

# SAFER STREETS FOR EVERYONE

A new tool from Paths for People could help pedestrians, cyclists and drivers.





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— CONRAD NOBERT, PATHS FOR PEOPLE CO-FOUNDER AND DIGITAL MEDIA AND IT INSTRUCTOR

CONRAD NOBERT never hides his enthusiasm for cycling. "Some mornings," he says, "I'm on my bike and I feel like I'm 12 again."

Nobert, a Digital Media and IT instructor who commutes to NAIT by bike year-round, has turned this passion into a mission. As co-founder of Paths for People, he hopes to make Edmonton streets safer for cyclists and pedestrians. Last fall, the non-profit organization released an online map showing that more than 5,400 collisions occurred between vehicles and walkers or riders over a decade. The group hopes to work with the city to bring those numbers down.

One way is to use the map to identify areas where accidents are common, such as along Whyte Avenue - the city's main entertainment district - from 112 Street east to Mill Creek Ravine. "If this was a factory or a plant and one or two people per month were getting hurt or killed," says Nobert, "you'd shut it down until it was safe. So we're asking the city to ... make it safer and slow people down."

Ideally, the group would like to see speed limits reduced from 50 to 30 kilometres per hour on residential streets. According to a Global Road Safety Partnership report, a pedestrian has an 80 per cent chance of being killed if hit at 50 km/h. At 30 km/h, that number drops to less than 20 per cent.

As for keeping cyclists safe, "Our position is if vehicles are going more than 30 kilometres per hour, we want people on bicycles to be physically separated from them," says Nobert.

That's why Paths for People rejected the painted-on bike lanes that the city implemented in recent years. Those lanes are for strong and fearless riders, as Nobert calls them, who are already cycling. "[Separated lanes] will attract new riders."

Paths for People has initiated ongoing discussions with city council about safer bike lanes and infrastructure. In March, it released an interactive map inviting people to identify the best bike and walking routes and whether they should be separated from traffic, or include multi-use trails or traffic calming techniques. The results may influence the creation of a central Edmonton pedestrian and cyclist transportation strategy.

These efforts are directed toward those travelling under their own power but Nobert hopes they have a positive influence on drivers as well. Bike lanes, he points out, can be useful for managing traffic congestion.

"Even if you aren't interested in riding a bike yourself, if somebody gets on that bike route then they're not on the road in front of you."

— Janelle Aker

Paths for People hopes its interactive map will lead to a network of safe walking and riding routes.

