

Active Transportation & Trails In Kitchener 2023: A Progress Report



Contents



01	Walking, rolling and cycling in Kitchener	----->	3
02	How Kitchener is getting active	----->	8
03	The state of the network	----->	18
04	What the numbers tell us	----->	23
05	Building a culture of active living	----->	29
06	Looking to the future	----->	34

1. Walking, rolling and cycling in Kitchener



Iron Horse Trail pedestrian bridge replacement (Ward 9)

About this report

In this report, you'll find a snapshot of growth in pedestrian, cycling and trail investments in Kitchener over the past five years. There is a lot to celebrate – with more to come!

In Kitchener's Cycling and Trails Master Plan (2020), we committed to provide transparent, public updates on our progress of implementing the master plan and related walking, rolling and cycling initiatives.

Find out what we've been up to and where we're heading together.



A city for everyone



Walking, rolling and cycling is great for us in many ways. Everyone benefits when we collectively reduce automobile dependence and greenhouse gas emissions, provide more recreation and leisure options, increase social connections and physical activity, improve public health outcomes, reduce transportation expenses and lessen infrastructure demands.

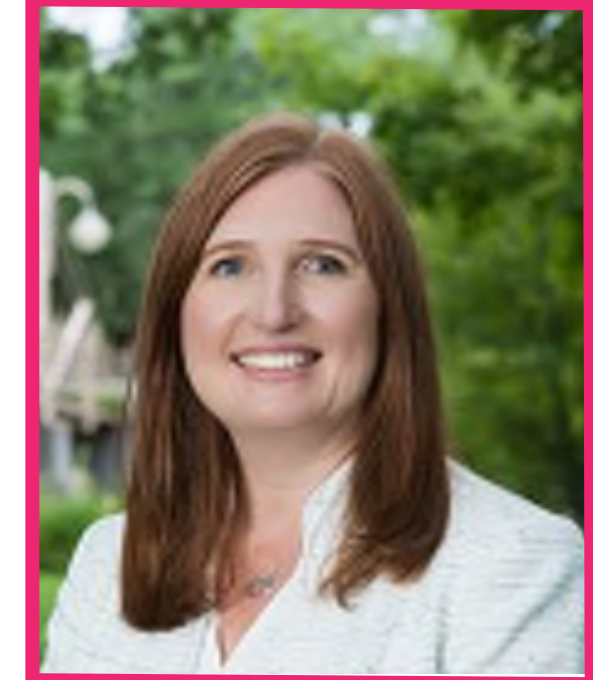
With the adoption of Kitchener’s award-winning Cycling and Trails Master Plan in late 2020, Kitchener focused on the immediate priority of installing 3 km of protected cycling infrastructure in the heart of its downtown, known as the “Downtown Cycling Grid.” This, combined with 27 km of new trails, multi-use pathways and supporting cycling routes in just two years since the plan was approved, has positioned Kitchener as a city invested in a sustainable future.

As Kitchener continues to grow and meets the growing urgency of the housing crisis and affordability challenges, it is even more critical that the city’s active transportation network continues to expand to meet the needs of new residents and the most underserved communities. Developing world-class walking, rolling and cycling infrastructure will help make Kitchener a city for everyone.

Sincerely,

Justin Readman, MEPP, General Manager, Development Services, City of Kitchener

Denise McGoldrick, General Manager, Infrastructure Services, City of Kitchener



The Power of active transportation



Active transportation creates resilient, sustainable and vibrant communities. Walking, rolling and cycling reduces our carbon footprint, and also promotes better health, economic development, equity, and well-being.

The Active Transportation and Trails Advisory Committee (ATTAC) welcomes the City of Kitchener's commitment to offer opportunities for mobility beyond the car. The emerging downtown cycling grid, complete streets, the Gaukel Block, and the Vision Zero strategy provide a glimpse into how we can reimagine our growing city.

As the climate emergency worsens, action is required to incentivize walking, rolling, and biking. ATTAC encourages City Council to live up to the commitments in the Strategic Plan (2019-2022), the Pedestrian Charter, and the Climate Emergency Declaration (2019). Evidence-informed policy-making shows that pedestrianization, protected bike lanes, play streets, traffic calming and improved connectivity are effective tools to achieve these goals.

Recent innovations have laid a foundation for a new approach to get around our diverse neighbourhoods – through investment in greener public infrastructure that is safe, equitable and climate-friendly.

-A message from Kitchener's Active Transportation & Trails Advisory Committee



Did you know?



68% of Ontarians (9.8 million people) ride their bike at least monthly.

58% agree that investing in cycling is good for their city's business and tourism.

65% say "investing in cycling is good for my municipality".

65% expressed their desire to cycle more if there were improved cycling infrastructure.

Ontarians are both cyclists and drivers: **87%** of Ontario's 3.2 million frequent cyclists say they also drive frequently, while **85%** of Ontario's 9.8 million occasional cyclists say this is the case.

Source: "Ontario Bike Summit Opens in Hamilton With Release of New Province-Wide Polling Data on Cycling in Ontario", Share the Road Cycling Coalition, May 1, 2023: <https://www.sharetheroad.ca/news-media-p157824>.

2. How Kitchener is getting active



A "complete street" on Franklin Street (Ward 3)

Strategic Initiatives

Cycling and Trails Master Plan (2020)



The Cycling and Trails Master Plan focuses on creating a city-wide network of cycling routes and trails that is comfortable for people of All Ages and Abilities. Vision: “Trails and cycling will connect Kitchener and create a sustainable, safe, equitable, and healthy community for everyone year-round.”

Complete Streets Kitchener (2019)



A Complete Streets approach uses every roadway construction project as an opportunity to improve the design and functionality of a street for all users. Vision: “Every street in Kitchener is safe, comfortable and convenient for all.”

Strategic Initiatives



Vision Zero (2022)

Vision Zero provides a framework to improve street safety for all street users regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation. The goal of this strategy is to achieve zero serious injuries and fatalities on City of Kitchener streets.



Speed limit reduction (2022-2024)

Lower speed limits are shown to reduce the likelihood that vehicle collisions result in serious injury or death. That's why we're lowering speed limits from 50 km/h to 40 km/h in Kitchener's residential neighbourhoods.



Strategic Initiatives



E-scooters and e-bike sharing system

The Region of Waterloo, along with the Cities of Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo, have selected Neuron Mobility to run an e-scooter and e-bike share program.

There are over 50 parking stations in Kitchener, with plans to expand to more areas of the city. There have been 23,821 trips taken in Kitchener since the launch.

In Ottawa, e-scooters have shown to contribute to economic activity:

- 73% of trips result in a direct purchase from a local business
- \$32 spent at local business per trip
- \$2M spent at local businesses each year.



Cedar Street protected bike lanes (Ward 9)

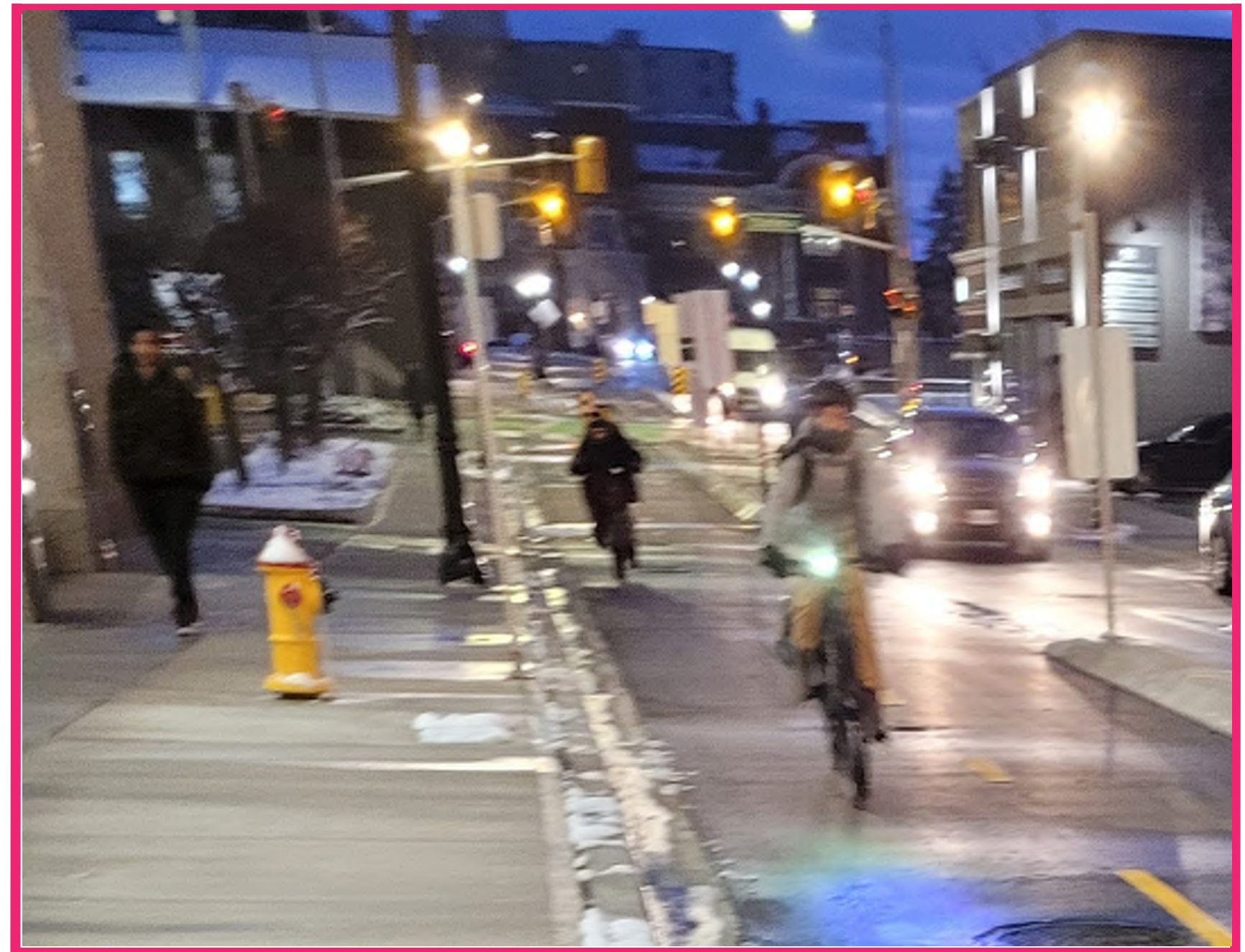
Key Investments



Downtown Cycling Grid

The Downtown Cycling Grid is a continuous and protected cycling network designed for all ages and abilities that connects adjacent neighbourhoods and major trails to the downtown. Half the network is now available for use, with the remaining to be completed by the end of 2024.

By creating a trail-like experience in the heart of the downtown, the grid attracts people who would like to bike more but don't feel comfortable riding in busy traffic. And, when combined with walking and light rail transit, the grid provides a viable alternative to car ownership for the up to 5,000 people moving downtown in new homes currently under construction.



Ontario Street protected bike lanes (Ward 10)

Key Investments



Iron Horse Trail Upgrades and Extension

When it was time to replace underground services on Delta Street, this barely used street was converted to a trail and greenspace, effectively extending the Iron Horse Trail.

This is just the latest of many upgrades on the City's busiest trail corridor. The City's first wayfinding signs are here, along with lighting, seating and other amenities. Pedestrian crossovers were installed on all city-owned street crossings, improving the safety of crossing the street by giving pedestrians the right-of-way.

- **2,894** average daily users in June 2023
- **4,923** users on the busiest day in 2023



New multi-use trail on what used to be Delta Street (Ward 9)

Key Investments



Trail Upgrades

Over the past five years, we have upgraded 7 km of stone dust trails to hard surfaces that can be maintained for year-round use, including the Henry Sturm Trail, Traynor trail and many more. This year-round access provides connections to transit, schools, parks and shopping centers.



Multi-use trail connecting Matthew Street & Rothsay Avenue with Victoria Street and iXpress bus station (Ward 1)



Multi-use trails in Rolling Meadows Park (Ward 7)



Wilson Park multi-use trail in Kingsdale neighbourhood (Ward 3)

Key Investments



A Pedestrian-First Gaukel Street

Now a pedestrian corridor, Gaukel Street has been host to many community-driven events and informal hangouts following a conversion to a pedestrian-first street.



- *More than 25,000 people attended events on Gaukel Block in 2023*
- *Nearly 20 events in 2023 with many new partners*



Gaukel Street (Ward 10)

Key Investments



Regional infrastructure expansion

The Region of Waterloo and City of Kitchener work together to create a holistic and connected active transportation network. When the Region builds new active transportation infrastructure in their boulevards, the new infrastructure becomes City assets to manage and maintain. Recent additions include new boulevard multi-use trails on Ottawa Street, Victoria Street, Lackner Boulevard and Homer Watson Boulevard.



Boulevard multi-use trail along Homer Watson Boulevard (Wards 3, 4 and 6)

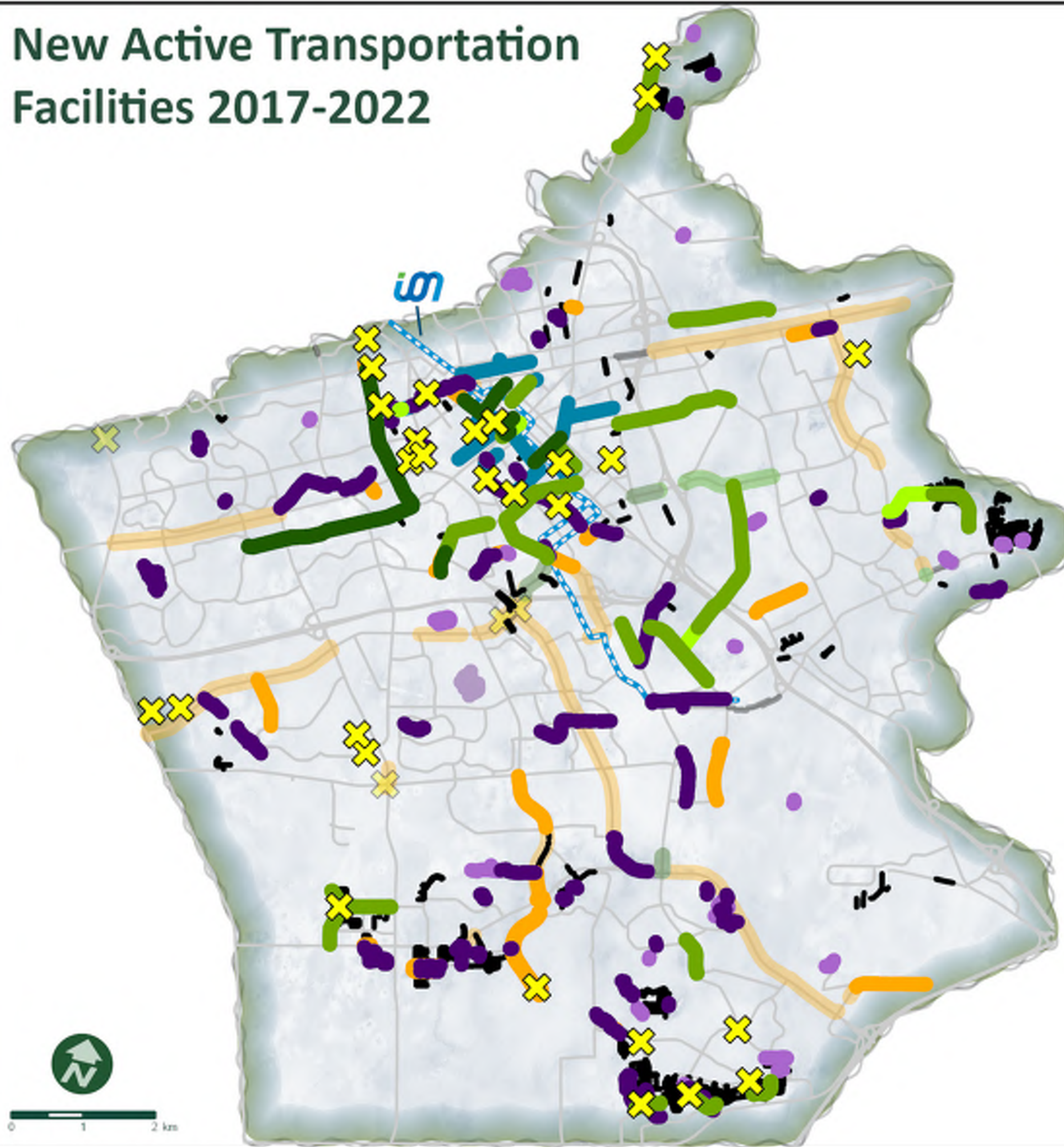
Bike Parking

Short-term and long-term bike parking is provided at various locations throughout the City. In the downtown, two new secure bike parking facilities were built at the Kitchener Market and the Duke and Ontario parking garages, bringing the total to 164 spaces at five locations, with 450 preregistered users!



Kitchener Market secure bike parking (Ward 10)

New Active Transportation Facilities 2017-2022



Active Transportation

-  Boulevard Multi-use Trail
-  Multi-use Trail
-  Major Trail
-  Neighbourhood Bikeway
-  Separated Bike Lane
-  Painted Bike Lane
-  Marked Shared-Use
-  Sidewalk & Walkway

Pedestrian Crossings

-  Level 2 PXO

(Projects installed by the Region of Waterloo are faded.)

3. The state of the network



Joseph Street protected bike lanes (Ward 9)

Making connections



A well-connected network of sidewalks, cycling routes and trails can significantly improve the ease of moving around Kitchener and provide more recreation opportunities.

Our focus is to build infrastructure for All Ages and Abilities (AAA), including children, women, and older adults. We can consider infrastructure to be “AAA” when it is safe and comfortable for all. Typically this includes sidewalks, multi-use trails and protected bicycle lanes that are physically separated from traffic, as well as neighbourhood bikeways, which are bike routes on streets with low traffic volumes and speeds.

Public consultation consistently revealed that the community wants to see an active transportation network that is more comfortable, complete and connected for all ages and abilities. So, how are we doing?



Laurentian multi-use trail (Ward 6)

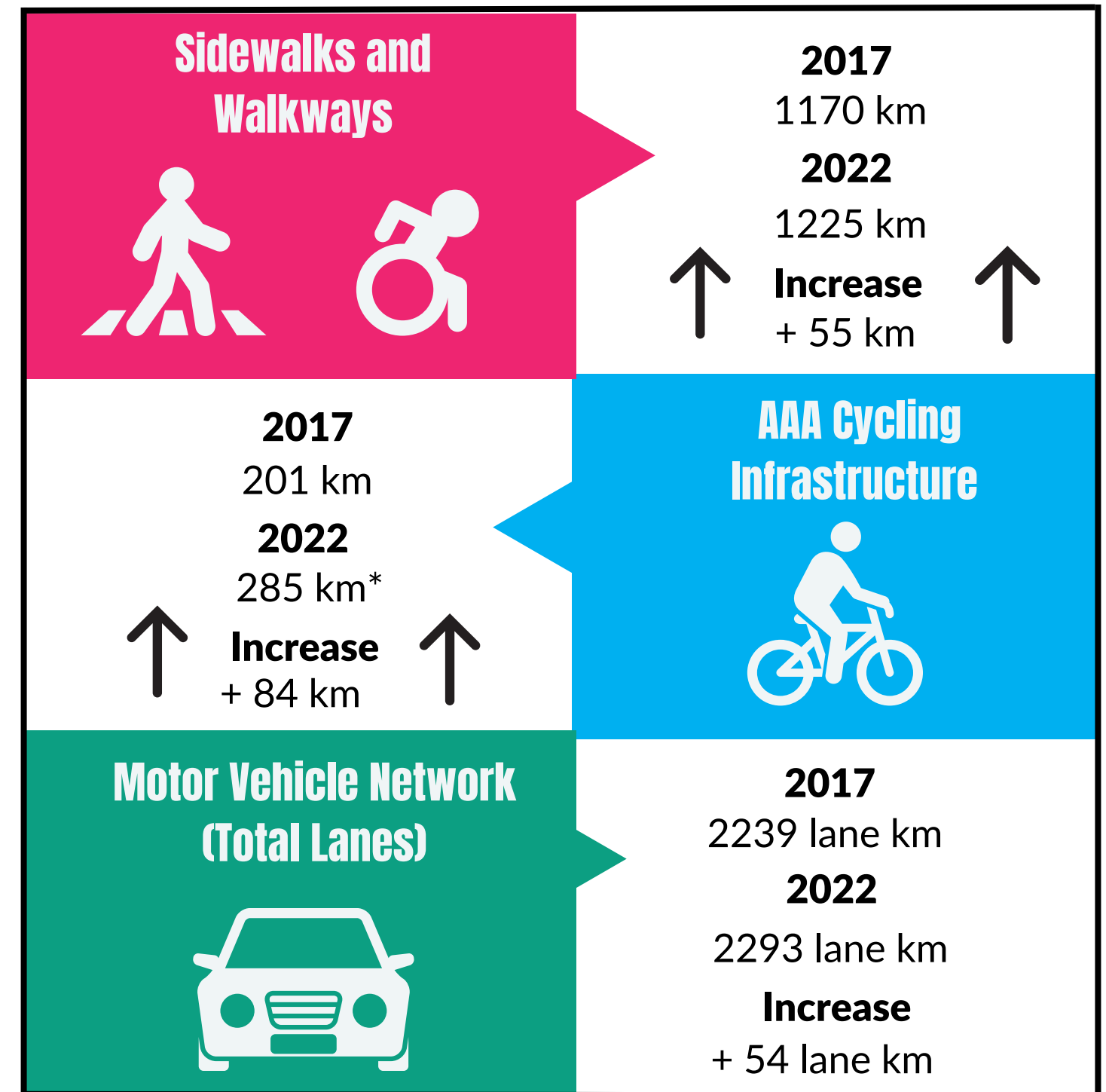
The last 5 years, by the numbers



We have seen large increases in walking, rolling and cycling infrastructure.



Boulevard multi-use trail along David Bergey Drive (Ward 5)



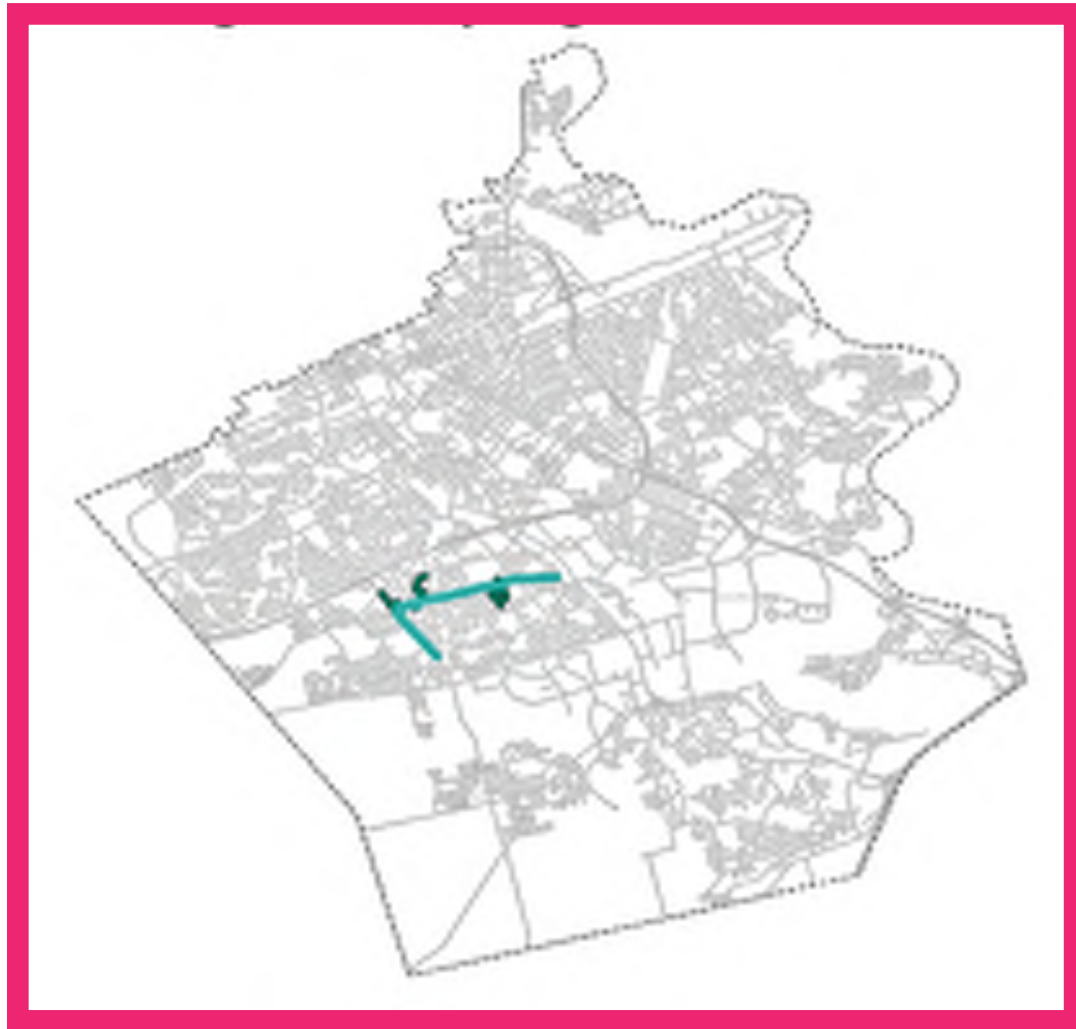
*This includes over 260 km of shared multi-use trails that are also available for pedestrian use.

The last 5 years, by the numbers



A network is only as good as its connectivity. While the motor vehicle network benefits from 100% connectivity, the active transportation network still has considerable gaps. However, the largest, uninterrupted network of AAA infrastructure is growing each year.

Longest AAA Cycling Network in 2017



Longest AAA Cycling Network in 2022



The last 5 years, by the numbers



Longest AAA & Painted Bike Lanes Network in 2017

Longest AAA & Painted Bike Lanes Network in 2022



4. What the numbers tell us



Separated bike lanes on Belmont Avenue (Ward 8)

If we build it, will they come?



In short, yes! In most cases, when we add cycling infrastructure, we see an increase in the number of people cycling. That increase will depend on the comfort level for people biking.



Transit Hub Trail (Ward 9)



Protected bike lanes on Queen's Boulevard (Wards 7 and 8)

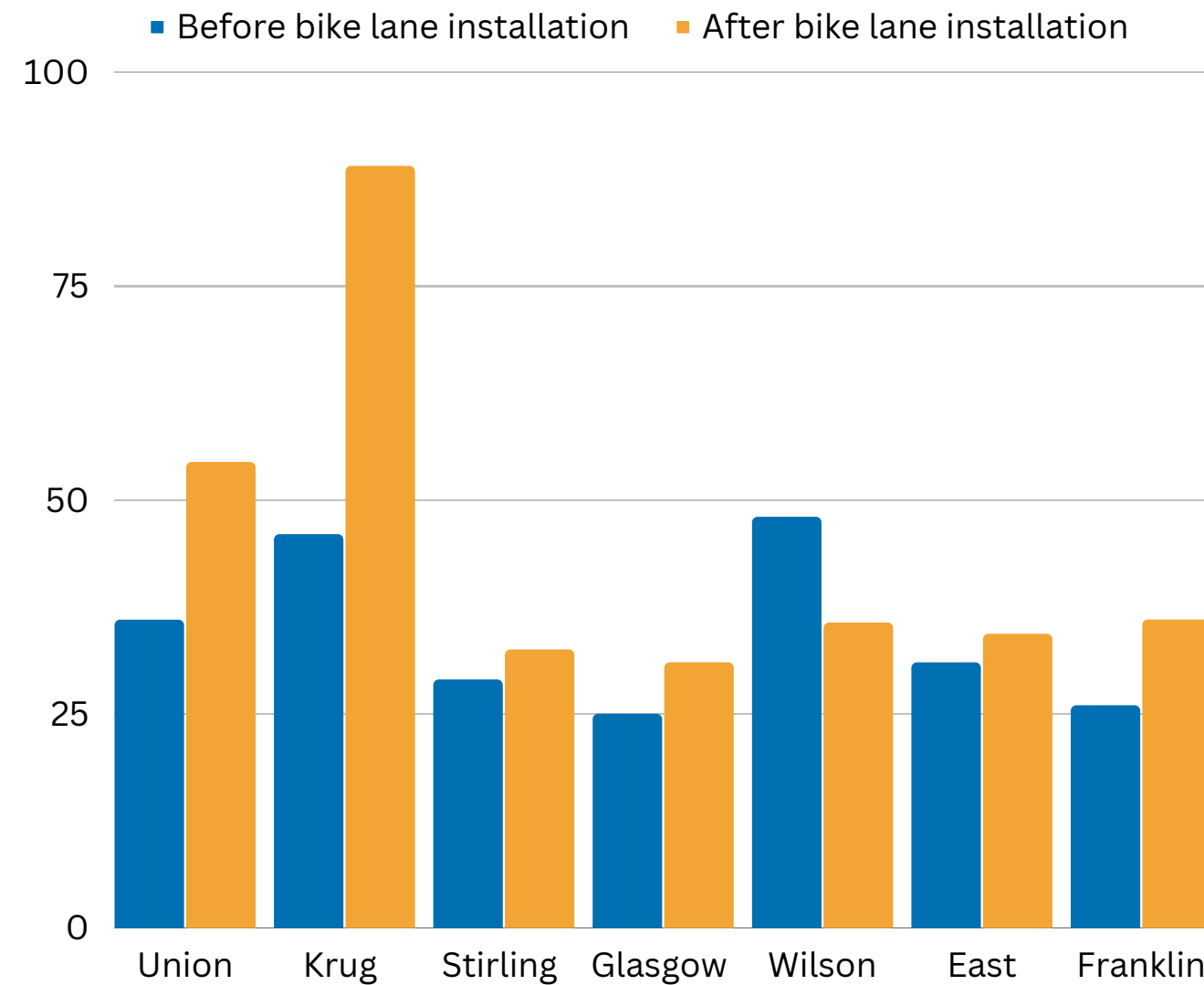


Multi-use trail along Huron Community Centre and Oak Creek Public School (Ward 5)

If we build it, will they come?

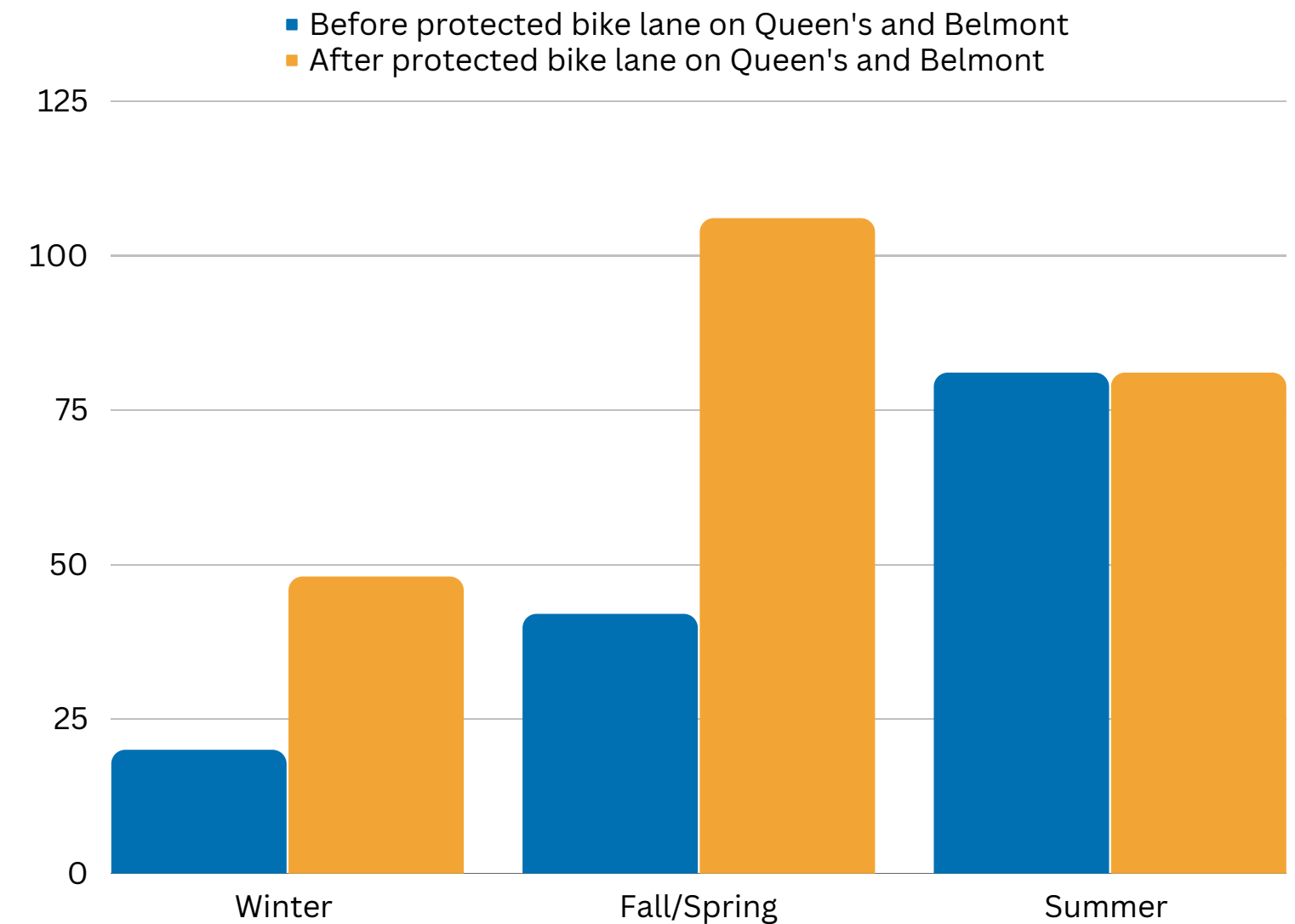


People biking (average per day in spring/fall)



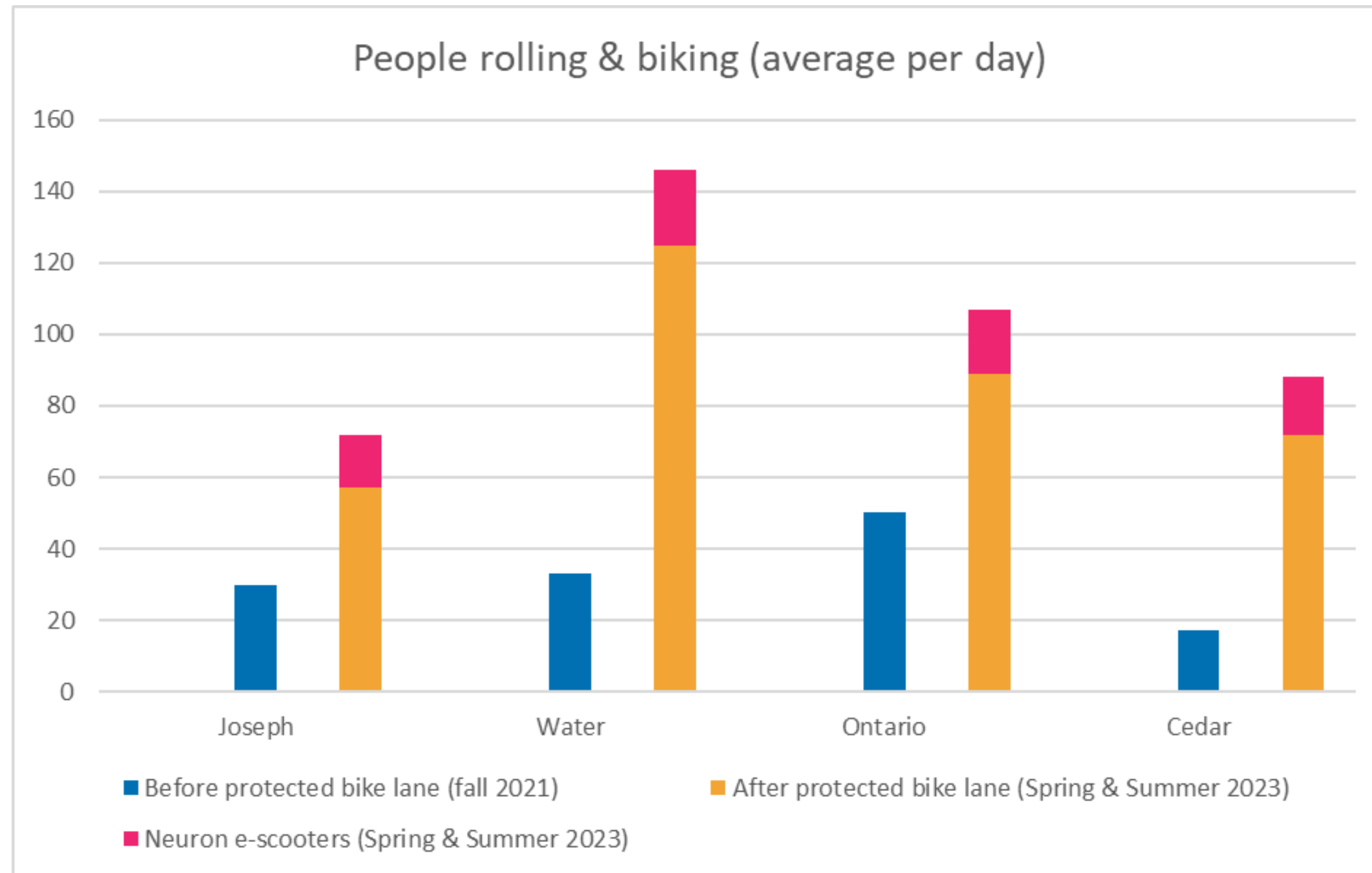
On average, the number of people cycling on a street increases by 30% after painted bike lanes are installed.

People biking (average per day)



On Queen's Boulevard and Belmont Avenue, protected bike lanes using low-cost measures like flex stakes and bumper blocks brought a year-round increase of 64% for people biking.

If we build it, will they come?



Overall, the Downtown Cycling Grid has seen a 164% increase in cycling ridership as people of all ages and abilities are attracted to fully protected bike lanes. When Neuron e-scooters are added to the cycling numbers, the Downtown Cycling Grid has an increase of 218% of trips, with Neuron adding 6,464 total trips at bike lane counter locations. These numbers are expected to continue to increase, especially as the network expands.

Downtown Cycling Grid Trends



54,781 total rides in 2023
(so far!)



More women and young
people have been observed
riding in the bike lanes



The bike lanes are used every
single day, year-round, with an
average of 111 people biking
per day in the winter months
on Joseph, Water, Ontario and
Cedar.



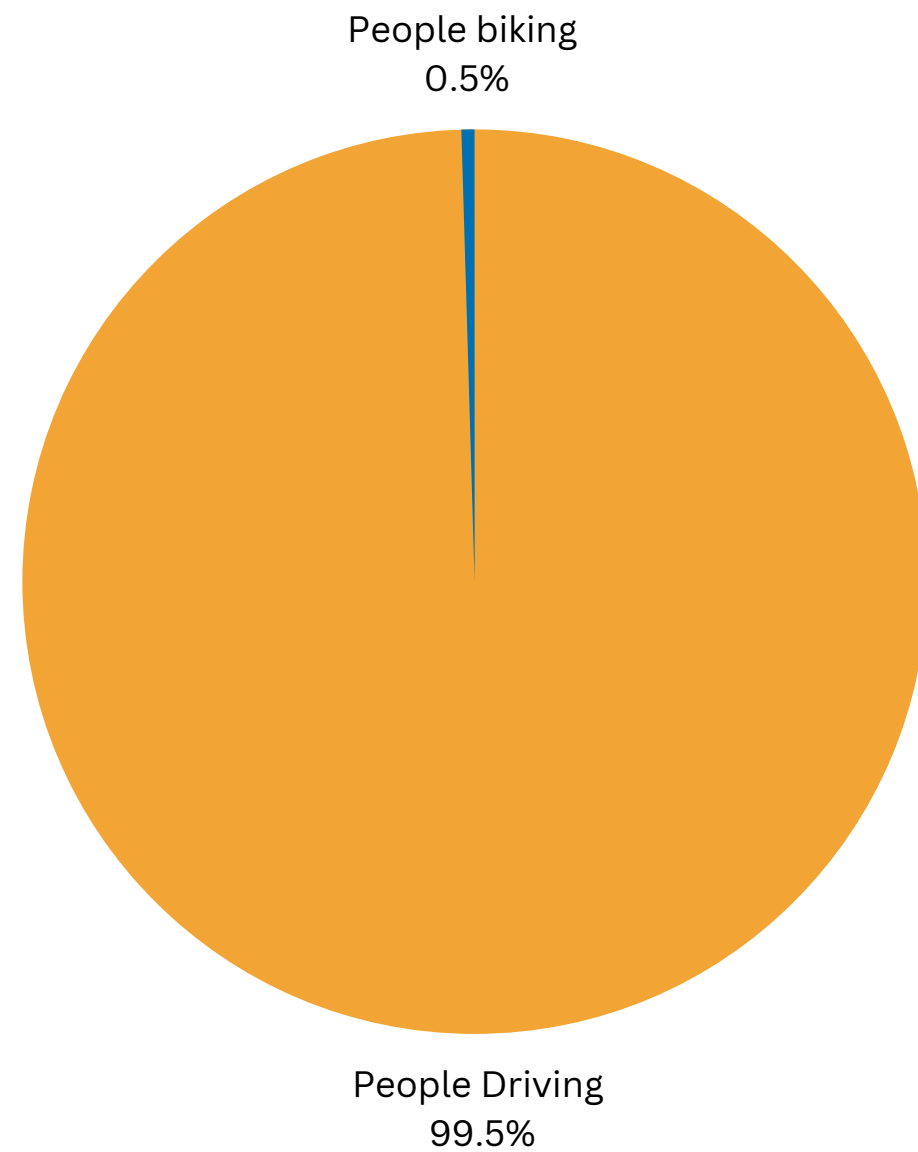
Primarily serve a transportation
function (Ridership peaks mid-
week as opposed to weekends.
Trails are the opposite, they peak
on sunny weekends indicating a
strong recreational function)

Downtown Cycling Grid Trends

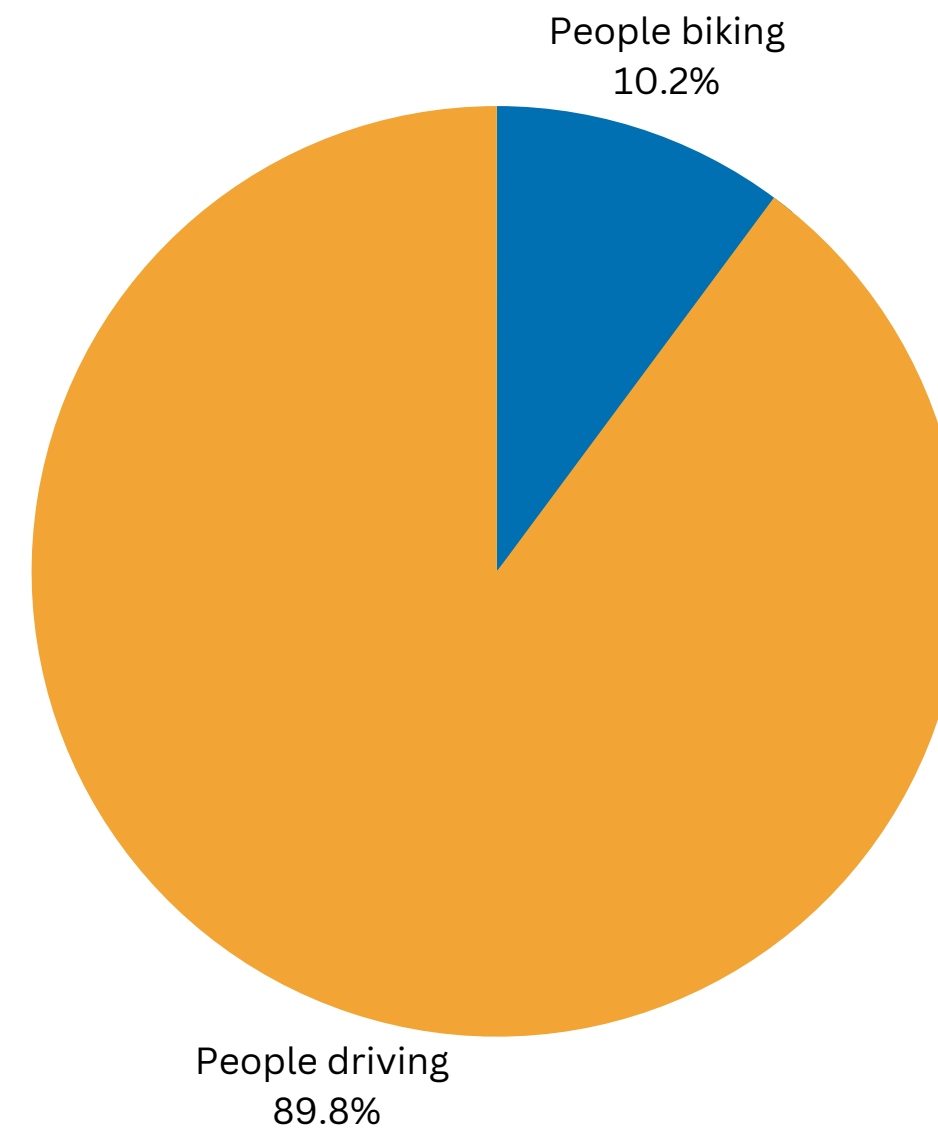


The percentage share of people biking compared to people driving has increased on the streets with bike lanes

Mode Share on Joseph Street (2020)



Mode Share on Joseph Street (2023)



5. Building a culture of active living



Safe cycling education during Bike Festivities event in 2022

Active transportation culture



While the installation of new infrastructure is critical to increase the number of people walking, rolling, and cycling in Kitchener, it's also important to encourage people to try active transportation and create a positive culture for sustainable and active living. Much of this work is done in cooperation with community partners and volunteers and the City of Kitchener extends its immense gratitude to everyone who has helped contribute to Kitchener's active transportation culture.

Bike Check

Bikecheck is a free, safe, and convenient bike parking service at local events provided by City of Kitchener volunteers and staff. It works just like a coat check: attendees drop off their bike, receive a ticket from a Bikecheck attendant and return with it to reclaim their bike. On average, 1,300 bikes are parked ever year at 6 events throughout the summer. 23 volunteers contributed over 195 hours!



Active transportation culture



Bike Events

In partnership with many valuable organizations and volunteers, city staff host events that reach out to various neighbourhood and community groups to introduce them to the joys of riding a bike.



The second annual Pride Ride in June 2023 attracted over 100 people to bring visibility to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community- and their beautifully decorated bikes!



At the Ride Safe event held in Laurentian neighbourhood in May, 2023, staff and volunteers distributed over 300 bells, maps and brochures to families learning to ride a bike. (Ward 6)

Active transportation culture



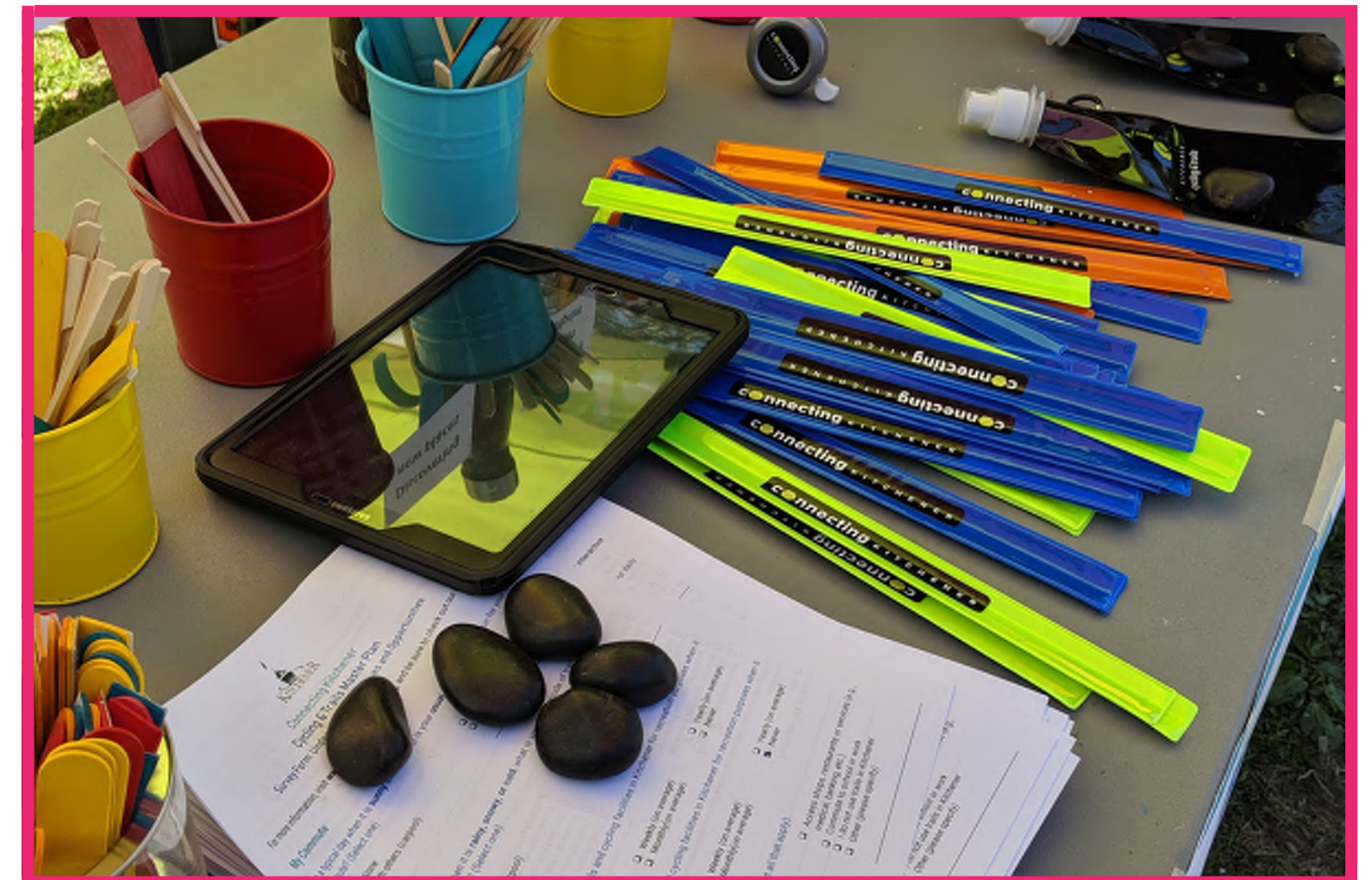
Winter Bike to Work Day

Winter Bike to Work Day aims to demystify winter cycling and create awareness that ordinary people can ride their bicycles year round. At this annual event hosted by the city, prizes are given away to people who are riding their bikes in winter for the first time.



Education

Staff work with many partners to educate the community on how to bike safely. Over 500 bike maps, 1,000 bells, 1,000 lights and 300 educational brochures are distributed each year to newcomers, community centres, older adult riding clubs, bike repair shops and youth groups.



Active transportation culture



School Travel Planning

Kitchener is an active partner with Student Transportation Services of Waterloo Region, to support important initiatives that help reduce traffic at schools and to encourage more families to use active transportation modes like walking, cycling, and scootering, for their school journey. Popular initiatives include IWALK month, bike to school week and school travel planning committees.



Trillium Public School (Ward 6)

“The children love to cycle and we are so proud of them for taking part in this event.”

- Fariha and Ayesha, from Trillium Public School who won a bike rack during Bike to School Week in 2023

Community Engagement

Community input into infrastructure and programming ensures staff build the highest quality infrastructure that meets community expectations. Thanks to the many residents who are engaged in our consultations, and to the Active Transportation and Trails Advisory Committee and CycleWR for their continued partnership in making Kitchener a great place to walk, roll and cycle.



6. Looking to the future



Growing thoughtfully



Kitchener is growing fast, and we need this growth – done in a sustainable and thoughtful way – to bring much needed homes to people who live here now and those who will join us in the future. As we plan for more homes and people to join our existing and new neighbourhoods, we are also planning on how they will get around. A combination of walking, rolling, cycling and public transit offers the greatest amount of opportunity to move people within limited space, while helping to free up road capacity for the remaining trips that do require a motor vehicle. Investments in walking, rolling and cycling are typically more accessible, cost effective, and efficient in terms of infrastructure investments, while bringing benefits to our quality of life, health, safety, recreation, environment and economy.

Kitchener’s Cycling and Trails Master Plan has won multiple awards by centring community engagement throughout every stage of its development. Our ambitious vision is embraced by a community ready for transformative change. Of course, this change won’t always be easy, and we are committed to continuing a two-way dialogue with the community as future projects come to neighbourhoods across the city. We look forward to working with you in the future – and waving hello as we pass each other on our sidewalks, bike routes and trails!



Traynor Trail (Ward 3)



**Get involved!
Join our newsletter at
bikekitchener.ca**

Henry Sturm trail through Filsinger Park (Ward 8)



BikeKitchener.ca

