

# Campaign aims to track cyclists' spending habits, win over merchants

**Urban councillors hope data will convince businesses to trade parking spots for bike lanes, racks**

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A cyclist passes businesses on Bank Street in Ottawa. (Giacomo Panico/CBC)

If you get around Ottawa by bike to eat, drink, shop or spend money in any way, Jeff Leiper wants to know about it.

The Kitchissippi councillor is expanding his "I Bike, I Buy" campaign to four additional wards in an attempt to track how much money cyclists are spending at local businesses.

"Anywhere you shop by bike, please tell us how much you spend," Leiper said Thursday at the campaign launch at the Ministry of Coffee on Elgin Street.

Cyclists can report what they spend on [the campaign's website](#), which uses GPS to track shopping patterns.

Leiper also showed off a bluetooth beacon which, when combined with an app to be released by the end of July, will prompt cyclists to report their spending at participating businesses.

"It's going to say, 'Hey, you're at Ministry of Coffee. Did you spend any money? Tell us how much,'" said Leiper, who so far has recruited three other stores to carry the beacon, with plans to recruit more this summer.

## Expanding campaign

Leiper launched a modest version of the campaign in June 2015, recruiting about 100 cyclists who reported their shopping habits near a bike corral at the corner of Wellington Street West and Fairmont Avenue. They reported spending roughly \$6,000 at area businesses.



Coun. Jeff Leiper shows off one of several bluetooth beacons being installed in participating businesses as part of the expanded I Bike, I Buy campaign. (Giacomo Panico/CBC)

This year's campaign has been expanded to include Leiper's entire ward of Kitchissippi, as well as Somerset, Capital, Rideau-Vanier, and Rideau-Rockcliffe wards.

Leiper is hoping the data collected will help convince business owners of the merits of investing in facilities for cyclists.

"There's sometimes merchant pushback to increasing cycling infrastructure," said Leiper. "I think a lot of merchants in the city of Ottawa think of their primary customer base as being those who drive to their stores."

## Bike corral removed

That resistance was on display in 2014 when a bike parking corral on Wellington Street West was removed following complaints from nearby business owners who wanted the spot converted back to on-street parking.

"The way we're going to be successful at getting more safe cycling infrastructure down our traditional main streets in particular, is going to be get merchants to push for it," Leiper said.

Somerset Coun. Catherine McKenney agrees that adding cycling infrastructure such as bike corrals or bike lanes on main streets can be a difficult sell because they reduce available on-street parking.

"It's frightening for them to think that we're going to switch from having parking right in front of my store, to expecting people to park a block away and walk over, or removing a parking spot to install a bike corral," says McKenney. "It's a difficult balancing act."



Couns. Catherine McKenney and Jeff Leiper are encouraging businesses in their wards to participate in the "I Bike, I Buy" campaign. (Giacomo Panico/CBC)