

5th Annual Eastern Ontario Active Transportation Summit

Brockville Memorial Centre

Thursday, May 10, 1pm to 2:15

Followed by a 40 minute roundtable discussion and Panel Q&A

Topic/Focus: ***Actions in Planning: Leading Practices and Lessons Learned: What Worked Well, What Didn't & Why!***

Panel Discussion: **Moderated** by Greg McElrea

Participants- Troy Dunlop, Egerton Boyce, Ken Forgeron, Kate Whitfield & Steve Roberts

In 10 minutes it is very difficult to sum up the actions and ideas (33) that I found to be meaningful and successful in Niagara, as well as those (18) that still remain as challenges. So what I will briefly give you today is what I believe to be some of the key take-aways from my observations over the past 20 years. It's been a long, winding and bumpy road but an important journey. So if anyone is interested, I will make available my more comprehensive list that can be provided after the summit.

1. What worked well (and why) in implementing Niagara's AT strategy and network? (33) My top 5-10!

- ☐ **Niagara completed 3 bicycling and/or AT Plans in 1995, 2003 and 2017. Knowledgeable consultants in this field are invaluable**
- ☐ **Leadership must be provided from the top to ensure consistent, forward thinking AT policies. Provincial, Regional & local municipal policies must be aligned to support and ensure implementation.** Conformity needed with Provincial policy direction (Growth Plan, Provincial Policy Statement & Ontario's cycling strategy [#CycleOn] recently updated to version 2.0
- ☐ **Land use and transportation policy direction should be mutually supportive within planning documents described above.**
- ☐ **That work has guided our TMP, including the AT component that builds on the 5 E's (Evaluation/Planning, Engineering, Encouragement, Education, Enforcement)- 1. Environmental Assessment Act process 2. OP under the Planning Act policy and implementation!- and cascading down to lower tiers. Policies and mapping should be in your OP!!!!**

- ☐ Meaningful **public engagement** helps to create a better plan, identifies opportunities/constraints and enables successful implementation
- ☐ The broader **public interest** before the private interest in developing plans
- ☐ Close **partnerships** with local municipalities, agencies, and service clubs needed for successful plan development and implementation. A desirable AT network may fall under various jurisdictions (Province, Region/County, local, agency) so co-ordination is essential
- ☐ Annual or semi-annual **joint meetings** with local ATNN and Bicycle Advisory Committees in adjacent jurisdictions to share best practice and discuss current issues
- ☐ To accelerate progress on AT, we hosted 2-3 **forums** involving Planners, Engineers, Public Health officials, local AT stakeholders and politicians on how to make walking and cycling a more viable option in Niagara
- ☐ Growing acceptance that planning for “**complete streets**” should be the new norm.
- ☐ Importance of **linkages** to other regional trails and bikeways systems like the Waterfront Trail, Greenbelt Route, TransCanada Trail, cross-border connections to the USA market, seamless linkages to adjacent counties and cities outside Niagara
- ☐ What this has helped to support is a vibrant **BICYCLE TOURISM Industry** that has been a key driver for our work on AT: Niagara tourism statistics (prepared by Venture Niagara) show major economic benefits to the Region. “*Today’s tourists are seeking out healthy, interactive and authentic experiences.*” The GN Circle Route is a key attractor
- ☐ One of your presenters at this summit, **Ontario by Bike**, has done important work in Niagara and across the Province to encourage and support businesses to cater to the needs of cyclists. **B. Friendly Businesses** are sought after by cycling tourists. Over 70 designated across Niagara
- ☐ **Niagara is blessed in terms of its offerings**, dense road system, history, interesting landscapes, fruitbelt, festivals, Niagara Escarpment, over 150 wineries, accommodations, position relative to bigger centres like Toronto, Hamilton, US destinations, cross border crossings, 70 bicycle friendly businesses, etc.
- ☐ As a result Niagara is an attractive location for large **charity rides and bicycle tours** like those from Velo Quebec.
- ☐ We have a wide variety of popular **mapping products**, including over 300 downloadable **scenic route loop rides**. Demand is for 50% paper and 50% digital

- ☐ Build your **AT network**, and fill gaps, as quickly as possible to attract users
- ☐ Have a “**working**” **AT Committee** of Council with broad representation, diverse interests. Have task groups to take on specific projects. Staff cannot do it all, they need help!
- ☐ Our **Regional Niagara Bicycling Committee** that operated very successfully for nearly 15 years was populated by a broad cross section of Regional departments (Engineering, Planning, Public Health, Economic Development and Police Service), political reps who chaired the Committee and lobbied on issues, local cycling stakeholders, MTO, public at large.
- ☐ Importance of **support** from elected officials, municipal staff who work on the Committee and lobby at Council. The first Chair of our Committee was a Regional Councillor with a passion for cycling and equity.
- ☐ Give municipal Councillors the **data/information** they need to make their case (**Say thank you often!**)
- ☐ **Education** of our youth is the key to longterm successes: Public Health and Heart Niagara are working with schools to deliver bicycle education programming.
- ☐ **Advocacy** must be a constant to keep AT on the front burner publicly & politically [Ontario Share the Road Cycling Coalition, Niagara Freewheelers, Niagara Cycling Clubs Alliance, CAA Bike Assist, local and Regional AT Committees, other Advocates]
- ☐ Time limited **pilots, demonstration projects and “quick wins”** to prove your case politically and publicly
- ☐ **Vigilance** in reviewing and commenting on EAs (local, Regional, Provincial) to ensure they conform to Planning policy and incorporate best practice solutions that protect vulnerable road users.
- ☐ I am very happy to report that **MTO** is becoming a willing partner with more municipalities to accommodate AT facilities over or under Prov. Highways.
- ☐ Keep antennae up for **Provincial funding opportunities** (eg. Waterfront Trust, OMCC) to build more and safe AT infrastructure.
- ☐ Key Support: **Incentive \$ for local projects** that support a connected network. (describe ours)
- ☐ **Bicycle Friendly Community designations** by 6 of 12 municipalities in Niagara: An economic development tool to attract new talent and business
- ☐ “**Slow Rolls**” reacquaint people of all ages with their bikes. A process that developed in the USA I understand and is spreading in Ontario.

- ☐ **Making it “easy”** for people to choose cycling over other forms of transportation. (Talk about NPC relationship with Metrolinx/Bike Train and Wego to bring people to bike rentals, future development of Bike Share at Train Stn.)
- ☐ Sensitivity to the **agricultural community**, educational brochures and messaging to cyclists that theirs is a working landscape (bird bangers, smells, spraying, produce theft, slow moving vehicles on roads, etc.)
- ☐ We have a large **migrant workers** population who predominantly ride bikes for basic transportation needs. Have several service groups providing refurbished bikes, providing lights, bells, helmets, educational material, etc.

2. What didn’t work well (and why) in implementing Niagara’s AT network? (18) My top 5-10!

- ☐ As I noted earlier, having an interdisciplinary staff team is critical. One of the most serious concerns we have **currently** is the absence of broad and meaningful **staff involvement** on the Regional AT Committee. Public Health reps have been the consistent and strongest partners.
- ☐ **Public attitudes, behaviours and perception** that AT facilities are not worth public expenditures, especially when new bike facilities are not used flooded with cyclists, cyclists riding the wrong way, blowing stop signs, etc.
- ☐ Always a challenge to **frame the discussion** away from a “War on the Car” toward “Creating Choice on How People Move”. “Changing the conversation” something the Ontario Share the Road Cycling Coalition has tried to focus on, including bipartisan buy-in from all Provincial parties
- ☐ As a municipality what are **your core values?** Does Council’s Vision and Strategic Plan value more vulnerable users over cars and trucks? Why can’t we adopt Vancouver’s transportation planning paradigm of prioritizing pedestrians first, including those with mobility challenges,² then cyclists, transit, with cars and trucks last. Our “Level of Service” criteria are geared toward accommodating vehicles not facilities for cyclists
- ☐ The absence or lack of bike parking is a serious concern. Local municipalities have been slow to accept the notion that safe, secure short term and long term **bicycle parking zoning provisions** are required in most land use zones just as there always has been a requirement to provide for vehicles. Our Committee has prepared model zoning provisions for local use but few municipalities have incorporated such provisions. This will dampen ridership.

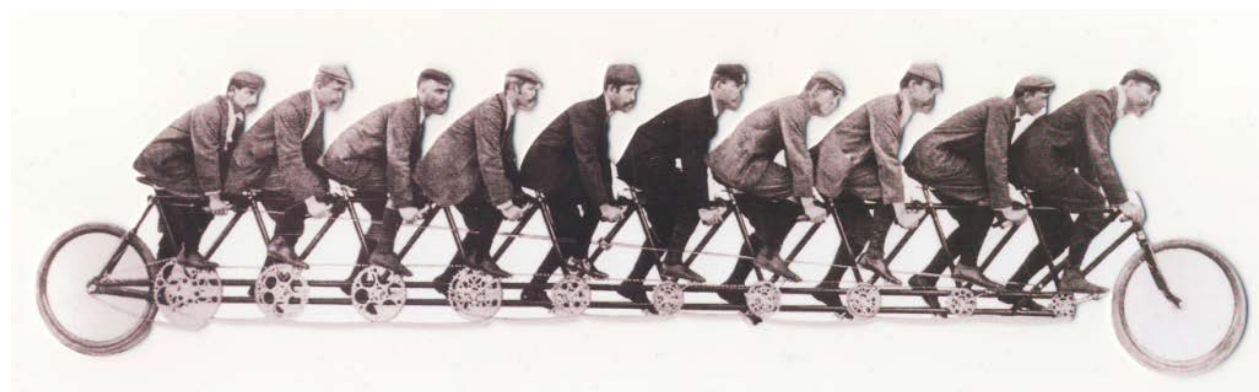
- ☐ **Car parking:** Many view roadways as places necessary to park cars rather than as corridors for **moving as many “people”** as possible in a safe, efficient way. This consumes valuable space for bicycle infrastructure.
- ☐ It is important to clearly **demonstrate the benefits** of AT infrastructure to residents and visitors, including business community. However, there is difficulty in making the business case for active transportation on specific projects in our communities. While there is information on more “general” economic, social, environmental and health benefits, “project specific” benefits are more difficult to articulate and quantify when pending funding decisions need to be made. We are always asked to show ROI Investment
- ☐ **Staff capability and time** to write and submit time sensitive funding applications as well as post project usage data reports
- ☐ Importance of **“the right data”** and measurement pre, during and post construction: Vancouver bridge example. “What gets measured gets funded”. But time, money and staff resources are issues on this task.
- ☐ Involve **post-secondary institutions** in research, modeling, data collection where possible
- ☐ Insufficient ROW **space and available funding** is necessary for the most appropriate infrastructure that keeps “all” cyclists safe, within Niagara’s very dense roadways and trails network.
- ☐ It has been far too easy to defer to the use of roadway **“sharrows”** in place of safer, more appropriate bicycling infrastructure
- ☐ Efforts to attract “older” cyclists have fallen short. More **success with school age children** as part of school curriculum. Children pressure their parents to change habits!
- ☐ Importance of taking **“calculated risks”** in building AT networks and infrastructure design. Engineering reticence to incorporate new designs captured in OTM Book 18, and now being updated. Mention examples like bike boxes, cross rides, advanced green lights for cyclists and review of Point Abino Road paved shoulder consideration where ROW space was sufficient for most of the project but too narrow in some small sections so land acquisition costs for those short sections scuttled the project.
- ☐ Used to have **targeted enforcement** campaigns re: sidewalk cycling infractions, helmet use, riding etiquette, illegal motorized trail riding activity, tracking/analyzing bicycle collision statistics. Not now. No Police Service representation on Committee or proactive involvement in programs.
- ☐ Do not discount the importance of **comprehensive bicycle tourism** programing. Our Region once took a more proactive role in tourism that

showcased the area in its entirety. Now the focus of the RTO seems to be only on a few high visibility areas like N. Falls, NOTL and the Jordan Valley, and not the other parts of Niagara which have much to offer a cycling tourist.

- ☐ Uniform **way finding signage** is critical for easy travel. Many studies in Niagara to date on this topic yet no cohesive plan agreed upon.
- ☐ While our TMP and AT plans have **operation and maintenance guidelines**, AT often gets overlooked particularly in winter and spring maintenance schedules.

3. But I Want to End on a Positive Note:

- ☐ **Not necessary to reinvent the “wheel” in our work on AT.** Look to guideline documents, strategies elsewhere. Use the C.A.S.E. approach- “Copy and Steal Everything!”
- ☐ **Celebrate** your achievements/successes, **evaluate** where challenges arise and have **Plan B** ready.
- ☐ Bring **passion** to your work! Never Give Up!
- ☐ Many **partners** are needed to move the AT agenda forward. Remember, *“Life is like a bicycle. In order to stay on top of it, you have to keep moving forward”*.
- ☐ As my wife often reminds me since I have retired: *“No task done with love is ever for naught”*
- ☐ *So....slide please...*
- ☐ Let’s all **pull together**:



Thank you.