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i Opinion

Expanding bike share into Scarborough a good start, reader writes

But infrastructure and social support will be needed

BY TORONTO.COM

MAR 1, 2018



Letter to the editor. - Metroland file photo

To the Editor:

On Feb. 27, the public works and infrastructure committee would have considered a proposal to study the feasibility of a pilot bike share project for east Scarborough. The growth of Bike Share Toronto in the downtown core reveals that residents appreciate the benefits of cycling everyday.

An active cycling culture helps reduce local traffic congestion, improves air quality and has proven health benefits. Moreover, bike share programs enhance equity and support the lives of residents by connecting them to services and economic opportunities and these benefits should be accessible to all Torontonians.

However, for this pilot to succeed in Scarborough, additional support will be required.

Firstly, greater improvements and investments in suburban cycling infrastructure will be necessary. Based on our 2017 evaluation of Scarborough Cycles participants, 75 per cent of residents who joined our rides stated that the number one factor that would get them to ride more was more bike lanes and paths.

Quite simply, if the city builds cycling infrastructure that makes people feel safe, more will ride, which directly determines the success of bike share in Scarborough.

Secondly, outreach and education will also play an essential role in achieving community buy-in, especially in neighbourhoods where bike share never existed before.

Letting people know that the goal is to address equity, and that the bikes are a means for transportation and not just for recreation is vital. For example, Hamilton Bike Share's Everyone Rides initiative, removes barriers that prevent residents from using their bikes through discounted passes for those who self-identify as in need, education workshops, group rides, and memberships allocated to local organizations.

This proposal comes at the perfect time. Figuring out how to make bike share work in a suburban context now, will pay dividends when the Eglinton Crosstown expands into Scarborough. Each new station will provide a significant opportunity to expand the bike share network and get more people riding.

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