



BIKES MEAN BUSINESS

BUILDING A GREAT CYCLING (AND WALKING) CITY

Report and Survey findings prepared and written by
Ray Straatsma and Tom Berkhout.

This report is generously supported by a
Special Projects Grant (2013) from the City of Victoria.

Survey Design and Management by the BMB Project Team:
Tom Berkhout, Edie Irons, Ray Straatsma

Report designed by Felicity Perryman.

Graphics on page 9 by Ryan Mijker.

Photos on cover by Felicity Perryman. Left to right: Downtown Victoria: Gov-
ernment St., Pandora Ave, Herald Ave.

Photos on back cover by Sarah Rose Robert. Left to right: Victoria West café
terrace on the Galloping Goose, downtown Victoria cyclists on Yates St, a bus
and bike on Douglas Ave.

Thanks to the following for their advice, assistance, reviews and comments:
Kate Berniaz, Edie Irons, Ryan Mijker, Edward Pullman, Owen Fitzgerald, Max
McLean, Christine Terry, Sarah Webb, Corey Burger, Ken Kelly

Any errors are those of the authors.

And many thanks to our 23 volunteers:
Janet Besler, Brenda Boyd, Brian Burger, Dorrie Collins, Owen Fitzpatrick,
Miranda Harvey, Don How, Kathryn Kelly-Freiberg, Clay Lloyd, John Luton,
Ivan Marko, Naomi Martz, Kristine McCormick, Max McLean, Joe Melton,
Ryan Mijker, Edward Pullman, Liz Rademacher, Ian Scott, Christine Terry, Stuart
Walker, Taylor Waterman, Grace Wicken. (Apologies if we missed anyone).

Greater Victoria Cycling Coalition
PO Box 8586, Stn Central, Victoria, B.C., Canada V8W 3S2
GVCC.bc.ca info@gvcc.bc.ca [facebook.com/GVCCbc](https://www.facebook.com/GVCCbc) twitter.com/gvcc

BIKES MEAN BUSINESS

BUILDING A GREAT CYCLING (AND WALKING) CITY

A Bikes Mean Business (BMB) project
For the Greater Victoria Cycling Coalition (GVCC)
Ray Straatsma and Tom Berkhout

March 2014



GVCC cyclists on a tour of historic Fernwood Square, Victoria, BC. Photo by F. Perryman

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Across North America, cities are discovering and embracing cycling. Bicycle ridership is on the rise. Many mayors and city councils now view bicycling as an essential ingredient in the urban transportation mix. Cities across the continent are making major investments in bicycle lanes and facilities.

In addition to the direct health and environmental benefits long attributed to cycling, a number of recent North American studies have demonstrated the positive local economic impacts of active transportation (e.g., cycling and walking) in cities. These include: increased property values, lower transport costs, increased cycling-related manufacturing and retail opportunities and a loyal and reliable customer-base for local businesses.

To explore how these North American trends are playing out in Victoria, the Greater Victoria Cycling Coalition (GVCC) undertook a transportation survey from October

to December 2013 of downtown businesses and consumers. The project, which was supported with funding from the City of Victoria Special Project Grant, examined the relationship between personal transportation choices in downtown Victoria and local business activity. It also sought public opinion about transportation investments and changes to street configurations and public space. This report provides the findings from these two surveys.

This report also reviews the recent growth of active transportation in North American cities and summarizes research about the economic benefits that derive from investments in cycling infrastructure and increased biking and walking in our cities.

PRIMARY FINDINGS

Data for the project was collected through two different surveys carried out in downtown Victoria. In the first survey, we interviewed over 500 people on downtown sidewalks. This was followed by a second survey with 125 downtown businesses.

Our report shows that almost half of the people surveyed (48%) came downtown by bike or on foot. No particular mode of travel made up more than one-third of all trips: Car trips were at 26%, walking 31%, public transit 23% and cycling 17%. These proportions held when respondents were asked their 'most frequent' means of travel in a 'typical month'.

These numbers are broadly consistent with other local surveys and statistical data. For instance: 23% walk to work, and 10% bike to work in Victoria. Over two-thirds of downtown residents walk, bike or take transit to work. Between 40% and 60% of residents of adjacent neighbourhoods journey to work by sustainable transportation. Since 1996, motor vehicle trips downtown have declined, and other modes of travel have grown. Despite these established trends, business respondents tended to significantly underestimate how many people walked and cycled downtown.

Our survey shows that people who walked or biked downtown reported similar amounts of spending as motorists or transit users. We found no significant variation in spending estimates (over a month) by mode of travel. Our survey did find that walkers and cyclists tended to visit downtown more frequently, with drivers being the least frequent visitors. We point to related research from other cities showing that pedestrians and cyclists, as more frequent visitors, tend to spend as much or more than drivers over a longer period.

Respondents to our survey support new investments in infrastructure. New and better bike lanes had the highest levels of support; increased car parking the least. Business respondents were also supportive of bike facilities, improved sidewalks, better transit and other transport investments for the city's downtown. They were more split when queried about their support for bike lanes, even if it meant the loss of some street parking near their downtown location. Still, more than half of business respondents saw either a positive or little to no impact from that trade-off.

The research and data summarized in this report show that perceptions about the possible negative business impacts of expanding the city's active transportation infrastructure are on the whole unwarranted or misplaced. Better pedestrian and cycling infrastructure has enormous potential to support and enhance local business activity. The loss of a few parking spaces is easily mitigated by the upsides of more diverse transportation facilities that provide a broader range of options for people to come to and enjoy downtown.

The city of Victoria is well positioned to be a great cycling city. However, its commitments to cycling facilities are inconsistent and inadequate compared to our great potential. In the recent past, Victoria has been a leader in advancing cycling as a mode of urban transportation. But now the city has fallen behind: its mode share is not growing nearly as fast as other cities, and its cycling budget is quite modest. Cities across North America are making major investments

in cycling, and seeing dramatic results. Victoria can learn a lot from those examples.

New and better bike lanes had the highest levels of support, increased car parking the least.

Business respondents were also supportive of bike facilities, improved sidewalks, better transit and other transport investments for the city's downtown.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on relevant research and the results of our surveys, the report advances the following recommendations to Victoria City Council and staff:

1. Develop a fully-fledged Bicycle Master Plan, with strong targets, high-quality design standards and a funded implementation plan.
2. Create at least one new staff position: Bicycle and Pedestrian planner or coordinator.
3. Make significant new investments in cycling infrastructure – budget in the range of \$2-\$3 million annually for stand-alone bike projects.
4. Make similar investments in pedestrian facilities and public spaces that create an attractive, more walkable city, and a safer walking environment.
5. Encourage and facilitate ‘pilot projects’ to make walking attractive, create better bicycle facilities and vibrant public spaces.

INTRODUCTION

Dozens of Canadian and US cities have made dramatic and sustained investments in cycling and pedestrian infrastructure in recent years. Community leaders, mayors and city councils increasingly view bicycling as a cost-effective solution to common urban challenges, helping to address traffic congestion, air pollution, and the costs of providing parking. Cities big and small have strived to improve walkability in their communities, seeing foot traffic as a way to bring renewed vibrancy to downtown areas challenged by widespread suburban developments and the pull of shopping malls.

Better walking and cycling facilities bring a spectrum of benefits. Individuals benefit from improved health and fitness, lower personal transport costs, and more travel options. Cities and communities realize dividends from less congestion, air pollution and vehicle emissions, as well as reduced demand on parking, and lower transportation costs.

Community and business leaders frequently welcome the rise of cycling and walking in their cities and towns. However, there is often considerable resistance. Some individuals, businesses and organizations question the value of bike lanes or related infrastructure. A common perception is that investments and policies that encourage

cycling, walking (and transit) can inhibit automobile use, hamper access for drivers and disrupt an established business model that is reliant on customers arriving by car. Put another way, cycling might be seen as a good thing to do, but it is not often considered as ‘good for business’ or as part of an economic development strategy.

This report is part of a larger effort by the Greater Victoria Cycling Coalition (GVCC) to make the “business case for cycling.” Through a new program called Bikes Mean Business, we aim to demonstrate how and why cycling investments and a vibrant cycling community contributes to the local business community in Victoria.

To initiate this project, the GVCC conducted a transportation survey in 2013. The survey took place in downtown Victoria, in two parts. We interviewed over 500 people on sidewalks in different locations, followed by surveys with 125 downtown businesses. The project was supported with funding from the City of Victoria Special Grants Program.

The survey aimed to examine some of the issues regarding personal transportation choices and local business activity. We also sought out public opinion about transportation investments and possible changes to street configurations and public space.

A Cycling Renaissance

Montreal has over 500 kilometres of bicycle routes and paths. In the last decade, the city has built a robust network of separated bike lanes in its downtown. Over half the city's population identifies themselves as cyclists.^A

In Vancouver, cycling was the fastest growing transportation mode from 2008-2011 with 40% growth (increasing cycle mode share citywide from 2.9% to 3.8%).^B

Minneapolis saw a 47% increase in its bicycle counts from 2007-2011, and added 75% more miles of bike-way routes from 2010-2011. In 2011, Minneapolis was named the best bicycling city in the USA by Bicycling Magazine.^{CD}

Since 2007, New York has added nearly 350 miles of on-street bike lanes to its city, including 25 miles of protected lanes separated from traffic. As a result, commuter cycling has doubled between 2005 and 2011.^E

Bicycle counts in San Francisco rose by 96% since 2006. These successes in turn prompted further investments. San Francisco's recent transportation plan outlines \$316 Million for bicycle and pedestrian improvements, with a target of 20% of all trips by bike by 2030.^F

A. Figure from [Bicycle Facilities Design](#), BC Parks and Recreation Association, Spring 2011

B. "Report shows major shift to sustainable transportation." Office of the [Mayor of Vancouver](#)

C. City of Minneapolis, [Bicycle Account 2011](#)

D. [Bicycling.com](#); See also [Yes Magazine](#).

E. New York City, Department of Transportation, [Network and Statistics](#)

F. See [San Francisco Bicycle Coalition](#), Dec. 2013

We begin the report with a brief discussion of cycling ridership and planning practices both locally and across North America. Next the report summarizes recent research showing some of the economic benefits and dividends of sustained investments and commitments to urban cycling.

We then present the results and major findings from the GVCC's transportation survey of people and businesses in downtown Victoria. This is followed by a discussion of the relevance of our findings on transportation infrastructure decisions for Victoria's downtown core.

The study concludes with recommendations for the City of Victoria to take advantage of the economic benefits attributed to building a truly diverse transportation system in its downtown core.

EMERGING CYCLING TRENDS AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Local and Regional Cycling Initiatives

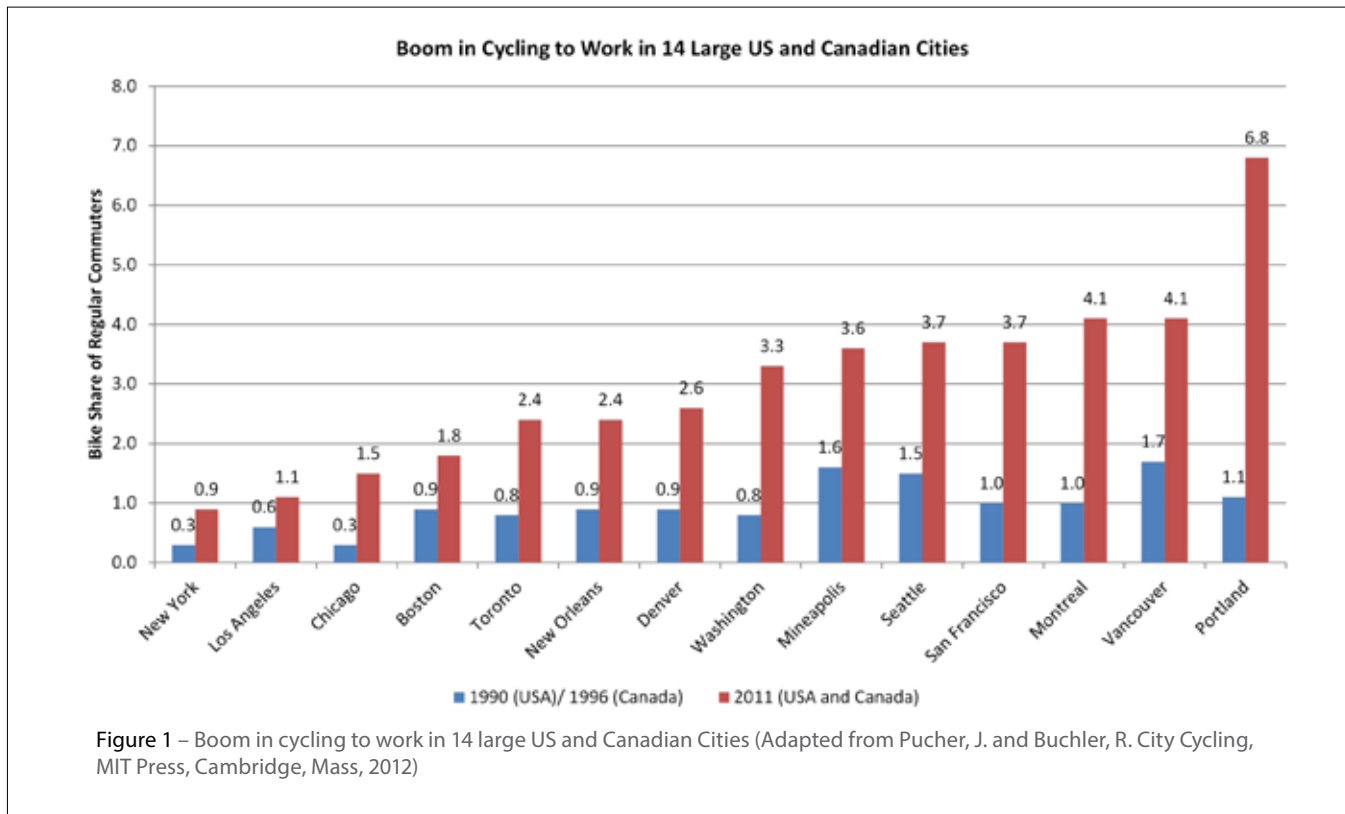
The Bikes Means Business program, and this survey report, are timely as local municipalities undertake a range of active transportation plans and activities. A number of cities in the Capital Region District are updating their bike and pedestrian plans, and/or preparing significant new investments in bike facilities, related infrastructure and programs to support active transportation.

Most immediately relevant, the City of Victoria formally launched an "Update" of its Bicycle Master Plan (BMP). The city's Bike Master Plan has not been renewed since 1995, and is therefore overdue for a detailed review of new priorities, policies and design standards. The city has installed bike lanes in recent years, but there is strong demand to fill in the gaps of the bike network and improve bike lanes and intersection designs.

Other cities in the region are also undertaking major transportation plans (e.g. Saanich's Shelbourne Valley Action Plan and Colwood's Transportation Plan).

At the regional level, the CRD has contributed to bike and pedestrian plans, at both local and regional levels. In 2011, the CRD released a comprehensive Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan (PCMP), which identified \$100 Million in priority cycling projects for accelerated implementation across the region. The CRD is now undertaking a number of efforts to support and fund active transportation projects across the region, including funding programs to the thirteen area municipalities, and other community and education efforts.

The PCMP placed major emphasis on making cycling more widely accessible for people of all ages and abilities. In line with research and practice elsewhere, the PCMP highlights the provision of cycling facilities



separate from motorized traffic to attract more cyclists, especially new riders, women and families. Only one-third of existing on-street bikeways in the region (282 km) are considered to offer adequate degree of separation.

North American and Local Cycling Ridership Trends

As local and regional cycling planning taking place throughout the Greater Victoria Area, dozens of cities across North America are experiencing remarkable rises in cycling usage. Over the last decade, bike riding across the largest 70 American cities has nearly doubled. Biking to work in the US increased by 57 percent between 2000 and 2009. Figure 1 shows a doubling and tripling of bike trips to work in select US and Canadian cities over the last couple of decades.¹

Numerous factors are contributing to this trend, such as changing urban planning and engineering practices, supportive leadership and funding at political and planning levels.² Often

municipal staff are dedicated to bike and pedestrian planning, and widespread educational efforts and a supportive bike community also play a role.³ But the most critical factor is dedicated and consistent investments in infrastructure and other supportive facilities (see Cycling Renaissance sidebar, page 06).

Unfortunately, these remarkable North American growth trends stand in stark contrast to what has taken place in Victoria and the CRD over a similar period. Both Victoria and the region have healthy overall bike and walk numbers. But what's striking is the lack of growth in recent years. Indeed, recent CRD numbers show little change among all modes of travel at the regional level (motor vehicle, transit, bike and foot) between 2001-2011. Bike trips at the regional level were 2.7% in 2011, 3.5% in 2006, and 2.7% in 2011.⁴

Victoria (city wide)	1996	2001	2006	2011
Bike to Work trips	9%	8%	10%	10%
Walk to work trips	23%	25%	23%	23%

Table 1- How people get to work in Victoria. Journey-to-Work, Statistics Canada.

This appears to be true for the City of Victoria as well (see Table 1). Cycling trips to work rose barely more than 1% between 1996-2011, with little variation over 15 years. Walk trips to work have also remained level over this period.

Bicycles Mean Business

The flattening of local cycling ridership over the past decade is troubling for at least two reasons. First, it reflects missed opportunities to expand the health and environmental benefits attributed to active transportation. Second, it means that Victoria and other communities in the region are likely also failing to capture the economic benefits that recent research shows comes with expanding cycling infrastructure and increased ridership. Based on our review of this research, there are at least seven compelling reasons why increasing ridership makes good business sense for cities.

1. Attracting Loyal Local Customers

An underlying aspect of the bicycle and business equation is the correlation between new or improved bike facilities – e.g. bike lanes or parking stalls – and local retail expenditures. With major new cycling investments now in place in many cities, the data is in. In New York City, businesses on Eighth and Ninth Avenues in New York saw almost 50% increase in sales receipts after the installation of protected bike lanes. Two thirds of merchants on San Francisco's Valencia Street said that bike lanes on that corridor had been good for business.⁶

2. A Boon to Tourism

At the broader level, some studies have highlighted the return on investment from cycling for industry and tourism. Colorado and Wisconsin both estimate revenues of \$1 billion each from recreational cyclists and cycling tourism. The popular Outer Banks region in North Carolina estimates over \$60 million in revenue from tourists who come specifically to the area for cycling.⁷

Portland's Bike Economy

In 2008 alone, bike related industries in Portland Oregon accounted for \$90 million in direct economic activity (60 per cent from retail, rental and repair sectors). Those industries have grown by 50 per cent since 2006, and provide 850-1150 jobs in Portland.^A

Bicycling & Business in the Windy City

"The city of Chicago moved from 10th to 5th of most bike-friendly cities in the country in one year. In the same year, we moved from 15th to 10th worldwide in the 'start-up' economy. No city worldwide moved that far that fast that quickly. You cannot be for a start-up, high-tech economy and not be pro-bike."

— Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel^B

A. [Value of Bike-Related Industry in Portland](#), Alta Planning, 2008

B. Quoted in [Seattle Bike Blog](#), Dec. 17, 2012.

Here in BC, over 50,000 people visit Myra Canyon, part of the Kettle Valley Trail in the Okanagan, generating \$5 million in economic benefits.⁸

3. Attracting Knowledge Sector Businesses

Bike-friendly and walkable cities also derive economic benefits from their ability to attract businesses and employees. Computing, gaming and other high-tech, innovative industries strive and compete to attract well-educated, high-wage employees. These workers – many of them highly mobile millennials – increasingly demand and expect to work in cities with well-connected urban amenities accessible by foot and bike.

In 2011, when Microsoft opened up a new gaming studio in Victoria, one of its executives proclaimed:

"We wanted to live where we worked and we love the community feel of Victoria... the walkability, the village centres, the bike lanes."⁹

4. Increased Property Values

In Vancouver, 85% of realtors said they would use a bike-way as a selling feature of a home. Bikeways and bike routes placed 3rd out of 39 features considered most important for home buyers when making their decision to purchase. Other research show how cycling routes can boost commercial activity and property values (see Figure 2).

5. Supporting Construction Industry Jobs

Bicycle infrastructure also creates jobs. One study, assessing 58 separate transport projects, found that \$1 million invested in bike infrastructure produced 11.4 jobs compared to 7.8 jobs for road-only projects.¹⁰

6. Keeping Up with the Kids

A new generation of workers and consumers are less interested in driving and cars than their parents. The average American drove 6% less in 2011 than 2004 (see Figure 3). Among young adults (16- to 34-year-olds), car use plummeted 23% from 2001 to 2009.¹¹ The Millennial generation tends to value their smart phones more than a new car, and are spending the time and money accordingly.

7. Reduced Health Costs

Many people also enjoy the fitness benefits from regular walking and cycling. In addition to these personal health benefits, employers and the economy as a whole benefit because, as is now well documented by research, a healthier workforce means fewer sick days, increased productivity and lower health care costs (see Figure 4).¹²

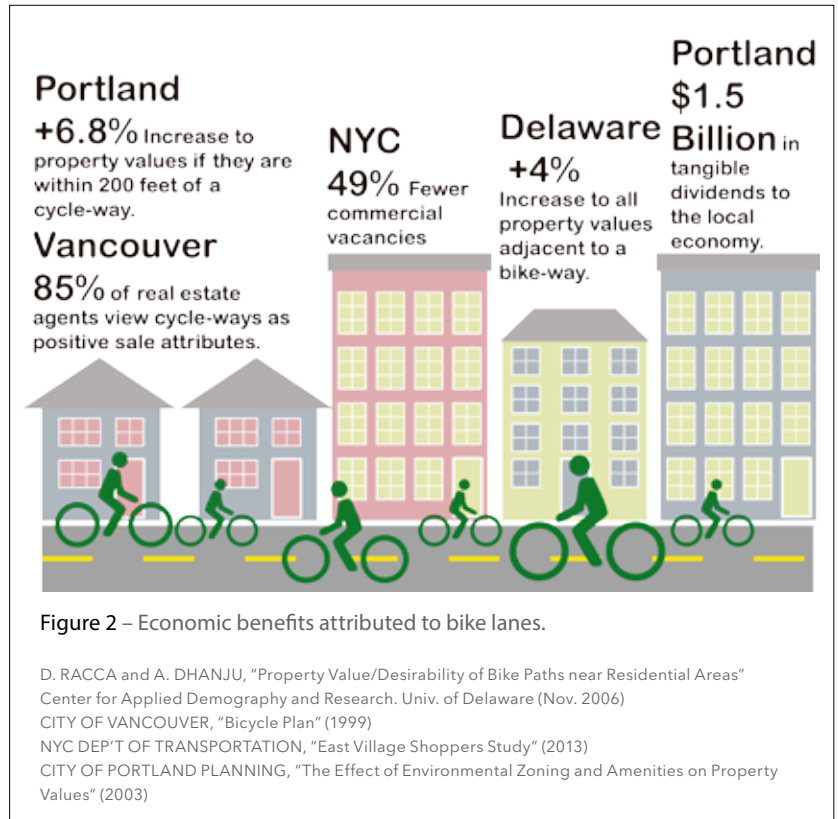


Figure 3 – US Data. Infograph adapted from Protected Bike Lanes Mean Business report



Figure 4 – US Data. Infograph adapted from Protected Bike Lanes Mean Business report

SURVEY RESULTS and MAJOR FINDINGS

From October 2013 to early December, the GVCC team and a group of volunteers conducted sidewalk or 'intercept' interviews with 504 people in Victoria's downtown core. We subsequently interviewed 125 business owners with a set of similar questions. In this section we provide a summary of the major results from these two surveys. The major findings from these surveys are discussed briefly in the section that follows.

Who We Surveyed

Of the 504 people who participated in the intercept survey, 48% were female and 51% male. About 50% of respondents were between ages 20 and 39; almost 45% between ages 40 and 69, with the rest under 20 years of age, or older than 70. In terms of where people live, 45% of respondents live in the city of Victoria; 37% from the Saanich Peninsula; with the rest from Western communities (Langford, Colwood etc.), or visiting from elsewhere in BC, Canada or abroad. Further information on survey respondents is outlined in Appendix 1.

Turning to the business survey, 58% of the businesses surveyed were in the shopping/retail sector, 19% dining, 16% professional services (e.g., hair salons, spas, clothing and shoe repair, educational services, employment services, financial institutions, travel and transport). Four per cent were accommodation services, and three per cent in arts and entertainment and public service.

How People Are Getting Downtown

The survey asked two key questions about mode of travel. How did respondents get downtown on the day of the survey? And what mode of travel do they use most often when travelling downtown? Both questions revealed that respondents use a range of transportation options for downtown trips.

Of the 504 people surveyed, 31% walked on the day of the survey; 26% took public transit; 23% drove a car; and 17% rode a bicycle (see Figure 5). Three percent arrived by some other mode (e.g taxi, scooter, motor cycle). Looking at non-motorized transportation options, almost half of the people surveyed (48%) came downtown by bike or on foot.

This same pattern held when we asked participants how often they used different modes of transportation to get downtown in a typical month (see Figure 6). The only

How did you get downtown today?

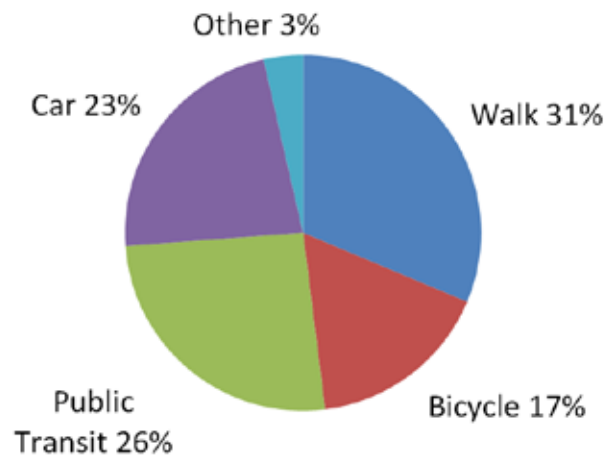
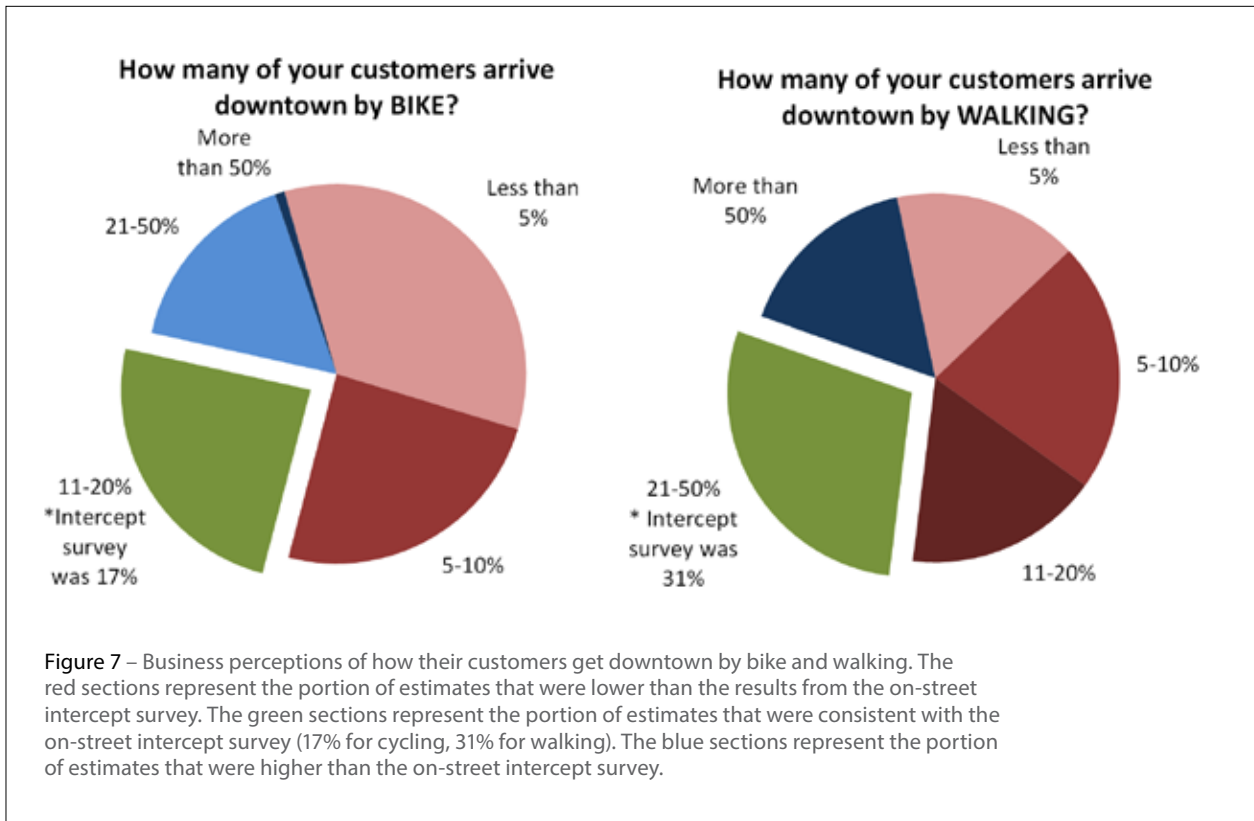
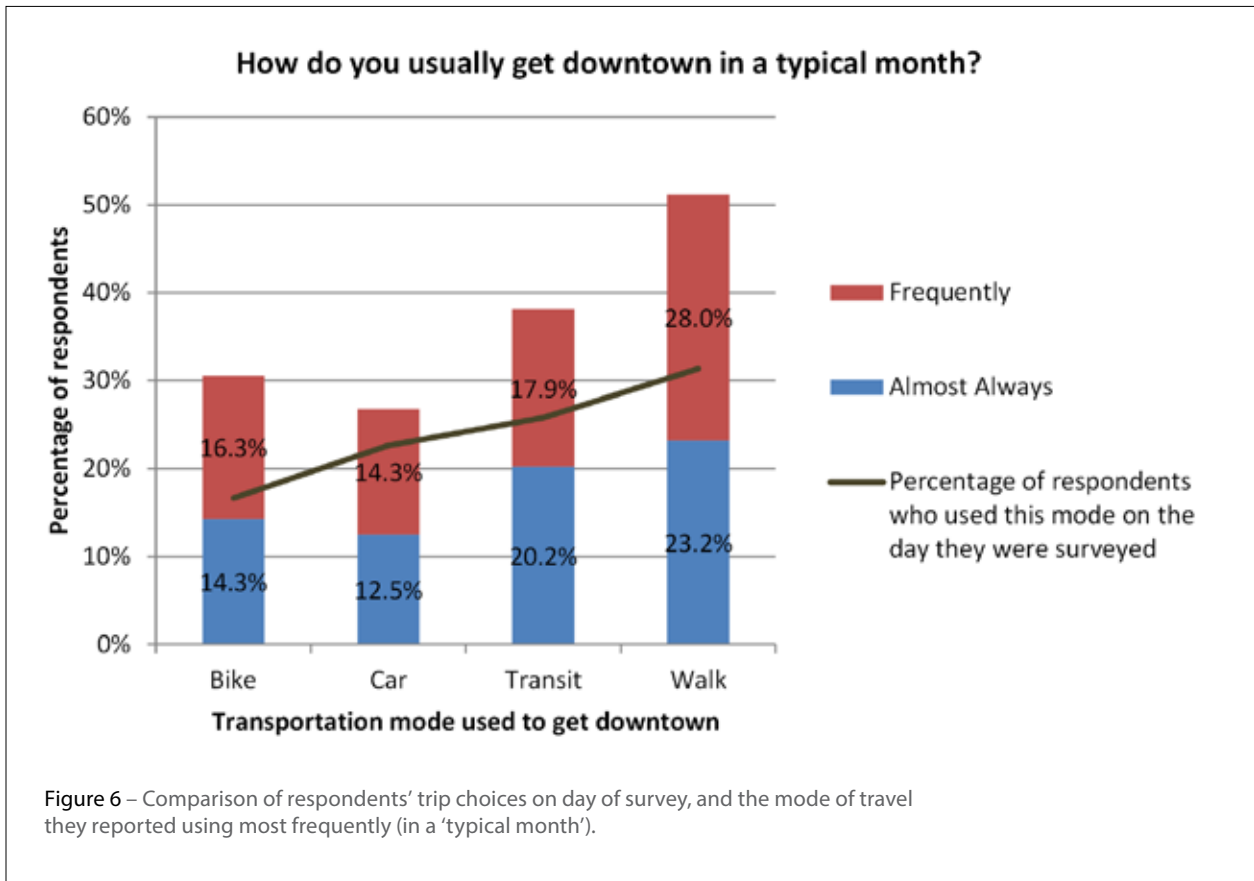


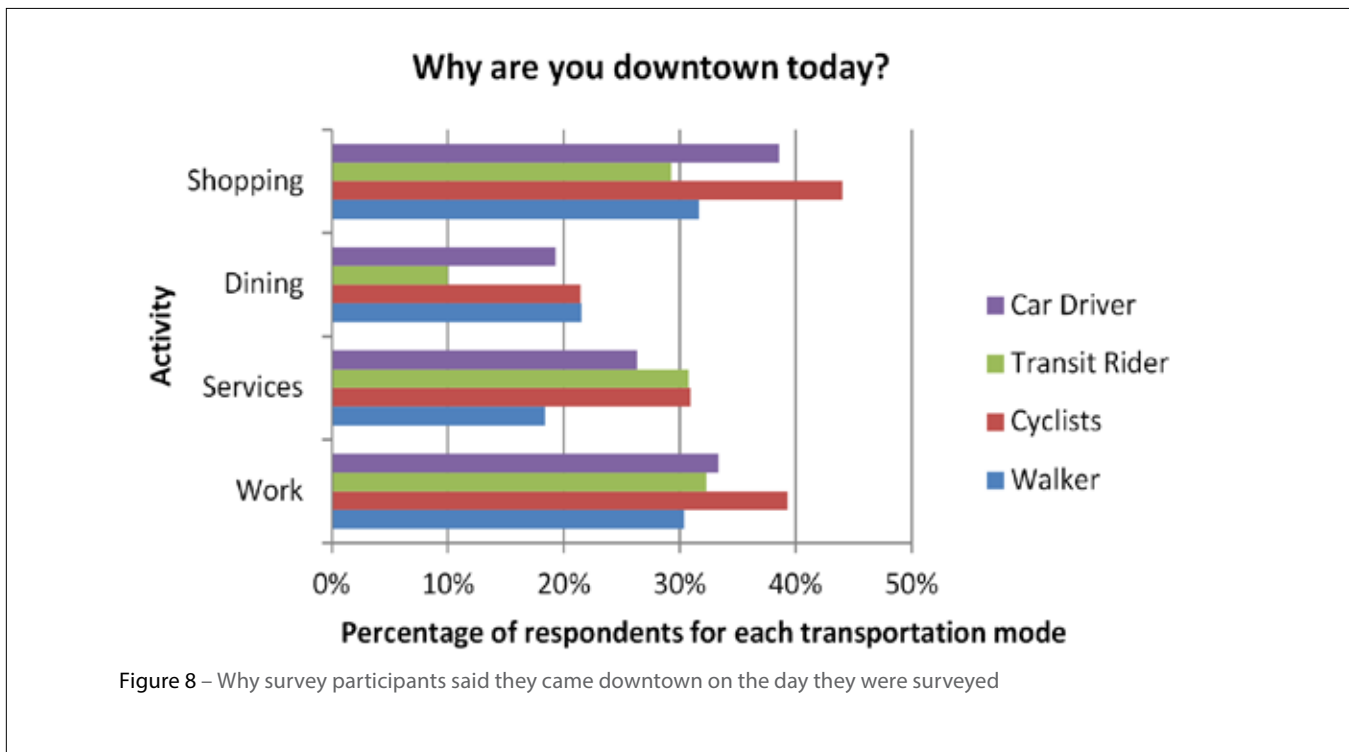
Figure 5

significant difference in this case was that the number of respondents who reported cycling either frequently or almost always (30.7%) was somewhat higher than those who reported driving their car to get downtown either frequently or almost always (26.8%).

Business Perceptions of How Customers Get Downtown

In our second survey, we interviewed 125 business owners and managers. We asked them to estimate what mode of travel their customers used to get downtown (e.g., car, walk, bike, transit). Almost 60% of businesses estimated that 10% or less of their customers biked to get downtown and 55% estimated that 20% or less walked (see Figure 7). By contrast, our intercept survey found 17% cycled and 31% walked. Transit use was also underestimated by a majority of business respondents (75%). Estimates of car use by downtown patrons appear to be closest to our intercept survey results. While not conclusive, our survey results suggest that businesses tend to underestimate how many downtown patrons arrive by foot, bike or transit. (See Appendix for more details on this question.)





What People Are Doing When They Get Downtown

More than 57% of respondents said they were downtown on the day of the survey to acquire goods and services from local businesses (i.e., shop, dine or access a professional service – see Figure 8). In many cases, multiple downtown activities were planned. Cyclists and motorists were the most likely to be carrying out these activities and walkers the least likely (although the acquisition of goods and services were fairly well distributed across all transportation modes).

In terms of the frequency of visits to downtown, more than 70% of people surveyed who reported walking, biking or using public transit to get downtown either frequently or almost always reported coming downtown 10 or more days in a typical month (79% for walkers, 77% for cyclists, and 74% for transit riders – see Figure 9). However, this number dropped to a little more than 50% for participants who reported driving downtown either frequently or almost always.

We also asked respondents to estimate how much money they spend downtown in a typical month. More than half of all respondents reported spending more than \$100 downtown in a typical month (74% of walkers, 68%

of cyclists, 67% of transit riders, and 65% of motorists) (Figure 10). Generally, there were no significant spending differences based on the frequency of transportation modes used.

Public & Business Support for Infrastructure Upgrades in Victoria’s Downtown Core

Given the important link between cycling infrastructure upgrades and increased ridership, both our intercept survey and business survey asked participants questions about upgrades to downtown Victoria’s transportation infrastructure.

In the intercept survey, we listed eight potential types of infrastructure changes in Victoria’s downtown core (see Figure 11). Of the changes listed, creating more painted bike lanes and building bike lanes separated by a physical divider received the highest levels of support, 60.7% and 58.7% respectively. Only 22% of respondents said that they would like to see more car parking in the downtown core. The remaining changes suggested by the survey received between 38% and 45% support from people surveyed. Only seven per cent of respondents felt that no changes were required.

How often do you come downtown in a typical month?

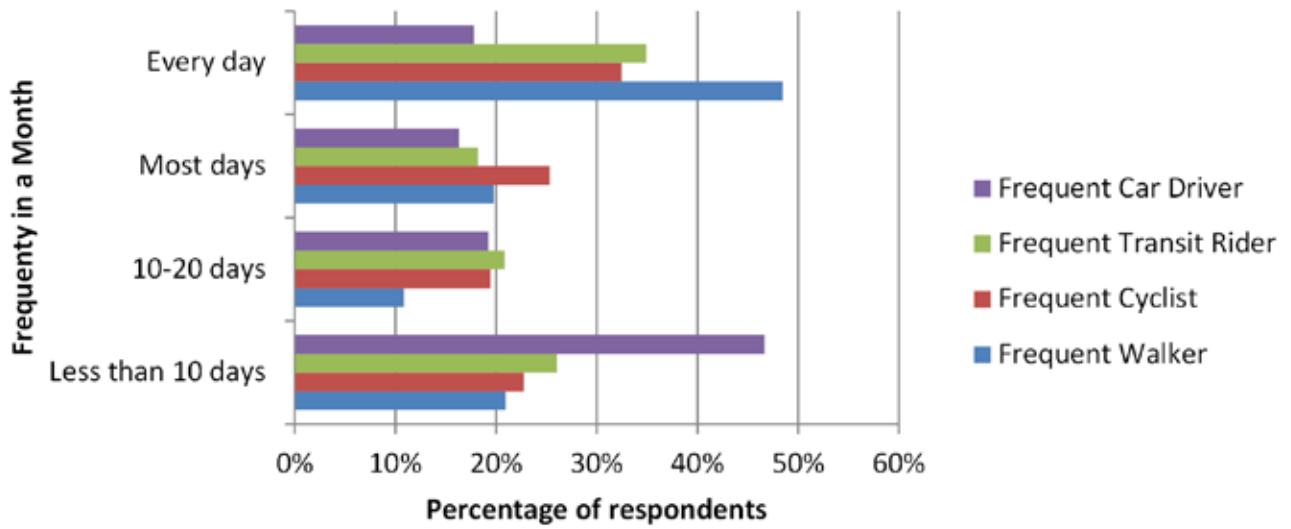


Figure 9 – Frequency of visits to downtown for respondents who reported using different transportation modes

How much money do you spend downtown in a typical month?

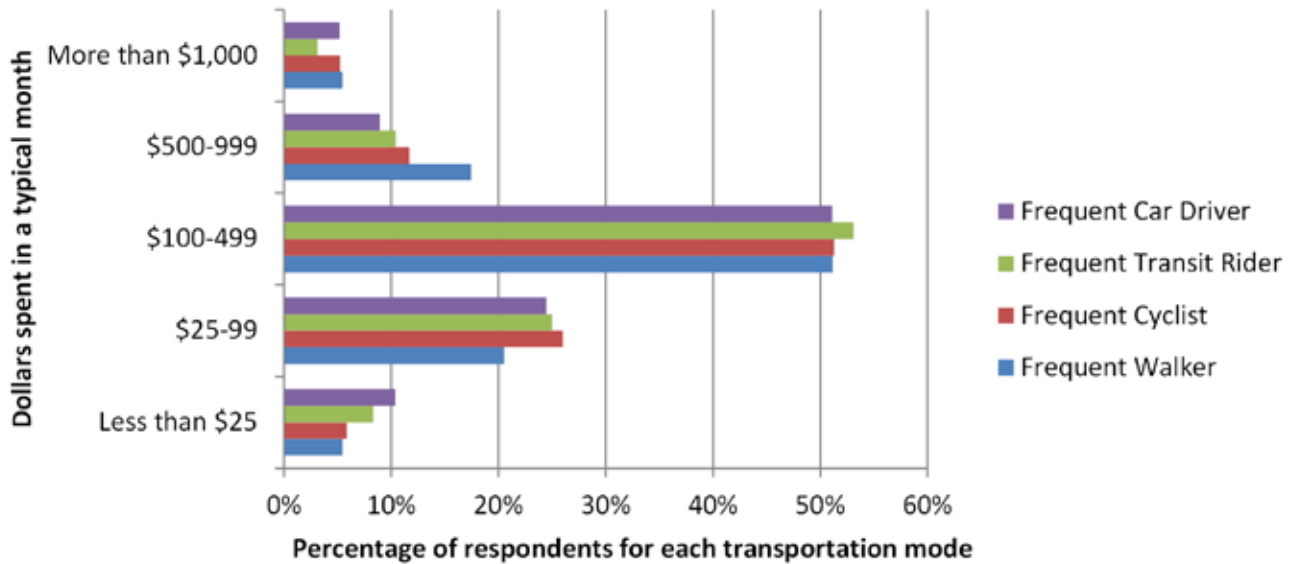


Figure 10 – Money spent in a typical month for respondents who reported using different transportation modes

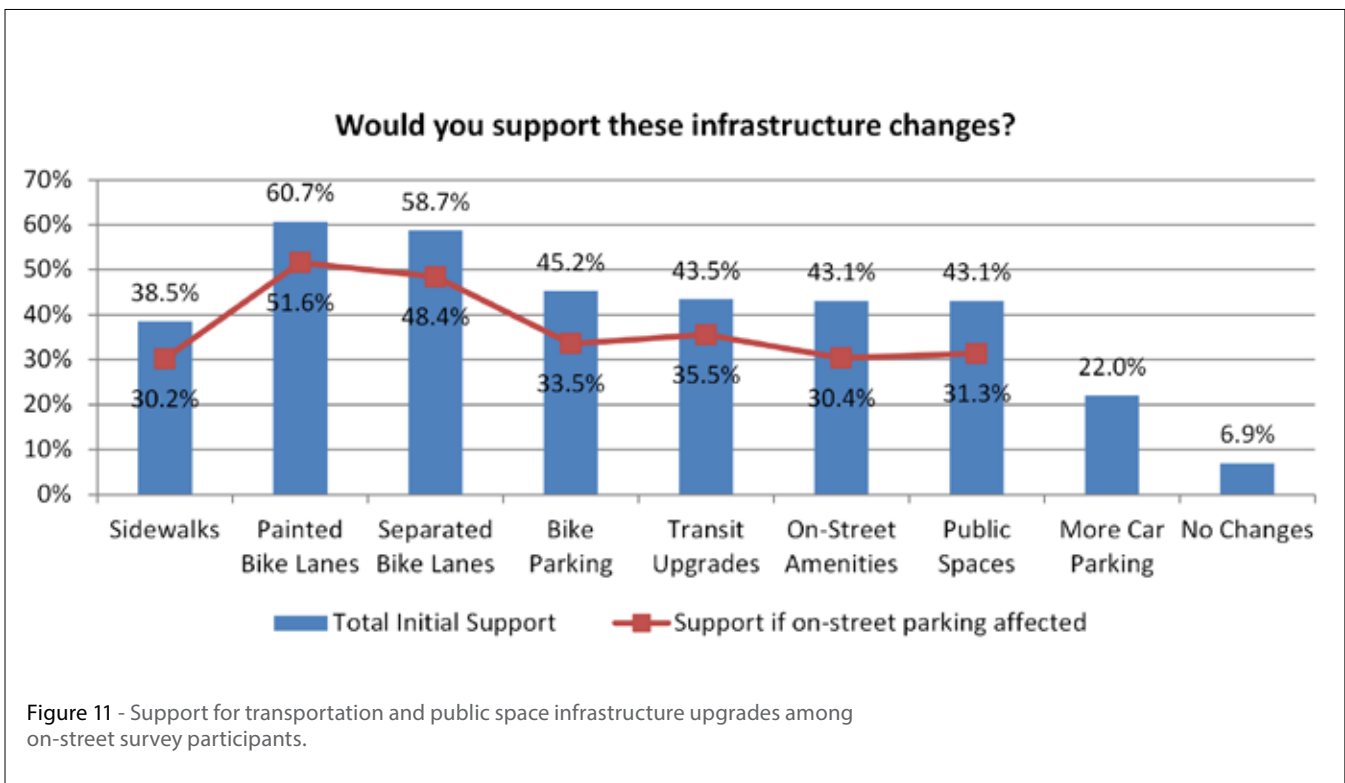
In a follow up question, we asked participants who indicated that they would support one or more infrastructure changes if they would still do so if it required the loss of some on-street parking. This led to roughly a 10% drop in support across the board, lowering support for painted and separated bikes lanes to 51.6% and 48.4% respectively (see Figure 11).

Anticipated Business Impacts of Infrastructure Upgrades

In the business survey, we asked what impact, if any, businesses expected nine preselected infrastructure upgrades in the city’s downtown would have on their business. Nearly

every business that we surveyed said that on their own these kinds of changes would have either little impact or a positive impact on them, with the greatest positive impact coming from more parking and the least from widening sidewalks (see Figure 12).

In a follow up question, we asked what impact these types of infrastructure changes would have on their business if it meant the loss of some on-street parking close to their location (see Figure 13). In this case, 57% - 62% of businesses felt that cycling, transit, and expanded public spaces and amenities would have either little impact or a positive impact on their business. For pedestrian infrastructure changes, this number dropped to only 45% of businesses.



Predicted Business Impact of Infrastructure Changes

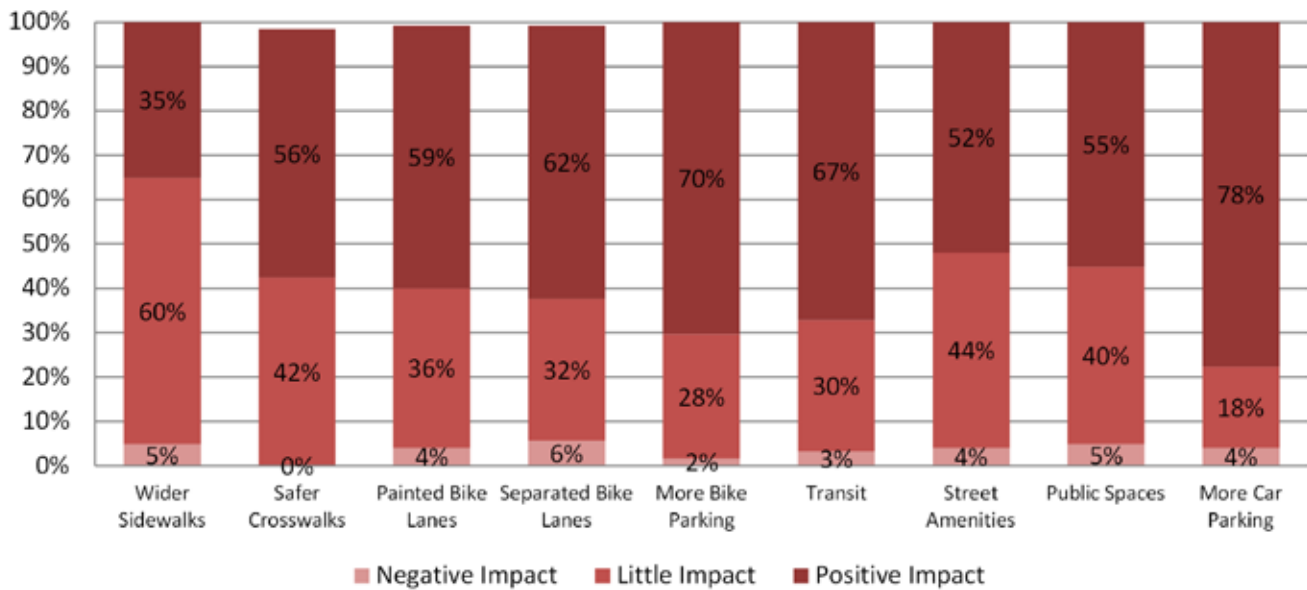


Figure 12 - Business impacts of different infrastructure changes that were predicted by business survey respondents (assumes no explicit link to loss of on-street parking)

Predicted Business Impact of Infrastructure Changes if Some On-Street Parking Reduced

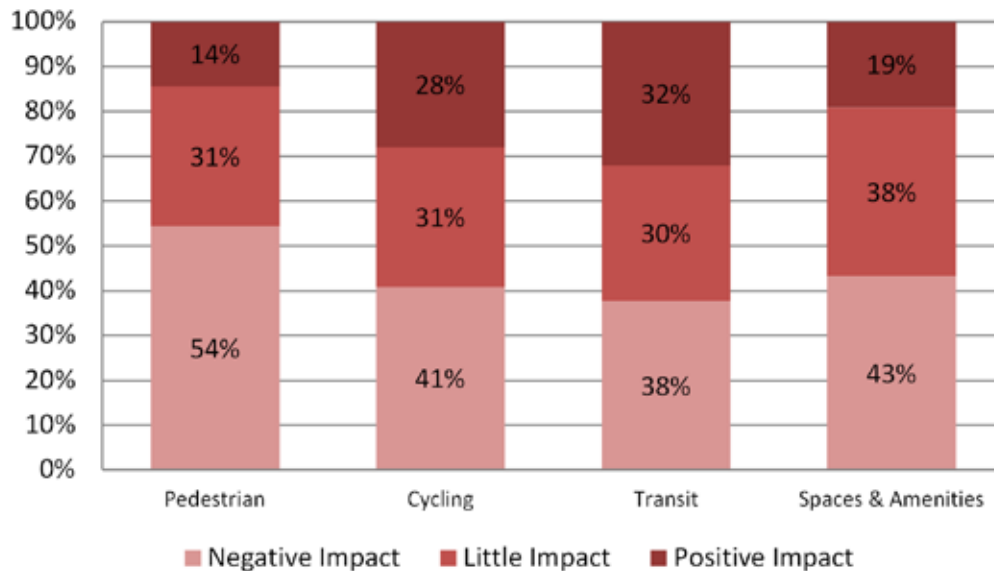


Figure 13 - Business impacts of different types of infrastructure changes if the change results in the loss of some on-street parking near the participant's down location.

DISCUSSION

The survey's findings demonstrate that no particular mode dominates travel downtown; none of the modes make up more than one-third of all trips. The fact that a car was used to get downtown by only 23% of the people surveyed may come as a surprise to some. However, this figure is well within the range of car use found in similar transportation surveys conducted in dense commercial neighborhoods of Toronto, New York, Portland and San Francisco (See Figure 14). For example, a 2008 survey of the Bloor St. area in Toronto found less than 20% of Bloor St. patrons arrived by car.¹³

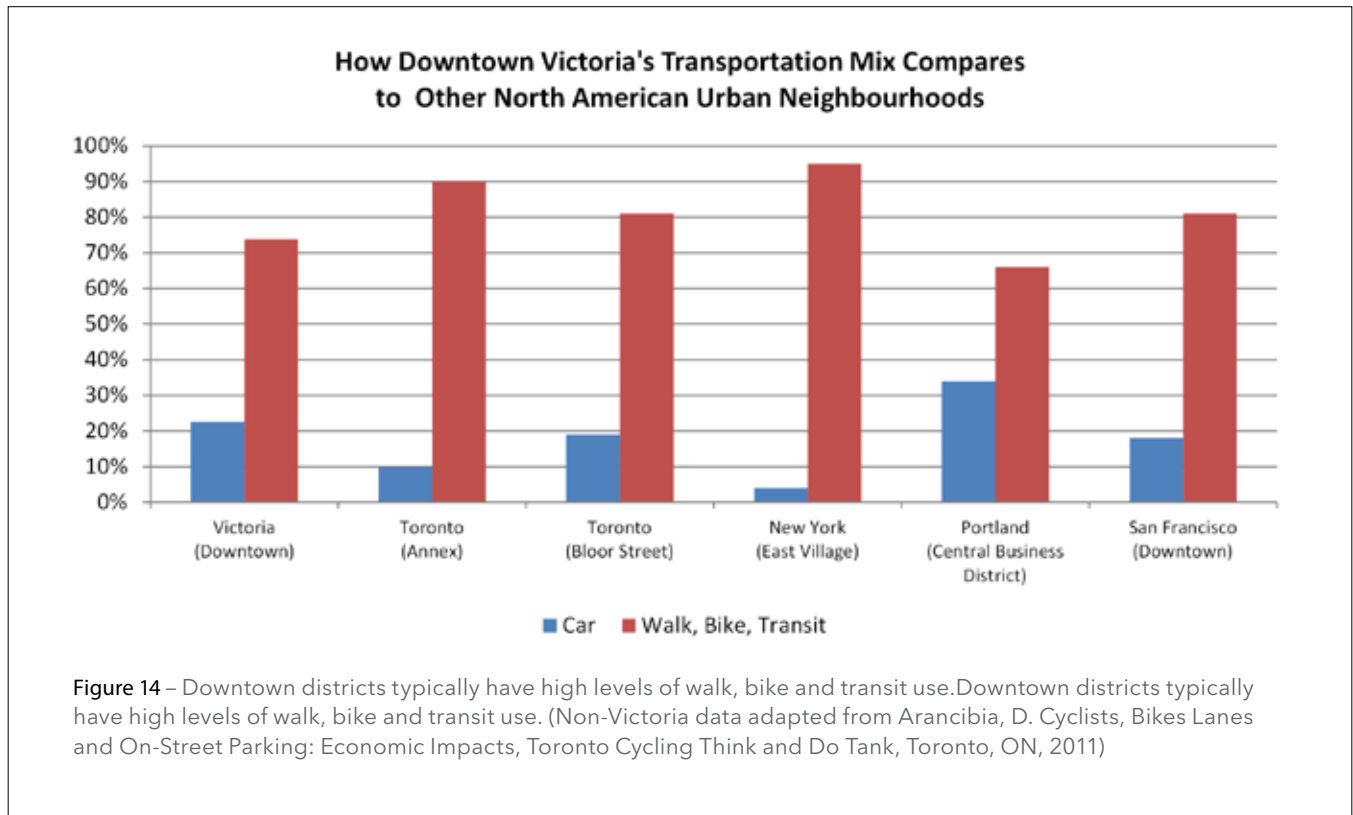
The findings of our transportation survey also confirm a strong level of cycling and walking in Victoria. For some time, survey and statistical data have shown Victoria has among the highest walk and bike commuting numbers in Canada. Citywide, about 23% of Victorians walk to work, and about 9-10% bike to work.¹⁴

The physical boundaries and character of Victoria likely accounts for a large part of these travel choices. Victoria is a compact city, with residential neighbourhoods in easy reach of the downtown and other primary destinations. Flat topography and a fine-grained street network also enable time-efficient walk and bike trips.

Despite Victoria's many benefits, over the past decade, there has been little to no growth in overall bike and walk numbers in both Victoria and the region. This stands in stark contrast to the remarkable growth, particularly in bike trips, in other North American cities such as Montreal, Portland, Seattle, Minneapolis, as well as smaller towns and cities.

In downtown Victoria, the story is a little different. Its central location and the concentration and proximity of many destinations, services and workplaces encourage higher level of sustainable transportation choices than the rest of the city (see Figure 15). Background documents from Victoria's Official Community Plan show that the sustainable transportation modal share grew between 1991 and 2006. During this time, car trips to and from Victoria's downtown core declined by 8% while transit, walk and bike trips to, from and within downtown increased by 11%.

These walking and biking figures are in line with those found in densely-populated and centrally-located neighbourhoods in larger cities such as Montreal and Vancouver (e.g. Mile-End, Kitsilano).



Despite the high use of sustainable transportation modes downtown, our survey found evidence that a strong car-bias exists among many downtown businesses. When asked how their customers arrived downtown, the majority of businesses surveyed underestimated the prevalence of walking, cycling, and transit compared to our on-street survey. Although each individual business is different in terms of how its customers typically get downtown, taken on the whole, this comparison suggests that a number of downtown businesses may not appreciate the important role that walking, cycling, and public transit play in getting customers downtown.

Our study also found that cyclists, pedestrians and transit riders spend about the same amount of money downtown over the course of a month as motorists but frequent downtown more often. This finding is consistent with several other studies that have examined cyclists and pedestrians and their consumption patterns. Research in San Francisco, Portland and Toronto found that consumers travelling by foot or bike may spend less per visit at given business but on the whole they spend similar amounts to motorists because they visit more frequently. A 2008 study of the Bloor St. area in Toronto found that “patrons arriving by foot and bicycle visit the area most often and spend the most per month.”¹⁵

One of the most rigorous studies of this type was by Kelly Clifton of Portland State University. She led a team in 2011 to research the link between consumer spending and travel behaviour in Portland, Oregon. Her conclusion:

“Survey results suggest that patrons who arrive by automobile do not necessarily convey greater monetary benefits to businesses than bicyclists, transit users, or pedestrians. This finding is contrary to what business owners often believe.”¹⁶

Coming back to our survey, given that more than 70% of the survey’s respondents reported using a sustainable

transportation mode to come downtown, underestimating the importance of these modes could prove harmful to downtown businesses if it is translated into how transportation infrastructure choices are prioritized.

Looking specifically at cycling, it is important to keep in mind that ridership increases in other North American cities demonstrate an important link between cycling infrastructure upgrades and increased ridership. Our on-street survey showed a strong level of support exists for expanding bike lanes in Victoria’s downtown core. The number of respondents who said that they supported more bike lanes – around 60% – was considerably higher than the 30% of respondents who reported they “frequently” or “almost always” rode their bikes downtown. In other words, support for new and improved bicycle infrastructure extends to non-cyclists as well as cyclists.

For businesses, the survey shows that on its own, the vast majority of businesses expect either a positive impact from an improved cycling infrastructure, or little impact. However, it also showed that careful consideration will need to be given to ensuring that motorists continue to have convenient and

predictable access to many businesses. So it will remain important to address issues such as parking for downtown businesses.

Yet our survey suggests, as does a growing body of similar research, that it is equally important to ensure a diverse and balanced mix of transportation choices in the downtown, and that there are plenty of advantages for local businesses to support alternatives modes of travel, especially in the downtown core.

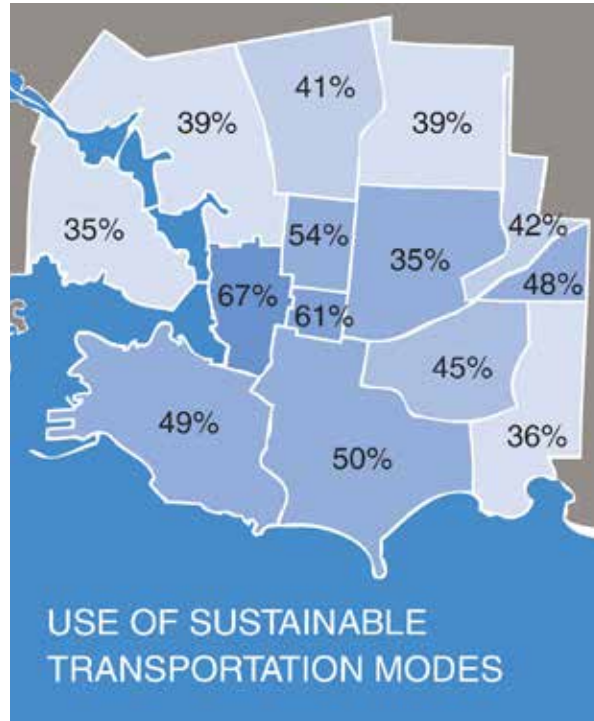


Figure 15 – Total percentage of walk, bike, transit use by Victoria residents, by neighborhood. Journey-to-Work Statistics Canada 2006, City of Victoria 2010

RECOMMENDATIONS and CONCLUSION

This report outlines the multiple economic benefits and dividends that derive from smart investments in walkable urban design and high-quality cycling facilities. In recent years, the downtown core has seen a decline in overall car trips, and a small but notable rise in sustainable modes of transportation. Our survey findings support this shift, showing levels of walking, biking and transit downtown similar or greater than motor vehicle trips. In the coming years, increased density and development will result in more residents living downtown, and generate more walk and bike trips in and around Victoria's city centre. As a result, these transportation trends are sure to continue.

Fortunately, Victoria is well situated to take advantage of these trends. The city as a whole is remarkably accessible, with many pleasant residential areas within easy walking distance of ocean waterfront, local neighbourhood villages and the downtown core. These attributes – what author Jeff Speck calls 'walkable urbanism' – are increasingly recognized as a competitive advantage, and a critical element to sustain and grow the local economy. As the American developer Chris Leinberger puts it:

"All the fancy economic development strategies, such as developing a biomedical cluster, an aerospace cluster, or whatever the current economic development 'flavor of the month' might be, do not hold a candle to the power of a great walkable urban place."¹⁷

The city's commercial centre, meanwhile, effectively serves as the downtown-core for the entire region. Downtown's natural waterfront setting, compact urban form, status as provincial capital and mix of heritage and modern buildings mark it as a special and attractive place for residents, visitors and the business community.

Despite these advantages, to date Victoria has underplayed its hand to be a truly great biking and walking city. Although the city has among the highest levels of biking and walking to work in the country, these levels are not well reflected or supported in the quality and attractiveness of Victoria's built environment.

Perhaps Victoria's walking and cycling numbers have either been taken for granted or have led to a certain complacency. The City has not made consistent or substantial investments in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Its current annual budget for bicycle facilities is a modest \$250,000-\$300,000.¹⁸ As a result, the city's bicycle network is incomplete, rife with gaps and poor connections. Some designated bicycle routes have no facilities to speak of, other than the odd sign. Where new bike lanes

or facilities have been installed they are often poorly designed or inappropriate for traffic volumes and speed. And some of the most popular bike routes are not part of the city's designated bicycle network.

Dozens of major cities across North America are experiencing major growth in cycling; this growth is largely the result of multi-million dollar investments in high-quality bicycle infrastructure aimed at attracting riders of all ages and abilities. The Victoria region is

blessed with comparable facilities: the Galloping Goose and Lochside trails are world-class and well-loved by local residents and visitors. Similar investments suitable for the downtown core and nearby neighbourhoods will help complete the city's cycling network and attract new riders.

Victoria's recently announced 'Update' of its 20-year old Bicycle Master Plan is an opportune moment to identify broader ambitions for cycling in the city. The CRD's regional Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan is a good place to start, with its priority projects and mode share targets. Victoria can learn much from best practices and design standards established in other cities.

Much more can be done to encourage new riders, provide a comfortable and safe riding experience and really support and promote daily cycling for transportation and recreation. Fortunately, the results of our study show a latent support for improving the city's cycling infrastructure exists among the majority of individuals and businesses we surveyed.



Cycle tracks, Dunsmuir St., Vancouver. Photo by Ray Straatsma.

The City of Victoria is very well situated for significant new investments in cycling. Based on relevant research and results of our surveys, this report supports the following recommendations to Victoria City Council and staff:

1. Develop a fully-fledged Bicycle Master Plan, with strong targets, high-quality design standards and a funded implementation plan. A new Victoria plan should set interim targets to meet the goals of the region's Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan (PCMP), including a 25% cycling mode share in core municipalities by 2038.
2. Create at least one new staff position: Bicycle and Pedestrian planner or coordinator.
3. Make significant new investments in cycling infrastructure – an annual budget in the range of \$2-3 million for stand-alone bike projects. (The PCMP has identified \$100 million in priority projects across the region).
4. Similar investments in pedestrian facilities and public spaces that create an attractive, more walkable city, and a safer walking environment. (Too often such improvements are made only in response to new developments or road maintenance, and therefore proceed on a piecemeal basis).
5. Encourage and facilitate 'pilot projects' to create vibrant pedestrian and public spaces and better bicycle facilities. Creative conversion of street and parking spaces is one of multiple opportunities.¹⁹

Victoria is a very small city in a dynamic, highly-mobile global economy, dominated by wealthy cities and large regions that compete with each other to attract companies, employees and tourists worldwide. Victoria also competes with its neighbours at the regional level. Suburban municipalities, such as Langford, offer expansive residential areas, attractive recreational opportunities and multiple shopping venues.

To thrive in 21st century, Victoria would do well to enhance and intensify its essential urban qualities – including attractive pedestrian spaces and well-designed bicycle facilities. Building a truly walkable and bikeable city can generate dividends for local businesses, and support Victoria's future economic development. Doing so will also further advance the city's brand and tourism value.

Finally, a more walkable and bike-friendly city will also be a safer and more livable city for all of Victoria's residents.

These goals are attainable and well within reach. Many of the key ingredients and foundations are already in place. Leadership, imagination and an active community of engaged citizens will help get us there. Let's get started.

ENDNOTES

1. See the 2011 Benchmarking Report of the Alliance for Biking and Walking.
2. For instance, between 1988 and 2006, annual US federal funding for cycling has grown from \$5million to \$1billion. http://www.participaction.com/pdf/May2012_RF_EN.pdf
3. See: <http://bikeportland.org/2013/07/02/what-caused-portlands-biking-boom-89491>
4. Capital Regional District, [Draft Regional Transportation Plan, 2013](#).
5. City of Victoria, Official Community Plan, Transportation Topic Sheet, 2011
6. Figures from the [Green Lane Statistics Library](#).
7. Figures from K. Clifton et al, [Business Cycles: Catering to the Cycling Market](#)
8. Public Safety Canada, 2004, \$13.4 Million to Rebuild Myra Canyon Trestles.
9. Victoria Times-Colonist, Dec. 1, 2011.
10. Reported in [Fast Company](#), Oct. 1. 2012
11. US Public Interest Research Group, [A New Direction: Our Changing Relationship with Driving](#) (May 2013)
12. People for Bikes/Alliance for Biking and Walking, [Protected Bike Lanes Mean Business](#).
13. [Bike Lanes, On-Street Parking and Business](#), Clean Air Partnership, 2009
14. City of Victoria, Official Community Plan, Transportation Topic Sheet, 2011
15. [Bike Lanes, On-Street Parking and Business](#), Clean Air Partnership, 2009
16. K. Clifton et al, [Business Cycles: Catering to the Cycling Market](#)
17. Quoted in Jeff Speck, [Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time](#) (2012)
18. For comparison, Victoria has spent \$5 million in recent years upgrading its four downtown parkades, according to a recent article in Times-Colonist (Feb. 13, 2014).
19. A good example is the [VIVA Vancouver program](#), which invites applications for Street Parklets.



GVCC.BC.CA