

Bikes Mean Business is a report completed and released by the Greater Victoria Cycling Coalition in March 2014. In the report we highlight the growth in bicycle usage in North American cities and recent research demonstrating the economic benefits of cycling infrastructure and increased cycling trips in urban areas. To provide some local context to these broader North American trends and research findings, the GVCC conducted a survey of people and businesses in downtown Victoria.

Project Intent

The survey aimed to provide a snapshot of travel and consumption habits of people who actually spent time in the downtown core (as opposed to just passing through). It also sought to assess the level of interest and support by downtown patrons and businesses for various transportation investments, such as bike lanes and transit improvements. Our survey was developed, in part, according to similar research conducted in other cities, such as Toronto and San Francisco.

Similar to CRD and other data, our survey found that downtown Victoria has a balanced and diverse mix of transportation choices. We argue that this is likely due to a number of factors including downtown's unique location, density, commercial mix and close proximity to numerous residential neighbourhoods. Furthermore, given the diversity of transportation choices, we suggest that Victoria business and community leaders should in turn embrace and support a balanced transportation system.

Survey Critiques and Our Response to Them

Since the report was released on March 9, there has been some criticism and doubt cast on the report, in particular the survey findings and methods. These include:

- Our study was biased against car drivers, it was claimed, because we did sidewalk surveys.
- We must have only interviewed people at one bike-friendly location (such as 'in front of MEC') to intentionally bias the results against car drivers.
- When compared to CRD survey data (e.g. the 2011 *Origin-Destination Household Travel Survey*), the results of these surveys are quite different than our findings.

Many of these critiques are misplaced or erroneous. Clearly, some critics failed to review the Appendices referenced in the report, which was posted on the GVCC website alongside the main report. [The Appendices](#) provide detailed information on our survey method, including:

- Distributing surveys at 16 different locations throughout downtown to try to get a more complete mix of people and transportation choices;
- Distributing surveys at different times of the day and week to try to get a reasonable cross section of people downtown over the course of a week;
- Explicitly telling the volunteers who distributed the survey to ask people to fill out the survey according to the same order that they crossed paths with them as opposed to intentionally seeking somebody out because of any particular characteristic.

These were among the multiple tactics used by the survey team to minimize the study's

selection bias. Nonetheless, we recognize the limits of sidewalk or ‘intercept’ surveys. For instance, it is obvious that a sidewalk survey wouldn’t capture motor vehicle trips that pass through downtown without stopping nor could we claim to capture all types of trips or people with a sample size of 502 interviews.

In terms of comparing our results to that of other local transportation surveys, one critic cites CRD data (O&D 2011) showing car travel being 49% of trips in Victoria, compared with 23% from our survey. However, our survey took place downtown, while the 49% figure references the entire city of Victoria.

Survey Limits

We are well aware of CRD data showing higher number of car trips, and lower bicycle and transit numbers. We cite those and other data in our report. As we collected only limited sociodemographic information, our study did not claim to adopt a statistically random sample. For this reason, the *Bikes Mean Business* survey never claims to be a fully accurate representation of total or typical trip shares in the downtown core (nor the city as a whole).

We considered other survey and observation methods (such as a telephone survey or traffic counts). But they were deemed inappropriate to the goals of our project. Nor did we have the resources (as a volunteer-based non-profit) to hire a professional survey company, as some have suggested.

Another limitation of the study is that it was conducted during only two months of the year. We recognize that factors such as weather, personal schedules, and the volume of non-residents visiting the city mean that travel choices to downtown will likely vary over the course of the year. Although we would have liked to conduct our survey at different times of the year, funding and organizational resource constraints meant that this was not possible. As a result there are potential seasonal variations in travel and consumer behaviour that may not be captured in this study.

With regards to the business survey, we recognize that the bulk of participants owned or worked for businesses that were located at ground level with direct sidewalk access. As a result, the views of businesses and organizations downtown with less readily available street access were for the most part not included in the study.

[Multiple transportation counts and surveys](#) have taken place in the CRD and Victoria over the years. All surveys come with inherent limits and margins of error. The *Bikes Mean Business* report was intended to generate public discussion about the breadth of transportation choices in downtown Victoria, and how further investments would enhance safety and options for all residents, no matter how they travel. We are confident that this conversation will continue in the months and years ahead.