

Commuter Cycling in Winnipeg, 2007 - 2014 Executive Summary

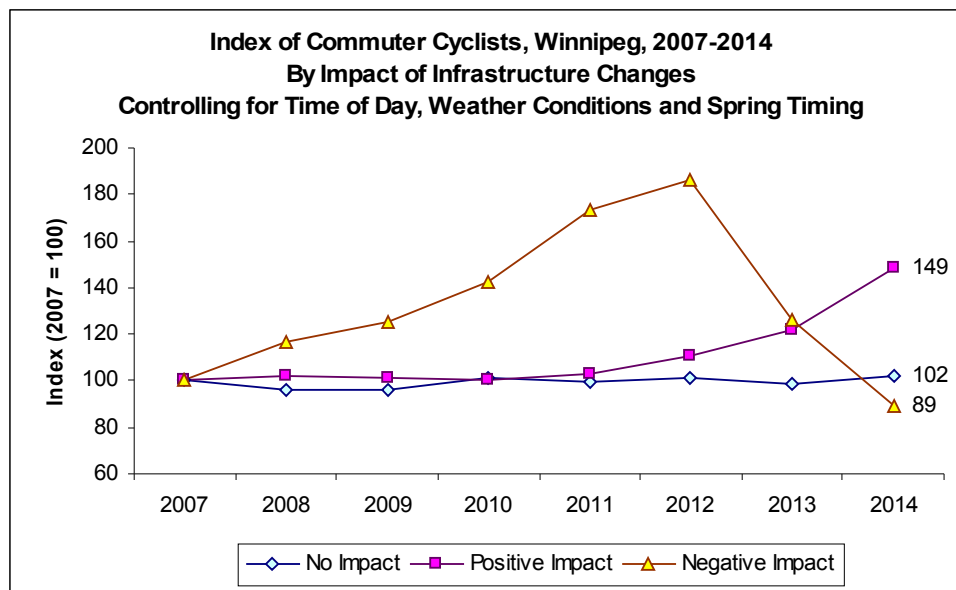
Volunteers from Bike Winnipeg (formerly Bike to the Future) have been conducting spring counts of bicycle traffic since 2007 in order to provide solid information about the numbers of commuter cyclists in Winnipeg based on direct observation. During April, May and June of 2014 we completed 68 counts at 25 locations in Winnipeg. Since 2007 we have completed 530 counts at 84 locations. (See Appendix B for summary data on the 2014 counts.) Our analysis resulted in these findings:

Daily and Seasonal Weather Patterns Affect Cycling Levels

Weather patterns have a big impact on the numbers of commuter cyclists, and this includes both daily and seasonal weather. The number of cyclists increases directly with the improvement of weather conditions. In addition the number of cyclists increases in relation to the timing of spring weather, measured as time since the last snow has melted. “Snow on the ground” is a better measure of spring timing than the calendar month and provides a clearer annual trend in commuter cycling behaviour.

Increase in Commuter Cycling Where Bike Lanes and Paths are Available

Cycling trends are related to the availability of bicycle lanes and paths. At locations where bike lanes or paths have been completed in recent years the number of cyclists increased by 8% in 2012, 10% in 2013 and 22% in 2014. **Since 2010 bicycle counts at these locations have increased by 49%.** On the other hand there was only a slight increase in bicycle counts at locations without such improvements. At two locations new bicycle infrastructure appears to have diverted cyclists away from unimproved facilities.

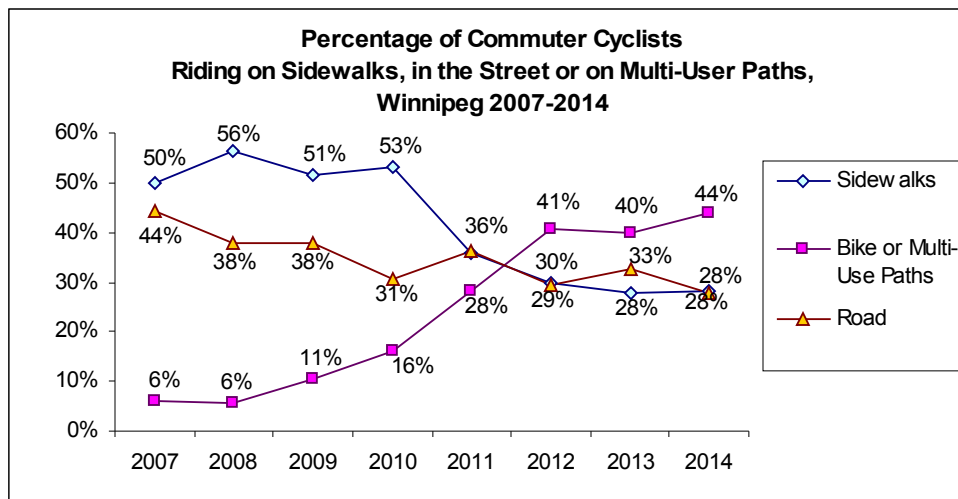


More than 14,000 Daily Bicycle Commuters in Winnipeg

- In **downtown Winnipeg** average daily bicycle traffic (number of cyclists) traveling during a typical weekday in May or June is estimated at **13,789**.
- Assuming each cyclist is counted twice, traveling both in and out of downtown, the number of downtown commuter cyclists is estimated at half of the total daily traffic or **6,895**.
- Given that downtown commuters are about 48% of the total number of Winnipeg commuter cyclists, the number of bicycle commuters for the city as a whole on a typical weekday in May or June is estimated at **14,350**. The total number of commuter cyclists in the city would be higher, given that not every cyclist commutes every day.

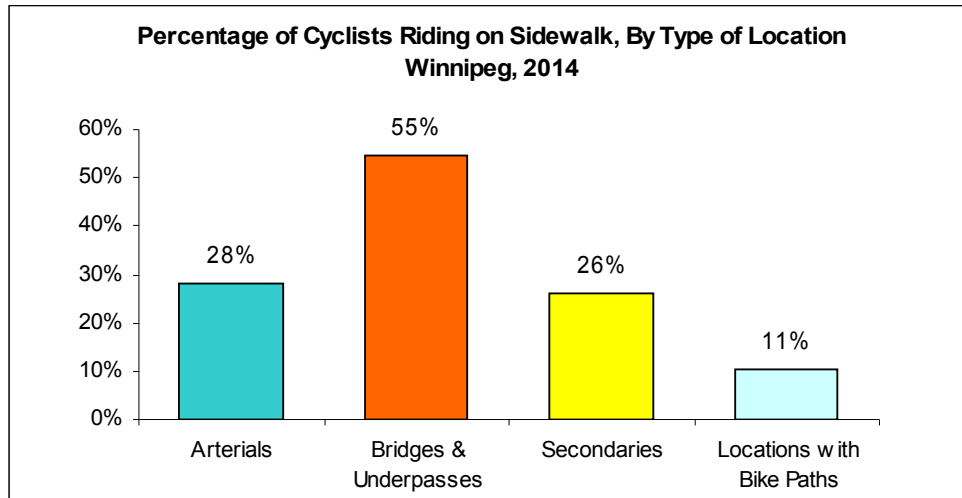
Less Sidewalk Riding Where Bike Paths Exist

Although cycling on sidewalks is illegal in Manitoba, except where explicitly permitted, many cyclists ride on the sidewalks, either for convenience or out of fear of riding in the street. At the locations we monitor, the proportion of cyclists riding on the sidewalks declined from 53% in 2010 to 27% in 2008. The percentage riding in the street has also declined, from 44% to 26%. At the same time the percentage of cyclists riding on bike lanes or paths has increased from 6% in 2007 to 45% in 2014. In short, there has been a major shift in bicycle traffic from sidewalks and roads to bike lanes and multi-user paths. The timing of these shifts coincided with the completion of a number of new bike lanes and paths in 2010 and subsequent years.



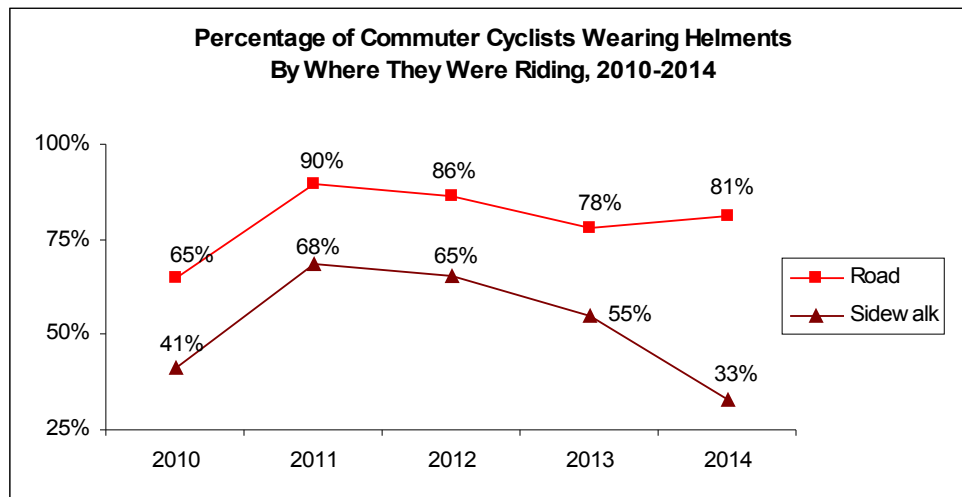
Majority of Cyclists on Sidewalks at Bridges and Underpasses

Sidewalk riding remains high on major bridges and underpasses where the majority continue to take to the sidewalks. Where bike lanes or paths are available few ride on the sidewalks.



Helmet Use Higher on Roads than on Sidewalks

In 2014 65% of commuter cyclists wore helmets, down slightly from 2013. While 81% of cyclists riding on the roads wore helmets, only 33% of those riding on sidewalks wore helmets.



Conclusions

Over the past several years Winnipeg has been gradually increasing the extent of facilities designed for cyclists, including the provision of multi-user paths, separated or buffered bike lanes, painted bike lanes, and traffic calming devices. Progress has been slow with most of the new facilities built as part of the federal infrastructure stimulus program. These new facilities have included a few major bridges, but most have been smaller projects, such as painted bicycle lanes, and cyclists continue to avoid riding in the street at most of the major bridges and underpasses.

Nevertheless there is strong evidence that even the limited construction of new cycling infrastructure that has occurred since 2009 has had a positive impact on the numbers of cyclists in Winnipeg. This year's bike counts and analysis suggest that there has been substantial growth in cycling but that this is taking place primarily at locations with new bike lanes and multi-user paths. Similarly, the locations with these new bicycle facilities have seen a reduction in sidewalk riding. On the other hand, major bridges and underpasses that have not yet been improved or which do not have bike lanes continue to push cyclists onto the sidewalks, or to discourage them from riding at all.

In addition, we reached the following conclusions:

- ❖ During May and June of 2014, an average of approximately 6,900 cyclists commuted in and out of the downtown area of Winnipeg during weekdays, and throughout the entire city a total of about 14,350 cyclists commuted on a daily basis.
- ❖ Sidewalk riding has been declining as bicycle-specific infrastructure becomes available. More than half of cyclists ride on the sidewalks on major bridges and underpasses, but where bike paths exist, only 11% ride on sidewalks. There has been a major shift in bicycle traffic from sidewalks and roads to bike lanes and multi-user paths *where they have been provided*.
- ❖ 65% of commuter cyclists wear helmets, with women, and those riding in the street more likely to wear helmets than men and those riding on sidewalks.
- ❖ After taking into account location, weather conditions, spring timing and time of day, commuter cycling in Winnipeg has increased by 16% over the past eight years. However, at locations with separated bike lanes or paths there has been a 49% increase over this time period.

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