

REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL

Amendments to Bill 212, Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act, 2024, Environmental Registry of Ontario Posting 019-9266

To: Warden and Members of County Council

From: Acting Director of Public Works

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Oxford County Council receive Report PW 2025-01 entitled “Amendments to Bill 212, Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act, 2024, Environmental Registry of Ontario Posting 019-9266” as information.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The purpose of this report is to update County Council on the proposed legislative framework for bike lanes that require removal of a traffic lane, that was posted on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) on October 21, 2024 for a 30-day public review period.
- The proposed legislative amendments will establish a review process by the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) for cycling infrastructure (bike lanes) implementation that removes a lane of traffic and could also require the removal of existing bike lanes where the removal of a travel lane took place.
- The proposed legislative framework is not expected to impact Oxford County’s capital program except possibly where four-lane roads have been converted to three-lane cross sections (road diet).

IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

Staff will continue to monitor any new developments regarding any regulatory requirements that are established due to the legislative amendments which received Royal Assent on November 25, 2024.

Financial Impact

The recommendation contained in this report will have no financial impact to the 2025 operating budget.

Communications




The ERO posting and submission comments by the County were reviewed with the Active Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) at the November 28, 2024 meeting. Report PW 2025-01 will be shared with ATAC members and circulated to Area Municipalities.

2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

Oxford County Council approved the [2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#) on September 13, 2023. The Plan outlines 39 goals across three strategic pillars that advance Council’s vision of “Working together for a healthy, vibrant, and sustainable future.” These pillars are: (1) *Promoting community vitality*, (2) *Enhancing environmental sustainability*, and (3) *Fostering progressive government*.

The recommendation in this report supports the following strategic goals.

Strategic Plan Pillars and Goals

PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3
		
Promoting community vitality	Enhancing environmental sustainability	Fostering progressive government
<p>Goal 1.2 – Sustainable infrastructure and development</p> <p>Goal 1.3 – Community health, safety and well-being</p> <p>Goal 1.4 – Connected people and places</p>	<p>Goal 2.1 – Climate change mitigation and adaptation</p>	<p>Goal 3.2 – Collaborate with our partners and communities</p> <p>Goal 3.5 – Advocate for Oxford County</p>

See: [Oxford County 2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#)

DISCUSSION

Background

On October 21, 2024, the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) posted proposed amendments to *Bill 212 – Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act, 2024* on the ERO for a 30-day public comment period that establishes the legislative framework for bike lane implementation that requires removal of a traffic lane.

Under the proposed framework, municipalities would be required to seek provincial approval to allow for the implementation of new cycling infrastructure (“bike lanes”) that require the removal of an existing lane of traffic. The Province would also have the authority to require municipalities to submit information regarding existing bike lanes where an existing vehicle lane was removed and potentially requires the removal of the bike lane and return it to the pre-existing lane of traffic.

The proposed legislative framework specifically identifies removal of bike lanes on Bloor Street, Young Street, and University Avenue within the City of Toronto and will be including large municipalities in the development of future criterion for the installation of new cycling infrastructure.

Oxford County 2024 Transportation Master Plan

The Oxford County Transportation Master Plan (TMP) was updated in 2024 with a continued focus on multi-modal transportation options as the preferred transportation strategy to optimize the County’s road network through various initiatives including, but not limited to, Active Transportation (AT) and implementation of the 2021 Oxford County Cycling Master Plan (CMP).

Oxford County 2021 Cycling Master Plan

The Oxford County 2021 CMP identifies primary and secondary routing on the County road network with the objective of providing greater connectivity from rural to urban areas as well as to local cycling and trail networks, tourism-oriented destinations, and employment areas. The CMP is not intended to provide detailed design of specific cycling infrastructure projects but generally is anticipated to include buffered paved shoulders on rural roads and designated bike lanes in urbanized areas.

Road Diets

The CMP identifies road diets as a strategy to improve feasibility of cycling infrastructure implementation in urban areas by reallocating existing road space without the need for road widening. A road diet would typically involve conversion of a 4-lane road to a 3-lane road with two travel lanes and a shared centre turn lane as shown in Figure 1 and can improve road safety by mitigating traffic weaving, speeding, and reduction in rear end collision occurrences.

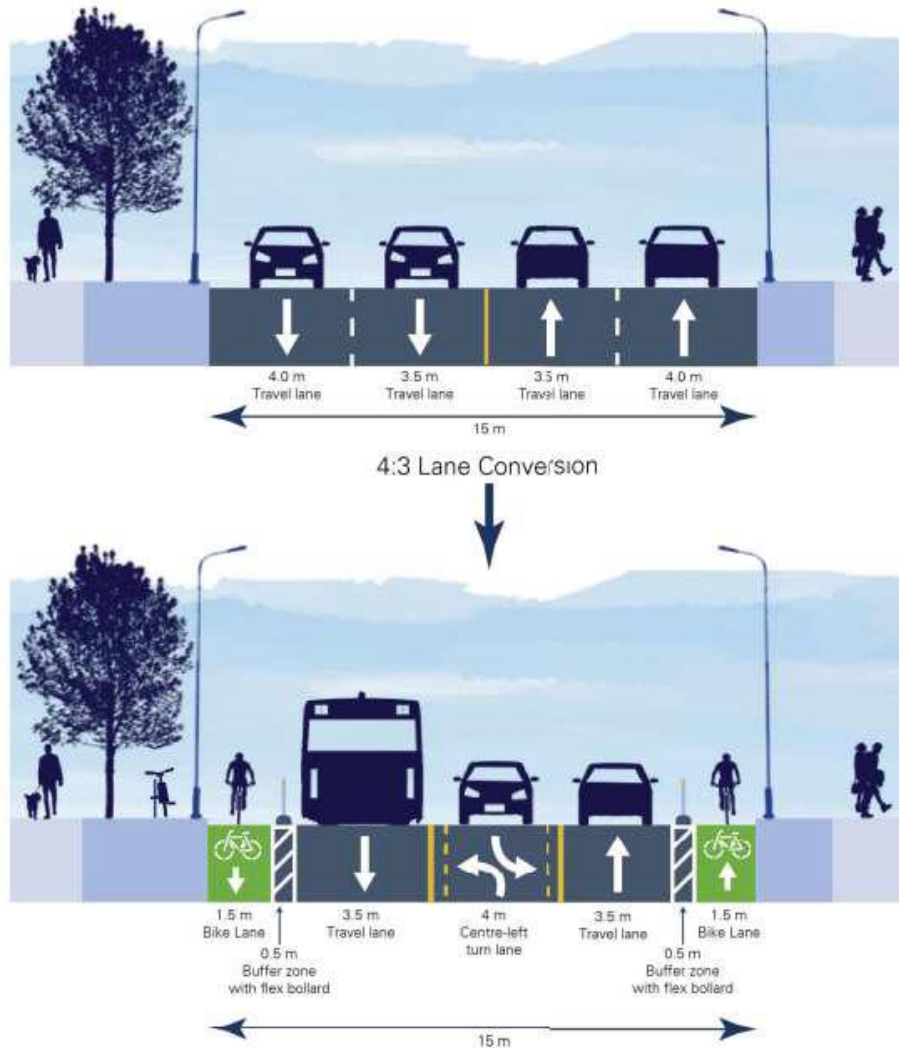


Figure 1: 4-Lane Conversion to 3-Lane with Shared Turning Lane (Road Diet)

The County has successfully utilized road diets as part of scheduled road rehabilitation on Oxford Road 12 (Mill Street), Oxford Road 9 (Ingersoll Road), and Oxford Road 54/59 (Huron/Wilson Street) in Woodstock without negatively impacting traffic capacity that was validated through comprehensive traffic studies as part of preliminary design.

A road diet is considered a reallocation of existing lanes and still provides for a travel lane and turning lane for each direction, although the turning lane is shared for both directions and may be seen as a reduction in travel lanes in the MTO's proposed legislative framework.

Active Transportation Advisory Committee

County Council approved (PW 2022-47) formation of the Active Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) as an advisory committee with the mandate to:

“Promote all modes of active transportation (AT) and low carbon travel options through support and advocacy of a well-connected, safe, accessible and functional AT network consisting of sidewalks/multi-use paths, designated bicycle lanes, wider paved shoulders, and off-road trails.”

Development of the ATAC was a recommendation in the CMP to replace the former Oxford County Cycling Advisory Committee (CAC) and provide a broader focus on AT to promote various non-motorized and low carbon travel options.

Comments

Staff submitted comments (Attachment 1) in response to the proposed bike lane legislative framework on November 20, 2024. The proposed amendments are not expected to have significant impacts to the County’s transportation strategies identified in the TMP since, in most cases, cycling infrastructure implementation does not impact existing travel lanes, except potentially where road diets have been utilized.

In the submission comments, staff has requested clarification regarding road diets and an exemption from the proposed legislative framework since a road diet is considered a reallocation of existing lanes. It is the opinion of staff that the potential requirement by the Province for reinstatement of the four-lane cross section where road diets have been implemented is a low probability since supporting data can be provided, should it be requested from the Province.

Amendments to Bill 212 as proposed, received Royal Assent on November 25, 2024, five days after the ERO posting was closed for comments. Associated amendments to the Highway Traffic Act (HTA) include the following requirements:

- municipalities are required, in certain circumstances, to obtain the Minister’s approval before constructing bicycle lanes or to provide the Minister with information relating to existing bicycle lanes;
- the Minister is required to remove specific bicycle lanes in the City of Toronto; and
- the Lieutenant Governor in Council may order the removal of other bicycle lanes in certain circumstances.

Staff has since attempted to reach out to MTO staff regarding next steps but has not received a response. It is anticipated the MTO will develop a regulatory framework to support the legislative amendments with additional criteria for cycling infrastructure implementation.

CONCLUSIONS

The proposed legislative framework regarding bike lanes is not expected to have a significant impact on the TMP and CMP strategies and associated implementation programs. The MTO could potentially request a review of existing County cycling infrastructure projects that were implemented using lane reallocation (road diets); however, justification for these projects were supported by comprehensive traffic studies and analysis as part of preliminary design.

SIGNATURES

Departmental approval:

Original signed by

Frank Gross, C. Tech
Acting Director of Public Works

Approved for submission:

Original signed by

Benjamin R. Addley
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1: ERO Posting 019-9266 - Oxford County Submission Comments