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CYCLISTS IN THE CITY

Toronto Bike Month is kicking off with announcements that give the two-wheeled commuter alternative a big boost.

City Council approved a \$6 million facelift for Jarvis Street, which will see the addition of two new bike lanes - and the removal of the centre lane. City Councillor and Chair of the Toronto Cycling Committee Adrian Heaps says the city is adjusting to current attitudes. "20 years ago no one envisioned the Distillery District as a tourist area. Toronto's a fluid city - things change. Cycling is now undergoing a renaissance."

27,000 drivers use Jarvis St. daily, and some drivers are worried that the reduction from five lanes to four will wreck havoc on their commutes. The city says the change will add just two minutes onto travel times. Council is now proposing similar changes to the Bloor Danforth corridor - suggesting that street parking for cars be eliminated, in order to accommodate cyclists.

Not everyone agrees with the changes. City Councillor Karen Stintz says, "You need an integrated plan that has to look at mobility in transit - but it has to include the car. Right now congestion is being made worse by City Hall... We continue to add to the bike plan, and I think that's why we're facing frustration from drivers. We're expanding the plan beyond its original intent."

Transit authorities are also moving to integrate cyclists. Mayor David Miller was at Union Station this morning to unveil its new Bike Station, which will allow commuters to cycle to and from their trains. The storage facility holds up to 180 bikes, and costs \$2 per day.

Cycling is on the rise in the city. The number of people riding bikes to work has increased by over 30% since 2001, while the number of people taking cars dropped by about 5%. Toronto is trying to keep up with cycling enthusiasts. 95 km of bike lanes currently exist, and the city wants to install an additional 1,000 km in the next five years.

Councillor Heaps says the new bike lanes will take some getting used to. Of the frustrations, he says, "Some of it is ignorance - drivers not understanding how bike lanes work. But cyclists also have to understand they're sharing the road. They've got to share the responsibility as well."