



2.0 DIRECTION

The development of the Regional Niagara Bikeways Master Plan was guided by a vision statement and supporting goals and objectives. A study purpose was defined and a comprehensive study approach established and then executed. This chapter documents these guiding elements that gave direction to the study team in developing the RNBP.

2.1 VISION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The vision for the Plan is to build upon current cycling and trail efforts by the Region, as well as Local Municipalities, the Niagara Parks Commission and other groups. As this Plan is implemented, it is expected to foster an increase in local bicycle commuting and recreational cycling, while significantly enhancing Niagara Region's role as one of the premier tourist destinations in North America.

The Plan has been developed based on two primary goals:

1. To develop a visible and connected cycling network in Niagara Region that is easily accessible and actively used by all types of cyclists; and
2. To connect, integrate, enhance and expand the existing on and off-road cycling network as a means of facilitating the use of bicycles for leisure, tourism and utilitarian purposes such as commuting, shopping, school and errands.

Objectives address the key components of a successful Master Plan for the Region. They are intended to address all facets of an integrated system that includes establishing cyclists' needs and desires, developing/refining the network, creating supporting policies, facilities and programs for cycling, and establishing the priorities for implementation.

A number of objectives were developed to guide the development of the Plan. Following consideration of input from the public and stakeholders, these objectives were refined into a set of 11 primary objectives intended to guide the development of the Plan. These include the following:

1. Identify the magnitude and characteristics of the existing cycling demand for both on-road and off-road bikeways throughout Niagara Region, including use for tourism, recreational, utilitarian and family cycling.
2. Estimate the future demand for bikeways.
3. Review the implementation history of the network of both on and off-road bikeways.
4. Recommend changes to the on and off-road bikeway networks as well as amendments to the Regional Niagara Policy Plan where it is deemed necessary to ensure that the system can meet the full range of existing and future cycling needs in the Region.
5. Review jurisdictional roles with respect to specific funding mechanisms.



REGIONAL NIAGARA Bikeways Master Plan

6. Review planning and design criteria, and develop a comprehensive set of guidelines for implementing bikeways that meet the full range of expected conditions in Niagara.
7. Review the implementation status of the existing designated Regional system of bikeway routes, and estimate the cost of improving the system to meet identified needs and standards.
8. Develop realistic targets on which the priorities for implementation of the bikeway system can be reviewed from time to time.
9. Identify a long-term implementation plan for acquiring, developing and maintaining a comprehensive on and off-road bikeway system throughout the Region.
10. Identify a process whereby the plans for a Regional system of bikeways are integrated with the planning for Regional and local road networks as well as existing and planned neighbourhoods throughout the Region.
11. Identify desired improvements to the system of on and off-road bikeways, and recommend ways that the Region can provide support to and co-ordinate the work of the agencies that are responsible for implementing various components of the bicycle route system throughout the Region.

The study purpose and the approach undertaken to develop the RNBP are outlined in the remaining sections of this chapter.

2.2 STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of the Regional Niagara Bikeways Master Plan (RNBP) Study is to develop a Master Plan to guide the Region and its partners in the development of an enhanced Region-wide on and off-road bikeways network, and to provide the necessary tools to make it happen.

These tools include a short-term and long-term strategy that clearly lays out a course of action over a 20-year period, identifies the means to implement the Plan in stages or as opportunities arise, plus it provides supporting policies to encourage cycling. Also in the toolbox is a comprehensive set of planning and design guidelines developed especially for Niagara Region to facilitate implementation of the proposed network plan.

As such, the Plan emphasizes integrating, enhancing and expanding bikeway facilities in Niagara.

2.3 STUDY APPROACH

The Regional Niagara Bikeways Master Plan Study was initiated in the Fall of 2001. The Region retained Marshall Macklin Monaghan Limited and a team that included ESG International, Touristics, Intus Road Safety, Paula Neice & Associates and Steve Bauer Bike Tours Inc. to assist the Region and its partners in the development of the Bikeways Master Plan.

A Technical Steering Committee (TSC) was formed to both guide the consultant team and to provide input to the development of each individual component of the study. The TSC consisted of staff from Regional Niagara, as



REGIONAL NIAGARA Bikeways Master Plan

well as representatives from the local Municipalities and the Niagara Parks Commission.

The Regional Niagara Bicycling Committee as well as other stakeholders participated as part of an Agency or Community focus group and through regular consultations with the study team.

The *study approach* that led to the development of the Regional Niagara Bikeways Master Plan generally included five phases, as follows:

1. *Understanding Cycling in Niagara Region*

This phase included the development and execution of a Region-wide statistically valid public attitude survey as well as the completion of a bikeway user survey in the field at several key locations in the Region. A tourism and market assessment was undertaken to better define the role and value of cycling in Niagara's rapidly expanding tourism sector, and a risk analysis was undertaken to address safety issues related to cycling on Regional Roads. Extensive public and stakeholder consultation was also conducted in this phase, and on-going dialogue with members of the RNBC was established.

2. *Assessing Existing Conditions*

An extensive inventory of existing on and off-road bikeway facilities was undertaken by digitally mapping existing and planned bikeways, paths, major attractions and destinations, then identifying real or perceived barriers to cycling.

3. *Developing an Appropriate Bikeway Network*

This phase involved establishing a vision for the network, then identifying, evaluating, ground-proofing and selecting bikeway routes, and suitable facility types. The facility options include on-road paved shoulders in rural areas, bike lanes in urban areas, signed routes and off-road paths. Over 1,700 km of Regional and local roads plus off-road corridors were investigated in the field, and data was collected for use in assessing candidate routes. Again, this phase involved a significant level of consultation with the public and stakeholders, as well as Regional and local municipal staff and the Niagara Parks Commission.

4. *Establishing an Implementation Strategy*

The fourth phase of the study focused on assessing the process and participants that are involved in making decisions regarding bikeway facility and program implementation plus funding in Niagara Region. This review included looking at the role and structure of the RNBC and the Region. From this exercise a number of enhancements were identified. An improved administrative structure was then developed along with a set of supporting recommendations intended to better integrate and facilitate the planning, design and implementation of bikeway facilities and related programs in Niagara Region.



REGIONAL NIAGARA Bikeways Master Plan

5. *Preparing and Documenting the Master Plan*

Documenting the Plan and Associated Implementation Strategy involved synthesizing all the work that had been done as part of the study into a concise, informative and prescriptive 10 and 20 year plan of action to improve the state of cycling throughout all of the Region of Niagara.

2.4 PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

One of the most important steps in developing the Bikeways Master Plan was to obtain input from all relevant stakeholders and the general public with regard to what they thought should be addressed in the study. In order to reach the greatest number of individuals possible, various approaches were used.

Newsletters

A series of newsletters designed to keep the public informed about the status of the Regional Niagara Bikeways Master Plan Study were created. These were made available at public consultation activities and were posted on the Region of Niagara's Transportation Strategy website at: www.transportationniagara.com in portable document format (pdf) so they could easily be downloaded or reviewed on-line.

The first newsletter was published in November of 2001. It outlined the purpose and objectives of the study, invited input from the public and other stakeholders, and requested contact information for those who wished to be included in the study's mailing list. This November

newsletter also invited the public to provide their input concerning cycling issues in Niagara Region and to offer suggestions for additions to the existing bikeway network. The public was also encouraged to participate in future public meetings.



November 2001 Issue 1
REGIONAL NIAGARA
Bikeways Master Plan Newsletter
 Visit us on the web at: www.regional.niagara.on.ca

This is the first in a series of newsletters
 designed to inform you about the current study to develop the Regional Niagara Bikeways Master Plan.

In October of 2001, Region of Niagara Council approved a staff recommendation to retain the services of one of the three consultant teams that submitted a proposal to assist Regional staff in the preparation of the Bikeways Master Plan. The consultant selected is the Marshall Macklin Moxham Limited led team that also includes ESG International, Intus Road Safety Engineering Inc., Decima Research Inc., Paula Neice & Associates, and Steve Bauer Bike Tours Inc.

One of the first steps in developing the Bikeways Master Plan is to get input from stakeholders and the general public on what they think should be addressed in the study.

Why Undertake a Bikeways Master Plan?

The Bikeways Master Plan Study (BMPS) is being completed as one part of a multi-faceted effort to develop a Regional Niagara Transportation Strategy that will address all modes of transportation in Niagara Region and will serve to guide decision-makers over the next two decades. The BMPS is being undertaken within the context of a comprehensive public consultation strategy designed to support the purpose of the study. The rationale for the BMPS is to develop a long-term plan to guide the implementation of a system of bikeways in the Region of Niagara. The study will review the existing network plans and the status of the current system. The need for changes in the present system will also be reviewed, along with the current bikeways plan review, design and approval process. Design guidelines and a clear set of criteria on which to base priorities for implementation will also be established.



Many issues need to be considered in the preparation of a Bikeways Master Plan so that it can address the needs and desires of cyclists and other trail users. The Plan must also pay close attention to the realities that the Regional and Municipal governments face in providing their facilities.

How Can You Participate?

One of the first steps in developing the Bikeways Master Plan is to get input from stakeholders and the general public on what they think should be addressed in the study. Included in this newsletter is a list of study objectives and a proposed scope of work to achieve them. You can provide input at the start of this study by reviewing the information presented in this newsletter, completing the enclosed comment form and/or attending the first public consultation series. Written submissions should include your name and/or agency, a clear statement of the issues, facts and arguments and any recommendations or actions to address the issues.



Bikeways Master Plan Newsletter

The second newsletter was published in February 2002 and provided a summary of the results of the Public Attitude Survey conducted in the Winter of 2001. The results identified the approximate number of recreational and utilitarian cyclists in the Region and profiled each group. Information was also obtained from residents on their perception of the quality of



REGIONAL NIAGARA Bikeways Master Plan

cycling routes in the Region. A copy of all the Newsletters released are attached in Appendix A.

Public Meetings and Focus Groups

Focus groups for agency members and community stakeholders were held on January 23, 2002 along with an evening public meeting. The meetings included presentations by the consulting team on the overall study approach, as well as the goals and objectives, plus an open forum for discussion. Maps were presented that identified existing trails and bikeway facilities, locations of existing or potential attractions for cyclists, plus the location of real or perceived barriers to cycling in the Region. Participants were encouraged to mark up the maps to identify additional locations or key connections that should be considered by the study team.

Comment sheets were also distributed to participants, which included questions about how participants saw themselves or their agencies being involved in the study process, issues that should be addressed within the

context of the study and potential destinations/areas of interest. A copy of one of the comment sheets is provided in **Appendix A**.

Based on the comments received through the first series of public and stakeholder meetings, the study goals and objectives were re-examined to ensure that the needs and views of the participants were incorporated. The principles for the route selection process were also developed using the input received through the consultation process.

A second formal public consultation session was conducted on June 27, 2002. This was conducted as a joint public meeting for both the Bikeways Master Plan Study and the Arterial Road Systems Plan Study. A set of display boards was presented in an Open-House format, a presentation was made for both studies and a question and answer period followed.

With regard to the Bikeways study, those who attended generally supported the proposed Plan, including the proposed routes presented as part of the ultimate bikeway network. Several suggestions were made about route alignments and facility types, and these were taken into consideration by the Study Team in finalizing the Plan and proposed bikeways network.

Meetings

Regular meetings were held with the study's Technical Steering Committee to review the status of the project and to receive input from Local Municipalities and the Niagara Parks Commission. In addition, the study team attended a number of other stakeholder meetings including several Regional Niagara Bicycling



RNBP Public Meeting in Niagara Regional Council Chambers



REGIONAL NIAGARA Bikeways Master Plan

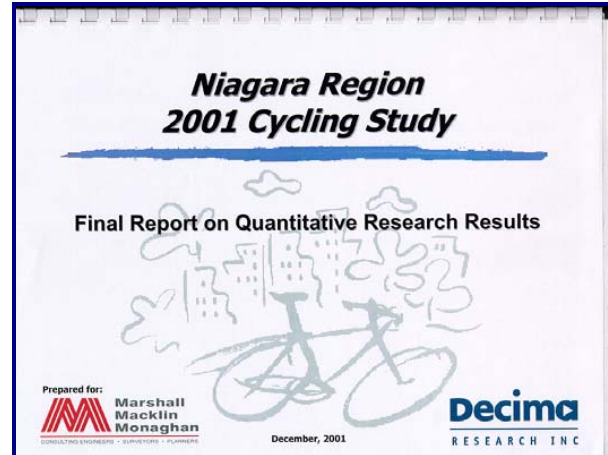


RNBP Agency Stakeholder Meeting

Committee meetings. Meetings were also held with the Region's consultants preparing the Arterial Road Systems Plan and the Regional Niagara Transit Study.

Public Attitude and User Surveys

A comprehensive public attitude survey was undertaken on behalf of the Region to gain greater insight into the views of Niagara Region residents on cycling. The Survey was completed in the Fall of 2001 and the final results were submitted to Regional staff in December of 2001. The overall objective of the survey was to provide valid statistics on cycling demand and the potential use of bikeways in Niagara Region, and also to obtain opinions about cycling and cyclists. Results were based on 202 Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) with individuals 15 years or older who reside in Niagara Region. Proportionate to population quotas were set for Niagara Region to ensure a representative sample across the Local Municipalities that comprise the Region.



RNBP Public Attitude Survey Results

The results from this important survey are discussed in detail in Section 3.1 of this report.

As part of the Regional Niagara Bikeways Master Plan Study, a User Survey was conducted at three locations in the Region on a typical weekday and weekend. The intent of this intercept type survey was to gather input from actual users of the existing bikeway facilities in Niagara Region. This included both residents and visitors to Niagara Region.

The results from the survey were used to finalize the proposed bikeway route network and to gather input from tourists who currently cycle in Niagara Region.

Other user survey data was also reviewed. The Regional Niagara Bicycling Committee, with assistance from the Consulting Team, conducted a survey at the Toronto International Bike Show in March of 2002. In addition, the Waterfront



REGIONAL NIAGARA Bikeways Master Plan

Regeneration Trust completed the “Waterfront Trail User Survey” in 2002.¹ This comprehensive survey was conducted at different points along the entire length of the



Conducting the RNBP User Survey on the Niagara River Recreation Trail

Waterfront Trail of Lake Ontario, including the section in Niagara Region. The results from both the RNBC and Waterfront Regeneration Trust sponsored surveys, as they related to bicycle tourism in Niagara Region, were reviewed as input to the Tourism and Market Assessment component of the Bikeways Master Plan Study.

Public and Stakeholder Consultation

Most of the information presented during the formal public and stakeholder consultation activities was posted on the Regional Niagara’s Transportation Services website at www.transportationniagara.com. Also posted on

¹ Waterfront Regeneration Trust, “Waterfront Trail User Survey”, 2002.

the website were reports and a set of maps that outlined the route selection process.

A record of the major consultation activities, as well as a summary of the input received from stakeholders has been documented in a separately bound Technical Appendix. This is available for review at Regional Niagara’s Public Works Department.

The substantial input received from those who participated in the Bikeways Master Plan Study was taken into consideration in the development of the Plan. The RNBP, therefore, is the product of an extensive study and consultation process which accurately reflects the interests of all residents, and at the same time is a direct response to many of the declared needs and wishes of cyclists who reside in or visit Niagara Region.

2.5 RNBP ORGANIZATION

The balance of this report describes the Regional Niagara Bikeways Master Plan in detail. Chapter 3 sets the stage by outlining the context from which this Plan was developed. It includes information on transportation, recreation, health, fitness, environmental and economic benefits related to cycling from a North American perspective. It also identifies previous initiatives by the Region, as well as a number of local municipalities, the Niagara Parks Commission and other groups with regard to implementing on and off road bikeway facilities and/or promoting both recreational and utilitarian cycling in Niagara Region. Chapter 4 reports on the results of a number of initiatives that were undertaken as part of the bikeways



REGIONAL NIAGARA *Bikeways Master Plan*

study. These include the Public Attitude and User Surveys as well as the Tourism and Market Assessment plus the review of on-road cycling safety and liability issues.

Chapter 5 sets out the network strategy, in terms of goals and objectives, route selection criteria and proposed facility types. The approach used to develop the proposed bikeways network is also clearly outlined.

Chapter 6 delivers a detailed set of planning and design guidelines that provide the Region and its partners with the “tools” necessary to implement the network.

Chapter 7 addresses the other key elements of a bikeways master plan, including policies and program recommendations related to cycling awareness, promotion, education and tourism in Niagara Region.

Chapter 8 pulls it all together with a comprehensive implementation strategy which addresses administering the Plan as well as network priorities, phasing, funding, monitoring and evaluation.

Chapter 9 provides a concise summary of all of the guidelines, recommendations and policies proposed in the Regional Niagara Bikeways Master Plan.

The appendices provide details on individual routes, including the length of segments by facility type and the associated cost estimates to implement. Also included are the study newsletters that were used to keep the public and stakeholders informed and to engage them in participating in the study.