

September 9, 2020

City of Calgary
Offices of the Mayor and Councillors
Calgary, Alberta

For the Attention of the Mayor, Councillors and Elected Officials of the City of Calgary

An Open Letter via email and Social Media

Re: City of Calgary - Shared Streets

Dear Mayor and Councillors,

Bike Calgary works to improve conditions for Calgarians who ride bicycles, including infrastructure, education and advocacy for all ages to enable those who would like to make that choice for active transportation. Our 4000+ members and collaboration groups represent all areas of the city and many demographic categories. We strive to connect all of Calgary's communities through bicycling. Bike Calgary is member based and is a 100 % volunteer organization.

While 2020 will go down in history as the year of the pandemic, it should also be remembered as the year Calgarians became acutely aware of the importance of our local outdoor public spaces. The use of the pathway systems has exploded as local recreational activity has been reinvented, with the City closing roads and lanes to allow people to benefit from physically distanced outdoor activities. This has also been assisted by a reduction in traffic as people worked from home, some of which is likely to become permanent.

Cycling has seen a huge spike of users within the City as people realize that this is not only a viable mode of transport, but can also enable them to easily explore the outdoor spaces, providing that necessary break from the home / office. The City's June 14th statistics tell us that bike volume increased by 164% on cycle tracks and 469% on pathways. There were 13Km's of adapted roadways and that more cyclists used the adaptive roads compared to pedestrians. E-scooter use also hit the 1 million rides in the two years they have been in Calgary, and expect over 2,300 rides per day. Bike shops are literally selling out and cannot keep pace with demand.

All this activity, cyclists, scooters, pedestrian and other modes of transport now share the same pathways, designed around a plan that is now 20 years old. Major Cities around the world are adapting to the provision for shared streets between cars and cyclists, with the UK spending nearly \$3.4 Billion on cycling infrastructure, Paris will create 650kms of Post-Covid cycleways, and there are many more examples we could quote, and with Calgary being the third largest populous City in Canada, we need to be leading the way in Canada. Times clearly have changed.

Covid-19 itself should be a catalyst for change in how we share our infrastructure, and it is now that Calgary has the chance to move forwards. We have a chance to bank some of the benefits made to date and enable Calgarians to enjoy our shared streets and pathways safely and to continue to promote and support the boom in local outdoor activities. This will bring huge gains in local business as streets with less traffic generally become local focal points, and of course these can be commutable from other areas using our existing infrastructure.

Whilst we recognize that major traffic arteries cannot sustain practical reductions in capacity, we should however use the information gained to make changes to how our infrastructure can be shared and maximized. We should also take a moment to pause, and to reflect and review where existing adapted roads could be converted into shared streets before reverting back to pre-Covid status. These times have gone and as such, we can learn and invoke change.

Dovetailed into the City's already visionary decision for the Green Line, we can begin the evolution of our City, reducing our carbon emissions and striving further towards rapid transport, open air activities, carbon neutral modes of commuting and usable safe pathways for all.

Bike Calgary has launched its Shared Streets campaign, which we believe is our opportunity to change as a City and to revolutionize access and navigation to, through and within our outdoor spaces. Shared Streets seeks to identify the current lane closures across the City, or where there is a need for the implementation of such, and asks for their retention, review and in some cases their permanency or weekend transition.

Through this open letter we ask that stakeholder groups work together and focus in the right areas, where we can help our local businesses recover and generate community income by change as well as providing safe usable cycling spaces. What we ask for by this letter is for our elected officials to guide the respective City departments to pause in releasing back the adaptive roadways and for you to provide leadership for the reviews and changes which we need to learn from and adapt into.

It is the crisis that is the catalyst, but it is the people and the leadership of this City that will make the changes, and it's now that we can choose to act or ignore the "new now".

Bike Calgary remains available to discuss this at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Peter J Spearing
Director, Bike Calgary

cc. Bike Calgary Board of Directors