



7.0 OUTREACH

A successful cycling network is one that is actively and properly used. People of all ages and abilities must be encouraged and educated to use the Regional cycling network for both recreational and commuting purposes.

The previous cycling master plan proposed a three prong outreach strategy focused on education, enforcement and encouragement.

The Regional Niagara Policy Plan provides strategic support for outreach initiatives through its objectives related to encouraging cycling, promoting cycling safety and promoting cycling as a part of Niagara's tourism experience. Although these initiatives are carried out by the RNBC, they also are implemented in part through the programs carried out by Regional Planning and Development, Public Works, Public Health, Police Service and the Niagara Economic and Tourism Corporation (NETC).

The plan defers the implementation of these objectives to the Regional Niagara Bicycling Committee (RNBC).

The RNBC's mandate includes the goals of:

- promoting safe cycling;
- promoting bicycle tourism;
- co-ordinating bicycle promotion between the Region and its local municipalities;
- encouraging and supporting Region-wide bicycle programs, events and tours;
- encouraging cycling among residents; and

- encouraging and supporting the enforcement of existing legislation addressing cycling issues.

Regional Niagara in partnership with the RNBC, local businesses, charities and individuals have an impressive track record of successfully implementing various outreach initiatives, more so than any other community examined by the consulting team. These initiatives are the foundation for the recommendations of this Plan and its future success. They are described in the following three sections:

- education;
- encouragement; and
- enforcement.

7.1 EDUCATION

Cycling in the Region is perceived by many people as a high-risk activity. Public attitude research conducted as a part of the master plan process revealed that approximately one-half (51%) of recreational cyclists were comfortable on major road with bike lanes and that the proportion decreases to one-in-four on major roads without bike lanes.

Unfortunately, this perception is fostered by local press reports that have a tendency to focus on cycling collisions and fatalities rather than the preventative actions being undertaken by several groups. On a positive note, there are several targeted education programs being delivered in the Region to improve cycling skills, behaviours and attitudes.



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The previous cycling master plan established the following cycling education initiatives:

- support the [RNBC] in developing, facilitating and administering a safe-cycling skills program for all ages such as the nationally accredited Can-Bike course;
- encourage all Regional employees who use a bicycle to take a recognized, safe-cycling skills course;
- support the [RNBC] in developing a “share the road” campaign for motorists;
- support local municipalities and other agencies in implementing “Share the Path” campaigns that encourage etiquette and safety for multi-use trails; and
- encourage the Ministry of Transportation to update the *Driver’s Handbook* to include skills for motorists in sharing the road with cyclists.

Many of these educational initiatives are being actively pursued and implemented.

The RNBC has produced several informative publications directed to educating cyclists on proper cycling etiquette and practices. These publications include:

- *Trail Etiquette on Multi-use Trails* – a pamphlet directed to all off-road trail users, including cyclists, walkers and in-line skaters;
- *Lighten Up, Eh* – a pamphlet encouraging cyclists to have appropriate reflective materials and clothing to increase their visibility to motorists;

- *Sidewalk Cycling-Risky Business* – a pamphlet dedicated to informing cyclists about the hazards of riding on sidewalks and the need to ride on the road; and
- *Bike to Work Guide* – a pamphlet dedicated to encouraging more cyclists to ride to work and school.

While the RNBC publications are thorough and informative, their effectiveness is limited to the audience who has the opportunity to pick up the publications at the locations where they are made available. The delivery of cycling safety information to *all* residents should be expanded to take advantage of a variety of other media.

With the growing use of the internet as an information medium, the various safety publications should be provided on the Region’s website. This low-cost delivery mechanism would expand the potential audience.

Another available delivery medium is through transit shelters. This medium is used by the City of Toronto to effectively target a wider audience, including drivers.

It is important to note that the RNBC has worked in conjunction with the local media to provide information on cyclists’ rights, such as a recently aired program on Cogeco cable. These public service activities should continue.

Recommendation:

The Regional Niagara, in association with the Niagara Police Service, NETC and School Boards should develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for the



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development and distribution of cycling related literature.

The Regional Niagara and its partners should expand the delivery of cycling safety messages through the use of a wide variety of mediums, including publications, the Internet, local media and transit shelters.

A common cause of injuries resulting in hospital admissions is as a result of cycling. In the communities of Halton, Niagara, Hamilton, Haldimand, Norfolk, Kitchener, Waterloo, Guelph, Wellington, Dufferin and Brant, cyclist admissions were the third leading cause of unintentional injury-related hospital admissions between the years 1991 to 1995. According to the Ontario Trauma Registry, children 5 to 14 years is the age group most likely to incur injuries while cycling.

The vast majority of children over age 5 ride a bike. Most incidents causing injury occur less than six blocks from home. Mid-block entry into a street, usually from a driveway, is a known cause of injury to children under 10 years of age. Swerving into the path of a motor vehicle or other cyclist error are the most frequent cause of injury to youths aged 10 to 19 years. Falls are also a common cause of cyclist injury in all age groups. The causes of falls are varied and include:

- objects, holes, sewer grates, etc. in the path of cyclists;
- uneven surface or poor maintenance of a bicycle route;

- route chosen for cycling is not designed for that purpose;
- cyclists error, including loss of control, and the feet being caught in the wheel of the bicycle; and
- motorist error, including driving too close, overtaking and passing too close to cyclists.

Provincial legislation currently requires that cyclists under the age of 18 wear an approved helmet to protect their heads in the event of a fall or crash. Although some children do wear a helmet when they bike, many have helmets that are incorrectly fitted or are loosely worn.

We understand that the Niagara Regional Police Service currently has only one officer dedicated to the delivery of all safety programs, including cycling. This same officer is responsible for delivering safety information to students at over 200 schools in the Region. The recently opened Niagara Region Children's Safety Village, is an important and significant step in addressing safety issues, including those related to cycling with children. However, more should be done with regard to cycling safety. Other programs in local schools such as the Bike Rodeo are successful at teaching young cyclists proper safety practices, however, older cyclists should also be provided the opportunity to improve their skills.

The CAN-BIKE program provides practical information about bicycle safety for cyclists of every age and ability. Courses cover collision-avoidance techniques, bicycle-handling skills, safety equipment, the Highway Traffic Act (the "rules of the road") and lane positioning. Cyclists practice skills to anticipate possible



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conflict and to take preventative action. The program emphasizes communication with other road users. CAN-BIKE is nationally certified through the Canadian Cycling Association with an instructor-certification process.

To realize this objective, the Region must take several steps, including:

- Deliver the CAN-BIKE program in communities across Niagara;
- investing in instructor development and developing a pool of qualified instructors to meet the demand for courses;
- identifying qualified instructors to teach special groups of cyclists. This implies a greater number of female instructors, instructors who can teach in other languages and instructors with special interests in teaching children, teens, people with disabilities and seniors; and
- advertising about CAN-BIKE courses.

Training cyclists and informing them about appropriate cycling techniques is not enough to prevent collisions. Motor vehicle drivers *must* become more skilled at sharing the road with cyclists. Motorists need to learn new skills and attitudes to safely “share the road” with cyclists.

Reviewing driver-training manuals and talking with professional driver trainers reveals a clear lack of appropriate cycling materials available for driver education. The Region needs to encourage the Ministry of Transportation to improve its driver education, training manuals and related Highway Traffic Act contents to address cycling issues.

The Regional Niagara Police Service should formerly identify bicycle safety as an area that requires increased emphasis on the part of police. Further, the Police Service should provide additional resources, including staff and funding, to become more active in the delivery of safe cycling programs in Niagara Region. The delivery of safety programs, including those related to cycling, is an important and necessary role for the Police Service.

Recommendations:

That the Region develop and deliver CAN-BIKE courses.

That the Region actively encourage the Ministry of Transportation to address cycling safety issues in its driver training manuals.

With an increase in both public concern about safety and requests for bicycle safety programming, the Region must find a way to develop, deliver and sustain effective safety education programs.

Limited funding and staff resources are the largest impediments to expanding safety and education programs. This is a concern as limited resources must be spread over a large population and geographic area.

Clearly, the Region has to increase its flexibility in the ways it funds and delivers programs. The Region alone cannot afford to fund all of the necessary safety programs. If the Region can bring new partners to the table by initiating a Bicycle Safety Partnership, it can use its resources to encourage an on-going



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public/private partnership on bike safety. Insurance companies, bicycle manufacturers, police, driver trainers, health care professionals and numerous other organizations all have a vested interest in bicycle safety. By inviting these stakeholders to work together and to pool resources and expertise, safety programs can be developed and implemented that would be beyond the resources of any one organization. An active Bicycle Safety Partnership would result in an increase in effective bicycle safety programming across Niagara.

Recommendation:

The Region should establish a broad-based Niagara Bicycle Safety Partnership to develop and implement bicycle safety programming.

Regional Niagara must also build on its current investment in bicycle safety campaigns. Evidence from successful awareness programs, such as campaigns against smoking, drinking and driving, and seatbelt safety, indicate that exposing the public to messages and campaigns over a long period of time builds momentum and can change attitudes. The Region must continue to fund the development and delivery of existing safety and education programs. A stable level of funding should be clearly identified in the annual operating budget for Public Works, Planning and the Police Service.

The Region must also support an entrepreneurial approach to cost recovery in order to support bicycle safety programming. This proposed review is a critical step in making the Region's programs self-supporting.

It is also important to investigate new, innovative approaches for delivering bicycle safety. Through public consultation for the Regional Niagara Bikeways Master Plan, new program ideas were put forward that should be reviewed for potential future development.

A multi-faceted communications strategy is needed to expand our reach into the community. The communication strategy should address both the content of the message itself and how that message is delivered.

The Region needs to develop a multi-media public education campaign that would expand its reach. By developing television public service announcements and instructional videos for cyclists and motorists, the Region would more effectively communicate safety messages to the whole community. The intent is to have bicycle safety information accessible to a wide variety of audiences.

Recommendation:

The Region should maintain its commitment to bicycle safety programs by:

- *providing a stable level of core funding in the annual operating budget;*
- *supporting an entrepreneurial approach to generating revenue for the expansion and sustainability of programs; and*
- *investigating new, innovative programs to make bicycle safety information and training more accessible to specific target audiences.*



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7.2 ENCOURAGEMENT

The previous cycling master plan established four encouragement initiatives:

- ensure bicycle access to all Region-owned buildings including secure and convenient parking for visitors and employees;
- encourage the provision of shower and change facilities for employees at all Region-owned buildings;
- encourage cycling by supporting the RNBC or other agencies in developing and publishing a map of utilitarian, recreational and touring bikeways in Regional Niagara; and
- encourage the development of information on cycling in the Region by supporting the RNBC, local municipalities and other agencies in conducting surveys and collecting statistics on cyclists and cycling issues including safety, demand and economic benefits.

Many of these encouragement initiatives are being actively pursued and implemented.

There are a number of trail and bicycle route maps and guides in circulation throughout the Region including:

- *Cycling Niagara* – a trip-tick style guide produced by the Niagara Economic and Tourism Corporation in conjunction with the RNBC, which identifies scenic loops for cyclists;
- *Cycling Niagara-An Off-Road Trail Guide* – an off-road cycling route map produced by the RNBC;
- *The Niagara River Recreation Trail* – an area specific trail guide produced by the Niagara Parks Commission;
- *Friendship Trail-Town of Fort Erie Section* – an area specific trail guide produced by Regional Niagara, the Town of Fort Erie and the Trans Canada Trail Foundation; and
- *Walking/Multi-use Trails in the Niagara Region* – a summary guide produced by the Regional Niagara Public Health Department that describes a number of trails (without maps).

There is, however, no comprehensive cycling route map for the Region. Such a map would greatly assist local and visiting cyclists to determine their own cycling routes and could be provided at strategic cycling destinations and access points. The costs for the development and production of such a map can be offset by advertising of local attractions, such as wineries.

Recommendation:

The Regional Niagara, in association with the RNBC and the NETC should develop and publish a region-wide bikeway network map. This map should, among other things:

- *Identify all existing on and off-road (i.e. multi-use trail) bikeway facilities in Niagara Region;*
- *Identify the distance of existing bikeway segments and the level of difficulty of the route (e.g. Ascents and descents the Niagara Escarpment);*
- *Develop a way-finding sign plan that will also identify key destinations and*



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attractions as well as rest stations and bike shops and tour operators where bikes can be rented and/or serviced; and

- *provide information on safe cycling techniques, including bikeway etiquette as well as contacts for additional information.*

There is a website, www.cycleniagara.com that actively encourages cycling in Regional Niagara. The site provides a wealth of information to visitors on cycling routes, tour operators, bicycle shops and rentals, clubs and events. The Region may want to co-ordinate its educational and promotional initiatives with the site operator.

Alternatively, it may be more appropriate for the Region to establish a Regional webpage as part of the Regional website, dedicated to cycling and the Bikeway Plan. Such a webpage would be an excellent vehicle to inform residents on the status of the plan, lists of relevant reports and to obtain input.

Recommendation:

The Region should establish a Regional webpage dedicated to cycling and the Bikeways Plan, which is also accessible to the educational and promotional activities associated with www.cycleniagara.com.

The Region is actively promoting cycling through events such as the Mayor's Challenge, Canal Trails Bike Week Blast, Bike to Work Week and the Toronto Bike Show, an annual cycling event in Toronto which is the largest of

its kind in Ontario. These events should continue.

Recommendation:

The Region and its partners should continue to support cycling events.

While it is important to promote cycling in general, there is a specific need to encourage more bicycle commuting. New cycling infrastructure, bike lanes and bike parking, for example, will influence these practical trips. Just as important, promotion needs to begin by changing attitudes, reinforcing that bicycle commuting can be both practical and enjoyable.

In the last two decades, more sedentary lifestyles have resulted in an increase in the proportion of overweight children ages 7 to 13. Short-distance automobile trips to schools are ideal candidates to switch to cycling trips. School boards have done little to encourage cycling as one of the ways to solve the problems that short-distance automobile trips to schools create.

A recent survey (2000) by Greenest City, a non-profit environmental group, reveals that less than one percent of Toronto school children cycle to school. The same study, however, showed that there is a demand among these children to cycle, and 90 percent own a bicycle. Three main barriers discouraging these potential cyclists are concerns about traffic safety, bike theft and the security of children cycling and walking to school. Some schools actively discourage cycling to school because they do not have secure bike parking and are concerned about related liabilities.



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The Region should work with School Boards to develop bike-to-school and bike parking pilot programs, research bike-to-school activity in selected schools and develop criteria and an ongoing process (including funding) for providing bike parking at all schools.

Recommendation:

The Regional Niagara and the Regional Police Service should work with School Boards and other agencies to develop a bike-to-school program, which would identify safer routes to schools, and provide secure bicycle parking, CAN-BIKE training and incentive programs for students and their parents.

Encouraging the use of bicycles for everyday transportation is an effort that will require more resources and influence than those of the Region alone. Every employer has a role to play in encouraging and supporting cycling among its own work force. The Region of Niagara must also play an important leadership role in encouraging and supporting the Region's many other employers in participating in this initiative. To be a credible leader, the Region must do much more than encourage others; it must lead by example. Being a leader means providing high-quality parking, shower and change facilities for bicycle commuters at all work places, and establishing innovative policies for encouraging Regional employees to cycle.

The Region should explore a number of initiatives to demonstrate leadership. Some of these include:

- compensating employees who choose to use their own bicycles for Regional business, just as it compensates employees who drive their own cars for business purposes;
- making CAN-BIKE training courses available to Regional staff during normal working hours, to minimize the risk associated with using a bicycle during the workday and to enhance the cycling skills necessary to commute safely by bicycle;
- creating an incentive program for employees who cycle to work;
- developing contests among departments to encourage increased ridership;
- installing bike parking facilities outside of all Regional buildings (police stations, parks and recreation centres) and indoor parking facilities wherever possible;
- encouraging the establishment a Bicycle User Group (BUG) to promote and lobby for bicycle friendly regional workplaces;
- encouraging a bicycle mentoring or linking program (so cyclists can find a colleague with whom they can ride to work);
- installing shower and change facilities for employees; and
- providing lockers in offices for storing clothes.

Bicycle User Groups (BUG) for example, are becoming increasingly more popular across North America as a vehicle to inform and encourage cycling. A Bicycle User Group, or BUG, is group of a people in a workplace, a school, a community, or a neighbourhood, who come together to improve conditions for



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commuter cycling, or to enjoy cycling together. It can be as formal or as informal as desired. Some BUGs have constitutions, by-laws, and elected officials, and some just keep in touch over e-mail lists and message boards. Each BUG grows out of its own environment and develops differently.

BUG activities are based on the interests of its members. Examples of activities of existing BUGs in other jurisdictions in Ontario include:

- Encouraging people to cycle;
- Posting notices and newspaper articles about cycling for others to read;
- Going on bicycle rides/tours;
- Ride Matching Programs – matches less experienced cyclists with veterans;
- Trying to get secure bicycle parking, change rooms/showers;
- Mileage for commuting and cycle journeys on work-related business;
- Neighbourhood bicycle planning initiatives;
- Organizing Bike Week events;
- Hosting cycling seminars on nutrition, cycling safety, bicycle repairs, and commuting tips;
- Recycling/repairing bicycles for others; and
- Taking [CAN BIKE](#) courses to increase confidence and safety on the road.

Recommendation:

The Region should take a leadership role in encouraging and supporting cycling as a

mode of transportation for Regional staff, including:

- *developing a plan for providing high quality bicycle parking and shower/change facilities at all civic work places;*
- *offering CAN-BIKE training to all Regional employees through regular employee training and development programs;*
- *establishing a Regional Bicycle User Group (BUG) and providing incentives for Regional employees to cycle to work; and*
- *compensating Regional employees (through kilometre disbursement) for using their own bicycle to conduct Regional business.*

Having established leading facilities and policies, the Region should document and promote these to other employers. Promotional materials explaining the benefits of bicycle commuting, accompanied by incentive programs and friendly competition, will significantly increase bicycle commuting across the Region.

The RNBC recognizes and honours leading-edge agencies and private corporations through the Bicycle Friendly Awards.

The Awards recognize small and large businesses and corporations for their efforts in promoting cycling.



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Any type of business can be bicycle-friendly. Using bicycle courier or delivery services, providing secure bicycle parking or participating in Bike Week events are good examples. Some employers have provided employees with training in bicycle safety and repairs.

The Bicycle Friendly Awards remind the private sector that it has a unique opportunity to facilitate the use of a healthier, more sustainable and more enjoyable method of transportation.

Recommendation:

The Region should encourage other employers in Niagara to promote and support bicycle commuting, including:

- *providing information and technical advice on the provision of bicycle parking facilities;*
- *developing a plan for establishing Bicycle User Groups; and*
- *continuing the annual Bicycle Friendly Awards program.*

Developing bicycle tourism can have significant benefits for both the economy and the environment. The concept of sustainable tourism is growing. Sustainable tourism is based on the combination of ecological, economic, ethical and social equality for local communities.

Sustainable development is a guided process, which envisages globally managing resources so as to ensure their viability, thus enabling the a Region to preserve its natural and cultural capital, including protected areas. As a

powerful instrument of development, the tourism industry can and will participate actively in the sustainable development strategy. A requirement of sound management of tourism is that the sustainability of the resources on which it depends must be guaranteed.¹

The environment for bicycle tourism in the Region of Niagara will improve as the components of this plan are implemented. People who visit Niagara for other reasons (conferences, etc.) will be encouraged to cycle if the infrastructure makes it easier for them to do so, as it does in other cities such as Amsterdam and Copenhagen.

Events and facilities that encourage cyclists to stay longer will result in increased economic benefits. The economic benefits resulting from bicycle events are well documented in **Section 3** of this report as are the recommended policies for improving Niagara as a cycling destination.

7.3 ENFORCEMENT

Creating a safer environment where people can ride without fear of injury goes beyond injury prevention programs and engineering. There is a real need to respond to collisions and fatalities in a way that mitigates the factors that lead to a collision. This can be done in three ways. The Region can begin by encouraging cyclists to report their concerns about road safety. Secondly, analysis of collision data should be undertaken by Regional Niagara and Police

¹ The Charter for Sustainable Tourism was developed at the World Conference on Sustainable Tourism, in Lanzarote, Canary Islands, Spain on 27-28 April 1995.



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Service staff to identify and then implement improvements in infrastructure, education and enforcement programs. Finally, the Niagara Police Service should provide information to cyclists involved in collisions. By establishing a protocol to respond to cycling collisions, the Region can improve the cycling environment.

The Niagara Regional Police are collecting and reporting cycling collision statistics. However, a detailed analysis of these statistics is not currently being conducted.

By assessing cyclists collisions, the Region can evaluate its programs to ensure that they are responding to the root causes of collisions.

A proposed format to assess collisions involves establishing a multi-disciplinary team involving Regional staff, including traffic engineering, police service and ambulance personnel. This team could set up a process whereby collision data is routinely analyzed and shared with all agencies concerned.

This review will also serve as a mechanism to exchange information among groups and Departments working on bicycle safety. This exchange should allow Regional staff to identify trends, and to work co-operatively on existing or new initiatives.

The threat or experience of being involved in a bicycle collision has a huge impact on whether people ride, how often they ride and where they will ride. While improving roadway conditions and adding safety equipment (like air bags) to automobiles can help reduce injuries to car drivers, few advances protect the cyclist in collisions.

Police reports only tell part of the story. Researchers estimate that more than 80 per cent of bicycle crashes go unreported to the police². Cyclists are more likely than motorists to sustain injuries in a collision. Those who emerge uninjured from a collision can thus consider themselves fortunate. While they may decide not to report their collision to police, the experience can leave a lasting impression, and inhibit them from riding as often as they might like.

There is a need to improve the collision reporting process, since cyclists express concern that “their side of the story” is often unheard. Extra effort on the part of investigating officers to collect complete information from the cyclists involved in collisions would demonstrate that cycling collisions are treated as a serious concern in Niagara Region. It would also assist in the analysis of collision data. In order to respond to this additional responsibility, the Niagara Regional Police Service will need to provide additional resources, particularly officers and support staff, to assume this role.

Moreover, cyclists receive little information or help about what to do in a collision. For instance, cyclists do not have to go to collision reporting centres as drivers have to, but often are misinformed about where to report their collision. Cyclists also report having difficulty in dealing with insurance companies after a

² Stutts, J. C., and W. Hunter, 1998. Police Reporting of Pedestrians and Cyclists Treated In Hospital Emergency Rooms. Proceeds of the Transportation Research Board's 77th Annual Meeting on Pedestrian/Bicycle Safety, January 11-15, 1998.



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collision. Police, insurance companies and agencies like the Canadian Automobile Association (CAA) are used to dealing with motorists' concerns. There is no parallel supportive structure available to cyclists.

to date information on bikeway routes and construction activities.

Recommendations:

Regional Niagara works with the Niagara Regional Police, NETC and School Boards should develop materials to assist cyclists involved in collisions, as well as other agencies that have, or could share, responsibilities related to bicycle collisions.

The Niagara Regional Police Service should provide additional resources, including officers and support, to assume a more active and direct role in assessing and reporting on collisions and fatalities that involve cyclists in Niagara Region.

The Regional Niagara Police Officers should receive training on cyclists' rights and the operating characteristics of a bicycle so that when they investigate collisions involving cyclists that they can better identify contributing factors.

Regional Niagara Public Works, with input from the Niagara Police Service, should develop and implement a program to record and report on actions taken to address conditions that impact cycling including potholes, poor shoulder pavement conditions, lack of signing or other deficiencies. This should include a 24hr Bike telephone number where cyclists can report network problems and offer improvement suggestions as well as get up