



# Position Statement

## West End Bikeways

Date:

March 2, 2025

## Halifax Cycling Coalition

### Halifax West End Bicycle Infrastructure Position Statement

February 2025

#### Summary

- Safety improvements along Liverpool Street for people walking, rolling, and cycling are urgently needed, especially at intersection crossings
- Given the ongoing and expected population growth in the broader neighbourhood, the need for a safe infrastructure for all vulnerable road users will be needed along Liverpool as well as in the surrounding streets
- A protected bike lane along the entirety of Almon Street is urgently needed to meet the safety needs of people cycling
- A protected bike lane along Oxford Street must be urgently planned
- A protected bike lane along Agricola Street must be urgently planned
- Bike lane projects must be prioritised based on traffic volumes, speeds and risks to cyclists, including cyclist injury and fatality data. Directness of routes and connectivity are key principles to adhere to in cycling network design
- Halifax has a poor track record of designing and building Local Street Bikeways (LSBs) that meet established criteria for the safety of people cycling and this record will not improve unless Halifax fully adheres to the priorities of the Integrated Mobility Plan



## Background and vision

Halifax Cycling Coalition (HCC) has been actively engaged as a stakeholder in the development of safe, comfortable and convenient cycling along the East-West corridor north of North Street. Currently, there are protected bike lanes (close to completion) on Almon Street between Agricola and Windsor Streets. Against the overwhelming wishes of those who cycle, unfortunately, the municipality has decided to divert those cycling along Almon Street onto Windsor Street (currently a painted bike lane) and then onto Liverpool Local Street Bikeway.

HCC has always maintained that active transportation improvements along Liverpool Street are not mutually inconsistent with a protected bike lane along the entirety of Almon Street, which has a much heavier cyclist traffic (Figure 1), connects to many local streets and a playground visited by families and youth. The municipality has consistently told us that they have not ruled out Almon Street protected bike lane, and argued, unconvincingly, that Liverpool Local Street Bikeway (LSB) is an interim solution to a lack of connectivity in the cycling network.

Recently, the municipality has issued an RFP with the intention of hiring a consultant to review and update the 2020 West End Bikeway Functional Plan's recommendations for the outstanding portions of the corridor, and further develop the design through to the tender and construction stages. It is HCC's understanding that while the design will be "generally" based on the original functional plan, the consultants will be expected to update it using new data and analysis to confirm the proposed measures' viability or recommend alternative options. We think that this is a tremendous opportunity for the municipality to take a holistic (neighborhood) approach to planning to meet the expressed safety and convenience needs of people cycling using the Complete Streets approach and the Integrated Mobility Plan (IMP) Principles, Pillars and Priorities.

## Key observations

1. **LSBs can in principle bring valuable improvements to road safety for people walking, rolling, and cycling.** However, they have been designed using controversial interventions such as mini roundabouts (or traffic circles) or diverters (that have been contested in the court of law), and several LSBs still have not achieved desired safety standards many years after their initial launching and continue to require costly modifications and upgrades (eg, Vernon) or are still incomplete (eg, Oak-Allen). It is our



position that LSBs modal filters that divert motorized traffic are critical to meet the LSB criteria and they should be designed with these modal filters from the initial phase of the project, yet, Liverpool LSB design lacks any such diverters. These modal filters reduce traffic volume and make the street less attractive for through traffic are essential for a LSB. Streets where modal filters are not viable should not be considered for a LSB.

2. **The traffic calming measures used in the Liverpool LSB have been particularly controversial.** The Liverpool-Dublin mini roundabout has a low profile to accommodate emergency vehicles, which means that even light trucks drive over them with ease. More significantly, as built, Liverpool-Dublin mini-roundabout reduces service levels for pedestrians, especially for those who are blind and partially sighted, without any demonstrable safety improvements for people cycling. People cycling have wrongly been identified as the source of this design. HCC has never approved of this design, because HCC has never accepted Liverpool LSB as *an alternative* to the Almon Street Protected Bikeway. Intersection crosswalks should be safe for people walking, rolling, and cycling, and cars must be, with appropriate engineering interventions, forced to slow down significantly before negotiating an intersection.
  
3. It is HCC's understanding that the consultant will consider modifications to the proposed Liverpool-Connolly mini-roundabout, or replacement with a different intersection treatment. **What we are witnessing is thus an admission that a project that was initially thought to be cost-saving, through rushed decision making and against the wishes of all stakeholders, is now costing the taxpayers more money and headaches.**<sup>1</sup>
  
4. **Liverpool LSB requires safety improvements for people walking, rolling, and cycling at other intersections in the project area.** Many of these improvements are essential as there are no marked crosswalks along Windsor and Oxford streets for unacceptably long stretches. However, the municipality is doing a poor communication job by branding these improvements as an LSB: most of these improvements will be enhancing the safety of those who are walking and rolling as well. HCC firmly believes that these safety improvements should be prioritized but sees little justification to claim

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<sup>1</sup> RFP states that "The proponent should consider best-practices for design and implementation of mini-roundabouts, taking into account lessons learned from HRM's two existing examples, and consider alternative treatments if needed."

that the entire budget that will be spent on this project will be dedicated to building a *cycling* infrastructure. It is vital that all intersections of Liverpool with major streets (Windsor, Oxford, Connaught) and of the West End Bikeway where Leppert crosses Mumford be half signals. This is for two reasons: it is safer for all people walking, rolling or cycling, but also, crosswalks with flashing lights are not a legal place for riders to cross without dismounting – to require dismounting or to design for legal entrapment of those choosing not to dismount would make a mockery of bikeway planning.

5. Almon Street bike lane west of Windsor would require no changes to intersections. It is already heavily subscribed by people cycling (Figure 1). As a collector road, Almon Street has traffic lights at all major intersections, and Almon-Connaught intersection has recently been upgraded to allow for cross rides. It provides direct travel along the only East-West corridor. We reiterate, the overwhelming majority of people cycling prefer Almon Street protected bike lane. Given that the consultant can propose changes, **we strongly recommend that the municipality start planning for the remaining segments of Almon Street protected bike lane without dropping the essential traffic safety improvements needed for all intersection crossings along Liverpool Street.**
6. A protected bike lane along Almon Street will provide safe, comfortable, and convenient access by families and children to Ardmore playground. It would encourage active transportation to a healthy and vibrant community hub and space.
7. The planning for the **Young Street District Future Growth Node** is ongoing with significant implications for population growth in the area. The Liverpool LSB project has implications for the Forum and all the surrounding streets. Isn't it more appropriate to integrate the Liverpool LSB into that plan so that all the surrounding streets are planned using the Complete Streets guidelines and that they are given back protected bike lanes?
8. We recognize that certain segments of Almon Street pose design challenges for building a protected bike lane. However, if the municipality were to prioritize people cycling over parking and vehicle flows, as expressly stated in the IMP, and worked with the stakeholders to meet the needs of people cycling, it could build a protected bike lane along Almon street that is safe and convenient for people cycling.



9. **Oxford Street must be considered as part of the planning process.** In the near future it will be the main connector for two major schools in this neighbourhood: the new French language school that is being built on Bayers/Oxford, and Oxford School on North/Chebucto/Oxford. The street width on Oxford is wide enough to accommodate transit buses and protected bike lanes. The on-street parking along Oxford can easily be accommodated by local streets, and the space saved by such a reallocation must be reallocated to bike lanes. The neighbourhood is vibrant, the population along this corridor growing, and the corridor connects many major amenities. However, cycling on Oxford street is dangerous due to traffic volumes and speeds.
10. The tender document states that “Connolly Street has been identified as a potential future Local Street Bikeway”. HCC would like to caution against using Connolly as an *alternative* to a protected bike lane along Oxford Street and would recommend it in conjunction with a protected bike lane along Oxford Street. A Connolly LSB would require significant safety improvements and a half stoplight at the Chebucto-Connolly intersection crossing.
11. The municipality should not undertake this exercise purely to “connect” a (non-existent) network to the Chain of Lakes multi-use trail through a subpar set of LSB projects that somehow get labelled as (an ill defined) “AAA”. If this is the underlying drive behind this exercise, HCC thinks that it is misguided. **The goal should be to provide safety and comfort to the maximum number of people cycling for a range of activities and needs.** Instead, what we are witnessing is a set of LSBs proposed on streets which cannot possibly be rationalized and prioritized based on cyclist and car volumes, injury collision data, and vehicle speeds.
12. The same logic applies to Agricola Street. HCC reiterates its long-standing position that **Agricola is the most direct and comfortable corridor for people cycling and it must have a protected bike lane.** Current LSB configurations are forced upon cyclists because Agricola does not have a protected bike lane. It is a relegation rather than an elevation of the needs and concerns of people cycling, prioritizing private vehicles ahead of cycling but not even for moving people, but rather to provide free storage of private vehicles on public property (i.e. parking)



13. The municipality has a habit of “improving” safety where it is least needed, all the while admitting that they have no evidence to back up their claim that additional safety measures are needed there. HCC has heard over and over staff justifying their poor investment decisions by making the claim that traffic calming measures have reduced speeds in the “85th percentile”. The municipality routinely fails to evaluate the effectiveness of such measures. We are thus left with the conclusion that traffic engineers and planners have an incomplete or poor understanding of the most basic concept called “opportunity cost.” By investing our scarce resources on projects that yield low or no return, the municipality fails to take action on meaningful safety measures that really matter.

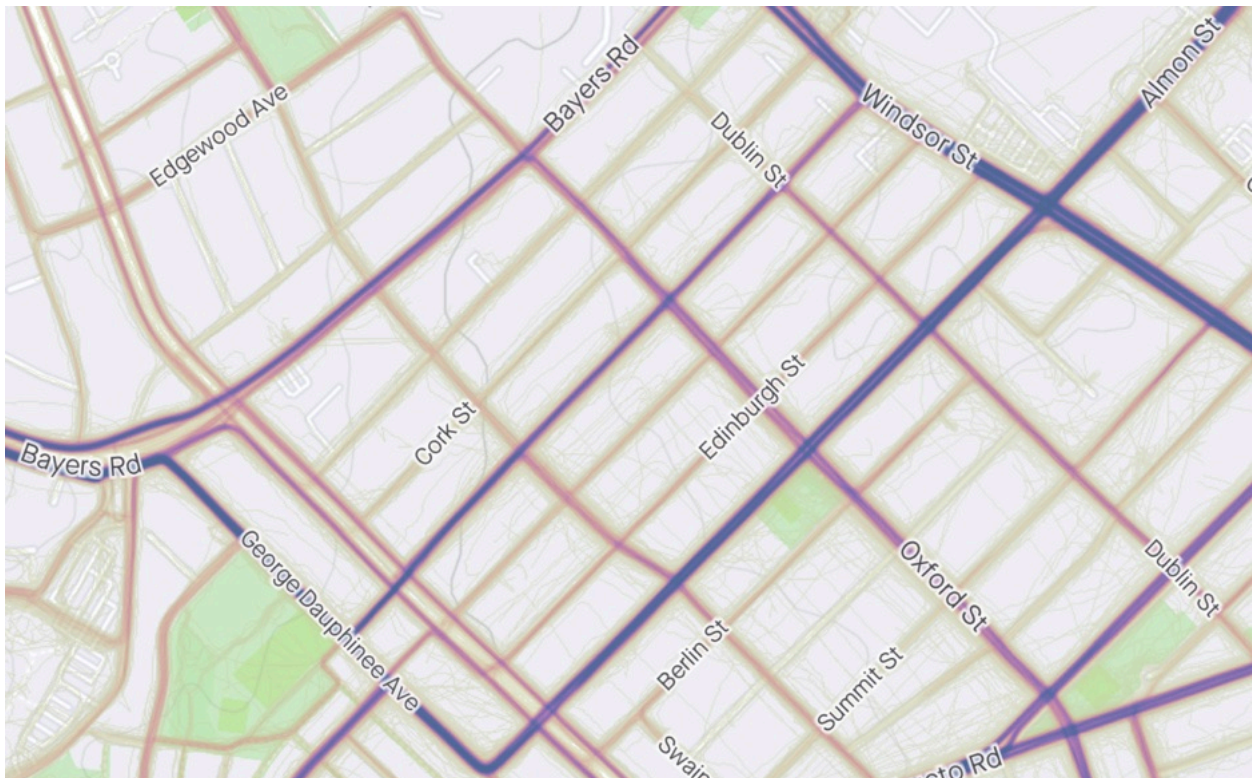


Figure 1: Cycling heatmap from Strava Metro showing patterns of cycling traffic where darker, heavier lines indicate higher usage. Strava data may be somewhat biased toward more athletic cyclists, but their studies have shown that it is still highly correlated with general usage. In this case, Almon St. clearly is used much more by people cycling than Liverpool (one street south of, and parallel to Cork St.).