

REGIONAL NIAGARA BICYCLING COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES



Meeting of Thursday, June 12, 2003
Committee Room 4, Regional Headquarters
7:00 p.m.

Brian McMullan	- Regional Council (Chair)
Robert Gabriel	- Regional Council
Jan Somerwil	- Public at Large
David Hunt	- Public at Large
Bob Romanuk	- Public at Large/Niagara Falls Bikeways Committee
Hank Bauer	- Public at Large
Paul Pattison	- Public at Large
Bill Rashleigh	- Public at large
John Reep	- District School Board of Niagara (retired)
Peter Davies	- Niagara Freewheelers
Tim Whittle	- Niagara Regional Police Service
Marian Landry	- Regional Niagara Public Health Department
Phil Bergen	- Regional Niagara Public Works (Transportation)
Ken Forgeron	- Regional Niagara Planning

Regrets:

Frank Pravitz - Ministry of Transportation

Before the meeting commenced, the Chair announced that Jan Somerwil is celebrating his 80th Birthday. Happy birthday wishes were offered in English and Dutch, and a birthday cake was enjoyed by everyone. A gift certificate to the Oban Inn, Niagara on the Lake was also presented to Jan.

1. Adoption of Agenda

With the addition of two new agenda items – Niagara Bikeways Master Plan and Ontario Trails Council Conference, the agenda was adopted, as revised.

Motion:

To accept RNBC Agenda as revised.

Moved by: Peter Davies

Seconded by: Bill Rashleigh

Carried

2. Review of Meeting Notes of Thursday May 8, 2003

All were in favour of approving the meeting notes as written.

Motion:

To accept RNBC Meeting Notes of Thursday May 8, 2003.

Moved by: Jan Somerwil

Seconded by: Bob Romanuk

Carried

3. Business Arising from May 8, 2003 Meeting Notes

K. Forgeron referenced the funding support of \$1,500 approved by the Niagara Freewheelers to the Waterfront Trust program on page 2. In terms of the RNBC contribution, he noted that separate approval is needed from Regional Council for the annual \$15,000 RNBC operating funds. The Chair indicated that he would investigate why separate approval was required when the overall Regional budget had already approved this allocation.

4. Niagara Bicycle Master Plan

P. Bergen distributed an information letter from Eric Flora, with copies of the report to the four Task Force Chairs for review and comment by June 27th. The report is defined as final, with changes allowed for only minor grammatical errors. After any revisions are incorporated, the report will be presented to the Transportation Strategy Steering Committee (July 15th) and then the Public Works and Utilities Committee (August 12th). The final report will be available on the Region's website.

It was suggested that this copy of the report also be made available on the Region's website to allow the opportunity for comments by other RNBC committee members and the public. **(Action Items)**

5. Niagara Road Improvements

P. Bergen distributed information on the 2003 Transportation Capital Program and Hot Mix Resurfacing and Strengthening projects in the region. It was agreed that this information would be referred to the Engineering Committee for review and comment back to the RNBC and then to Public Works. P. Bergen agreed to deliver a copy of the material to Frank Pravitz, Chair of the Engineering Committee. **(Action and Follow-up Required)**

6. Further Discussion on Round-a-Bouts Use and Design in Niagara

A number of questions and comments were offered in response to material from Holland that Jan Somerwil distributed at the last two meetings. The discussion noted that space needed for road allowances would vary depending on such issues as the intensity of traffic. A key design requirement would be to ensure that traffic converges with a round-a-bout at 90 degrees in order to ensure a decrease in speed. Signing would also be needed to help regulate who has the right of way. Holland retrofits round-a-bouts in existing traffic configurations as well as placing them in new intersections.

Some countries, such as Australia, have simply placed inexpensive circular bollards at the centre of intersections to form a ready made round-a-bout. Whatever the application, cycling aspects need to be considered in any design.

From a smart growth and cycling perspective round-a-bouts will serve to integrate cyclists, help reduce air pollution by decreasing the need for motor vehicles to come to a full stop. Cycling operation will also be aided by allowing legal flow through movements at intersections, rather than having to stop for lights or signs, or illegally running through a stop condition.

The Chair noted that Regional Public Works have made a commitment to have one or two round-a-bouts in Niagara within 2 years. The RNBC supports this initiative.

7. Flash Traffic Signal Lighting in Late Evening

This item has been previously considered and discussed in terms of support for this idea. It was noted that making vehicles wait during normal red/green/amber sequence lighting at intersections in the early morning hours makes little sense. This situation only encourages illegal running of red lights at that time of night, adds to air pollution from stopped vehicles as well as safety concerns and inconvenience of cyclists. The committee would like to see a demonstration project implemented with flashing red lights in the late evening. The Chair indicated that Public Works has had some discussion on this issue and will revisit it.

The Region now has flashing red lights at intersections only in power outage situations. P. Bergen indicated that some confusion could result if flashing reds are applied in a different circumstance. Nick Rosati was unavailable for this meeting, but could provide background research to the committee to demonstrate that flashing red lights may lead to some accident situations. Nick's item will be placed on the July meeting. **(Action Item)**

8. Review of Draft Bicycle Map for Niagara

P. Bergen presented 1st and 2nd redrafts of the Bicycle Map routes as well as a rough draft of the back panel. Questions remain regarding an appropriate design for the front cover and whether to place cycling loops on the map. He indicated that the project is moving forward towards a final product. An e-mail from F. Pravitz was circulated which indicated his modifications on the map and an approach for a finalization with involvement from the Freewheelers. NETCORP are half way through an advertising campaign for sponsors and have raised about \$5000 to date. It looks like they are on track to meet their goal of paying for production costs estimated to be between \$10,000 to \$15,000. The Chair acknowledged the hard work put into this project by staff and committee members, and indicated that the project must be finalized for the July 10th RNBC meeting. **(Action Item)**

9. Bike Week 2003 Program

M. Landry reported that Bike Week was a success. A full report will be available next meeting. Highlights included two new events involving Gord Singleton's bicycle discussion at Chapters and Dave Hunt's Niagara Freewheelers bicycle ride. Both events have high potential for being continued next year.

M. Landry suggested consideration for a broader context to the "Bike Week" title such as a "Celebration of the season for cycling through bike to work week". This would acknowledge that cycling and related events occur beyond a single Bike Week, and it would also allow a focus on utilitarian bike use such as commuting. The utilitarian angle would also complement Public Health's Workplace Wellness Program, where prizes could be incorporated into challenges for over 80 workplace locations. It was suggested that this idea could be extended to the 175 Niagara schools, which could run competitions for such items as logo designs on cycling jackets.

The discussion noted general agreement with the idea, but also the desire not to lose sight of the many activities that cycling involves (outside of commuting) nor the focus generated by other municipalities, which identify with "Bike Week".

Motion:

Consideration be given for a broader context to the "Bike Week" title such as a "Celebration of the season for cycling through bike to work week".

Moved by: Jan Somerwil

Seconded by: Bill Rashleigh

With one nay vote noted, the motion was Carried

10. Agenda for June 14th Joint Meeting of the Bicycling Committees

K. Forgeron distributed the tentative agenda for the above meeting with items obtained from Bicycling Committee members of Hamilton, Burlington and Niagara. The meeting will be held at Niagara Falls City Hall, Saturday, June 14/03 at 9:00 a.m. K. Forgeron will Chair the meeting, with B. Romanuk acting as Secretary. A bicycle ride is scheduled in the afternoon featuring the Millennium Trail.

11. Task Force Reports

Encouragement

M. Landry reported that the Public Health Department has hired Ms. Jocelyn Strath a summer student to assist with projects related to Bike Week such as a bicycle friendly awards resource base for business applications, a focus group survey and telephone calls to encourage applications. The multiuse trails web site is also being updated, with the possibility of doing a map focused on walking trails.

A view was expressed that businesses should not apply but be nominated. However, the primary goal is to have businesses focus on cycling, therefore self-nominations are acceptable. Possible winners can have their supporting documentation checked to verify its authenticity.

A review meeting was held on the Greater Niagara Circle Trek event. All municipalities attended except for Welland and it was decided to hold a 3rd Trek next year. The date will change to a Sunday and be set annually for the 1st Sunday in May. Marketing will promote the event as a kick off to the summer season. Casino Niagara was so impressed with the commitment and organization that they have agreed to future support as a signature event.

T. Whittle asked if any thought had been given to getting away from an emphasis on fund raising (a \$25 per person sponsorship minimum now exists) and moving simply towards a focus on getting more people out to the event. The numbers participating are more important from a local political perspective than the funds raised. Other charity rides were identified which draw large participants such as the Toronto Ride for Heart (14,000) and Montreal's Tour de Isle (30,000 to 40,000). Marian supported this direction and indicated that more consideration will be placed on trail promotion and awareness.

It was also noted that a restructuring has taken place regarding fund raising for the Greater Niagara Circle Route. A contracted "fund raiser" will no longer be used. Instead, a group will be established called "The Friends of the Greater Niagara Circle Route" which will be independent of the Region and have greater latitude for initiatives.

Engineering

An Engineering Task Force meeting has not been held. The Chair of the Task Force is focusing efforts on the new Back Roads Niagara Bicycle Map.

Education

T. Whittle indicated that some handout materials are running low and requested printing cost be approved for a couple of boxes each of two brochures ("Lighten Up Eh", and "Trail Etiquette") for education initiatives.

Motion:

To provide \$200 to \$500 for the printing of two brochures "Lighten Up Eh" and Trail Etiquette", when funds become available.

Moved by: Hank Bauer

Seconded by: Paul Pattison

Carried

Tim also indicated that MTO is no longer printing their "Cycling Skills" booklet, since it is available on the internet. Therefore he is looking into the possibility of having the document printed by the Region in order to have copies on hand for local safety and education events. **(Action Item)**

The Bicycle Safety Clinics are being well attended. The last one in Niagara Falls attracted 53 children, with parents, even though it was raining. This coming Saturday a clinic is being held in Welland.

A concern was expressed over the unsafe night riding habits (no lights or reflectors) of off shore workers in Niagara. Farmers often provide free bikes to the workers as a means of transportation, however, they are not properly equipped with lights or reflectors. A bicycle fatality did occur a few years ago under these conditions. Putting pressure on farmers to properly equip these bicycles may backfire if the bikes are completely withdrawn. LED flashing lights may also be easily stolen, when the bikes are left unattended. It was thought that reflective tape might be the most inexpensive and best way to help solve the problem, if some means can be found to sponsor and deliver the message and materials. Tim Whittle will investigate an existing Police Program to see if something can be incorporated. **(Action Item)**

Collision statistics are slow coming in this spring but are still being compiled for a future report.

12. Other Business

M. Laundry reported on an Ontario Trails Council Conference which was held in Sarnia over June 6, 7 and 8th. Over 60 people attended with some from Michigan. She attended a trails strategy session and noted that the presenters focused in on Niagara's promotion of trails as a model for others to follow. This was quite interesting. Information may have been taken from the RNBC web site.

T. Whittle noted that part of the Canadian National Cycling Championships are being held in Niagara on June 30th, with the course including Saylor's Hill on Effingham Street, Pelham. Volunteers are being requested for course marshals. Bob Romanuk indicated that the RNBC Web site has been updated for events after July 10th.

13. Information Items for Distribution

The following items were distributed by Ken Forgeron and briefly reviewed:

- Status Report on the Greater Niagara Circle Route: funds raised.
- Bike Week article in the April 28th St. Catharines Standard: "Circling Niagara".
- Regional Media Release on "Celebrating the 2003 Cycling Season".

Next RNBC Meeting

As the summer social was cancelled due to rain, we will try and have the next meeting at the home of Paul Pattison (24 Wolseley Ave., St. Catharines) on Thursday, July 10,

2003 at **6:00 p.m.**... Everyone is asked to contribute \$10.00 towards the food. Please call and rsvp Paul at 905-685-0316. Please bring a lawn chair and something to drink.

Possible agenda items could include:

- Comments on the Niagara Bike Master Plan
- Joint Bicycle Meeting Highlights
- Research information on Flashing Lights
- Niagara Back Roads Bike Map

Motion:

To adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

Moved by: Jan Somerwil

Seconded by: Paul Pattison

Carried

Meeting Notes:

Prepared by: David Hunt, Public at Large

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