

REGIONAL NIAGARA BICYCLING COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES



Meeting of Thursday, February 22, 2007
Regional Council Chambers
7:00 p.m.

Present:

Brian Baty	- Regional Councillor, Chair
Barb Henderson	- Regional Councillor
Bob Romanuk	- Public-at-Large
Paul Pattison	- Public-at-Large
Tim Whittle	- Niagara Regional Police Service
Dave Hunt	- Public-at-Large/Cycle Ontario Alliance
Frank Pravitz	- MTO
Peter Leyser	- City of St. Catharines
Gwen Speranzini	- Facilitator
Ken Forgeron	- Regional Niagara Planning
Eric Flora	- Regional Niagara Public Works (Transportation)
Tom Jamieson	- Regional Niagara GIS
Renato Romanin	- Niagara Economic Development Corporation
Virginia Hatch Stewart	- Guest
Haley Penner	- Niagara College GIS Student
Ryan Sutcliffe	- Niagara College GIS Student

Regrets:

John Reep	- Public-at-Large
Peter Davies	- Niagara Freewheelers Bicycle Touring Club
Jan Somerwil	- Public-at-Large
Diane Coppola	- Regional Public Health Department
Henry D'Angela	- Regional Councillor

The meeting commenced at 7:00 p.m.

1. Welcome and Introductions: New Regional Councillors

Councillor Baty introduced Councillor Henderson who has agreed to be a new member of the Committee. Those in attendance at the meeting were asked to introduce themselves and provide a bit of background.

2. Adoption of Agenda

With the addition of the agenda item listed below, the agenda was adopted:

- Environmental Assessment for Fourth Avenue in St. Catharines (Paul Pattison)

Motion:

To accept the agenda of February 22, 2007 as revised.

Moved by: Dave Hunt

Seconded by: Councillor Henderson

Carried

3. Review of Previous Meeting Notes (January 11, 2007)

Mr. Forgeron noted that on page two of the Meeting Notes, the Motion should be revised to add the words “as revised” after the words November 2, 2006. Since changes have been made to the previous Meeting Notes of November 2, 2006.

A number of action items were addressed:

- Councillor Baty intends to write a letter to both Brock University and Niagara College Student Unions encouraging them to involve their students in pursuing the issue of bike racks on buses to their campuses. **(Action Item)**
- Tim Whittle distributed a copy of a Bicycle Safety Game CD to all members of the RNBC. Although the game is a fairly simple one, it can cater to younger cyclists.
- Councillor Baty noted that the upcoming report on the RNBC Strategic Plan should be developed and finalized prior to its presentation to cycling clubs like the Niagara Freewheelers for their input. **(Action Item)**
- In terms of the Queenston/Lewiston Bridge Plaza project, a consultant will be making a presentation to Regional Council on March 22nd. The consultant will be invited to a following RNBC meeting to allow Committee discussion. **(Action Item)**
- Ken Forgeron indicated that DPD 12-2007 “Draft Niagara River Greenway Plan (Western New York)” was emailed to all RNBC members.
- Bob Romanuk has had some difficulty in printing out a summary of activity on the RNBC website for 2006. This item will be deferred for discussion at the next meeting.
- Tim Whittle emphasized that a number of bike rodeos will be held in the Spring in Grimsby and Fort Erie. Volunteers are needed to assist with the rodeos. Both RNBC and Niagara Freewheeler members are asked to volunteer and to let Tim know.

Motion:

To accept and approve the Meeting Notes of January 11, 2007 as revised.

Moved by: Dave Hunt

Seconded by: Paul Pattison

Carried

4. Business Arising

None

5. Wine Country Enhancement Initiative

Renato Romanin, Sr. Economic Development Officer, NEDC provided highlights of the recently completed report entitled: Energizing Niagara's Wine Country Communities. The complete report was sent as a PDF file to all RNBC members in advance of the meeting.

Working together with the Ministry of Tourism, Wine Council of Ontario, Grape Growers of Ontario, the municipalities of Grimsby, St. Catharines and Niagara –on-the-Lake, and business stakeholders, the NEDC has taken the lead role in completing the Wine Country Enhancement Initiative. The initiative began in 2004 when the wine/culinary and tourism stakeholders labelled it a top priority to achieve. Through an extensive study process, which included public consultation workshops in 2006, a comprehensive report entitled **Energizing Niagara's Wine Country Communities** was prepared. It depicts wine country as an up-scale, world-class destination that invites visitors to enjoy a variety of high quality cultural and heritage experiences. Integrating these opportunities with wine and culinary experiences provides the foundation for enhancing the wine country communities.

The report recommends a number of actions to be taken. Throughout the study, several projects and developments have been identified to encourage investment by the private sector and/or joint ventures with the public sector. Among these projects, "signature" development concepts have been proposed to anchor the future wine country.

Of particular interest to the RNBC are the recommendations around infrastructure enhancements. These public sector investments serve to support the private sector investment that is the primary target of the initiative. The enhancements are twofold – character of the corridors and wayfinding. The objective to enhance the aesthetics of the various corridors (roadways) and make the wine country experience user-friendly to traverse. By ensuring consistency in the road standards helps to create a sense of place and transparency between municipalities. The recommended way finding system has a hierarchy: Arrival (gateway primary and secondary); Orientation (centres and pullovers) and Identification (marker and directional).

Following Mr. Romanin's presentation, the Committee had several questions:

- Why hadn't the Town of Lincoln participated in the development of the Study? Mr. Romanin indicated that Lincoln had undertaken a considerable amount of Secondary Planning work and felt that they were ahead in terms of their Cultural Heritage and Tourism Planning work. Apparently they have agreed to participate in future phases of this initiative.
- Frank Pravitz indicated that this project could be a potential partnership with the RNBC work, "Sustainable Tourism" and "Transportation" are important themes. The results from the Study seem to blend and dovetail well with the profile of people who visit Wine Country by bicycle. The second edition Bicycle Map does showcase all of the wineries in Niagara. Also the proposed weigh finding system could be incorporated into a proposed pilot signage program that may be developed in 2007. Frank concluded by indicating that the country parkway concept in the report should be revised to show on-road bike lanes, which are safer than off-road pathways to the Parkway system. The existing problems along the Niagara River Parkway are an example of where cyclists travelling at the faster speeds should be directed off of the Trails System.
- It was generally concluded that the Wine Country Enhancement Initiative was a good one and can be supported through the Work Program of the RNBC. Many of the roads identified in the report are part of the Regional Bicycling network as approved by Regional Council.
- Ken Forgeron indicated that the RNBC's work, the pilot Toronto to Niagara Bike Train Initiative and its participation at the Toronto International Bicycle Show are ways that the Committee can spread the messages contained in the Initiative.

For a copy of Mr. Romanin's PowerPoint presentation please see Ken Forgeron.

6. (a) RNBC/GIS Student Cycling Project

Niagara College GIS students Ryan Sutcliffe and Haley Penner provided an update on their work on an interactive cycling map they are developing for the Niagara Region and the NRBC. As part of their volunteer internship at Niagara College they are working under Tom Jamieson (GIS Services) on a project to map the scenic bike rides provided by the Freewheelers Cycling Club into GIS so it can be displayed on an online map like the Region's Niagara Navigator. (<http://navigator.yourniagara.ca/navigator/>)

They provided some brief examples of how they hoped to enable the bike routes to be displayed and various information to be included with the rides for cyclists such as: directions, length, location, hilliness, trail/road types and difficulty level of the route among others. There was also brief discussion regarding future possibilities of the

interactive cycling map and in general of using GIS to allow riders to find out about cycling in the Niagara Region. The students will be providing a formal report on the project in the end of April at Niagara College (date and time TBA) and encouraged anyone interested to attend

Ken Forgeron encouraged everyone to attend Ryan and Haley's presentation at Niagara College, which is scheduled sometime in April. The date and time of the presentation will be forwarded to RNBC and Freewheeler members once it has been determined. **(Action Item)**

6. (b) ESRI Recognition: Bicycle Map, Second Edition

In August 2006 the 2nd Edition Bicycling Map was entered as a submission in the annual Map Gallery competition at the ESRI User conference in San Diego. ESRI (Environmental Systems and Research Institute) designs and develops the worlds leading GIS software and technology and has 10's of thousands of users world-wide. Each year ESRI holds a user conference attended by thousands of GIS professionals from a range of disciplines. This is the largest conference in the world devoted to GIS. Users from more than 120 countries come to learn new skills, share information and discover best practices.

Although the 2nd Edition Cycling Map did not bring home an award from the User conference last summer we recently received word that it will be honoured nonetheless. The map has been chosen for publication in the 22nd Edition of the ESRI Map Book. The Map Book published annually since 1984 is the only publication dedicated to acknowledging the important and innovative accomplishments of GIS users around the world. It is a compilation of some of the best digital maps produced each year. The Book showcases maps from a number of industries and sectors including Agriculture, Business, Environmental Management, Transportation and Tourism. Accompanying each map is descriptive text describing how it was created and used.

Although the theme and publication date for this year's map-book is as of yet unannounced, Tom will keep the Committee posted as this information becomes available. The book retails for \$24.95, but he's rallying to obtain some free copies as in-kind recognition of the contribution of the map.

Congratulations to the RNBC and all participants in the development of the Bicycling Map – this is a significant accomplishment!

After Tom Jamieson and the Niagara College students left the meeting, Councillor Baty requested that a letter be prepared thanking the students for their participation on this very exciting project. **(Action Item)**

7. Further Development of the RNBC Strategic Plan (Operational Planning)

Gwen Speranzini opened the discussion by indicating that more work is needed on "Purpose", "Mission" and "Vision" statements of the Strategic Plan. Also more work is needed to develop the document for public review and Council consideration. Frank Pravitz has prepared a draft document that contains some suggestions for the way ahead. Also operational plans need to be developed to set out who will do what and by when.

Gwen suggested that three or four people be identified to recraft the document for future assessment by the RNBC. Also, it would be helpful to develop a PowerPoint presentation for use at Planning and Public Works Committee and other venues. Frank Pravitz, Dave Hunt and Virginia Hatch-Stewart volunteered to work on the Strategic Plan. Gwen stressed that the successes and accomplishments needed to be included in the document up front and clear links must be made between various key themes like Public Health, Community Design, Tourism, Provincial-Regional initiatives and roadway infrastructure.

Dave Hunt suggested that a Table of Contents be developed and the work within the report could be divided up amongst the Committee. Frank Pravitz indicated that there needs to be capacity at the Region to get the Program done. Partnerships will be required with others outside Regional Niagara. The Public Health connection is not well addressed in the Terms of Reference of the RNBC. Accommodating the needs of pedestrians has generally been accepted to be a municipal responsibility. Local municipalities can provide for the needs of pedestrians through the policies expressed in their local official plans. Dedicated staff are needed at the Region to work on initiatives outlined in the Strategic Plan. Volunteers on the RNBC cannot be expected to do everything. Once the Strategic Plan has been finalized, it then will be possible to advertise in the community to acquire additional people to sit on the RNBC.

Gwen agreed to assist the Task Force in developing a final product

8. Utilitarian Cycling Presentation and Discussion

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

9. Niagara to GTA Corridor Planning and EA Study

The Ministry of Transportation has announced the beginning of Phase I, of the Niagara to GTA Corridor Planning and Environmental (EA) Study, following approval of the EA Terms of Reference by the Ministry of the Environment. The Regional Municipality of Niagara has been identified as a contact during the study, and there will be four public information centre for Phase I. The March 31, 2005 RNBC comments to MTO for the study's Terms of Reference were reviewed and deemed appropriate to forward to MTO, as a reminder of cycling concerns to consider.

Motion:

That the RNBC forward to MTO a copy of the RNBC's March 31, 2005 letter on the study's draft Terms of Reference, as a reminder of cycling considerations and concerns for Phase 1 of the EA study.

Moved by: Dave Hunt

Seconded by: Paul Pattison

Carried

10. Cycling Comments on Fort Erie Official Plan

The RNBC Policy Task Force reviewed Fort Erie's cycling policies within Section 12.11 of their Official Plan and provided the RNBC with recommendations to be forwarded to the Regional Planning Department and Regional Public Works for consideration in formulating comments to the Town of Fort Erie. With reference to the Regional Niagara Bicycling Master Plan and Regional Niagara Policy Plan, the five cycling policies as listed in the Official Plan were provided with enriched wording and expanded to six policies, be more inclusive of support for cycling.

Motion:

That the RNBC support the recommendations of the RNBC Policy Task Force for enhancing the Town of Fort Erie's Official Plan policies on Bicycling (Section 12.110), and that these recommendations be forwarded to the Regional Planning Department and Regional Public Works Department for consideration in formulating policy modifications to the Town of Fort Erie Official Plan.

Moved by: Dave Hunt

Seconded by: Paul Pattison

Carried

11. Toronto to Niagara Bike Train Initiative

Ken Forgeron gave an update of this very exciting project that both Tourism Niagara and the RNBC have been supporting for several months. More detail on the Initiative can be found at the following website: www.bikeetrain.ca. Founding partners for the project are the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce, the Province of Ontario, City of Toronto and Via Rail Canada. The project partner at this point is Tourism Niagara.

The Toronto to Niagara Bike Train is a sustainable tourism and transportation initiative which will introduce bike racks on board Via Rail Canada service between Toronto and Niagara Falls. This pilot project will launch in June 2007 and will run on a limited

schedule until September 2007. If the pilot is successful, it is anticipated that the service will be expanded in subsequent years.

The Initiative has been developed in response to a growing demand in opportunity for improved transportation access for cyclists between the two regions and cycle tourism industry development.

The objectives are as follows:

- To introduce pilot train service between Toronto and Niagara Falls with bike racks,
- To increase inbound cycle tourists to Niagara,
- Improve accessibility, while reducing automobile pollution and traffic congestion,
- Promoting Niagara as a leading cycle tourism destination with unsurpassed natural beauty, while developing cycling infrastructure, diverse accommodation and dining options, and world renowned tourist attractions,
- To increase overnight stays throughout the Niagara Region, and
- Develop the project as a future model for other regions.

The first ceremonial run will be on April 24th beginning with a press conference at Union Station. This will occur during Niagara Week and will involve Jim Bradley, the Minister of Tourism; Mayor David Miller, City of Toronto; a federal minister responsible for Via Rail; and the Regional Chairman. Further test runs are scheduled in early May and June. The first public run is scheduled for Saturday, June 16th.

Organizers for the Initiative have requested that members of the RNBC and the Niagara Freewheelers Bicycle Touring Club be available in Niagara Falls when the train arrives to assist cyclists traveling throughout Niagara. A dedicated box car with 60 bicycle racks will be available.

Ken Forgeron concluded by indicating that post cards would be printed and be available to the RNBC for distribution at the Toronto International Bicycle Show. Ryerson University students will be on hand to survey the public on the desirability of having such an initiative.

12. The RNBC Draft Newsletter

This Agenda item will be deferred to the next RNBC meeting where more discussion can occur on the range of topics to be included in a newsletter. Once the list of topics has been identified, brief summaries can be prepared by individual members on the RNBC for submission to Bob Romanuk and John Reep in preparing the newsletter. Some of the topics suggested include accident statistics, local bicycle events, mapping and work on the Strategic Plan.

13. Cycle Ontario Alliance Projects Update

Dave Hunt tabled an information report outlining key activities and information related to the COA as follows:

- Eight major new projects approved by the Board coordinated by Project Director (These cover bikeway design and signage, theft prevention, cycling promotion, membership promotion, municipal cycling plans, destination facilities, cycle skills, and cycling awards.)
- Job description for a volunteer position, Ontario Bicycling Route (OBR) Coordinator
- Active grant supported project activities (funding sources include - Ontario Trillium Foundation, Ministry of Health Promotion, Heart & Stroke Foundation)
- Why join the COA?
- COA Events/Meetings
- Membership Form

Key event activities included attendance at the Toronto Bike Show on March 2-4/07 and a Membership Drive that connects new and renewing memberships to a free electrically assisted bicycle, to be drawn at the March 17th AGM at Metro Hall, 55 John St., Toronto. Members and volunteers are needed to help support COA's active agenda

A new COA website has been constructed at www.cycleontario.ca with further information on these and other activities.

These province wide projects are very supportive of cycling and Ken Forgeron urged that this information also be forwarded by Dave to the Niagara Freewheelers and the St. Catharines Cycling Club.

Ken Forgeron indicated that the Committee's COA membership had expired and that its membership should be renewed. There was general agreement to renew the membership in support of the COA.

Motion:

That the RNBC renew its membership for the next two years with the Cycle Ontario Alliance.

Moved by: Bob Romanuk

Seconded by: Dave Hunt

Carried

14. The Toronto International Bicycle Show: March 2-4, 2007

Ken Forgeron indicated that an orientation session had been held prior to tonight's meeting to discuss logistics, presentation materials, use of a PowerPoint presentation and distribution of the 2nd Edition Bicycle Map.

Twenty-one volunteers have agreed to assist the Committee on staffing the RNBC Display Booth at the Bicycle Show from Friday noon to Sunday evening. Two new

pieces associated with the Show will be a new PowerPoint presentation containing photos along the Greater Niagara Circle Route. Also, the new post cards alerting the Public to the Toronto to Niagara Bike Train Initiative will also be handed out. Ryerson University students will be on hand to assist with surveys, as in the past 10 years. This will be an excellent opportunity to showcase Niagara as a premier bicycle tourism destination in Canada. Potentially, 35,000 people will attend the event.

15. “Enjoy the Ride: Essential Cycling Skills”

Ken Forgeron indicated that this DVD video can be borrowed for viewing by members of the RNBC. Tim Whittle requested a copy for Police Service use.

16. Task Force Reports

- (i) **Education and Enforcement:** Tim Whittle indicated that the bicycle safety game CD, which was produced by a Barrie police officer, is suitable for grade 3 and 4 students. The Niagara Regional Police Service intends to provide copies to schools in Niagara. It was also suggested that the game be made available on the RNBC website. **(Action Item)**
- (ii) **Policy Task Force:** Item 10 addressed the Policy Task Forces comments on Fort Erie's Official Plan. Other upcoming work for this Task Force was noted as updating the Regional Policy Plan with the cycling policy recommendations approved by Council as part of the Regional Niagara Cycling Master Plan, as well as reviewing the cycling policies in other Municipal Official Plans.
- (iii) **Engineering:** Paul Pattison raised the issue of the need for bicycle facilities along Fourth Avenue in St. Catharines, which is the subject of a current Environmental Assessment Study from Martindale Road to Vansickle Road. Early indications in the EA Study are that dedicated bicycle lanes will not be provided and that a shared use outer lane is preferred by the consultant and Regional Public Works staff. Committee members raised concerns about this very busy area around the big box development west of Louth Street. Also, with the proposed construction of the new hospital, just west of First Street Louth, more traffic is anticipated. Tim Whittle pointed out that people should be able to walk and cycle along Fourth Avenue to reach these destinations. The hospital, for example, would contain a number of employees who may want to ride or walk to work. Safe walking and cycling conditions should be provided. There appeared to be significant support on the Committee for providing dedicated bicycle lanes between Ontario Street and First Street Louth along Fourth Avenue, which is part of the Regional Bicycle Master Plan as approved by Regional Council. Fourth Avenue was not part of the Regional bicycling network in the 1995 Plan. Although written comments have been provided to the consultants, Delcan, on the need for 1.5

metre bicycle lanes, it was suggested that a motion be brought to the RNBC for and recommended to Regional Council.

Motion:

The RNBC strongly recommends that 1.5 metre bicycling lanes be provided along Fourth Avenue, between Ontario Street and First Street at appropriate times when road reconstruction occurs. For purposes of the current Environmental Assessment Study, the RNBC recommends that 1.5 metre bicycling lanes be provided between Martindale Road and Vansickle Road along Fourth Avenue.

Moved by: Paul Pattison

Seconded by: Councillor Henderson

Carried

(iv) O'Reilly's Bridge:

***Eric Flora to provide summary.**

(v) Drummond Road Environmental Study Report:

***Eric Flora to provide summary.**

17. New Business

None

18. Items for Distribution

Ken Forgeron distributed the following items of information:

- Proposed bicycling policies in the Town of Fort Erie Official Plan as adopted by the Town in the Fall of 2006. Appended are the recommendations of the RNBC Policy Task Forces on suggested rewording of the policies.
- A flyer from the Department of Cambridge Community Development on the safety benefits of bicycle lanes. This is quite a good bullet summary.
- A paper from the Arlington Transportation Partners on the benefits of biking and walking programs. Some interesting information is contained about the impact on employees and health care costs, impact on productivity and reduced employee turnover, reduced parking costs. Also some interesting information is contained on how to encourage employee participation in biking and waling programs. A project backgrounder and tentative schedule for the Toronto to Niagara Bike Train Initiative.

- The Table of Contents on an interesting booklet entitled, “Bike: the Ultimate Guide to Human Powered Vehicles”. There is an interesting chapter on the bikable planet and bike culture.
- An article from the Atlanta Journal-Constitution which focuses on the demand for walkable communities. The article emphasizes that urban form land use and street layout have more of an impact on walkability than street design.
- An article entitled “Context Sensitive Solutions Put to Practise: A Warning” has some interesting perspectives on “complete streets” approaches vs. “context sensitive design solutions”.
- An article from the Toronto Star entitled “Memo to Cyclists: Don’t Get Bowled Over” which outlines the benefits of bike lanes and safety.
- An article from the Welland Tribune entitled “Good News for Trail Users in Welland”. The article discusses a pending agreement between the City of Welland and Canadian Pacific Railway with respect to the Welland Swing Bridge and the Welland Canal Trail network. CPR is willing to give Welland access to its property allowing for the installation of grade level crossings at its Welland Industrial Spur intersection. This has long been a source of concern to special needs users along the Trail.
- An article from the Christian Science Monitor entitled “New German Community Models Car-Free Living”. The article describes an environmentally friendly neighbourhood in Germany and a successful experiment in green urban living involving significant use of bicycles and trails for walking.
- An article from the Hamilton Spectator entitled “All City Buses Will Get Bike Racks”. The City of Hamilton intends to use its Provincial Gas Tax funding (\$224,000) to install racks on the City’s entire transit fleet in 2007.
- Information from the City of Ottawa on the development of a new zoning by-law requiring the provision of bicycle parking for various types of land uses.
- A publication from the League of American Bicyclists focusing on “What is a bicycle friendly community?” Forty-six cities throughout the US are described on one page sheets outlining what each does to make its community a better place to ride a bike. Communities of all shapes and sizes are included. Significant accomplishments and highlights of their programs are outlined.

19. Next Meeting

Due to a number of meeting conflicts, the proposal to reschedule the April 5th RNBC meeting before Easter to April 4th was not supported.

Motion:

That the February 22nd meeting of the Regional Niagara Bicycling Committee be adjourned.

Moved by: Paul Pattison

Seconded by: Bob Romanuk

Carried

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

The meeting notes were prepared by Ken Forgeron, Senior Planner, Regional Planning Department with contributions from other Committee members.