

REGIONAL NIAGARA BICYCLING COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES



Meeting of Thursday, December 9, 2004
Planning Department Boardroom
5:30 p.m.

Present:

Ron Leavens	- Regional Councillor (Chair)
Brian Baty	- Regional Councillor
Bob Romanuk	- Public at Large & Niagara Falls Trails & Bikeways Committee
Paul Pattison	- Public at Large
John Reep	- Public at Large
Jan Somerwil	- Public at Large
Brenda Sidlar	- Public at Large
Peter Davies	- Niagara Freewheelers
Mary Stanko	- Guest
Bill Dickson	- Guest
Dave Hunt	- Public at Large and Velo Ontario
Marian Landry	- Regional Niagara Public Health
Gregg Dame	- Port Colborne Trails and Bikeways Committee
Tim Whittle	- Niagara Regional Police Service
Ken Forgeron	- Regional Niagara Planning
Eric Flora	- Regional Niagara Public Works (Transportation)
Julie Bittner	- Regional Niagara Public Works (Transportation)

Regrets:

Frank Pravitz - Ministry of Transportation

The meeting commenced at 5:45 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 as amended.

Moved by: Jan Somerwil

Seconded by: Brian Baty

Carried

Eric Flora requested to speak on the following items:

- Bikeways Master Plan report which is going to the Transportation Strategy Steering Committee on December 15th.
- Councillor Bruce Timms' concerns on the West St. Catharines Transportation Study
- Possible new Public Works bicycling brochure.

Dave Hunt requested to speak on the following items:

- Regional Policy 9.F.3 re: Bicycle Network Funding
- Velo Ontario

2. Review of Previous Meeting Notes (November 9, 2004)

Motion:

To accept the meeting notes of November 9th.

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 November meeting notes:

- The letter requesting that the Niagara Regional Police provide an enforcement blitz for sidewalk cycling for 2005 Bike Month will not be completed until late March or early April 2005. **(Future Action Item)**
- Mr. Whittle said that he would compile the 2004 bicycle collision statistics and provide a summary in January. **(Action Item)**
- Mr. Flora provided an update on the Glendale/QEW interchange. The north side of York Rd. will have a 0.75 metre striped shoulder. There will not be 1.5 metres due to property and utility constraints. The lane widths will be 3.5 metres. He also reported that the Ministry of Transportation will be rehabilitating the Glendale structure over the QEW. The Region would like the MTO to remove the north structure, but presently the plan is to only rehabilitate the south structure. The work will probably take place next spring in conjunction with the QEW off ramp works for the Sand Hill Project.
- Mr. Forgeron reported that if there is a Regional directional signage program in 2005, the Town of Pelham may volunteer to host the pilot project. A letter may be coming from the Town of Pelham indicating their willingness to participate in the pilot project. Councillor Leavens said that the Town would like to go beyond the offer to just participate in the pilot. The Town maybe prepared to cost share with the Region and have local network signage as well. He will forward a letter to the RNBC advising that the Town of Pelham is willing to participate in the directional signage pilot program. **(Action Item)** He also will look into potential funding for the program through the Active Transportation: Go for Green program. **(Action Item)**

Mr. Flora reiterated Marshall Macklin Monaghan’s offer to assist the Region with the directional signage program. First the RNBC would need to decide what program steps to take. Mr. Whittle questioned the need to hire a consultant. Mr. Flora stressed that the RNBC did not have to hire Marshall Macklin Monaghan, however, he indicated that they did have considerable knowledge regarding signage programs in other

municipalities. He suggested having the Engineering Task Force meet to discuss whether there was a need to obtain their services. **(Action Item)**

It was reported that the memo regarding sweeping and maintenance of Regional roadways on the bicycling network was sent to the Operations Division in the Regional Public Works Department. Mr. Flora will follow-up with Ron Davidson regarding the memo. **(Action Item)**

Dave Hunt reminded the RNBC to send either Mr. Forgeron or himself any comments on the draft RNBC Terms of Reference. **(Action Item)** The RNBC would like to discuss them at the January meeting. He reminded everyone that any new information is highlighted in red on the draft.

Mr. Forgeron asked whether a mechanism has been put in place in order for the RNBC to review and comment on traffic signal designs. Mr. Flora responded that, at this time, there was no formal process in place and suggested that the project managers be contacted. He did, however, suggest that perhaps when the yearly Traffic Signal Rehabilitation and Installation Program report is sent to the Public Works and Utilities Committee, copies could be distributed to the RNBC as well.

4. Waterfront Trust Partners' Meeting: Highlights and Announcements

Mr. Forgeron reported that the website (www.waterfronttrail.org) includes new mapping for the entire Waterfront Trail between Brockville and Niagara-on-the-Lake. The web based map is very detailed and includes the local amenities.

Mr. Forgeron reported on a presentation made by the Trans Canada Trail Foundation. The presentation included a two year study on the economic impact of trails in Canada. The Price Waterhouse Cooper study assigned a value to trail development which includes both construction and tourism dollars. It also assigned a value to the spin off dollars generated by trail development.

It was announced that the Parliamentary Assistant to Jim Bradley, Tim Peterson, will chair a new committee which will develop an Ontario Trails Strategy. Regional Niagara will participate in this initiative.

5. Status of Work Program: Mapping, Display, Directional Signage

Mr. Forgeron reported that he has had discussions with the Region's GIS Division regarding updating the bicycling map and preparing insets for the next printing. It was brought to his attention that updating the map requires not only GIS, but graphic design experience. Bruce Irwin, from GIS, indicated that they have a contact who could be hired on a contract basis to work on this project. It is estimated that the cost would be approximately \$3,000 to \$4,000. It is anticipated that the work could be completed in three months.

In terms of the RNBC display and directional signage program, this work will have to be done in-house with RNBC volunteer support and if staff resources permits.

Motion:

To authorize the Public Works Department to hire the services of the recommended GIS contractor to begin work in January 2005.

Moved by: Paul Pattison

Seconded by: Jan Somerwil

Carried

6. Accommodating Cyclists in Glendale/QEW Area

Discussed under Action Items.

7. 2004 Bicycle Collision Statistics

Deferred until the January meeting.

8. RNBC Representation on West St. Catharines Transportation Study Stakeholders' Committee

Mr. Flora reported that approximately 60 mail outs had been sent out to various groups and individuals to participate in the study. Approximately 14 people replied to participate on the stakeholders' committee. The first stakeholders' meeting has been scheduled for January 18th in the evening. The first public information session has been tentatively set for January 27th. Paul Pattison will represent the RNBC.

Mr. Flora reported that Councillor Timms has requested that the study area be changed to include the area north of the QEW (Martindale Road area). However, the study's technical advisory committee agreed not to expand the study area as the MTO is already aware of what is happening in that area. Councillor Timms also requested that the RNBC proposed QEW pedestrian bridge over the QEW between Geneva St. and Lake St. be reconsidered (suggestion screened out during recent Value Engineering Study). He suggested that a motion be made to the City of St. Catharines supporting the importance of a pedestrian crossing there. It was also suggested that the City should request to the Province to provide bicycling/pedestrian facilities at the Lake and Geneva Street crossings. Mr. Pattison requested that a motion be supported by the RNBC for pedestrian/bicycling crossing over the QEW (Terry Fox Trail extension) and that a letter be sent to the City of St. Catharines. Mr. Pattison and Mr. Flora will work together and draft a letter for Councillor Leaven's signature. **(Action Item)**

Motion:

To pursue through the City of St. Catharines a pedestrian/bicycling access at the Terry Fox Trail over to the Fairview Mall area.

Moved by: Paul Pattison

Seconded by: Dave Hunt

Carried

9. Bikeways Master Plan Update

Mr. Flora said that a staff report on the Regional Niagara Bikeways Master Plan would be submitted to the Transportation Strategy Steering Committee (TSSC) on December 15th. This report, if approved, will be forwarded to the Public Works and Utilities Committee and then to Regional Council in January 2005.

The report outlines a number of recommendations, some of which include:

- To have the local municipalities construct those sections of the Regional Bikeways Network which are on the local roads at their own cost when reconstruction or resurfacing those sections of roads.
- To request that the Planning Department initiate an amendment to the Regional Policy Plan in regards to changes to the text and network mapping contained in Section 9.F Transportation: Bicycling.
- To assist local municipal staff in identifying and applying for funding and grants through Federal and Provincial infrastructure programs to be applied against the implementation of the Bikeways Master Plan.

The report stresses that based on existing funding mechanisms, the Region only has funding available to construct paved shoulders for bikeways on Regional roads. An estimated additional \$1.3M would have to be added to the annual Regional budget in order for the local road sections of the Bikeways Master Plan to be funded by the Region as outlined under Policy 9.F.3 of the Regional Policy Plan.

Mr. Whittle said that the Bikeways Network was designed based on the understanding that the bikeway facilities in the local municipalities would be funded by the Region when the time came. He said it's not likely the municipalities will provide the money themselves without help from the Region.

Mr. Hunt was concerned that any policy change will not only send a negative message regarding the network, but also as to what the RNBC does. The routes were evaluated on the basis of fairly rigorous criteria (eg. safety, connectivity, destinations) and were chosen for different reasons. The partnership funding was an assumption that went along with it. If the funding is cut, the Region sends a message to the municipalities that the Region and municipalities will not work as partners on this issue. He felt that the RNBC should take a stand on the report and that the Region should retain the existing Policy 9.F.3.

Mr. Forgeron offered a possible compromise to consider whereby the Region would share 50% of the cost for the bicycling facility component with the local municipalities. By agreeing to pay for half of the costs, the Region shows a commitment to the importance of cycling and the municipality reflects their buy in as well.

Councillor Leavens suggested staying with the present strategy and if the TSSC does not favour the recommendations outlined in the report, then the compromise possibly could be offered.

Motion:

That the existing supportive bicycle funding policy as recommended in the 2003 Regional Niagara Bikeways Master Plan be retained to demonstrate Regional support and leadership with affected local municipalities in the development of the Regional Niagara Bicycle Network. Further, approving this funding policy direction will help to support and obtain benefits from existing Regional policies and efforts in areas such as Active Living and Community Health, Environmental Policies for lower environmental impacts and Greening endeavors, Economic support including Active Tourism, land use measures for Smart Growth and Infrastructure Efficiency.

Moved by: Dave Hunt

Seconded by: Bob Romanuk

Carried

10. Niagara-on-the-Lake Transportation Master Plan

Mr. Flora reported that Master Plan had been completed and is available for review for those interested.

11. Public Works Department Cycling Brochure

Mr. Flora reported that the Public Works Department is considering preparing a brochure on cycling in Niagara. This would be similar to the brochure prepared last year on round-a-bouts. As the RNBC already has a number of cycling brochures in print, including brochures on cycling safety and trail etiquette, RNBC members requested clarification on the type of information the Public Works Department is considering for inclusion and who the target audience would be. At minimum, the RNBC should review any drafts prepared. This will be discussed again at the January meeting. **(Action Item)**

12. Summary Comments: Niagara Falls Trails and Bikeways Master Plan

Mr. Hunt provided a summary of the discussions held at the November 25th focus group meeting. The meeting was attended by Regional and city staff, cycling groups, Hydro, the Niagara Parks Commission and members of the Niagara Falls Trails and Bikeways Committee. The purpose of the Master Plan update is to add an appendix identifying projects which can be completed over the next ten years at a relatively low cost.

Some of the projects identified for consideration include:

- Completion of the Millennium Trail

- Construction of a cycling staging area where key routes and attractions come together
- Improve connections in and around the community centre
- Secure easements on Hydro One lands
- Examine the downtown improvement area, brownfields community improvement plan and related corridors for cycling routes
- Safe cycling courses

At the meeting, city staff reviewed the city's progress in implementing cycling projects. Either a C minus or a D rating was given as many projects have not been implemented. The lack of progress was attributed to having no established links between cycling and tourism as well as a lack of funding, political will and a local "champion" to push cycling projects forward.

Also discussed were obstacles and barriers to the network. These include provincial highways, bridges and canals. Working with multi-jurisdictional levels of government and agencies also is a challenge. The Ministry of Transportation was identified as being very difficult to deal with in terms of support for bicycle lanes on bridge overpasses. However, cooperation is being experienced in regards to bridges for the QEW in St. Catharines.

13. Access to the Queenston-Lewiston Bridge

Mr. Pattison explained that the bridge construction would begin in January and be completed in November 2005. During construction two lanes will remain open. All crossings of vehicles, including cyclists, will be staged. For example, trucks will be let through first and then cars and then cyclists. Traffic coordinators will be on each side of the bridge. A cyclist will need to contact the coordinator to let them know that he/she wishes to cross the bridge. The coordinator will then arrange for traffic on the bridge to be stopped in order to let the cyclists go across in turn. The bridge lanes, during construction, will not be wide enough to allow vehicles to pass cyclists. It was not clear what the final lane design will be with respect to bicycle crossing. Mr. Pattison is under the impression that no bicycle lanes will be provided. This is a concern!

14. Whirlpool Bridge

Cyclists are not allowed to cross the bridge even if they have a NEXUS pass. Mr. Pattison explained that the general feeling is that Immigration and Homeland Security should be pressured in order to have the bridge opened for cyclists with NEXUS passes.

15. Announcement: 2005 Toronto International Bicycle Show (March 4-6)

Mr. Forgeron announced that space has been reserved in the same location as last year. He requested assistance from both the RNBC and the Freewheelers in staffing the booth. Approximately, 1,000 copies of the 2004 bike map will be on hand to be

distributed. Mr. Forgeron emphasized that more NETC material should be distributed as they do pay for the booth and transport the information to the National Trade Centre. Mr. Whittle said that if we're going to be distributing their material, then we should have some input as what the material will be. In the past, information on wineries and b&bs has been very popular. Also, the Season's Magazine, with the map centre fold, is quite popular. Mr. Forgeron will contact the NETC. **(Action Item)**

16. Task Force Reports

Enforcement

Mr. Whittle reported that in discussions with his supervisor, it was brought to his attention that the Kiwanis Club is interested in cycling initiatives. As the Kiwanis Club is interested in producing a cycling brochure, Mr. Whittle suggested having the RNBC and the Kiwanis share the cost in reprinting the Road Warrior cycling brochure.

Encouragement

A number of RNBC members participated in all three Active Transportation: Go for Green public forums which were held in Pelham, Thorold and Niagara Falls. A final report will be completed by December 17th and Ms. Landry offered to share it with the RNBC. **(Action Item)** Councillor Leavens attended the Pelham forum and said that the participants were very enthusiastic and he felt that it was a very successful two days. Ms. Landry said that she is looking at approaching the Go for Green trainers and having a "Train the Trainer" program. Then members of the Public Health staff could facilitate the process in other communities.

Ms. Landry requested volunteers to form a Bike-to-Work Week Committee. Councillor Leavens, Tim Whittle, Bill Dickson and Brenda Sidlar volunteered. Mr. Forgeron asked Peter Davies and Gregg Dame to please bring this request for volunteers back to the Freewheelers and the Port Colborne Trails and Bikeways Committee. **(Action Item)**

Policy

Mr. Hunt reported that he is currently waiting for comments on the proposed revisions to the RNBC Terms of Reference.

Engineering

As Frank Pravitz was unable to attend the meeting, Paul Pattison read to the RNBC his comments regarding the new traffic circle at Queenston Heights. There is no provision for paved shoulders/bike lanes to accommodate cyclists. However, the design of the traffic circle will slow vehicles down and force cyclists to "take the lane". In a way it has a traffic calming effect. Mr. Pattison suggested having signing installed to assist cyclists and vehicles. This could be installed on Portage Road which is now under Regional jurisdiction. **(Action Item)**

17. Velo Ontario

A Velo Ontario meeting was held on December 4th. A General Meeting will be held on February 19th. Election of the new board will be held at this time

18. Items for Distribution

- E-mail from Paul Pattison regarding bicycle access to the Queenston-Lewiston Bridge.
- Memo to Ron Davidson, Associate Director Transportation Operations from RNBC Chair Ron Leavens regarding priorities for winter and spring road maintenance on bicycling routes.
- Memo to Cam Milne, Project Manager from Al Gummo, Senior Policy Coordination Planner regarding the Glendale Ave. (St. Catharines) Environmental Assessment.
- Go for Green Business Case for Active Transportation, The Economic Benefits of Walking and Cycling (Executive Summary).
- E-mail from Laura Dowsley, Ministry of Tourism and Recreation to Ken Forgeron with two links to trail organizations who have information on the positive effect of trails (ie. property values and public safety/vandalism).

19. Next meeting

The next RNBC meeting will take place on **Tuesday, January 11th at 6:45 p.m.** in the Planning Department Boardroom.

MOTION:

To adjourn the December 9th RNBC meeting.

Moved by: John Reep

Seconded by: Paul Pattison

Carried

Meeting adjourned at 9:17 p.m. followed by the Christmas Social.

Meeting Notes Taken by:
Julie Bittner

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