



Edmonton must change its multi-use trail policies in the name of safety

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Paths for People has released a report on the design and construction of multi-use trails in Edmonton, and it is calling on the City of Edmonton to redesign the way it builds multi-use trails, in order to increase safety and decrease the conflicts that users are reporting.

“Edmonton has squeezed cyclists, pedestrians and others onto what are often narrow multi-use trails for decades,” said Conrad Nobert, vice-chair of Paths for People. “But as the number of people using this active transportation infrastructure increases, their differing speeds, habits and abilities are creating conflict. People increasingly report problems. Rather than blame users, it’s time we designed better infrastructure.”

More people are following the city’s push for us to get around using active transportation and limit our reliance on private automobiles. But as demand for space to do this grows, Paths for People has found these people are increasingly coming into conflict on the 160 kilometres of paved multi-use trails that form Edmonton’s network. Users strolling two-abreast, owners letting their dogs off leashes and families out with their young children on bicycles are increasingly vying for space with cyclist commuters and others who are traveling at higher speeds.

Paths for People has published a draft policy to serve as a guidelines for the City of Edmonton to use to rethink its policies governing trail design. Detailed research shows many other Canadian jurisdictions are seeing growing user conflict on their multi-use trails, and several are responding by creating better design guidelines for these trails in the future. The City of Edmonton’s own policies commit it to adopting such best practices in trail design, but it currently is not doing so.

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CHARACTERS: Angela Doyle, Edmonton resident, mother, cyclist

Angela is the mother of three kids and uses the multi-use trails along Saskatchewan Drive to cycle with her family. She says the mixture of uses on this trail has put her children at risk several times. One time, a child she was riding with was nearly hit after straying from one side of the narrow pathway. “The person almost fell off her bike to avoid the child,” she says.

Doyle wants the city to rethink how it designs these trails. “I think everything needs separation. It doesn’t need to be physical, like curbs, when it’s cyclists versus pedestrians,



but the different modes need to be separated. I think the two direction multi-use trails are stupid. It's being designed by people who don't go biking with kids."

Paths for People can connect you with Angela and others with personal experiences on Edmonton's multi-use trails.

REPORT:

The report, "*Towards a better policy for multi-use trails or pathways in Edmonton*", as well as policy recommendations, can be [downloaded from the Paths for People website](#).

ABOUT:

Paths for People is a non-profit organization of volunteers that is committed to strengthening the voices of Edmontonians in support of creating a walkable and bikable city. The group collaborates with city planners to make the way we move through the city safe, enjoyable and sustainable. It does this by encouraging opportunities to utilize public space as shared space.