

Rolling *For*Ward 26

**A Community Proposal
for Improved Cycling Infrastructure
in Ward 26 - Don Valley West**

CYCLE 26
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Rolling *For*Ward 26

A Community Proposal for Improved Cycling Infrastructure in Ward 26

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*"Those who wish to control their own lives,
and move beyond existence as mere
clients and consumers - those people ride a bike."
- Wolfgang Sachs.*

About Cycle 26

Cycle 26 is a group of leading community cyclists who are committed to working with Toronto Ward 26 residents, community leaders, and City Staff; with the goal of providing contributive ideas, information, and input from the community, in a spirit of cooperation and goodwill, to advance, enhance, and improve cycling in Ward 26.

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1. Purpose

This proposal :

- 1) Provides background and context to cycling infrastructure in Ward 26
- 2) Provides an overview of cycling infrastructure currently in place compared with what was proposed in the approved Bike Plan (2001)
- 3) Analyzes Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats pertaining to cycling infrastructure in Ward 26.
 - a) Proposes new cycling infrastructure ideas as opportunities.
- 4) Makes recommendations for next steps and action items.

2. Context

Ward 26 is :

- located in mid-town Toronto (inner suburbs) about 10 Km from downtown (within a reasonable bicycle commute from downtown)
- a generator of cycling demand with a diverse population of cyclists:
 - ✓ Leaside/Bennington Heights residents
 - ✓ Thorncliffe, Flemingdon Park and Wynford/Concorde residents
- a key transportation connector to other parts of the city:
 - ✓ To south via Bayview, Millwood, Lower Don Trail,
 - ✓ To north via Bayview, Don Mills, Leslie, Don Trail North,
 - ✓ To west via Eglinton, Lower Don Trail,
 - ✓ To southwest via Moore, Southvale,
 - ✓ To east via Eglinton and Overlea, Lower Don Trail,
- Crossed by the Don Trail system, accessed via :
 - ✓ E.T. Seaton Park driveway, between 71-75 Thorncliffe Park Drive
 - ✓ Science Centre Access Road;
 - ✓ Paved path accesses to E.T. Seaton Park, Serena Gundy Park at Rykert Crescent and Sutherland Drive
- The site of Toronto's first trailhead kiosks
 - ✓ The Ridge Trail in E.T. Seaton Park

2. Context (cont'd.)

- ☑ Home to Toronto's most popular natural surface off-road (mountain bike) trails,
 - ✓ The Ridge (east side of Don Valley ravine, north of Redway Road, south of E.T. Seaton Park access driveway)
 - ✓ The Flats (east bank of Don River, north of Redway Road, south of E.T. Seaton Park access driveway)
 - ✓ Party Atmosphere (northeast reach of Don Valley ravine, north of E.T. Seaton Park access driveway, south of Serena Gundy Park)

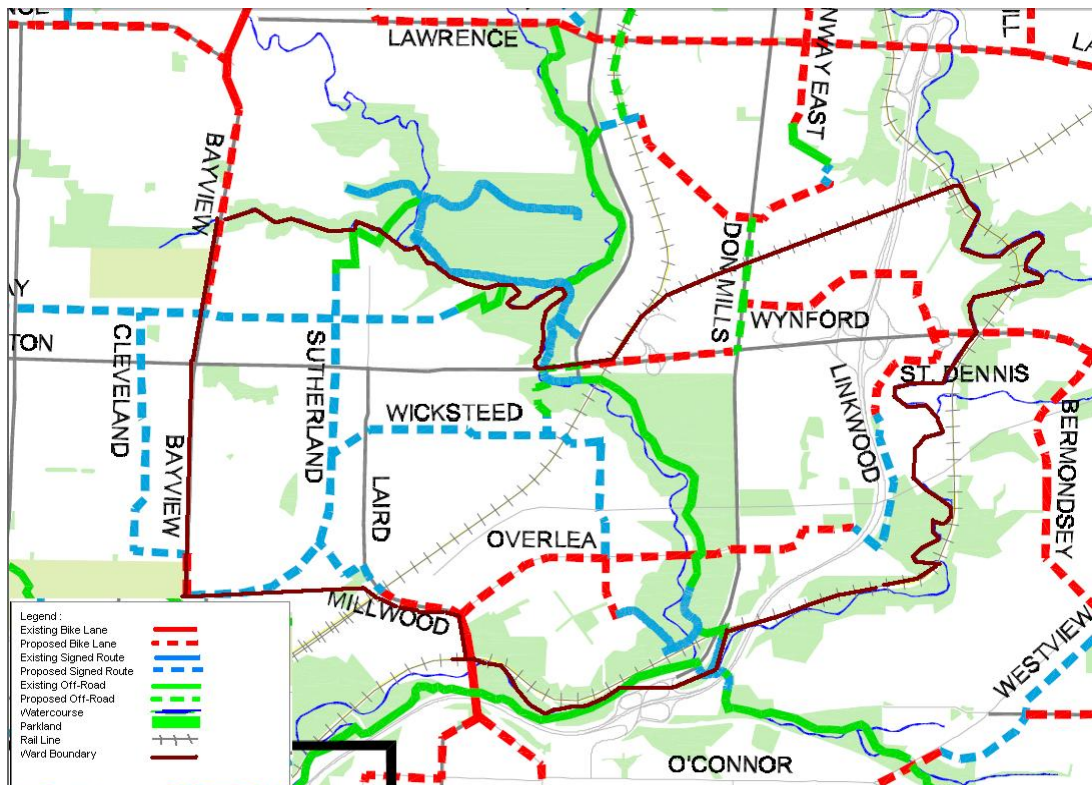
- ☑ Home to 59,870 people in 23,700 households as of 2001.

- ☑ Home to an estimated 22,678 adult cyclists; if 939,000 adult cyclists are within the City of Toronto.

- ☑ Home to approximately 14,694 bicycles; if 62 percent of households in Toronto own a bicycle.

- ☑ Home to four significant bicycle retailers; Sandy's Cycle, Endurosport, Canadian Tire, and Zellers.

Map Of Ward 26 including cycling infrastructure:



3. Overview

Toronto Bikeway Plan 2001 compared to Current Cycling Infrastructure

Table 1

BIKEWAY IN WARD 26 - PLANNED VERSUS EXISTING

Route Location	Bike Plan 2001 (km)	Existing 2008 (km)	Cycle 26 Proposed
Bike Lane / Signed Route			
Bayview - ward boundary to Broadway	0.5		
Bayview - Sutherland to Moore	0.5		
Moore - Beltline to Bayview	1.0		
Bayview - Moore/Southvale to rail underpass	0.5		
Millwood - rail underpass to Leaside Bridge	1.0	0.5	
Overlea - Millwood to Gateway	3.0		
St. Denis - Linkwood to Eglinton	0.5		
Eglinton - Leslie to Don Mills	1.0		
Wynford - Don Mills to Eglinton/St Denis	1.5		
Southvale - Millwood to Bayview			1.25
Laird - Eglinton to Millwood			1.4
Redway with extension			1.25
Total Bike lanes	9.5	0.5	3.9
Signed Routes			
Broadway - Bayview to Serena Gundy Park	1.5	1.5	
Sutherland – Serena Gundy Park to Bayview	2.5		
Wicksteed - Sutherland to Overlea to Thorncliffe Park Drive	2.5		
Linkwood - Gateway to St Dennis	1.0		
Total Signed Routes	7.5	1.5	

NOTE: Proposed additional bike lanes on TransitCity LRT routes not included

3. Overview (cont'd.)

The City Of Toronto Bike Plan (2001) has a vision *"to create a safe, comfortable, and bicycle friendly environment in Toronto, which encourages people of all ages to use bicycles for everyday transportation and enjoyment."*

It proposes six "spokes" of approach to implementing a common strategy for making Toronto a more bike-friendly city.



Specific to Ward 26, the Bike Plan proposes :

- 9.5 kilometers of bike lanes
- 7.5 kilometers of signed routes
- 15.2 kilometers of off-road trails

The Bike Plan was approved and adopted by Council in 2001, and implementation began across the City.

At the time of writing this proposal, despite approvals at all levels, and funding,

- 0.5 km of bike lanes exist (Leaside Bridge/Millwood Rd.)
- 1.5km of signed routes exist (Broadway Ave.)
- 6 km of off-road trails (natural surface and Lower Don)

To say that Bike Plan implementation in Ward 26 is behind schedule would be an understatement.

4. Analysis

Strengths Of Cycling Infrastructure in Ward 26

- ☑ The Leaside Bridge Bike Lane, on Millwood Road, is a key crossing of the Don Valley, Toronto's historically significant physical, political, and social divider.
 - ✓ The Bridge serves as the connection between Wards to the North and South.
 - ✓ It represents measurable proof that bike lanes work, and that demand for such infrastructure is sufficiently present both within the Ward, and from outside.

- ☑ Overlea Boulevard Diamond Lane
 - ✓ Proves that road user traffic through Thorncliffe is willing to concede a lane to high occupancy, transit, taxi, and human powered vehicles (bicycles and e-bikes), and includes bikes in the transportation hierarchy.

- ☑ Don Mills Road Diamond Lane
 - ✓ Demonstrates, to a lesser extent, that dedicated lanes work effectively in encouraging transit, carpooling, and human-powered road users. It also enables affordable, sustainable access to Thorncliffe and Flemingdon Park via TTC.

- ☑ Eglinton Avenue Diamond Lane
 - ✓ Works well to keep transit moving smoothly through key sections of the Ward, and again visibly identifies bicycles as part of road user traffic.

- ☑ Broadway Avenue Designated Route
 - ✓ Effective and useful to a multitude of cyclists who use it regularly when traveling east-west through the northern portion of Ward.

- ☑ Serena Gundy, Sunnybrook, and Lower Don Multi-Use Paved Trails
 - ✓ Significant multi-use pathways that allow off-road users to travel smoothly and easily through lower reaches of the Don Valley in Ward 26.
 - ✓ Paved trails in Flemingdon and Thorncliffe Parks also serve the community by providing automobile-free corridors through greenspaces.

- ☑ Don Valley Natural Surface Trails
 - ✓ Historically significant natural surface trails created by wildlife, First Nations & European settlers; more recently enhanced by off-road cyclists (mountain bikers), hikers, walkers, and nature enthusiasts
 - ✓ Enable recreational use of world-class internationally recognized trails in a designated Environmentally Sensitive Area, through rare beech-climax Carolinian forest indigenous to southern Ontario only.

Weaknesses To Cycling Infrastructure in Ward 26

- ☒ The Toronto Bike Plan as proposed does not appear to provide a continuous linked network through Ward 26.
- ☒ Existing infrastructure consists primarily of signed routes through residential streets, instead of bike lanes on main corridors such as Eglinton Ave., Bayview Ave., Don Mills Rd., and Laird Dr., thus marginalizing and isolating cycling traffic.
- ☒ While understandable in light of road design and traffic considerations, moving bicycles out of view from road users severely discourages bike commuting, while alienating and excluding bicycles as part of the road user hierarchy.
- ☒ Proposed signed routes on Sutherland Dr., Wicksteed Ave., and Broadway Ave. appear to be alternatives, compromises, to putting bike lanes “front and centre” on arterial roads like Eglinton Ave. and Laird Dr.
- ☒ Overlea Boulevard’s diamond lane becomes discontinuous in Flemingdon Park, and becomes a signed route. This confuses and disorients cycling traffic.
- ☒ In some parts of Leaside and Bennington Heights, left-turn restrictions in place for vehicular traffic restrict movements of bicycle traffic, discouraging use.
- ☒ Poor lighting and sightlines at the CPR rail underpass and intersection of Redway Rd. and Millwood Road create a significant risk to all road users, particularly cyclists, at this intersection. Numerous vehicular collisions and injuries have occurred here in recent years.
- ☒ Traffic on Millwood Rd, across Leaside Bridge and northwest towards Redway Rd.; and on Laird Dr. between Millwood and Eglinton, often travels at a very high rate of speed, (+70 km/h) due to road design (wideness) and lack of traffic signals; intimidating and deterring cyclists; occasionally causing collisions, injuries, and damage.
- ☒ Proliferation of informal natural surface trails and features created by unauthorized work, renegade builders, and disruptive individuals in the community creates hazards and provokes authorities having jurisdiction.
- ☒ Ravine Protection Bylaw does not allow for planning, implementation, maintenance and preservation of natural surface trails in Ravine Protected Areas.

Opportunities For Cycling Infrastructure in Ward 26

- ☑ More bikes on the road equal better traffic awareness and improved road user behaviour, as well as promoting cycling to everyone.
- ☑ Proposed Light Rail Transit lines, included as part of TransitCity on Eglinton Ave. and Don Mills Rd, represent a unique opportunity to provide bike lanes (or dedicated trails) on these major arterial routes, especially where LRT lines travel underground.
 - ✓ Bike lanes at grade level would be a welcome addition.
- ☑ Moore Avenue, west of Bayview Avenue, could be used to connect St. Clair Avenue and Rosedale with an east-west bike lane to Southvale Road, and on to Millwood Road. Paved shoulders already exist on Moore Avenue.
 - ✓ Would also create bike lane access to off-road infrastructure, namely the Kay Gardner Beltline Trail, in Mount Pleasant Cemetery.
- ☑ Millwood Road could accommodate bike lanes in both directions, from the CPR rail underpass at Redway Rd., to Overlea Blvd.
 - ✓ Traffic calming and continuity of the Leaside Bridge bike lane would result.
- ☑ A Laird Dr. bike lane in both directions north-south, from Broadway to Millwood, would be welcome.
 - ✓ Dedicated bike lanes would fit well with the vision of redevelopment of Laird Dr. as "a grand boulevard". As well, the proposed bike lane on Millwood Rd., after the Leaside Bridge, south to Donlands, enhance this route.
- ☑ Redway Road could be continued as a multi-purpose, automobile-free trail, from the current terminus at Loblaws Redway west to the Bayview Extension.
 - ✓ This would give riders the option of accessing the Bayview extension (which is a planned Bikeway route) or Rosedale via Nesbitt and Governor's Bridge.
- ☑ Improving access to the Lower Don Valley and natural surface trail systems from Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon, particularly at Gateway Blvd., Sunny Glenway, and Concorde, would enhance off-road access, and encourage recreational cyclists.
- ☑ Continued collaboration and work with builders, riders, stakeholders, and Authorities to design, construct, maintain, and preserve natural surface sustainable trails in Ravine Protected Areas.
 - ✓ Would enhance and increase the world-class trails demanded by local riders, and visitors from outside Toronto.

Threats To Cycling Infrastructure in Ward 26

- Inaction and further delay on implementing Bike Plan and community recommendations.
- Opposition from area businesses, residents, and other Ward councillors traditionally against cycling and related infrastructure.
- Lack of awareness, knowledge, and communication between residents, cyclists, City Staff, and local leaders.
- Continued proliferation and vilification of unplanned, informal natural surface trails and features in Ravine Protected Areas.
- Escalated, stringent enforcement of Ravine Protection and other bylaws, in Park and ravine areas, resulting in increased conflict between parties
- Decline of bicycle use due to environmental factors, perceived and actual risks, and economic recession.

5. Recommendations

1. Seek approval and implementation of:
 - a. immediate attention to installing bike lanes in unsafe places
 - b. priority on planning, feasibility studies, and installation of bike lanes on major arterials, namely Laird Dr., Eglinton Ave., Don Mills Rd.
 - c. planning to create a continuous bike network in Ward 26
 - d. ensure that Ward 26 cycling infrastructure is integral to Transit City studies and Environmental Assessments
 - e. amend bylaws to eliminate restrictions to bicycles to allow left-turns for bicycles only at certain intersections
 - f. amend Ravine Protection Bylaw to allow sustainable natural surface trail planning and installation
 - g. adopting international standards for planning, design, and construction of natural surface trails
2. Develop a plan for accountable, sustainable communication and correspondence with Ward 26 residents, City Staff across relevant departments, and local leaders.
3. Measure and evaluate outcomes on an ongoing basis, publishing results , reporting them to the public, and in particular to the residents of Ward 26.
4. Share and collaborate with other Wards, jurisdictions, and communities to enable and advance Ward 26 learnings and best practices.