

What We Heard Report: Edmonton Bike Plan

Phase 1: Aspiration and Values

February, 2019

SHARE YOUR VOICE
SHAPE OUR CITY

Edmonton



1.0 Project Overview

The City of Edmonton is experiencing transformation across many fronts, including the renewal of its 2009 Bicycle Transportation Plan. That plan recommended the implementation of a citywide bike network that consisted mainly of on-street bicycle facilities and was opportunistic in its approach to implementation: routes were typically planned through the Active Transportation Program and often implemented through the Neighbourhood Renewal Program.

Since the release of the 2009 Bicycle Transportation Plan, the city's biking culture and landscape has evolved significantly. New biking infrastructure, coupled with greater downtown biking activity, signal that a renewed aspiration and direction are needed to capitalize on the momentum which has been established. The new plan will reflect the evolution of bike planning in Edmonton and across the continent.

Edmonton's new Bike Plan will define the key principles to guide citywide network design in the coming years, along with enhancing safety and convenience. At its core, the Bike Plan will be guided by four main project goals, as follows:

BIKE PLAN PROJECT GOALS:

GOAL 1

- + Develop an update to Edmonton's Bicycle Transportation Plan that will support Edmonton's mode shift by providing an aspiration and guidance for biking in Edmonton

GOAL 2

- + Use an evidence-based, data-driven approach to develop the plan

GOAL 3

- + Use public and stakeholder input to support and shape the development of the plan

GOAL 4

- + Develop a high-level network map identifying the long-term bike network to replace the existing bike network map



Engagement Phases and Timeline

The City's commitment to public engagement means that public and stakeholder input and perspectives are indispensable components in the planning process.

The Bike Plan will include three sets of engagement opportunities, aligned with the overall project phases. They are:

PHASE 1

+ Aspiration + Values

In sharing reflections on the existing bike network, as well as what is important to them going forward, participants informed the creation of an aspiration and set of values that will guide the development of the Bike Plan.

PHASE 2

+ Tradeoffs + Priorities

Drawing on the aspiration and values created in Phase 1, participants will consider tradeoffs and identify priorities that will help to guide where resources should be focused in the coming years in order to achieve our shared aspiration for biking. Input will also help to shape network design principles, which will inform the creation of a draft network map.

PHASE 3

+ Objectives + Actions (Final Plan)

The aspiration, values and priorities will be brought together to form a draft plan framework – including goals, actions and a draft network map – which will be shared and refined based on public input.



2.0 Phase 1 Engagement Approach

The focus of Phase 1 Bike Plan engagement was on the following broad questions:

- + What is our shared **aspiration** for bikes in Edmonton?
- + What are our shared **values**?
- + What **attributes** should guide our design of the bike network?

The project team sought to engage with a diverse cross-section of Edmontonians, including:

- + **People who bike:**
 - Avid cyclists/cycle commuters*
 - Recreational cyclists*
 - People who would like to bike more*
- + **People who don't bike:**
 - Would never bike (not able/not interested)*
 - Might be willing to give it a try*

Communication and Engagement Outcomes

- + Public feels they have the opportunity to contribute to Bike Plan decisions
- + Public understands how their input informs decisions and is used in the Bike Plan
- + Bike Plan project team has meaningful data to use in Bike Plan decisions
- + City Council is pleased with the level of engagement for Bike Plan
- + Edmontonians will have opportunities to participate in public engagement in the next phases

The engagement activities for Phase One of Edmonton Bike Plan fell primarily in the 'advise' and 'refine' positions on the City of Edmonton Public Engagement Spectrum. The City sought the public's insights into decisions that will shape the future of cycling in Edmonton.

The public is consulted by the City to share feedback and perspectives that are considered for policies, programs, projects, or services.

ADVISE

The public is involved by the City to adapt and adjust approaches to policies, programs, projects, or services.

REFINE

The public collaborates with the City to develop and build solutions regarding policies, programs, projects, or services. This can include community initiated engagement.

CREATE

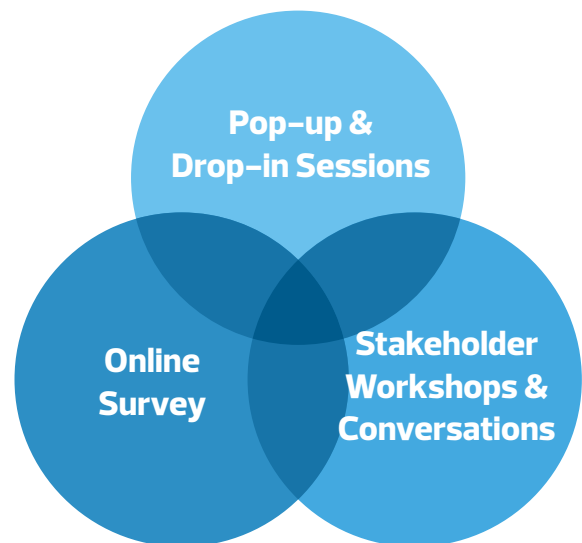
The public is empowered to make decisions directly or on behalf of the City about policies, programs, projects, or services.

DECIDE



Engagement Opportunities

Phase 1 included a number of opportunities for the public to share their perspectives on Edmonton's future Bike Plan, including pop-up events, drop-in sessions, an online survey and stakeholder workshops.



Pop-Up Sessions

- + Pop-up engagement sessions were held as a way to 'go where the people are'. The project team attended busy public events – including festivals, farmers markets and community events – through the late summer and early fall of 2018. Participants had a chance to talk to City staff about the project and to share their input on a 10x10' vinyl map of the city and existing bike network. People were asked to share their experience with what is working well around biking in Edmonton and what needs to change.

Drop-in Sessions

- + Drop-in sessions provided an opportunity for the project team to meet with a diverse audience, often in their own community and at hours that were convenient for them. Several drop-in sessions were held specifically for the Bike Plan project, while others were part of "Engage Edmonton", a series of interactive "marketplace" engagement opportunities that highlighted a number of City projects at once.

In order to facilitate deeper 1-on-1 conversations at these events, facilitators accompanied participants on a storyboard walk and jotted down their responses on clipboard notes or sticky notes. Subject matter experts were on hand to join the conversations and discuss items of technical interests.

Survey

- + The project team also wanted to reach Edmontonians who may not enjoy drop-in sessions, or who were unable to attend them. An online survey was developed with questions paralleling the in-person engagement opportunities. The survey was shared through the Insight Community and through a link on the project website (edmonton.ca/bikeplan). Participants could also choose to complete the survey in person at the drop-in sessions.

Targeted Workshops

- + The project team also wanted to talk with stakeholders who might be directly impacted by a new Bike Plan, and/or have specialized expertise to contribute. Three targeted workshops were held, with representatives from the active living, health, and education sectors participating. As with the public engagement opportunities, stakeholder groups were encouraged to contribute to the creation of an aspiration and values that would guide the formation of the Bike Plan.

Lastly, the project team facilitated two in-school sessions with grade 6 students at Bissett Elementary School, as well as a focused conversation with the Edmonton Youth Council, in order to seek out student/youth perspectives on biking in Edmonton. Additional focused conversations with youth and other targeted communities will take place in Phase 2.

Engagement Participation

ACTIVITY	NUMBER OF EVENTS	TIMING	PARTICIPATION
Pop-up sessions	8	August/ September	890 participants
Public drop-in sessions	11	October/ November	870 participants
Online survey	1 survey	October/ November	2,417 responses + Insight Community: 1,264 + Open Link: 1,136, + Drop-in sessions: 17
Targeted workshops and conversations	3	October/ November	118 participants

Communications Approach

A robust communications plan was developed to support the engagement process specifically and to draw attention to the new Bike Plan. A visual identity was created that gave the project an exciting 'look and feel'.

Some of the communications activities included:

- + Project website
- + Newsletters to those who express an interest
- + Social Media
- + Stakeholder emails
- + City of Edmonton engagement calendar
- + Print media
- + Posters and bookmarks
- + Project video
- + Insight community



Ad Performance:

- + **Ads on social media generated good results:**
 - 8,599 ad clicks
 - 2,906 link clicks
 - 1.5M+ Impressions
 - 41,275 3s+ video views
 - 7,596 50%+ video views
 - 195 comments generated
 - Males 25-34 were the most responsive

Twitter:

- + **41,637 impressions**
- + **345 engagements**
 - 30 retweets
 - 7 replies
 - 46 likes
 - 116 URL clicks



Engagement Questions

All of the engagement activities included a number of exercises to invite participants' input to the creation of an aspiration, values and characteristics. These exercises are explained here, and what we heard through each exercise is summarized in the following section.

+ TELL US WHAT YOU THINK:

We wanted to get a snapshot on what people thought about biking today in Edmonton. We started with Edmonton's Biking Vision from 2009 "Edmonton is a bike friendly city where more people bike more often". We asked "Is Edmonton a bike friendly city?" "When you think about biking in Edmonton what do you love? What deserves a thumbs down? What is missing? What is alarming? What do we need to think about?"

+ WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU: CHARACTERISTICS

Characteristics are the features or attributes essential in creating a city where biking is woven into the fabric of a livable urban environment. In the last decade of planning for bikes in Edmonton, the City has invited public input on a range of issues and opportunities, and it was clear that the Bike Plan project should start from a foundation of what had been heard to date. To achieve this, people who visited the drop-in or Engage Edmonton sessions were shown nine characteristics that summarized what had been heard prior to the start of this project, and were invited to choose the four that were most important to them when it comes to biking. The nine characteristics were:

- **Community-Driven:** *Involve the community in all aspects of bike planning including route selection, type of infrastructure and aesthetic treatments.*
- **Safe and Accessible:** *Edmonton's bike network should be safe, comfortable and accessible for people of All Ages and Abilities.*
- **Respectful:** *Create conditions so that people driving, biking, taking transit, walking or rolling can co-exist and care about each other.*
- **Well-designed:** *Trade offs and creative solutions are explored and implemented to create enjoyable, people-friendly spaces and neighbourhood vitality.*
- **Supported:** *Riding a bike and following the rules are supported through enforcement, education, and encouragement.*
- **Integrated:** *Bike routes consider and are connected with other ways to travel, such as public transit, driving, walking and rolling.*
- **Connected:** *People can bike a bicycle to regional, city-wide and neighbourhood destinations on a seamless, intuitive network that is easy to navigate.*
- **Convenient:** *Riding a bike is an easy, attractive option supported by direct routes, convenient and secure bike parking, and available bike share.*
- **Reliable:** *People can reliably enjoy low-stress cycling all year round without major detours or interruptions.*

+ WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU: VALUES

Values go to our core beliefs about biking in Edmonton and reflect our unique identity as Edmontonians. We asked participants to dig deep and differentiate between characteristics and values. The traits that were belief-based and passion-fueled emerged as values.

We asked: What identifies us as Edmontonians? What goes to the core of our beliefs about biking in Edmonton? What are our values?

+ ASPIRATION: IMAGINE

We asked people to be bold and dream a little. Participants were asked to 'Share the words and phrases that describe your vision for how biking fits into our city's future.' We explored what it could be: 'This is what it will look like, feel like, sound like. This is who will use it. This is how Edmontonians will talk about it and describe it. Here is why we will be proud of it and celebrate it.'

3.0 What We Heard

Tell Us What You Think

🗨️🗨️ Is Edmonton a bike friendly city? What do you love? What deserves a thumbs down? What is missing? What is alarming? What do we need to think about? 🗨️🗨️

+ LACK OF NETWORK CONNECTIVITY

Many participants mentioned that today's bike routes are disconnected from each other and expressed concerns about missing connections in the existing network.

"The disconnects between bike lanes force cyclists to share roads with drivers."

There is a strong desire for connected routes that allow cyclists to ride in continuous pathways without 'being dumped out into the middle of traffic', and without the flow of their ride being interrupted by unsafe intersections, gaps in infrastructure, construction/event activity (without well-marked detours) or poor wayfinding.

"Cycle paths go nowhere. Nothing is connected if you want to get somewhere."

+ CYCLIST/DRIVER BEHAVIOUR

In some cases, a tension exists between people who drive vehicles and people who bike.

"Confrontations between motor vehicle drivers and bikes are common and

frightening. They fail to abide by either's laws."

The 'rule breakers' in both groups – for example, drivers who make prohibited right-hand turns across bike lanes, or cyclists who ride on the sidewalk when it's not permitted – create tension and dangerous situations.

"Vehicle behaviour needs to be more respectful of cyclists and pedestrians. Edmonton needs to move away from being such a car dominated city and improved pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure does this."

Some participants felt that those who rode bikes should be required to be licensed and have insurance so they could be held responsible for dangerous behaviour.

"They should have to take a test, get insurance and have a license. Just like motor vehicles. They are quick to point out that under the Motor Vehicle Act they are considered vehicles. Well let's treat them like vehicles and make them pay, just like the rest of us."

While the City has had a comprehensive education program and street team in place to educate both drivers and cyclists about appropriate behaviour, some fear and

misinformation remain on both sides. Many participants stressed the importance of ongoing education of all road users – and active enforcement of the rules – to ensure respectful co-existence. Others felt that change will take time and will require a shift in culture.

“There needs to be a lot more education program for drivers. All of those signs are a cop out.”

“There are so many new traffic signals— it’s dangerous. We need driver education programs.”

+ BIKES ON SHARED USE PATHS AND SIDEWALKS

Many participants expressed concerns about the mixing – either by design or by default – of car/bike traffic on roadways, and bike/pedestrian traffic on sidewalks and shared-use paths. Specifically, concern was expressed by:

- **pedestrians:** who felt unsafe sharing the sidewalk with cyclists, who move more quickly and sometimes unpredictably in a confined space
- **cyclists:** some of whom reported biking on the sidewalk even though they knew it was against City bylaws, but felt unsafe sharing the road with traffic
- **drivers:** many of whom fear causing a collision if a cyclist acts unpredictably or doesn't follow the rules

“I fully support bike paths, particularly on the sidewalk as long as they do not interfere with traffic or parking.”

These concerns highlight the importance of and demand for protected bike facilities, which assign a safe, designated space to

cyclists and keep potentially conflicting modes separate.

“I bike on sidewalks because it feels safer in most areas.”

“My friends and I cycle together on the sidewalks. We are scared to bike on roads with six lanes of traffic or roads leading up to six lanes of traffic.”

+ POLARIZED PERSPECTIVES ON PROTECTED BIKE LANES

Many people expressed appreciation for the significant work done so far by the City. Beginners to seasoned commuters expressed gratitude about how protected bike lanes had improved biking in Edmonton. People who cycle recreationally as well less-confident cyclists riding for transportation said that they now bike more often due to the protected bike lanes.

“Philosophically really support this work – new lanes are great. Not a cyclist but support the direction!”

Other participants disagreed with the focus on protected bike routes. They felt that cyclists do not “pay their fair share” for bike infrastructure and that resources should not be spent on a minority of people who ride a bike. They were not in favour of their tax dollars going to support protected bike routes when, in their opinion, the routes are “underutilized” (especially in winter months) and interfere with vehicular traffic, parking and access.

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+ RECREATIONAL CYCLING

Participants emphasized that recreational cyclists—those who cycle for fun, to events, and outings with friends and family – need to be included in this work. Some participants felt that recent efforts have focused on the commuter cyclist, and wanted to ensure that biking can be enjoyable for many more people. People expressed a desire for more, clearly designated mountain bike trails and skills parks.

“As recreational cyclists we support better maintenance of river valley trails. Look for ways to connect communities to each other so kids could cycle to visit friends or go to school in adjacent communities.”

Interestingly, while recreational cyclists and some who do not cycle felt that undue emphasis has been placed on commuter routes, some commuting cyclists felt that recreational biking has been overemphasized.

“Current network is geared towards recreational cyclists.”

“The recreational cyclists need separation from overall system – shared paths should be looked at differently than commuting network. Much of the network is fine for leisure. Not great for most commuters because, system is not continuous across city.”

+ ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

A number of other comments were received through Phase 1 conversations, albeit less frequently than the themes identified above. They include:

- **Community engagement:** the importance of a community-driven process and ensuring that all road users and community members have a voice where bike infrastructure is planned
- **Maintenance of bike routes, particularly in the winter:** concern about brine solution damaging bikes, appreciation of quick snow clearing, concerns that bike lanes are sometimes cleared before sidewalks
- **Aesthetics:** some participants noted liking or not liking the way bike lanes look, and others were concerned about the amount of bike route-related signage in some areas
- **Bikes on main streets:** many participants shared their opinions about whether bike routes should be constructed – or not – on main streets like 109 St. or Whyte Ave

What We Heard: Characteristics

People who visited the drop-in sessions were shown nine characteristics and were invited to choose the four characteristics most important to them.

The nine characteristics were: community-driven; safe and accessible; respectful; well-designed; supported; integrated; connected; convenient; and reliable. Here's what emerged as the most important characteristics to participants.

+ SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE

Safe biking for people of all ages and abilities was identified as the top priority. Many people support separated or protected lanes and education for both drivers and cyclists to ensure the safety of all road users. Participants noted the importance of planning for more vulnerable road users, including individuals with disabilities, people using mobility aids/adapted bikes/strollers, children and seniors.

"Our parents won't let us ride from here to anywhere like Whyte Avenue or 104 Street or Rogers for a concert because there are no bike lanes and it is too dangerous."

"Sad as a few weeks ago my bike was stolen right next to NAIT LRT. My u-lock was cut and on the ground. I love biking places. Bike theft is a major problem."

People who ride extensively and recreational cyclists are also looking for

facilities where bikes can be secured without fear of theft and vandalism. Lack of secure bike parking facilities was a major deterrent for people who would like to bike more often and to more places.

"Need secure end-of-trip facility but only if convenient! I would like to ride more but not enough bike parking at my downtown office building."

+ CONNECTED

People want connected routes between 'places that people want to regularly get to'.

"Disconnects mean there's a constant battle inside me whether I want to be safe and slow (sidewalk) or less safe and fast (between the cars on the road)."

In particular, participants expressed a need for good connections to:

- key neighbourhood destinations (e.g. schools, libraries, grocery stores),
- citywide destinations (e.g. post-secondary institutions, recreation centres, the River Valley), events,
- employment areas (e.g. industrial areas), suburban neighbourhoods (e.g. Mill Woods, neighbourhoods outside Anthony Henday Drive)
- and adjacent municipalities, and a bike network facilitates seamless connections with other modes. People would also like to see routes that are well-connected and enjoyable for recreational cycling.

“Patchwork of routes needs infill/connections. Right now, we get dumped out miles from where we want to go and ride on the sidewalk the rest of the way.”

+ INTEGRATED

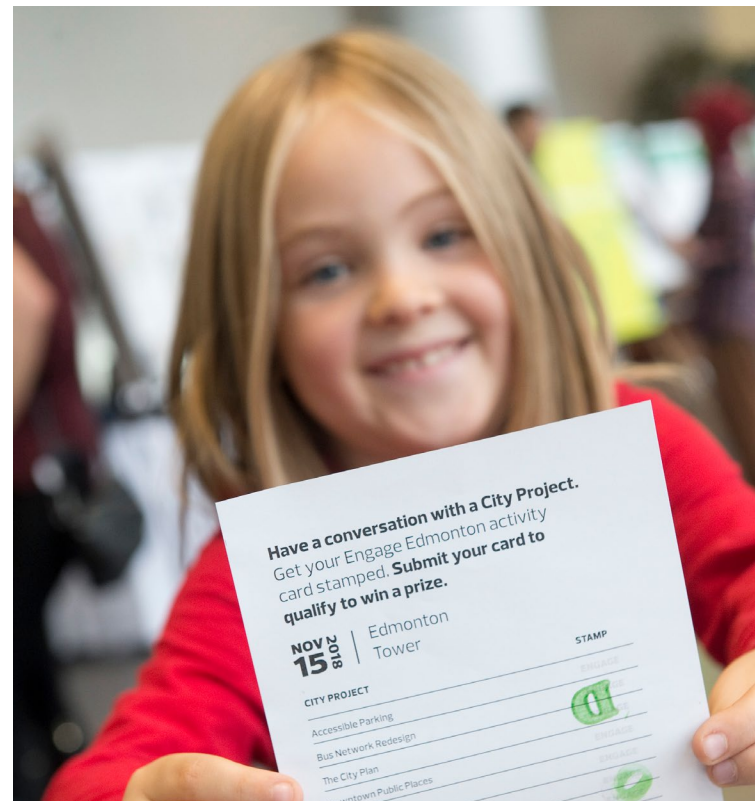
Linking easily to buses and LRT is important if biking is to be easy and fluid for recreational and commuter cyclists. Bikes on buses allow people to combine transportation modes.



While people expressed appreciation for bike racks on buses, they also noted that they don't currently work well for families or groups of more than two. Similarly, people expressed a desire for bikes to be allowed on the LRT during peak hours, thus facilitating commuter cycling.

“We'll never get cars off the road until the City allows bikes on the LRT during peak hours. Bikes + LRT = seamless commute to work, and more cars off the road. Unfortunately, now currently impossible. No taking bikes on LRT during peak hours.”

Good planning to separate potentially conflicting uses on River Valley trails and shared-use paths was also mentioned as a consideration, as was the need to accommodate bike share and e-bikes/e-scooters in a safe and coherent way.



What We Heard: Values

Values go to our core beliefs about biking in Edmonton and reflect our unique identity as Edmontonians. The traits that were belief-based and passion-fueled emerged as values.

We asked: What identifies us as Edmontonians? What goes to the core of our beliefs about biking in Edmonton? What are our values?

+ ACCESSIBLE AND EQUITABLE

People felt that biking in Edmonton should be available to everyone. People in all neighbourhoods and of all abilities, cultures, ages, and socio-economic groups should be able to enjoy biking in Edmonton.

"Equity for all. Kids from vulnerable neighbourhoods should be able to bike and have safe lock ups."

+ FUN

People felt that 'fun' needs to be emphasized. With some of the controversy that has surrounded new bike infrastructure in recent years, some people felt that fun had been taken out of the equation. Participants noted that bike lanes that are safe, connected and reliable can make biking so much more enjoyable, and make Edmonton a 'way more fun city!'

"If more people biked, Edmonton would be a happier city to live in. We can put the joy back in biking. Remember the fun we had as kids? We can find that fun again."

"Biking creates opportunities to have fun with friends and family."

+ URBAN PRIDE

People thought that a bike network could be a source of pride for Edmontonians, and that a strong bike network would 'up the cool factor' of Edmonton. Visitors to the city would see Edmonton as a modern, contemporary city, which could support tourism. People thought that bike lanes would be beneficial to young people and be a magnet that attracts and keeps youth in the city.

"With our river valley, and now our separated bike paths we could create a legacy of Edmonton as a biking city."

+ CULTURE OF BIKING

People acknowledged that a cultural shift needs to occur for biking to be viewed as commonplace and mainstream in Edmonton. Participants noted that the way to influence the culture is to create conditions so that people driving, biking, taking transit, walking or rolling can co-exist and care about each other. It was also noted that if school children could bike easily and safely to school, it could set them up for a lifetime of biking.

"Work on building the culture of biking. Start with schools. Culture change is important, more than infrastructure."

What We Heard: Aspiration

Participants offered several ideas on what aspirations should be incorporated when developing Edmonton's new Bike Plan.

There are some themes that emerged when talking about a future aspiration for biking in Edmonton. People would like biking in Edmonton to be:

+ A "GIVEN"

Biking should be mainstream and welcome as an ordinary and familiar way to enjoy Edmonton. If biking was the norm then interactions between cyclists, drivers, and those who do not bike would be friendly, and non-cyclists would demonstrate a positive attitude toward for cyclists and their families.

"Biking as a transportation is just a given. Obvious that everyone can bike."

+ AN EASY CHOICE

Biking should be an easy choice for people to make when they think of going anywhere—whether it's for groceries, to an event, to school or work, or just out for a ride to enjoy the city. This would be accomplished by easy access to routes that are connected, safe, and accessible for a diverse community of riders in all seasons.

"Easy choice because they are close by, safe, separated, intuitive to use. A safe efficient option for people to get around – anywhere, anytime."



+ **DIVERSE AND EQUITABLE**

People's aspirations included diversity—the ability for all ages, abilities, skill levels, socio-economic backgrounds, areas of the city, and cultures to choose to bike for a wide range of reasons.

"More people riding in all seasons. All people can ride in all season if they want to do so. Not just for the brave. For everyone. All ages kids 2–3 years, elderly."

"Accessible and equitable for all, including newcomers to Edmonton, youth, and different cultures."

+ **SUSTAINABLE**

Many people were advocates of the sustainable aspect of biking and felt that environmental benefits were an important consideration. Some called upon the City to stay true to their environmental sustainability strategies by giving cyclists priority when planning for transportation modes.

"Should be a core consideration. We must build it if we want to reduce greenhouse gases. Have a healthy society and a healthy environment."

Key Words and Phrases

There were certain words and phrases that people attending the targeted workshops wanted to make sure didn't get lost during the writing of the Bike Plan. We asked, "What words do you want to make sure we remember? What phrases do you not want us to lose?"

- + Everyone
- + Choice
- + Easy
- + Fun and Vibrant
- + Equitable, fair
- + Happy, invitation to explore
- + Uniquely Edmonton
- + Ordinary
- + Fun to Functional
- + Experience Edmonton
- + Bold
- + Legacy
- + Highly valued
- + Healthy city
- + Bikes are mainstream, normal



5.0 What It Means

What we heard and what we learned during **Phase 1: Aspiration and Values** tells us that Edmontonians have some clear ideas about the kind of city they would like to see for people who ride bikes – and people who don't. There was consistency across the engagement findings: from the public pop-up drop-in sessions, to the stakeholder sessions, to the online survey. These engagement results informed the development of the following aspiration statement and supporting values.

Aspiration

The Aspiration statement distilled from the engagement work in Phase 1 is:

🏡🏡 *Edmonton:
Where people are
invited to bike, for all
reasons in all seasons.* ””



Values

The following values were identified from the engagement work in Phase 1 and can be thought of as what people believe in for a made-in-Edmonton Bike Plan.

Equitable

- + Biking in Edmonton is an accessible choice for everyone. It reflects diverse users – all ages, abilities, backgrounds, and walks of life. It reflects the many motivations for biking – recreation, fitness, commuting, environmental stewardship, and enjoying the city. Biking welcomes new Edmontonians and long-time residents. Biking erases boundaries and creates connections across different worlds.

Urban Spirit

- + Edmonton is a vibrant city that invites people to change the way we move. Biking is an easy choice that generates opportunities for everyone to experience and explore Edmonton in new ways. Weaving biking into urban design creates spaces that celebrate the human spirit and people thriving in their urban element.

Fun

- + Biking creates happier cities to live in. Edmonton puts the fun back into biking and reignites the joy in adults that was found in childhood biking. Biking creates opportunities to have fun with friends and family.

Cultural Shift

- + Biking is mainstream in our city and is welcomed as an ordinary and familiar way to enjoy Edmonton. Biking spans the spectrum from fun to functional and is highly valued by people walking, driving, rolling, and biking.



Next Steps

The aspiration and values created in Phase 1 capture the essence of what is important to participants, and will inform the development of the rest of the Bike Plan. They will provide guidance as we move into Phase 2 of the Bike Plan project, considering tradeoffs and priorities and shaping the principles that will inform the evolution of the bike network, and they will support the development of the plan framework in Phase 3.

Thank You!

Thank you to everyone who contributed thoughts, ideas and concerns in Phase 1 – we are extremely grateful for your input, and we look forward to continuing the conversation in Phase 2!





FOR MORE INFORMATION

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