



HCC Position Statement

on

Curb Extensions

Jul 24, 2026

The Halifax Cycling Coalition advocates for safe, comfortable, and accessible streets for all road users. Our advocacy is consistent with the pillars and priorities of Halifax's Integrated Mobility Plan, which prioritizes the safety and comfort of people walking and rolling, followed by people cycling. Consistent with this approach, Halifax is building infrastructure that is intended to improve the safety of vulnerable road users. This position paper makes recommendations concerning the type of curb extensions that could be installed quickly and in a highly cost effective manner.

Conventional curb extensions

According to the NACTO's Urban Street Design Guide, curb extension is "an umbrella term" with distinct infrastructure applications depending on the context. For this Statement we will be focusing on applications that shorten the crossing distance for pedestrians. The municipality has been installing curb extensions at various intersection crossings, marked or unmarked, and we would like to state at the outset that these installations have significant safety benefits for people walking and rolling.

The "conventional" (according to NACTO) curb extensions increase the visibility of people walking at an intersection and along a road where there is on-street parking (Figure 1). In a conventional application, a curb extension decreases the overall width of the street thus shortening crossing distance for pedestrians, visually narrows the roadway thus slowing traffic, improves the visibility of pedestrians, and enhances overall safety.



Figure 1 ([PEDSAFE](#))

Unfortunately, Figure 1 is not representative of a typical curb extension in Halifax. The reason is that most of the roads with curb extensions lack bicycle facilities of the type shown (here a painted bike lane). Also, extensions like this are recommended where there is consistent parking and often in Halifax that is not the case. Bicyclists are required by law to ride on the right of a road, and many drivers are unwilling to share the road with bicyclists. In Halifax, curb



extensions are still infrequent and there are no road signs indicating that a bicyclist would be approaching a curb extension. As a result, and especially along roads where on-street parking is irregular and drivers aggressively force bicyclists away from the middle of the lane, curb extensions can suddenly force bicyclists to ride into traffic making it hazardous both for drivers and bicyclists. Figures 2-4 show several examples of curb extensions that invite a conflict between a driver and a person cycling.



Figure 2: Oxford-Berlin northbound (Credit: Contributed (TI))

The Oxford-Berlin intersection (Figure 2) illustrates the risks posed by curb extensions for people cycling: it is an arterial road with heavy, fast commuter traffic and often aggressive drivers but also used by a significant number of people cycling including parents carrying children on their bikes. Weaving into traffic while trying to negotiate the curb extensions is dangerous and challenging even for confident bicyclists. A street-level cut-through for cyclists would have provided a refuge for cyclists travelling northbound, and prevented a risky merge into vehicle traffic by people cycling at this curb extension. We stress that this situation is not unique to Oxford (see Appendix on the history of such implementations.)



Figure 3: Liverpool-Connolly (counter clockwise) northbound, southbound, westbound, eastbound (Credit: Contributed (TI))

Figure 3 shows the mixture of pre-cast concrete and flex bollard curb extensions at the Liverpool-Connolly intersection on the south side of Connolly and west side of Liverpool. Liverpool is a designated “local street bikeway” (LSB). We show northbound and eastbound views to demonstrate how irregular street parking is along these stretches. Also note that the curb extension at Liverpool (west and eastbound) does not reduce the crossing distance for pedestrians; it ends before the crosswalk and does not significantly tighten right-turn radii. Its



main function appears to “force” a single-file formation for cyclists and drivers, although given how irregular parking is along this stretch, it is difficult to appraise the safety value of these curb extensions for cyclists. Here a permeable curb-extension (see below) would have also allowed a refuge for cyclists and prevented an unnecessary merging of different modes of mobility.

The curb extension along Connolly (north and southbound) reduces the crossing distance for pedestrians, tightens the intersection curb radii, leading to slower right-turn speeds onto Liverpool (although the volume of such right turn movements is uncertain). Both of these are potentially helpful. However, the curb extension forces cyclists on Connolly to unnecessarily weave into traffic.



Figure 4: Liverpool-Oxford curb extension, eastbound (Credit: Contributed (TI))

Liverpool-Oxford extensions, with pre-cast concrete curbs, are also remarkable (Figure 4). We note that the curb extension is used to shorten the crossing distance on Liverpool. This is counterintuitive because from a safety perspective a curb extension would prioritize shortening the crossing distance along the street with more vehicle traffic volume, faster speeds, and no stop sign, which is Oxford Street, not Liverpool. Liverpool-Oxford curb extension provides no benefit to people cycling, and provides modest even questionable benefit for people walking and rolling.



We stress curb extensions along “local street bikeways” because in Halifax these facilities are not designed for vehicles and bicyclists to travel in a single file. As a result, bicyclists invariably have to weave into vehicle traffic just before an intersection crossing, creating unpredictability and conflict. This rather peculiar, even unsafe (for people cycling), application is common along Halifax’s “local street bikeways.” (See our position paper on how to improve safety and comfort of these bicycle facilities, which, unfortunately, remain below NACTO standards.)

NACTO guidelines recommend “cut-throughs” for people cycling. Unfortunately, unless the curb-extension is at the street level (see below for examples), cut-throughs do not meet the needs of all road users and are not a desirable design elements: blind and partially-sighted people rely on a single down ramp to the road surface as the signal they are entering a danger zone. Having double down ramps or raising the cycle lane to curb height both confuse this important signal.

Fortunately, more recent curb extensions we see in Halifax use street-level curb extensions with flex bollards and are permeable for people cycling (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Curb extensions using low cost materials (Credit: Contributed (DF, and DB))

Both of these street-level curb extensions (from Brunswick-Duke, and Clyde-Queen) are permeable for people cycling, who can continue cycling in a straight line, and avoid all the shortcomings mentioned above. (We note, however, that in both cases the final bollards along the angled lines can be placed closer to the curb improving the comfort of people cycling.)



Pinchpoints

Curb extensions can, of course, be installed midblock, also known as pinchpoints or chokers (according to NACTO), and these installations, by virtue of narrowing the road, calm motor vehicle speeds and could be used as part of traffic calming measures. Streets with lower vehicle speeds are more comfortable for all road users, and reduce noise, enhancing the neighborhood's general quality of life.

While pinchpoints have not been used by the municipality as frequently, we think there is potential for their use in Halifax, especially along streets where lanes are much wider than the minimum lane requirements and on-street parking is abundant and irregular. We stress, however, that pinchpoints should include cut-through for bicyclists, making them permeable for people cycling, and regardless of whether the street is designated as a “local street bikeway.”

An excellent example of a permeable pinchpoint is along Oxford Street near the Ambrea Academy (Figure 6), where the street-level curb extension has a built-in cut-through for bicyclists. This design is safe for all road users.



Figure 6. A pinchpoint with a flex bollard-design cut-through for people on bicycles (Credit: Contributed (TI))



Conclusion and recommendation

Conventional curb extensions and pinchpoints are important installations that can improve the safety of all road users. We encourage the municipality to accelerate the installation of street-level, low cost and effective curb extensions and pinchpoints, starting with all major intersection crossings. However, all these installations must be permeable for people on bicycles. We also encourage the staff to consult with stakeholders for user input: HCC remains committed to collaborative engagements.



Appendix: A historical note on curb extensions in Halifax

During our interactions with the HRM staff, HCC was told in an email (by HK, dated 6 January 2026) that “the first tactical bump-out we [HRM] ever installed was requested by the Halifax Cycling Coalition at the corner of Agricola and Charles”. We have no internal document demonstrating that this was in fact a formal request by the HCC Board. A document dated July 27, 2017, shared by the HRM staff to this effect appears to be a joint submission by the HCC (with its logo) and Northend Business Association (with its logo, and a contact email address and phone number), and has a conceptual design watermarked as “for discussion only” (Figure 7). We have no other documentation, nor a previous HCC position statement on “bump-outs”.



Figure 7: Conceptual design for a curb extension along Agricola Street

Notwithstanding the fact that an organization's position (if there ever was one) on a particular design feature should change as the evidence accumulates, we note that the document submitted for Agricola Street recommends curb extensions at five (5) intersections (Almon, Ontario, North, Charles, and Harris and Sarah), along with the following “improvements” at each of these intersections:



- 4-way-stop intersections [excluding *Almon and North* which had traffic lights]
- 3 metre widths for traffic lanes
- Reduction of speed limit
- Removal of street designation as a thoroughfare truck area
- Street signage for “Bicycles may use full lane” [*modern equivalent is Single File, only listed on the drawing*]

Unfortunately, almost ten years since these five improvements proposed jointly by the HCC (in draft form) and the Northend Business Community and that were specifically advocated to complement the proposed six curb extensions along Agricola none has so far been implemented by the municipality.¹

¹ This statement should not be interpreted as a recommendation by the current HCC Board of Directors. HCC has long advocated for a protected bike lane along Agricola because it is an ideal north-south corridor for people cycling, connecting them with many amenities and allowing them to directly reach to many significant destinations, including the Halifax Commons