

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

[NATIONAL](#)

War of the wheels looms with cross-city bike lane plan

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From Wednesday's Globe and Mail, Thursday, May. 21, 2009 03:26AM EDT

In a move certain to be seized on by critics who claim the city is waging a war on cars, a study of an Etobicoke-to-Scarborough bike lane right across Bloor Street and Danforth Avenue will soon be unveiled by Toronto officials.

The feasibility study contemplates a city-spanning bicycle lane from Victoria Park Avenue to Kipling Avenue, passing through Greektown, the Annex and Bloor West Village, among other neighbourhoods. The idea - long demanded by cycling activists who say the city lacks safe east-west bicycle routes - is expected to face a fight from drivers and business owners.

The report is still being finalized but is expected to come before the city's works committee on June 3. It will outline the options for fitting a cross-city bicycle lane onto Bloor Street and Danforth Avenue, such as the elimination of on-street parking or keeping parking but reducing rush-hour traffic to one lane in each direction, said Daniel Egan, the city's manager of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure.

"There isn't an easy design that can be implemented that is not going to have a big impact on the street," Mr. Egan said, adding that city council will have to decide whether to go ahead with a detailed design and public consultations.

But Councillor Adrian Heaps (Ward 35, Scarborough Southwest), the chairman of the city's cycling committee, said he thinks a first stretch of the proposed Danforth Avenue bicycle lane, from Victoria Park to Sherbourne Street, could be installed as early as this year.

Mr. Heaps said the road is wide enough, even along the Danforth's popular stretch of mostly Greek restaurants between Broadview and Pape Avenues, to maintain on-street parking along with a bicycle lane.

"Taking away parking there would have a dramatic effect on the merchants and the restaurants," Mr. Heaps said. "We respect that. The mandate is, how do we get bike lanes in there and retain parking and respect for traffic flow? We're very close."

While he said a conventional painted bicycle lane, running alongside a lane of parked cars, is likely the preferred option, designs under consideration include "dedicated boulevards," or bicycle lanes separated from the street by bollards and which could involve bicycle-only traffic signals.

Councillor Case Ootes (Ward 29, Toronto-Danforth), who has opposed bicycle lanes in the past, said neither he nor local businesses have been consulted about plans for a Danforth bicycle lane. He said he doubted bicycle lanes could be squeezed onto the Danforth without reducing parking or snarling car traffic.

"We keep doing these things on an ad-hoc basis without taking a look at the overall traffic situation," Mr. Ootes said, citing other city transportation initiatives such as the proposed narrowing of Jarvis Street, which is before city council next week. "... That's sadly lacking, and I think it's irresponsible."

A spokeswoman for the Greektown Business Improvement Area, which represents businesses along the Danforth, said the group's board has heard nothing about the bicycle-lane plan.

"Your call is the very first time that we have heard anything about the suggestion of bike lanes on Danforth Avenue," said Faiza Ansari, the BIA's director of operations. "So at this point, we don't have any comment but we are obviously going to find out what the heck is going on. It does concern us."

Glyn Laverick, chairman of the Danforth Business Improvement Area, said he has heard about the proposed bicycle lane but believes the city will have to consult businesses before going ahead. Restaurant owners say the area suffers from a shortage of parking now, he added.

"I know from a business point of view, I can't see it being met with open arms," said Mr. Laverick, owner of the Danforth Music Hall.

Albert Koehl, an environmental lawyer and co-founder of Bells on Bloor - a group that has been fighting for a Bloor Street bicycle lane - said that even if parking has to be sacrificed, a bicycle lane will attract new customers - on bicycles. He said he will be watching the city - long criticized for failing to deliver promised bicycle lanes - to see if it follows through.

"Given the city's track record ... we won't be celebrating any proposals or announcements about bike lanes until we are actually cycling on them," Mr. Koehl said.

Mr. Heaps said he does not think the Bloor-Danforth lane will be a massive council fight, since only a handful of councillors have opposed recent bicycle-lane measures.

"At the end of the day, it comes down to a council vote and harnessing public opinion," Mr. Heaps said.

"I think public opinion is strongly in favour of seeing cycling infrastructure expanded."

NORTH-SOUTH, TOO

It's not just Bloor Street. In addition to a study of a city-spanning lane across Bloor Street and Danforth

Avenue, the city's cycling committee chairman, Councillor Adrian Heaps, says council will debate proposed bicycle lanes on University Avenue and encircling the Ontario Legislature on Queen's Park Crescent.

"We have to make a definite statement and go around our provincial counterparts," said Mr. Heaps.

"There is ample room to respect traffic flow."

The proposed University Avenue lanes would start at Queen Street West. City transportation planners have been looking at "protected" bicycle lanes separated from automobile traffic by bollards or other barrier. But Mr. Heaps said such a plan might pose problems for ambulances serving University Avenue's hospitals, meaning the new lanes will likely be conventional ones.

The University Avenue lanes are part of a proposed package of new downtown bicycle lanes expected to come to the city's works committee on June 3. The new lanes are aimed at beefing up cycling routes before the planned 2010 launch of Toronto's bicycle-sharing service, modelled on similar services in Paris and Montreal. *Jeff Gray*

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The Globe and Mail is a division of CTVglobemedia Publishing Inc., 444 Front St. W.,
Toronto, ON Canada M5V 2S9
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