

CFIB Feedback on State of Bike Lanes

More informed municipal approach required

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The Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization representing the interests of 103,000 small- to medium-sized businesses in all sectors of the economy across Canada. CFIB's policy positions are grounded in the views of our members, gathered through regular surveys on a wide range of issues. On behalf of 11,000 members in Alberta, CFIB welcomes the opportunity to share concerns with the current approach to bike lanes in the province.

CFIB supports safe streets and recognizes that protected cycling infrastructure can improve mobility and safety when it is properly planned, placed and maintained. However, Alberta municipalities should pause blanket bike-lane expansion along retail and mixed-use corridors until they improve consultation with affected businesses, mitigate construction and access impacts, and demonstrate that projects are delivering measurable value for taxpayers, residents and local economies.

Bike Lane Implementation Is Creating Business Barriers

Bike lanes have become one of the most polarizing infrastructure issues in Alberta cities not because residents oppose cycling, but because projects are often implemented without sufficient regard for the streets and communities they traverse. A one-size-fits-all approach can disrupt local economies, reduce access to storefronts and alienate the businesses and residents most directly affected.

In Calgary and Edmonton, small businesses have reported significant losses when new bike lanes remove customer parking, loading space or convenient access in front of their stores. Recent CFIB data shows one-quarter of Alberta small businesses identify traffic management infrastructure, including bike lanes, as the most harmful municipal issue they face. For many small firms, curbside access is not a luxury. It is the difference between customers choosing a neighbourhood business or going elsewhere.

These impacts are compounded when bike lane installation overlaps with multi-season construction. CFIB's Hard Hats and Hard Times report found small firms across Canada endured an average of 508 days of construction-related disruption over the past five years, with construction causing a 22 per cent revenue decline and roughly \$10,000 in cleaning and repair costs.¹ When lane removals, concrete

¹ BOSTON, Emily and OULTON, Alex. Hard hats and hard times: Public construction impacts on small businesses. Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB), July 2024. [Hard hats and hard times: Public construction impacts on small businesses](#)

medians and signal changes are layered onto prolonged construction, a mom-and-pop retailer or cafe operating on thin margins cannot simply wait it out.

Affordability and Value for Money Must Be Central to Route Selection

Affordability concerns add another layer. Edmonton taxpayers are facing a nearly 7 per cent property tax increase in 2026, while Edmonton City Council previously approved \$100 million to build out the city's bike-lane network. Municipalities asking businesses to absorb higher taxes, rising operating costs and reduced curbside access should demonstrate that every transportation dollar delivers measurable value.

Winter maintenance obligations further underscore why route selection must be value-driven in Alberta cities. Edmonton devotes nearly 45 per cent of its \$67-million snow and ice budget to clearing bike lanes, multi-use paths, bus stops, stairs and pedestrian spaces.² The standard to clear priority bike lanes to bare pavement within 24 hours may be appropriate for safety, but premium winter maintenance in corridors with minimal winter use requires clear evidence that benefits justify costs.

Current Expansion Plans Lack Clear Measurement and Course Correction

Bike lanes are not inherently bad. Protected infrastructure for cyclists can improve safety and mobility when placed where it is needed most. The concern is that some municipalities pursue aggressive expansion, including parallel or intersecting lanes across dense downtown grids, without clear ridership targets, public reporting or review commitments.

Calgary's 15th Avenue SW bike lane illustrates the concern. It runs west-east just one block south of an existing east-west lane and is flanked by dual-direction cycling facilities on both 12th Avenue SW and 11th Street SW. According to City data referenced in the original op-ed, the 11th Street SW lane sees an average of 128 cyclists on weekdays³. More broadly, only 2 per cent of downtown trips in Calgary in 2024 were made by bike, half the target set in the City's 2020 cycling strategy.^{4 5} Edmonton's downtown bike lane data shows similarly low usage and unclear goals.⁶

If current investments are not boosting ridership and are harming businesses, cities need to ask whether their strategies are meeting their objectives. Municipalities should regularly publish ridership data, seasonal use, safety outcomes, construction impacts, public opinion and business health indicators, with explicit triggers for course correction when results fall short. One of Calgary's Cycling Strategy goals is to increase satisfaction with cycling. Unfortunately, we don't know if the current approach is boosting ridership because the City stopped publishing its annual Bicycle Program Yearbook in 2013 and hasn't posted a cycling strategy update since 2018.⁷

²Swensrude, S. Why it costs so much more to clear snow from sidewalks, bike lanes than roads. Taproot Edmonton. August 29, 2025.

³ City of Calgary bike counter: Retrieved November 2025. [City of Calgary](#)

⁴ City of Calgary, Central Business District Cordon Count, 2023. [Central Business District Cordon Count 2023 | Open Calgary](#)

⁵ City of Calgary, Cycling Strategy, 2020. <https://www.calgary.ca/planning/transportation/cycling-strategy.html>

⁶ City of Edmonton, Tableau Public Eco Counter. https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/city.of.edmonton/viz/EcoCounter-CyclistPedestrians_15833346762900/EcoCounters

⁷ City of Calgary, Cycling Strategy. [Cycling strategy](#)

Consultation With Small Businesses Must Be Meaningful

Consultation with merchants on bike lane projects is often superficial. Online surveys and virtual sessions attended by only a handful of businesses do not constitute meaningful engagement. Calgary's engagement process for the 15th Avenue SW bike lane, for example, reportedly included virtual sessions attended by only two businesses.⁸ That is not enough for projects that can permanently reconfigure parking, loading, delivery routes and customer access.

Transit projects reveal the same pattern. In Edmonton's Chinatown, the City proceeded with a transit lane that removed all parking on 101st Street NW despite strong opposition from area businesses. The City has since rectified this issue temporarily following repeated advocacy and strong opposition from the local business community.⁹ If cities want durable public support, they need to meet business owners where they are: on the street, in their shops and at times that work for them.

Recommendations

1. Pause blanket bike-lane expansion along retail corridors until project governance is fixed.

Municipalities should not expand networks simply to meet kilometer targets. New projects should proceed only where there is a clear safety need, demonstrated demand, credible mitigation for affected businesses and a plan to preserve access.

2. Require business access audits before final design approval.

Every project that changes parking, loading, traffic flow, deliveries or construction staging should include a curbside access audit, door-to-door outreach, and a public explanation of how customer access and commercial loading will be maintained.

3. Provide construction relief and mitigation for affected businesses.

Municipalities should provide tangible support for businesses affected by prolonged construction and permanent access changes, including signage, alternative parking, loading plans, marketing support, fee relief and compensation or grant programs where disruption is severe.

Calgary's new Business-friendly Construction Policy is a good example of the City acknowledging the impact of public construction, and seeking to rectify it.¹⁰ However, financial mitigation through property tax relief or grants should be added to the City's toolkit.

⁸ City of Calgary, 1415 Ave Phase 2 What We Heard Report. https://hdp-ca-prod-app-cgy-engage-files.s3.ca-central-1.amazonaws.com/5016/1835/2809/What_We_Heard_-_1415_Ave_Phase_2_-_FINAL3.pdf

⁹ Bowling, Eric, Council restores street parking on 101 Street in Chinatown. Edmonton Journal. <https://ca.news.yahoo.com/council-restores-street-parking-101-195912937.html>

¹⁰ City of Calgary. Business-friendly Construction Policy. [Business Friendly Construction Policy | Engage](#)

4. Set clear, measurable ridership, safety and economic targets.

Bike lane projects should include transparent targets for ridership, winter use, safety outcomes, public satisfaction and business impacts. Targets should be published before construction and reviewed after opening.

5. Commit to public monitoring and course correction.

Cities should publish annual cycling infrastructure updates, including corridor-level ridership, modal-share progress, maintenance costs and business feedback. Where targets are not met or business impacts are significant, municipalities should modify designs, restore access or reconsider routes.

6. Adopt a small business lens for transportation infrastructure.

Municipalities should evaluate infrastructure projects through the realities of small firms that lack the margins, staff and flexibility of larger organizations. Parking, delivery access, customer convenience and construction duration should be treated as core design criteria, not afterthoughts.

Conclusion

Cities do not need an endless tug-of-war between cyclists and shopkeepers. They need a plan for coexistence. Bike lanes can deliver safety and sustainability, but only if they are paired with policies that keep storefronts accessible and main streets vibrant.

Municipalities must listen to affected businesses and build infrastructure that works for everyone. A business-first approach would maintain parking and loading where needed, integrate construction relief, measure success by both ridership and retail health, and adjust projects when evidence shows they are not working. If the Government of Alberta and the province's municipalities get this right, they will build trust, stronger local economies, and streets where commerce and active transportation can thrive together.