

### The Economic Benefits of Bike Lanes

Bike lanes bring numerous benefits to cities. This section highlights those economical benefits of bike lanes by summarizing research and case studies from other municipalities across Canada, North America and the world. Economic benefits are generally grouped into five areas:

- Health benefits
- The shift to car-lite
- People who bike are shoppers, too
- Job creation
- Property values and bike lanes

### Physical Activity and Health

Investments in bicycle lanes come with good societal and economic value, largely in part because they promote physical activity, serving as one of the more cost-effective approaches to preventative healthcare (Gu et al., 2017). For example, in Copenhagen, it is estimated that every kilometer traveled via bicycle results in a net gain of 1.20 DKK (0.25 CAD). Driving, by contrast, is associated with a loss of 0.69 DKK (0.14 CAD) per kilometer (Gosling & Choi, 2005). These savings result from lower public sector investment (e.g., bike infrastructure costs less than vehicle infrastructure) and reduced health care costs from a more active population.

Considering savings in health care alone, the economic benefits of bike lanes outweigh the costs, typically in the order of 5:1 (Cavill et al. 2009). By providing bicyclists with a continuous network of bikeways and the highest degree of travel continuity possible, studies show that people bicycle more and obesity rates are lower in countries that have better bicycle infrastructure (City of New York, 2010).

### The Shift to Car-Lite

Cars are a relatively expensive way to move around in big cities. Nationally, spending on transportation is the second highest household expense after housing. The Alberta Motor Association estimates the annual cost for operating a mid-size car, including the cost of the vehicle, fuel, maintenance, and insurance, can be \$9,500 per year. Biking provides a low-cost transportation option with an estimated annual operating cost of around \$350. Reduced spending on transportation can allow residents to direct these cost-savings elsewhere.

Many cities are progressing towards better enabling car-lite life by making neighbourhoods people-first, rather than car-first. Measures employed range from providing a more comprehensive active modes network to the introduction of car-free zones to allow the movement of people by transit, bikes and walking more easily.

In Edmonton, 11 per cent of Edmonton households don't have a car and over half (59%) of Edmonton households have at least one adult bicycle, with an average ownership rate of 1.21 adult bicycles per household (City of Edmonton, 2018). Vehicle sharing is also trending up in Edmonton, further enabling people to pursue a car-lite lifestyle (City of Edmonton, 2018).

### Boosting Retail Sales

People who bike and walk to stores tend to spend less per visit than those who arrive by car, but people biking and walking tend to visit more often, resulting in more spending over the course of a longer period (i.e., per month) (Clifton et al., 2012). Research in the United Kingdom suggests that this support for local retailers is often unnoticed as retailers tend to overestimate how many people arrive by car and also tend to overestimate how far shoppers travel to get to their store (Sustrans, 2006).

Retailers adjacent or near newly installed bike corrals report increased numbers of customers and improved visibility of the business from the street (Meisel, 2012), and often tend to seek further improvements to the public realm space adjacent to their store, such as sidewalk seating and/or tables.

### Job Creation

Research suggests constructing pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure projects tend to require more people per dollar spent than road projects (Cambridge Systematics & Toole Design, 2018). In addition, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure projects tend to have a higher share of salary expenditures than capital costs like asphalt and heavy equipment (Cambridge Systematics & Toole Design, 2018). Besides construction, jobs may also be created in the bike manufacturing, retail, and hospitality sectors.

### Increasing Property Values

A review of past research from across the U.S. about bike lanes and property values concluded that "the majority of studies indicate that the presence of a bike path/trail either increases property values and ease of sale slightly or has no effect" (Dunne, 2019). Increases in property values are not seen as a benefit by everybody as bike lanes may, unintentionally, be a tool of gentrification that contribute to housing affordability issues (Dunne, 2019).

### References

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