

How Montreal can improve its cycling infrastructure

Brief submitted to the Office de Consultation Publique de Montréal by

Ingrid & David Birker

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In 1977 we were watching the 6 pm CBC news in a little apartment in downtown Toronto. Our jaws dropped as the headline unfolded: Montreal cyclists led by Bicycle Bob Silverman were illegally busting through Metro turnstiles hoisting their bikes on their shoulders and demanding that better accommodations be made for cyclists in the downtown core. There were no dedicated bike paths but people wanted to show that cycling needed to be integrated with the commuting and transit system.

We were enthralled. We had been cycling in Toronto since we were kids but never contemplated being able to take our bikes into the subway system. We barely were able to navigate through the Toronto street car tracks.

By 1981 we had moved to Montreal and continued cycling everywhere, not just daily but on vacation. We have cycled through the icestorm with our young children because the sidewalks were too dangerous for walking, however, the ice had been scraped off the roads. We have cycled into and out of Dorval airport, out of Paris Orly and London Gatwick with seamless connections to the trains and light rails. We have melded effortlessly with the thousands of relaxed and comfortable urban cyclists in Berlin, Zurich, Paris, London, Washington, Philadelphia, Boston and Toulouse. We would like to make a few recommendations for improving Montreal's cycling infrastructure.

1. Create better, larger, bolder signage and lane markers.
2. Prioritize improvement of the city's many dangerous and narrow underpasses.
3. Widen the right hand lane of many downtown streets in order to create velorues or shared roads with priority to cyclists.
4. Plan and develop all new and repurposed bike paths in consultation with cycling advocacy groups so that all Montreal commuters benefit. You can't just put in bike paths just to have them, they have to be safe and convenient for all travellers.