

REGIONAL NIAGARA BICYCLING COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES



Meeting of Thursday, June 2, 2005
Committee Room #4
7:00 p.m.

Present:

Ron Leavens	- Regional Councillor (Chair)
Paul Pattison	- Public at Large
Gregg Dame	- Port Colborne Trails and Bikeways Committee
Tim Whittle	- Niagara Regional Police Service
Bob Romanuk	- Niagara Falls Trails and Bikeways Committee
Marian Landry	- Regional Niagara Public Health
Dave Hunt	- Public at Large and Cycle Ontario Alliance
Bill Dickson	- Public at Large
Eric Flora	- Regional Niagara Public Works
Ken Forgeron	- Regional Niagara Planning
Julie Bittner	- Regional Niagara Public Works (Transportation)

Regrets:

Peter Davies	- Niagara Freewheelers
Brian Baty	- Regional Councillor

The meeting commenced at 7:00 p.m.

1. Adoption of Agenda

The order of the agenda was revised, and with the addition of the agenda items listed below, the agenda was adopted.

Motion:

To accept the Agenda of June 2nd as revised.

Moved by: Paul Pattison

Seconded by: Dave Hunt

Carried

2. Review of Previous Meeting Notes (May 12, 2005)

The following corrections and revisions were made to the May 12th meeting notes:

On page 5, under Item 7, 2nd paragraph "... and the Planning Services Committee" should be added after the words "... PWUC.

Motion:

To accept and approve the meeting notes of May 12th as revised.

Moved by: Dave Hunt

Seconded by: Gregg Dame

Carried

3. Business Arising

The Committee was provided updates on a number of "Action Items" which arose out of the May 2005 meeting notes:

- Mr. Hunt reported that he will send a letter to the Cycle Ontario Alliance Board regarding contacting the Southern Ontario Gateway Council resource members. Mr. Flora also reported that he had not received any further information. **(Action Item)**
- Mr. Whittle reported that he had no new information to add, at this time, in terms of the Niagara Regional Police Service conducting an enforcement blitz aimed at cycling. More information will be provided at a later date when information is available. **(Future Action Item)**
- Mr. Flora reported that the RNBC new Terms of Reference were approved by the Region's Public Works Department and will be sent to Council for ratification on June 9th. Once approved by Council, the Terms of Reference will be e-mailed to all RNBC members. **(Action Item)**
- This item was completed as Mr. Flora would be making a presentation on the Proposed Regional Road Right-of-Way Policies and Schedules later in the meeting.
- Mr. Flora reported that a letter from the Transportation Services Division, would be forthcoming explaining why the pole and push button at traffic lights cannot be placed closer to the roadway even though some other jurisdictions in Ontario do things differently. **(Action Item)**
- Mr. Flora reported that a Public Information Centre (PIC) for the St. Catharines Downtown St. Conversion Study would be held June 29 at Market Square.
- Mr. Flora reported that at a follow-up meeting with the City of St. Catharines, a recommendation had been made to have the Geneva St. underpass widened to two outside 'shared use' lanes, each lane at 4.25 metres, two lanes at 3.5 metres each with an additional left turn lane of 3.5 metres. As well, there would be 2.4 metre sidewalks on both sides. The Region is currently waiting for a cost estimate for this design from the Ministry of Transportation. Once it is received the Region and City will need to decide if they wish to pursue this option. The cost for this work would be shared between the City and the Region, subject to their respective Councils' approvals. An update will be provided at the July 14th RNBC meeting. **(Action Item)**
- As suggested at the May meeting, Mr. Forgeron sent the Economic Value of Active Transportation fact sheet and the Active Living Research article were sent to Mayor Salci of Niagara Falls in support of extending the Millennium Trail (Phase 2)
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4. Promoting Bicycle Tourism in Niagara

Gary Hardy and Patrick Gedge were in attendance at the meeting to answer questions members may have regarding what the NEDC could do for the RNBC to market and promote bicycle tourism in Niagara. Mr. Forgeron explained that although the RNBC does do some bicycle tourism promotions, ex. Toronto International Bike Show, we need better support in terms of presentations, for example, better display boards, slide shows, photographs, brochures that focus on the bicycling tourism aspect. The RNBC would also like to have portions of the revised bike map translated into French. It has been suggested that the RNBC partner with the NEDC in order to better sell bicycling tourism in Niagara and beyond.

Mr. Gedge and Mr. Hardy suggested that the RNBC should compile a list of projects that we would like the NEDC's assistance with. The list should be prioritized and indicate what type of assistance we require. The projects should be able to be completed within a specific time frame, for example, three years and should identify potential project partners. **(Action Item)**

In terms of a bicycle display, it was estimated that, if existing hardware was used, a cloth panel would cost around \$3,000 - \$3,500.

5. Presentation: Policy Plan Amendment 2-2005 Proposed Regional Roads Rights-of-Way (ROW) Allowance Policies

Mr. Flora informed the RNBC that a background report on the proposed Policy Plan Amendment has been approved by Council. It is being circulated to the local municipal Councils and affected agencies. Three formal public meetings under the *Planning Act* will be held in September. Mr. Flora displayed a map to the RNBC that indicated which Regional roads on the Regional Bicycle Network that the RNBC may need to review. The proposed amendment has recommended that these right-of-ways have a width of no greater than 20.1 metres. If left at this width, there would not be sufficient room for full on-road bike facilities according to Public Works, particularly in rural areas where ditches and hydro utilities are concerned. The Public Works Dept. would like these areas to be designated 26.1 metres for widening. Mr. Forgeron said that an RNBC task force had been set-up to specifically review the problematic areas. **(Action Items)**

Eric noted that all property owners who may be affected by the proposed amendment may need to be notified, as per Public Works Committee staff direction. However, the Region wants to get the message across to the property owners that the implementation policies encourage context sensitive design solutions for any reconstruction of Regional Roads. The proposed policies would only impact an abutting property if and when there are proposals for major development on the property that requires approval of site plans, plans of subdivision or land severance. In all other circumstances, property would be acquired for full market value **only** at the time that there is to be a major reconstruction of the road and then **only** after an

Environmental Assessment has been completed that evaluates the need and plans for the reconstruction.

6. QEW Widening Through St. Catharines

In addition to the information previously provided under Business Arising, Mr. Flora reported that the Addendum for the QEW Freeway Illumination has been filed by the MTO and the commenting period ends July 5, 2005.

7. Proposal to Open Whirlpool Bridge to Cyclists

Mr. Forgeron reported that he had received a phone call from a New York State Congresswoman looking for information on the number of cyclists who cross the Whirlpool Bridge and other Niagara area international bridges. The Congresswoman's office is considering introducing a motion which would open the Whirlpool Bridge to cyclists who have Nexus passes. In the past, the RNBC, as well as other agencies, have expressed support for this idea. Mr. Pattison, Mr. Pravitz and Mr. Forgeron have been putting statistics together to send to the Congresswoman. Mr. Rob Nicholson, MP, is also supportive of this initiative.

8. Request to Map Historical Routes

Mr. Forgeron suggested that a future project for the bike map could be the addition of a layer showing historical points of interest. Several organizations have suggested that it would be of interest to map historical themed routes like the Underground Railway, the Laura Secord Walk, etc. This should be considered later. **(Future Action Item)**

9. Roadway Improvements – OPG Tunnel Project

Mr. Forgeron reported that a new OPG tunnel would be built starting in Niagara Falls and ending in Chippawa. As part of the tunnel project, Stanley Avenue needs improvements. Originally, a painted edge line was not to be placed on the roadway for cyclists, but Mr. Forgeron said that in order to shift the trucks over, this would be desirable. He made this comment to John Rizzo, Region of Niagara Project Manager, who is requesting comments on the study. Mr. Forgeron requested that a motion be made supporting the marking of designated, bike lane not just a 'shared-use' lane given the heavy truck traffic expected.

Motion:

To support having a designated bike lane along Stanley Avenue and not just a 'shared-use' lane as part of the roadway upgrading from Highway 405 to the OPG Tunnel construction works yard.

Moved by: Paul Pattison

Seconded by: Bill Dickson

Carried

10. Bike Racks on Buses

Mr. Flora attended an Ontario Community Transportation Association meeting on May 25th and reported that one topic discussed was the installation of bike racks on buses and the issue preventing this from occurring under the *Public Vehicles Act* (cannot cross into another municipality carrying goods). This part of the *Act* would need to be revised. The Provincial Gas Tax Initiative is to increase transit ridership. Several transit authorities have recommended the installation of bike racks as a method of meeting this goal. None of the existing transit authorities in Niagara have bike racks on their buses even on a pilot basis. Thus, a letter for the RNBC Chair's signature indicating the importance of bike racks on buses will be drafted and sent to those transit authorities. **(Action Items)**

11. 2005 Capital Works Projects

Mr. Flora reported that he has a list of roads which the Region would like completed under the 2005 Capital Works Program. The list shows which projects have bike lanes or shared-use lanes. The information will be provided to Frank Pravitz for inclusion on the 2nd edition of the new bike map.

12. Task Force Reports

Education and Enforcement

Mr. Whittle reported that a number of bike rodeos had taken place. He reminded the RNBC that a rodeo was being held in Niagara Falls at Optimist Park this weekend (June 4). He also reported that one bike fun day had taken place which utilized the passport system that was well attended until the weather turned poor.

A number of bike helmets donated by the Brain Injury Association are left over. He asked that if anyone knows of any children who cannot afford to purchase one and need a helmet, to let him know.

Encouragement

Ms. Landry reported that Bike-to-Work week was a success with over 1200 rides being recorded. The Niagara Regional Police Service had over 100 ballots submitted. The Bike-to-Work Week prizes will be handed out in a public ceremony on June 20th. The media will be invited to attend as well. Mr. Whittle said that some of the schools were disappointed that they were not eligible to participate and he suggested having a Bike to Work/School Week. Ms. Landry suggested having a "brainstorming" session in August to discuss ideas for next year. As well, the RNBC needs to discuss the 2006 Bike-to-Work Week budget. **(Action Item)**

Policy

Once the RNBC Terms of Reference is approved by Regional Council on June 9, a copy will be sent to the RNBC members. **(Action Items)**

Engineering

Mr. Flora has the construction pavement marking drawing of what will be occurring on York Rd. between Glendale Ave. and Airport Rd. in Niagara-on-the-Lake if anyone is interested in taking a look at it.

13. New Business

13 (a)Port Colborne Trails and Bikeways Committee

Mr. Dame reported that the planned events for the bike festival that tie into the Lake-to-Lake Classic have been postponed for this year due to problems in getting the necessary support for the events. However, the Niagara Freewheelers will still be scheduling rides out of Port Colborne that weekend (June 18-19).

The Committee is exploring options for a trail watch or mentoring program to deal with trail etiquette problems along the Friendship Trail. They would try and have someone on the trails at all times.

13 (b) Millennium Trail

Mr. Romanuk reported that the Millennium Trail issue, which was to be decided at the May 30th Niagara Falls Council meeting, has been postponed to some later date. Some Council members have requested staff to prepare a more comprehensive review of what could be done to make the trail more palatable to the residents who maybe affected by the trail.

13 (c)Welland Canals Parkway Accessibility

Mr. Whittle said that it was brought to his attention by two person with disabilities who ride modified bicycles that they are unable to access parts of the Welland Canals Parkway because of bollards (specifically sections of Merritt Island). Mr. Forgeron said that George Nicholson from the Planning Department has had discussions with the City of Welland regarding this issue, but he was unsure as to what the City is doing about it. Mr. Flora said that the Region's Accessibility Advisory Committee should be made aware of this specific issue as well. **(Action Item)**

13 (d) Joint Meeting with Hamilton/Burlington/Niagara's Cycling Committees

Mr. Forgeron advised that the joint meeting has been rescheduled to June 25th. Details of the agenda and meeting location already have been distributed.

13 (e) International Trails Day

Mr. Whittle encouraged all members to attend International Trails Day on Saturday, June 4 in Fort Erie. There is no fee and you can ride, walk, or rollerblade across the border.

13 (f) Queenston-Lewiston Bridge

Mr. Pattison said that it was his understanding that directional/instruction-type signs would be placed on Portage Road directing cyclists over the Queenston-Lewiston Bridge. Mr. Pattison also said that it was his understanding that 'Share-the-Road' signage eventually would be placed in advance of the existing roundabout on Portage Rd.

Mr. Flora commented that this section of Portage Rd. would soon be transferred to the Region of Niagara and the Region will not likely install signage there until the road officially is turned over to them. However, Mr. Flora offered to follow-up with the Parks Commission regarding having the Region construct and install the signs prior to the official roadway assumption. The Parks Commission must undertake the utility locates.
(Action Item)

13 (g) West St. Catharines Transportation Study

Mr. Flora reported that a focus group meeting would be held during the week of June 20-24 and the second PIC would be held June 28th at the Regional Headquarters building.

13 (h) Merritt St. Bridge EA

Mr. Pattison reported that he had received a letter from the consultant in response to his inquiry about having continuous bike lanes continuous through the construction zone. The response he received was that there would be adequate width. As well, Mr. Pattison had expressed concern about the bump-outs for bus pullover bays. He was advised that the bump-outs would be redesigned.

14. Items for Distribution

- Article and photo about the completion of the San Francisco Shared Lane Marking Study.
- Department of Cambridge Community Development summary on bicycle lanes.

- Excerpt from the May 2005 Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail newsletter “Ezine”. The excerpt directs readers who are looking for statistical information on the economic impact of trails and cycling tourism to an article published on May 7th in the Toronto Star titled “*Cycling Holidays A Tour de Force*”
- Article from the American Planning Association website titled “Complete Street Program.” The article discusses new state and local policies requiring virtually all roads to be built to serve all types of users.
- Letter to Synectics from Ken Forgeron re: Lake St. Grimsby Speed Management Review. The letter requests that consideration be given to providing 1.5 metre wide paved shoulders for cyclists. As well, the letter mentions the traffic calming effect that bike lanes and better signage have on reducing traffic speeds.
- Port Colborne cycling brochure, which was produced in conjunction with International Trails Day. The brochure includes a map of the Friendship Trail from Fort Erie to Port Colborne.
- Brochure on the First Annual: International Trails Day. The brochure outlines the day’s events.
- Letter from Trojan Alarms Ltd. to the RNBC praising the Region’s Bike to Week initiatives. (Attached)

15. Items for Next Agenda

No Items were suggested.

16. Next Meeting: July 14, 2005 – The Ice Box Restaurant in Port Colborne

A map with directions has been sent via e-mail to RNBC members.

MOTION:

To adjourn the June 2, 2005 RNBC meeting.

Moved by: Gregg Dame

Seconded by: Bill Dixon

Carried

Meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Meeting Notes Taken by:
Julie Bittner

Reviewed by:
Ken Forgeron, MCIP, RPP
Senior Planner

Eric Flora, P.Eng., C.E.T.
Acting Associate Director Transportation Systems