

Document 1 – Public Engagement Summary

INTRODUCTION

The Bank Street Cycling and Transit Improvements project proposes the addition of bike lanes on Bank Street across Billings Bridge and modifications to the intersections of Bank Street at Riverside Drive westbound and at Riverdale Avenue. The project also proposes a northbound bus lane on Bank Street through Old Ottawa South in the weekday afternoon peak period.

Public engagement for this project included the following tools:

- Engage Ottawa/Participons Ottawa page with an online survey
- Virtual public meeting on June 21, 2023
- Individual comments delivered via email and phone to City staff
- Meeting with a local business representative on July 11, 2023

SUMMARY OF ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

Most participants were supportive of the project and emphasized the need for cycling infrastructure on a major corridor like Bank Street. They expressed support for safety improvements in cycling and walking as many stated that they feel unsafe or discouraged from cycling on the road over the bridge or feel uncomfortable as a pedestrian with people cycling on the sidewalk. They also supported enhanced connectivity in the cycling network, better access to major destinations like Old Ottawa South, Billings Bridge Mall, and Rideau River pathways, and reduced transit delay. Participants were generally pleased with any improvements in existing pedestrian, cycling, and transit infrastructure conditions in the city.

Based on the survey:

- 82% of respondents support bike lanes across Billings Bridge; and
- 67% of respondents support the northbound afternoon peak bus lane.

Concerns were expressed about reduced on-street parking and implications for local businesses, lane reduction and traffic congestion, greater physical protection for the cycling lanes, and the safety of cycling permitted in the bus lane.

This document contains further details of the engagement and is set up as follows:

- Section 1 presents the online survey results.

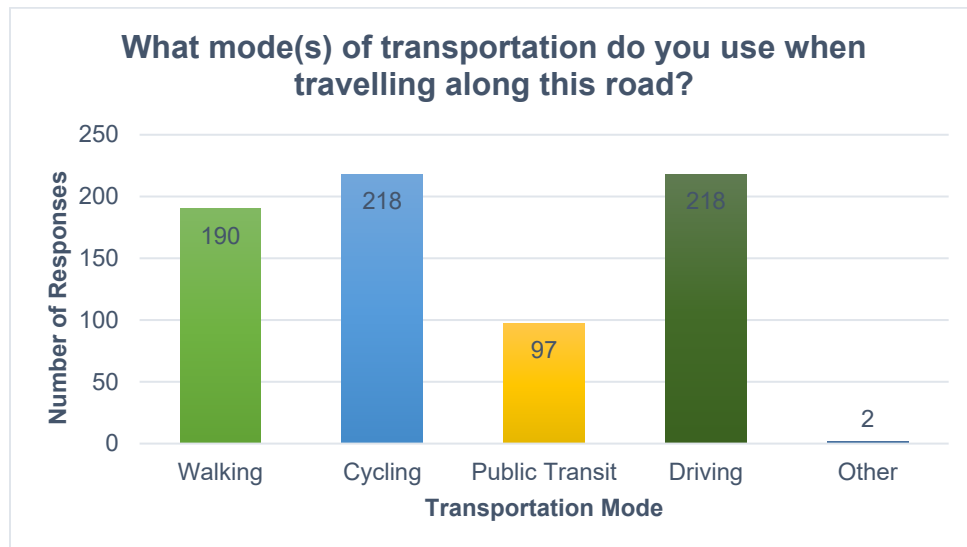
- Section 2 discusses concerns and provides staff responses.

SECTION 1: SUMMARY OF ONLINE SURVEY

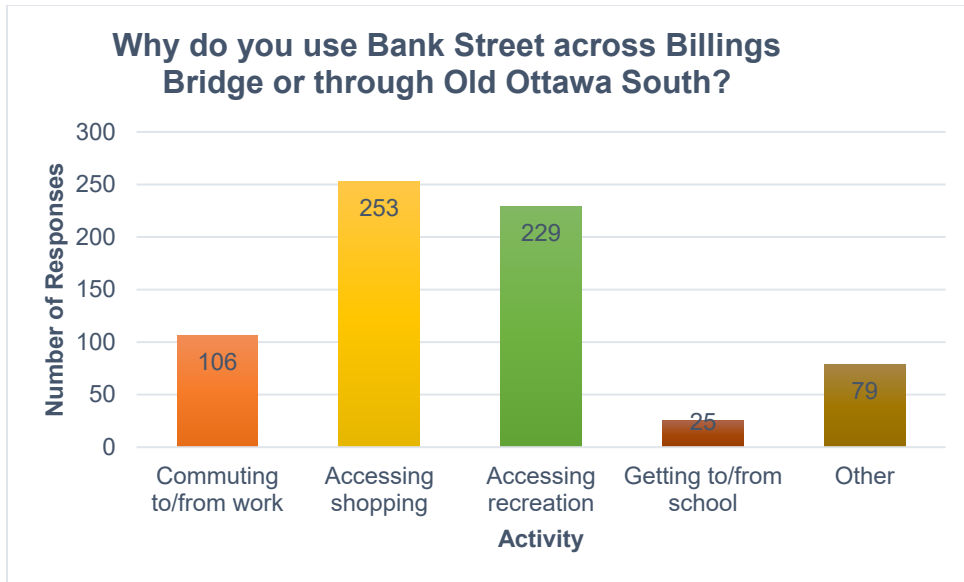
An online survey was available on Engage/Participons Ottawa between June 14-30, 2023.

There were 291 respondents, of which 46% use Bank Street across Billings Bridge or through Old Ottawa South on a daily basis. The remaining 54% consisted of those who use it weekly (29%) and occasionally (25%).

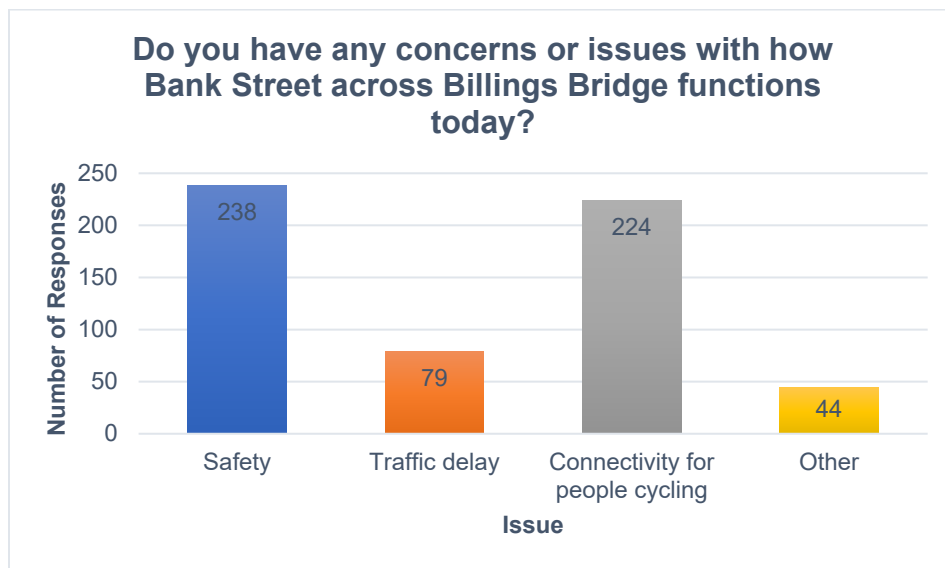
There were a variety of users captured, with cycling, driving, and walking as the most common modes on this road.



The survey reported access to shopping and recreation as popular uses for the corridor.



Safety and cycling connectivity were identified as significant issues with the bridge.



Most respondents expressed that there were no alternative routes for any mode without adding significant time and distance to their travels.

Based on the survey, the majority of respondents were supportive of the project. Approximately 82% of respondents supported the addition of bike lanes on Billings Bridge, while 15% did not and 3% were indifferent. Furthermore, 67% of respondents supported the northbound afternoon peak bus lane, 18% did not and 16% were indifferent.

SECTION 2: SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AND STAFF RESPONSES

In addition to the survey, public feedback for this project was received via an online public meeting held on June 21, 2023 and emails received by City staff. The feedback received through all channels has been summarized and addressed by staff below.

Physical Separation of Bike Facilities

Residents expressed the desire for more physical protection on the proposed bike lanes, such as raised cycle tracks, or other forms of barriers like delineators and concrete curbs.

Staff Response:

Raised cycle tracks would require modifications to the bridge structure which is outside the scope of this project. There is limited space available within the existing bridge deck to provide physical separation between the three traffic lanes and each of the bike lanes. In addition, there are technical challenges of providing physical measures on a bridge. Staff are considering options for providing separation, which will be explored in greater detail through the detailed design stage.

Alternative Bridge Options

There were suggestions for consideration of alternative bridge options to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists, such as widening or adding a cantilever to Billings Bridge, or the construction of a separate crossing/bridge.

Staff Response:

The Bank Street Renewal project provides an opportunity in the short term to provide cycling facilities. Rehabilitation or replacement of the bridge is not proceeding in the foreseeable future and therefore modifications to the bridge structure are not being considered as part of this project. This project does not preclude exploration of other crossing options in future.

Businesses and Reduced On-Street Parking

A range of concerns were raised related to the impact of the on-street parking restrictions on local businesses. These include:

1. The availability of parking for business patrons, especially at a busy time of day.
2. The availability of accessible parking.
3. Provision of loading and deliveries.
4. Suggestion for more bike racks to improve cycling access.

5. The benefits to busses not being worth the drawbacks of reduced parking.
6. Parked cars acting as a traffic calming measure.

Staff Response:

The original proposal for parking restrictions between 2pm and 6:30pm reflected the period of greatest delay to transit. The revised proposal limits the parking restrictions to between 2:30pm and 5:30pm to strike a balance between improving transit and providing parking for businesses. Staff conducted a parking study and found that during the proposed peak period (2:30-5:30pm), on-street parking is approximately 60 per cent utilized. Parking is available on side streets through the area.

The City's Traffic and Parking By-law (2017-301) allows vehicles with a valid accessible parking permit to stop within the bus lane to load or unload a person with a disability.

Short-term (one hour) parking is permitted on side streets throughout the area, which can be used for loading and deliveries.

Additional bike racks will be considered for this corridor.

If this project is approved, there are approximately 600 transit passengers in this corridor and whose journeys will improve significantly during the afternoon peak hour.

While on-street parking can act as a traffic calming measure, speeds in the Bank Street corridor during the afternoon peak period are limited primarily by vehicle volumes and congestion.

Traffic Congestion

Concern was raised related to the proposed reduction in vehicle lanes and the potential impact on traffic congestion, including the following comments:

1. The benefits of the project are not worth the traffic impacts. Environmental trade-offs between vehicular congestion and transit/cycling improvements are not well balanced.
2. Current traffic congestion around Billings Bridge due to construction shows that a reduction in vehicular lanes will result in traffic congestion.
3. Future congestion result in cut-through traffic in Old Ottawa South and Alta Vista.
4. Additional traffic from new residential developments on Bank Street will make traffic congestion worse.
5. Traffic impacts will increase difficulty in getting to events at Lansdowne.

Staff Response:

The TMP seeks to improve sustainable transportation alternatives, including walking, cycling, and transit. Improvements to cycling and transit facilities in the Bank Street corridor will provide people with more transportation options, while reducing the reliance on motor vehicles.

The current lane reductions associated with the construction on Bank Street do not represent the future configuration proposed by this project. Several factors are expected to reduce congestion compared to what is being experienced during construction, such as the inclusion of auxiliary lanes at key intersections, traffic signal timing optimization, and consistent lane arrangement.

Approximately 1600 vehicles crossed Billings Bridge during the morning peak hour pre-pandemic, and this project will maintain similar volumes despite ongoing development in the City. The traffic model estimated that some traffic would divert to other arterial roads that cross the Rideau River, such as Bronson Avenue and Main Street. Side streets are not expected to provide a suitable alternative to motor vehicles.

New developments were considered in the future traffic assumptions.

The bus lane will improve access for people using transit to get to Lansdowne events during the afternoon peak. The most significant traffic impacts resulting from the reduction of vehicular lanes on Billings Bridge occur in the weekday morning peak, which does not coincide with Lansdowne event times. Minor impacts to traffic are expected during other times of the day and week.

Proposed Lane Configuration

There were questions raised regarding the proposed three-lane configuration across Billings Bridge. Many residents voiced a preference for two vehicular lanes without auxiliary turning lanes to provide more space for the cycling facilities. Some suggested that a three-lane option with reversible centre lane should be considered.

Staff Response:

To address the cycling safety concern at the intersection of Bank Street and Riverside Drive westbound, a dedicated right turn signal is being proposed, meaning southbound drivers would not be able to turn right onto Riverside Drive unless the right turn arrow is displayed. A separate right turn lane is required so that right-turning vehicles do not block vehicles proceeding straight through during a separate signal phase. Options with

two-lanes and three-lanes with reversible centre lane would not be able to address the cycling safety concern and were not carried forward.

Network Connectivity

Respondents suggested improved connectivity and integration with adjacent pathways and streets in the cycling network. There was a suggestion to extend the northbound bike lane to Cameron Avenue.

Staff Response:

Connections from the Rideau River Eastern and Western Pathways to Bank Street will be explored through detailed design. Extending the northbound bike lane to Cameron Avenue would further impact on-street parking and would impact the ability to provide a southbound transit queue jump lane.

Engagement Notice

There was concern that notice of the public engagement period was too short.

Staff Response:

Formal notice of the public meeting was sent one week in advance of the event coincident with the posting of the project on Engage Ottawa. Additional outreach was provided in advance of the public meeting by Councillors Menard and Carr. The survey on Engage Ottawa was open for three weeks.

Cycling Permitted in Bus Lane

There were concerns about the safety and efficacy of a bus lane that permits people to cycle, such as limited visibility of people cycling from the bus, potential for collisions, busses slowed down by people cycling, and people cycling feeling unsafe or discouraged from cycling with busses.

Staff Response:

At present, people cycling must share the single northbound lane with general traffic, including buses, while also having consideration for parked cars. The proposed bus lane will have significantly fewer vehicles than the general traffic lane and will eliminate the potential conflict between people cycling and parked cars. Transit operators are trained professionals and will be aware that people cycling may be using the lane.

Northbound Direction for Bus Lane

There were questions about why the bus lane is proposed in the northbound direction rather than southbound, as it would be in the counterflow direction for the afternoon peak period.

Staff Response:

Parking is currently permitted during the afternoon peak period on the east side (northbound direction) of Bank Street, while it is not permitted on the west side (southbound direction) of Bank Street, meaning there are effectively two southbound lanes and one northbound lane during this period. OC Transpo buses experience significant delays in the northbound direction during this period as a result of the single northbound lane.

Winter Cycling

Questions were raised whether there are enough people cycling in winter to justify the bike lane and reduced vehicular lane.

Staff Response:

Approximately 11 per cent of people cycle year-round. For those who don't cycle year-round, there are still significant benefits to the city such as reduced car ownership and usage. Billings Bridge forms part of the Cross-Town Bikeway network and is expected to be a critical connection for people cycling year-round.

Bus Lane Enforcement

Residents were concerned with how the bus lane will be enforced to ensure that other vehicles do not use it.

Staff Response:

OC Transpo monitors the effectiveness of its bus lanes and will work with By-law Services if enforcement of parking and traffic restrictions is required.

Existing Routes for Cyclists

There were suggestions for cyclists to use other roads in the existing network instead of Billings Bridge and/or for cyclists to walk their bikes on the sidewalk over the bridge.

Staff Response:

The Rideau River is a major barrier to people cycling, with the nearest crossings being over one kilometre away. People cycling are more sensitive to distance and take shorter

trips than people driving motor vehicles and therefore are less comfortable riding out of their way to get to their destination. Bank Street is a Cross-Town Bikeway and is expected to have a high volume of people cycling, and therefore a “walk your bike” condition would not be appropriate.

Emergency Vehicles

Some were concerned that the reduced lanes and potential congestion may slow or impede emergency vehicles from using a main corridor.

Staff Response:

The three resulting lanes meet standards for emergency vehicles.

Existing Traffic Speed Conditions

There were comments that existing slow traffic speeds on Bank Street is safe for cyclists as it is.

Staff Response:

The traffic volumes and posted speed limit on Bank Street are greater than what is considered comfortable for people cycling in mixed traffic according to current best practices and City policy.

Lowering Speed Limits on Bank Street

It was suggested that the speed limit on Bank Street be lowered to help with road safety and vehicular flow in addition to the proposed changes, or as an alternative to the changes.

Staff Response:

Staff will explore lowering the speed limit across Billings Bridge.

Accessibility

The Accessibility Advisory Committee was consulted on this project and submitted the following comments:

Comment:

There was a comment asking how wheelchair users and those with visual impairments were considered in this proposal, noting that there can be conflicts on narrow sidewalks between users.

Staff Response:

Adding cycling facilities is expected to reduce the number of people cycling on the sidewalk and therefore the potential for conflict between people cycling and those walking or using mobility devices. Modifications at the intersections of Bank Street and Riverdale Avenue and Riverside Drive westbound will add accessible features, such as tactile walking surface indicators and wider sidewalks.

Comment:

There were concerns about the impacts on parking, specifically parking available for people with accessible parking permits, and whether the time savings for transit justifies the impact on parking.

Staff Response:

Approximately 14 parking spaces are proposed to be permanently removed and 41 parking spaces removed during the afternoon peak hour, however, these are general parking spaces as there are not currently any dedicated accessible parking spaces. Parking on side streets will not be affected and can provide an alternative to parking on Bank Street, though it is noted that there is significant distance between blocks on the east side of the street (approximately 200 m). A vehicle displaying an accessible parking permit may load or unload a person with a disability in a reserved bus or bike lane.

Improving delay and reliability of transit will positively impact those people with disabilities who use the transit system.

Comment:

There was a comment asking if the Parking Stakeholder Consultation Group was consulted about the removal of parking spaces.

Staff Response:

The Parking Stakeholder Consultation Group meets three or more times per year to discuss and provide input on policy and services related to the Municipal Parking Management Strategy, but do not have any formal decision-making authority. This project will be considered for inclusion on the agenda for the next meeting.

Comment:

There was a comment suggesting that a pathway underpass be constructed at Bank Street and Riverside Drive westbound so cyclists and pedestrians traversing on the path along the water don't have to cross this busy intersection.

Staff Response:

A pathway underpass was constructed at this location in 2019.