

Ontario Legislation to Remove Bike Lanes

Ontario Premier Doug Ford announced Tuesday, Oct. 15, that his government will introduce legislation forcing local governments to get provincial approval for any new bike lanes that remove a lane of vehicle traffic, according to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). Toronto's Minister of Transportation said further that municipalities would need to retroactively justify cycling infrastructure installed in the last five years.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ford-bike-lanes-removal-toronto-1.7355887> (CBC News, Oct 18, 2024)

In the midst of a long-term strategy to build 500 kilometers of bike lanes throughout the city by 2041, Toronto installed around 40 kilometers of bike lanes this past summer - the largest single-year expansion of the city's cycling network history.

"It isn't enough to keep an eye on future bike lanes," Ford said Oct. 17. "We need to and will remove . . . existing bike lanes on primary roads that are bringing traffic in our cities to a standstill." Ford said his focus is on "bringing sanity back to bike lane decisions."

Many stretches of lanes were completed in Toronto during the COVID-19 pandemic, when their effects on traffic were unclear due to fewer vehicles on the roads. City officials point to recently completed lanes which have drawn significant local opposition. In

Mississauga, for example, a planned bike lane became a major flashpoint in the latest mayoral byelection.

The announcement garnered criticism from opposition parties, Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, which called it a "significant overreach into municipal jurisdiction."

The Ontario government is introducing legislation to require municipalities to obtain approval from the province before installing new bike lanes that would result in the removal of lanes for traffic.

Toronto has removed bike lanes in the past. In 2012, after a protracted battle in council, the city opted to remove protected lanes.

Bike lane installations have aroused opposition in cities across the US in Brooklyn NY, Cambridge MA, Northampton MA, St. Paul MN, Providence RI, and Washington DC.

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