. Among the study's findings:

1. 4 out of 5 people surveyed do not usually drive to the area
2. Merchants overestimated the percentage of people who drive to Bloor West Village and yet more than half 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.
3. People who arrive by transit, foot, and bike visit more often and spend more money than those who drive
4. 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.
5. The majority of people surveyed (58%) preferred to see street use reallocated for widened sidewalks or a bike lane, even if on-street parking is reduced by 50%

“As the City of Toronto moves forward with the implementation of its Bike Plan and the Walking Strategy, and communities work towards more complete streets, we hope that this research sheds light into the perceptions and misconceptions about the contributions of bike lanes, pedestrians and on-street parking to the vitality of neighbourhoods along major arterial streets. We strongly encourage and support the reallocation of street space to create a more liveable City for all”, said Eva Ligeti, Executive Director of the Clean Air Partnership.

Background: It is essential to achieve implementation of bike lanes on major streets be accelerated to facilitate Canadians to use bicycles for utilitarian trips. The Bloor-Danforth corridor is a particularly attractive option for a city-wide east-west bike lane in Toronto because it is one of the only long, straight, relatively flat routes that connects the city from end to end; there are no streetcar tracks; and it has one of the highest incidences of bicycle collisions in the city. However, the installation of bike lanes in this corridor has been politically difficult to achieve.

This study in Bloor West Village 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.

Support for this work has been provided by the Vital Toronto Fund at the Toronto Community Foundation, the Moving on Sustainable Transportation (MOST) Program at Transport Canada and the City of Toronto.

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Clean Air Partnership is a registered charity that works with partners to facilitate the exchange of ideas, and promote and coordinate the implementation of actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve local air quality for a healthy urban environment. In August 2007, Metrolinx contracted the services of CAP to prepare a report that has helped form the basis for their active transportation policies, program and infrastructure planning. The Toronto Coalition for Active Transportation, a project of CAP since 2008, is the unified voice of over 60 groups promoting an improved environment for walking and bicycling in the City of Toronto.

For more information and to download the report visit
http://www.cleanairpartnership.org/active_transportation