

# REGIONAL NIAGARA BICYCLING COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES



Meeting of Thursday, April 13, 2004  
Committee Room #2  
7:00 p.m.

## Present:

Ron Leavens	- Regional Councillor (Chair)
Brian Baty	- Regional Councillor
Rob Gabriel	- Regional Councillor
John Reep	- Public at Large
Brenda Sidlar	- Public at Large (Guest & former member of the St. Catharines Bicycling Committee)
Bob Romanuk	- Public at Large
Greg Dame	- Public at Large
Bill Rashleigh	- Public at Large
Dave Hunt	- Public at Large
Dwight Alguire	- Public at Large
Jan Somerwil	- Public at Large
Paul Pattison	- Public at Large
Frank Pravitz	- Ministry of Transportation
Tim Whittle	- Regional Niagara Police Service
Marian Landry	- Regional Niagara Public Health
Ken Forgeron	- Regional Niagara Planning
Brian Hughes	- Regional Niagara Public Works (Transportation)
Julie Bittner	- Regional Niagara Public Works (Transportation)

## Regrets:

Dave Arnott	- Public at Large
Eric Flora	- Regional Niagara Public Works (Transportation)

## 1. Adoption of Agenda

With the addition of the agenda items listed below, the agenda was adopted as revised.

- Discussion on the Thorold Tunnel
- Merritt St. bridge at the CNR railway crossing

### ***Motion:***

***To accept the agenda as amended.***

***Moved by: Jan Somerwil***

***Seconded by: Bob Romanuk***

***Carried***

## 2. Review of Meeting Notes of March 11, 2004

Mr. Hunt reported that in the March meeting notes, on page 8, under item 12, it should be noted that Frank Pravitz was elected as a VeloOntario board member.

**Motion:**

**To adopt the RNBC Meeting Notes of March 11, 2004.**

**Moved by: Paul Pattison**

**Seconded by: Dave Hunt**

**Carried**

**3. Business Arising**

The Committee was provided updates on a number of "Action Items" which arose out of the March meeting notes.

- Ken Forgeron reported that so far, just under, \$4,000 in donations has been received for map reprinting.
- 2004 RNBC initiatives account is to be set-up in the amount of \$10,000. Additional funds contained within 2003 account are not to be used for students, intended for signage (i.e. for the proposed signage project); \$5,000 budgeted – not specifically allocated yet.
- The Regional Police Service Safety Task Force's Strategic Plan will be presented to the Executive Committee either May 5 or 6.
- A Public Information Centre (PIC) was held on April 7<sup>th</sup> regarding the EA for Regional 81 at Fifteen Mile Creek. The RNBC was notified by e-mail of this event.
- Mr. Forgeron was able to advise that Joe Cousins and Eric Flora, from the Public Works Department, would be presenting the Bikeways Master Plan to all the local municipalities. The March meeting notes have been revised to indicate that although the Region would like the municipalities' endorsement of the Bikeways Master Plan, it was not imperative to have it order for Regional Council to approve the Plan.
- Mr. Forgeron reported that a joint report would be prepared for the April 27<sup>th</sup> Public Works Committee meeting and the April 28<sup>th</sup> Planning Services Committee meeting summarizing the RNBC's participation at the Toronto International Bike Show and other public outreach efforts.
- An update was provided on the proposed Glenridge roundabout. It was decided at the Public Works Committee meeting of April 13<sup>th</sup> that the roundabout would no longer be included in the design. The preferred option would be Option #5, which includes a signalized intersection.

- It was reported that Mr. Flora had not yet heard back from a GBNRTC representative, but he will provide an update on the GBNRTC's recent projects at the next RNBC meeting. **(Action Item)**
- Councillor Leavens reported that the Regional Road 20 EA had not been re-opened. However an ad hoc committee had been formed by the Town after last November's municipal elections. The ad hoc committee will be presenting a recommendation to Pelham Council on Monday, April 19<sup>th</sup>. The ad hoc committee would like to have a three lane cross section within the Town of Pelham while the Region would like to have four lanes. Currently, there is no provision at this time for the inclusion of bicycle lanes in either cross section. Some members believe that paved shoulders are needed through Fonthill which is a major route for touring cyclists. Councillor Leavens told the Committee that it may be difficult to have an actual bike lane within the Town itself due to space limitations.

Rural sections of Regional Road 20 (Fonthill easterly towards Highway 406), when reconstructed, will include minimum 0.5 metre paved shoulders, perhaps wider where possible. Regional staff will confirm at a later date. **(Action Item)**

- Mr. Forgeron suggested using the word "Velo" in the French wording for Bike Month as it is more commonly recognized. This had been requested by RNBC members.

#### **4. Presentation on the Environmental Assessment Process – Opportunities for Input**

Brian Hughes, Associate Director Transportation Engineering, spoke to the Committee regarding the environmental assessment (EA) process. Excerpts from the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment were handed out to the RNBC. Mr. Hughes explained to the Committee that there was an Ontario Environmental Assessment Act and a Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. Under the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act there are two classes, an Individual Class and a Municipal Class. The Region operates under the Municipal Class. The Municipal Class governs how all municipal projects are done. This includes everything from filling a pothole to widening a roadway. Within the Class EA there are three different schedules. Schedule "A" projects are limited in scale and have minimal negative environmental effects. Schedule "B" projects are more involved and have the potential for some adverse environmental effects. Schedule "C" projects have the potential for significant environmental effects. An example of a Schedule "C" project would be the widening of a roadway from two to four lanes. Also within the process are five project phases. Each phase outlines the steps that need to be followed.

Mr. Forgeron asked if Mr. Hughes would be able to indicate to the Committee where in the process groups such as the RNBC could provide meaningful input. Mr. Hughes responded that currently there are already opportunities in place within the Region for groups such as the RNBC to provide comments. A procedure is in place whereby RNBC members are notified by e-mail of upcoming public information centres (PIC). This provides an opportunity to review what is being proposed in a particular project. After a PIC is held a group or citizen can still stay in touch with the project manager. Mr. Hughes provided an outline of the process and highlighted the steps where input can be provided.

Mr. Pattison showed the RNBC an advertisement which was placed in the Standard by the City of St. Catharines regarding a Notice of Study Commencement regarding the Merritt St. bridge. He asked Mr. Hughes what would be the purpose of placing this type of advertisement and whether the RNBC should be contacting the City of St. Catharines if we are concerned about bike lanes. Should we wait for a PIC? Mr. Hughes responded that a Notice of Study Commencement is basically just a way to "flush out" initial comments from various groups. This would be an opportunity to have a person or groups name included on a mailing list.

Mr. Romanuk asked when evaluating public input if residents or property owners closest to the affected area have a greater role in the process than those who are not. Are all comments treated equally? Mr. Hughes said that a lot would depend on the volume of comments and that most comments at meetings are from people who are directly affected. Mr. Romanuk asked whether a group from outside the municipality that comes forward in favour of a preferred option, would that group have any bearing on that preferred option? Mr. Hughes said that it would all depend on the issue. Also, many issues are "safety" driven and regardless of where anyone lives it will be assessed carefully. If the issue deals with aesthetics, then people living in the community would have a greater say in any decisions made. In any event, the EA process must recommend the most reasonable alternative in the public's (including environment) interest.

Councillor Gabriel asked whether there is a certain level of public input which, if it occurs, may change a preferred option to an alternative option. Mr. Hughes, using Glenridge Avenue as example, explained that public input indicated that the citizens were not in favour of the roundabout. After all the comments were received Option #5 was refined and it then became the preferred option.

Mr. Forgeron told the RNBC that a one day seminar by the Ministry of the Environment on the EA process would be held on May 19<sup>th</sup> in Mississauga if any Committee members were interested in attending. No one volunteered to attend.

5. Updates

Queenston-Lewiston Bridge EA

Mr. Pattison read an e-mail he had received from Arlene White from the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation regarding the Queenston-Lewiston Bridge EA. Ms. White notes that she was pleased to note that there would be bike access as well as a sidewalk. Mr. Pattison said that it was his understanding that there would be no sidewalk on the bridge. Mr. Forgeron said that he had also spoken to Ms. White and clarified that she was referring to the Stanley Avenue bridge improvements in regards to the sidewalk and not the Queenston-Lewiston Bridge.

Mr. Whittle reported that an article in The Standard provided comments from many tourism operators in the Niagara-on-the-Lake area who feel that if traffic is not allowed access the bridge then tourism will be negatively affected.

Glendale Avenue EA

Mr. Hughes reported to the Committee that an EA will be undertaken between the Welland Canal and Merritt St. With the recent sale of the Domtar lands, the EA will now also include Merritt up to Mountain St. One option is to have Glendale extended through the former Domtar lands. Another option is to have a slight "jog" in the roadway to go around a historical building on the Domtar lands which may not be torn down. A PIC will be held sometime in the spring of this year.

Glenridge Avenue Roundabout

Mr. Hunt distributed a report by the Glenridge Avenue EA Review Sub-Committee. The sub-committee concluded that that the roundabout should not be used in this instance as designed as there are too many conflicts with motorists and pedestrians. The report also listed five roundabout redesign suggestions. **Should the roundabout be redesigned to address the sub-committee's concerns, then they would be in favour of a roundabout at the Glenridge Ave. location.** Councillor Leavens suggested that the report, along with a covering letter explaining that the RNBC supports roundabouts in certain situations, be forwarded to Council via the Planning and Public Works Committees.

***Motion:***

***To accept the sub-committees report as presented and forward it to Regional Planning Services and Public Works Committees.***

***Moved by: Paul Pattison***

***Seconded by: Bob Romanuk***

***Carried***

Dorchester Road EA

Bob Romanuk and Tim Whittle are to provide the Committee with an update on the Dorchester Road EA at the next RNBC meeting. **(Action Item)**

#### Lakeshore Road EA

Mr. Hughes reported that the EA would include the area from Niagara St. to Lakeport Rd. A number of different options are currently being looked at. A second PIC will be held in May. Bicycle lanes (1.5m) are proposed.

#### Regional Road 81 EA @15 Mile Creek

A PIC was held on April 7<sup>th</sup>. The design for this area is unique (ie. environmental concerns) in that the roadway will be separated from the multi-use trail by a rollover curb. Mr. Pattison told the Committee that both he and Mr. Pravitz were in favour of the design. Mr. Pattison did express some concern over how well the multi-use trail will be kept clean and hoped that it would receive a better than average amount of sweeping and snow removal. **(Action Item – follow-up with John Rizzo)**

#### Thorold Tunnel Closing

The closing of the north side of the Thorold tunnel will be in effect from April 1 until mid-September 2004. As indicated in a letter from Mr. Pete Parker of Henderson Paddon and Associates Limited to Eric Flora, a shuttle bus will be provided as all access to the existing sidewalk will be cut off. The shuttle will operate on an “as required basis” and no pedestrian or cyclist will be delayed by more than ten minutes. Mr. Pattison will provide an update to the Committee on how cyclists are being accommodated at the next meeting. **(Action Item)**

#### Merritt St. Bridge

Mr. Pattison advised that he will be contacting the engineer in charge of this project to advise him that the RNBC will be looking for the addition of bike lanes to the bridge. He also suggested that, perhaps, a letter should be sent indicating the RNBC's position right up front. Previously a cyclist was killed at this structure.

### **6. Improvements on Regional Road 55 (@ East-West Line)**

It was reported that there was currently a watermain project occurring at this location. Transportation staff are doing a geometric improvement design right now with construction tentatively scheduled for 2005.

Mr. Whittle expressed interest in being provided further clarification on this project. With the current watermain work being undertaken, perhaps there is an opportunity to have bike lanes added to the roadway. **(Action Item)**

### **7. Bicycle Safety for Off-Shore Workers**

Mr. Whittle provided the Committee with an update on a bicycle safety program for off-shore workers. A commitment has been received from Niagara-on-the-Lake and Welland. Grimsby has also expressed some interest as well. Currently,

numbers are being gathered in order to determine how many workers will need to be included in the program.

**8. Comments on Bicycle Master Plan Addendum – Municipal Costs**

Engineering Task Force/subcommittee needs to meet to review maps ASAP in order to meet deadlines for upcoming Public Works and Planning Officials meetings. **(Action Items)**

**9. Student Project: Ideas and Next Steps**

Mr. Forgeron told the RNBC that \$10,000 had been set aside for RNBC initiatives in 2004. One idea might be to hire a summer student. Mr. Pravitz distributed a proposal which included three possible projects for a student to work on in the summer. The three proposals included:

- Assisting in updating/enhancing the Regional Niagara Bicycling Map
- Managing the preparation of promotional materials
- Conducting preparatory work on the development and implementation of a bicycle signage strategy

Upon discussion, the Committee agreed that it was too late in the year to hire a student for the summer. Most students would already have a summer placement. Also, both the Planning Department and the Public Works Department had indicated that they did not have the space or the manpower to supervise a student at this time. Mr. Forgeron suggested that perhaps we could take advantage of hiring a co-op student in the fall term.

The Committee decided that the preparation of promotional materials as well as having our bicycle display updated is an RNBC priority at this time. Ms. Landry suggested asking individuals to send in cycling pictures which could be used in promotional materials or could be posted on the website. Perhaps a photo competition could be organized in order to generate higher quality photos and this would also raise the profile of the photographers who submit the pictures. Ms. Landry and Tim Whittle will provide the Committee with more information on the possibility of having a photo competition at the next meeting. **(Action Item)**

**10. Task Force Reports**

Encouragement

Ms. Landry reported that the Eastside Trail opening is scheduled for April 17<sup>th</sup>. The event will take place at Ramey's Bend in Port Colborne at 2:30 p.m. A media release will be sent out. An advance copy has been forwarded to the Freewheelers, Liberty and the St. Catharines Cycling Club.

The Greater Niagara Circle Trek will be held on May 2<sup>nd</sup> from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00. The Cities of Port Colborne, Thorold, Niagara Falls and St. Catharines are all participating this year.

Ms. Landry distributed bike month flyers to all Committee members and requested volunteers to deliver the flyers to various bike shops throughout the Region. A number of Committee members volunteered and were instructed to see Ms. Landry after the meeting.

Ms. Landry questioned whether any of the municipal mayors were aware that there was a Government Institution category for the Bicycle Friendly Awards. She suggested composing a letter signed by the RNBC Chair and attaching a Bicycle Friendly Award application and then sending this information to every municipality. Councillors Leavens was agreeable to this suggestion. **(Action Item)**

#### Education and Enforcement

Mr. Whittle reported that on May 2<sup>nd</sup> a bike rodeo will be combined with the Niagara Falls Circle Trek event at Firemen's Park. This year the rodeo will have a passport program whereby at each checkpoint the passport will be stamped, and at the end of the rodeo the passport holder will be eligible for a prize. Mr. Whittle requested volunteers to help with the rodeo.

#### Engineering

It was reported that the City of Thorold has monies in their 2004 budget for the resurfacing of a one kilometre section of Cataract Road from Decew south. This is a key area for cyclists travelling from Welland to St. Catharines and it is also on the Regional network.

### **11. 2004 Regional Road Reconstruction & Resurfacing Program**

Item was deferred until the May meeting. **(Action Item)**

### **12. Public Outreach and Advocacy**

Mr. Pravitz said that he would like to make a presentation to the Councils of all the local municipalities starting with the Town of Pelham. The purpose of the presentation would be to make people aware that we have a bicycling network. The presentation would also be an opportunity to explain what the RNBC does and show how cycling impacts the local community. He told the Committee that it is important to get the mayors to agree to the Master Plan and in order to have this happen, we need the support of the local Councils.

Mr. Forgeron said that this presentation could be very important as ten municipalities are undergoing Official Plan reviews. He also cautioned that both Joe Cousins and Eric Flora were planning on making presentations to the

municipalities and Mr. Pravitz should coordinate with them to make sure that the same message is not being delivered twice. The RNBC should undertake this advocacy campaign after Regional Public Works completes its presentations to local municipalities.

It was reported that both the QEW widening and the Merritt St. bridge would have EAs occurring imminently. Also, a secondary plan for the Hartzel Rd. area is being finalized. There was a suggestion that a letter be sent to the City of St. Catharines Council requesting that space be provided on these structures for cyclists. Mr. Pravitz and Mr. Pattison agreed to develop the letters, (review by Mr. Forgeron) and bring them back to the RNBC at the May meeting for Committee approval.

### **13. Items for Distribution**

- Cycling Advocacy – Making Roads Better for Bicyclists by Frank Pravitz. This article was in the previous issue of the Freewheelers newsletter
- Queenston-Lewiston bridge article by Paul Pattison. This article was also in the previous issue of the Freewheelers newsletter
- Comments on the Reconstruction of Regional Rd. 50 (Glenridge Ave.), specifically the roundabout, by Tim Whittle
- Welland Canals Parkway Eastside Trail “Trail Etiquette” brochure
- Toronto Star article titled, Park the car and travel by bike.
- List of a few agenda items that was passed on to the City of Burlington for the Joint Meeting of Bicycling Committees to be held on May 15<sup>th</sup>.

### **14. Possible Agenda Items for May RNBC Meeting**

- QEW crossing
- Draft Municipal Presentation
- Proposal for the new display
- Review of membership for the RNBC

As a new RNBC member, Gregg Dame asked how he could become a voting member. Mr. Forgeron said that as he was a member of the Port Colborne Bike and Trailways Committee there was a provision in the RNBC Terms of Reference that allowed him to be a voting member.

***Motion: To accept Gregg Dame, Port Colborne Bike and Trailways Committee, as a voting member of the RNBC.***

***Moved by: Paul Pattison***

***Seconded by: Bob Romanuk***

***Carried***

**15. Next Meeting – May 13, 2004**

The next RNBC meeting will be held on May 13<sup>th</sup> in Committee Room #4 at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting Notes Taken by:  
Julie Bittner

Reviewed by:  
Ken Forgeron, MCIP, RPP, Senior Planner