



# REGIONAL NIAGARA

## *Bikeways Master Plan Newsletter*

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### This Regional Niagara Bikeways Master Plan Study (BMPS) Newsletter is the 2nd in a series...

designed to inform residents and businesses of the Region's Bikeways Master Plan. The Study is intended to review the current state of cycling, integrate the current off-road multi-use recreational trail system with an on-road cycling network, fill in the gaps in the existing recreational network and improve connections to, from and between existing cycling facilities. This report is intended to guide the Region's efforts to encourage and promote cycling.

The overall goal for the Bikeways Master Plan study is to "Develop a visible and connected cycling network that is easily accessible and actively used by all types of cyclists. The plan will connect,

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## REGION OF NIAGARA RELEASES PUBLIC ATTITUDE SURVEY RESULTS ON CYCLING IN THE REGION OF NIAGARA

As part of the Region of Niagara Bikeways Master Plan Study (BMPS), the Region of Niagara and the consultant team retained Decima Research Inc. in the winter of 2001 to undertake a public attitude survey. This was done to establish a profile of residents in Niagara Region with regard to their use of the bicycle as both a mode of transportation and a recreation vehicle. The overall study objective was to measure the prevalence of cycling in the Region with a focus on utilitarian trips. The study included a comprehensive telephone survey of 202 residents, aged 15 years or older who reside in Niagara Region. To ensure a representative sample, proportionate to population quotas were set for each of the 12 communities within the Regional boundary.

### SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The key findings of the Decima Survey are being used as input into the Bikeways Master Plan. We believe the survey will establish a new benchmark for future studies, and become a tool for the Region to monitor trends and gather information about cycling.

The results of the Decima Survey provide key insights on cycling behavior and attitudes in the Region. The six major conclusions associated with Decima's findings are:

#### 1. GENERAL

Cycling is a critical mode of transportation and form of recreation for Region of Niagara residents. Approximately 52% or 168,000 residents over age 15 are cyclists.

#### Utilitarian Cyclists

In total, approximately 19% of the population (62,000) cycle to get to work, school, or to go shopping, run errands or go visiting. Given some of these utilitarian cyclists ride for more than one of these practical purposes, the more detailed estimates sum to greater than the total:

- ◆ Almost 17,000 or 5% of cyclists bike to work. These cyclists make approximately 52,000 work trips per week. Just over one third (34%) have a commute of less than 20 minutes, the average ride taking 37.7 minutes.
- ◆ Almost 6,000 or 2% of cyclists bike to school. These cyclist make over 3,000 school trips per week. All cyclists (100%) have a commute of less than 20 minutes with the average ride taking 7.5 minutes.
- ◆ Almost 57,000 or 18% of cyclists bike to go shopping, run errands or go visiting. These cyclists make almost 119,000 such trips per week.



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integrate, enhance and expand on the existing on and off-road cycling network as a means of facilitating the use of bicycles for leisure, tourism and utilitarian (commuting) purposes".

When completed in late 2002, the Bikeways Master Plan study will provide a "blueprint" for the Region's future cycling infrastructure investments and policy decisions. The BMPS will include recommendations with regard to policies and programs that can serve to both educate and inform residents on the role of the bicycle, the infrastructure that exists today and is proposed for the future, and the importance of safe cycling.

## Recreational Cyclists

In total, there are just over 162,000 recreational cyclists who ride for leisure or fitness, representing 50% of the population. Recreational cyclists make more than 300,000 such trips per week.

## 2. PROFILE OF NIAGARA REGION CYCLISTS

Cyclists in the Region of Niagara are not a marginalized group. The profile identifies individuals who tend to be mainstream residents with a skew to middle-age citizens with a moderate socio-economic status.

The analysis reveals that as age increases the prevalence of cycling decreases. In the context of an aging population, this finding will have important implications for the Region's Bikeways Master Plan.

A more detailed breakdown indicates that those who are younger are more likely to be utilitarian cyclists than those who are older and that women (51%) are just as likely to be utilitarian cyclists as men (49%). Further, nine-in-ten (90%) utilitarian cyclists also cycle for recreation or fitness.

### REASONS WHY RECREATIONAL CYCLISTS DON'T CYCLE TO WORK/SCHOOL

Question: Why don't you use your bike to get to work, school, or for shopping, running errands or visiting friends?

Source: Decima Survey, 2001

	Recreational n=66 %
<b>Distance</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Can't carry things on bike</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Unsafe traffic conditions</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Inconvenient (general)</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Too tired /I'm lazy</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Incompatible with work clothes</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Prefer walking</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Weather conditions</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Need car for work</b>	<b>3</b>

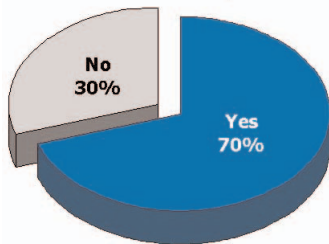
The analysis also reveals that age is a primary factor in contrasting the different types of cycling groups. That is, as age increases, cycling behavior tends to shift from utilitarian to recreational to non-cycling.

As with utilitarian cyclists, age plays a role in defining recreational cyclists. Recreational cyclists tend to be middle-aged (median age 44.0) and are older than utilitarian cyclists (median age 35.5). The Regional population distribution of men and women is also mirrored within the sub-set of recreational cyclists. It is also evident that recreational cyclists earn higher incomes than others.

Almost seven-in-ten (67%) recreational cyclists cite distance as the number one reason they do not cycle for utilitarian purposes. It is also apparent some feel cycling to work is simply not feasible - "can't carry things on bike" (13%) is seen as a common barrier to utilitarian cycling. In addition, one-in-ten (11%) indicate unsafe traffic conditions are also a major concern.

When those mentioning distance (67%) as a cycling barrier were asked what steps could be taken to encourage them to begin cycling to work or school, 78% said "nothing". However, when prompted, 25% said they would "bike-n-ride" if there were bike racks attached to local buses.

### Households with Bicycles



Question: Do you or does anyone in your household own a bicycle?

The non-cyclist profile is somewhat similar to the recreational cyclist profile. For example, both men and women are equally represented in this sub-set. However there is a somewhat notable difference in age. Non-cyclists are more likely to be older (median age 54.0).

### 3. QUALITY OF CYCLING ROUTES IN THE REGION OF NIAGARA

Overall perceptions of the quality of cycling routes and facilities in Niagara Region suggest there is significant opportunity for improvement. Despite the fact that 59% of residents evaluate cycling routes and facilities as at least "good", only two-in-ten (20%) feel the quality of cycling facilities is "excellent" (8%) or very good (12%).

In total, almost one-in-five respondents (17%) say their number one concern about cycling is careless cyclists. Non-cyclists (21%) hold this as their highest concern as do recreational cyclists (18%). Utilitarian cyclists indicate their major concern is careless drivers (20%). It is apparent that as age rises there are a greater number of people who feel this way about careless drivers.

Based on residents' evaluations, there is considerable opportunity to improve the overall quality of cycling facilities and routes. Residents stated three key areas of improvement would have the greatest impact on the overall quality of cycling facilities and routes in the Niagara Region.

1. More on-street bike lanes;
2. More off-street bike paths or trails; and
3. Repair potholes and bad pavement.

Almost one-in-five (17%) respondents volunteered that adding more on-street bike



Bike lane, St. Catharines, Ontario



Welland Canal Trail

**“Almost one-in-five (17%) respondents feel adding more on-street bike lanes is the one thing the Region could do to improve cycling in the Region of Niagara.”**



Paved shoulder, bikeway and parking, Vineland, Ontario

#### CHANGES THAT WOULD IMPROVE REGION OF NIAGARA CYCLING

	Total n=202 %	Non-Cyclists n=97 %	Recreational n=66 %	Utilitarian n=39 %
More bike lanes (on-street)	17	18	17	14
More bike paths and trails (off-street)	16	14	15	22
Better education for cyclists	8	12	6	3
Enforce rules/regulations (give tickets/fines)	3	5	-	-
Better education for motorists	2	1	4	2
Promote cycling	2	-	7	-
Promote safety	2	4	-	-
DK/NS	38	37	39	40

Question: What ONE thing do you feel the Region or your employer or school could do to improve cycling in the Region of Niagara? (Volunteered) Source: Decima Survey, 2001

lanes is the ONE thing the Region could do to improve cycling. An additional 16% feel adding more off-street bike paths or trails would improve cycling in Niagara.

When asked outright about improvements that could be made, Niagara residents stated that more on-street bike lanes and repairing potholes or bad pavement would improve cycling somewhat or a great deal (92% and 91% respectively). However, there are some notable differences between groups. All utilitarian cyclists report that repairing potholes or bad pavement would improve cycling somewhat or a great deal compared to 94% of non-cyclists and only 81% of recreational cyclists.



Friendship Trail

#### Consultant Team:



Paula Neice  
& Associates



INTUS  
Road Safety



Steve Bauer  
Bike Tours

## NEXT STEPS

Over the next few months the consulting team will undertake the next three phases which includes groundproofing candidate routes, developing an appropriate bikeways network, developing an implementation strategy and establishing design guidelines and supporting policies, and preparing a draft report.

For further information on the Niagara Region Bikeways Master Plan, please contact :

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Similarly, utilitarian and non-cyclists are somewhat more likely than recreational cyclists to believe that improved signage on bike routes would also improve cycling (93%, 84% and 75% respectively).

## 4. INTEGRATING CYCLING AND PUBLIC TRANSIT

There is some opportunity to create "Bike-n-ride" behaviour with the introduction of innovative public transit measures.

Almost two-in-five (39%) respondents would consider combining cycling and public transit if a "Bike-n-ride" program was implemented. More specifically, half (52%) of utilitarian cyclists and almost one-third (32%) of recreational cyclists say they would consider combining cycling and public transit if there were bike racks attached to buses.

## 5. CYCLING AND TOURISM

Most cyclists have yet to take a cycling vacation in the Region of Niagara, although sixteen percent of Niagara cyclists have taken a cycling vacation within the past two years. More specifically, 5% of cyclists have taken a vacation dedicated to cycling within their "backyard". Recreational cyclists are twice as likely as utilitarian cyclist to have taken a cycling vacation within the Region (6% versus 3%).

On average, vacationing cyclists have spent \$130.00 on cycling vacations. Almost six-in-ten (59%) cyclists have spent under \$100.00 and slightly over one-in-five (21%) have spent between \$300.00 and \$499.00 on cycling vacations within the Region. Please note that due to small base sizes, results should be interpreted with extreme caution.

Almost one-in-ten (9%) cyclists plan to take a cycling vacation within the Region over the next year. Utilitarian cyclists are almost three times as likely as recreational cyclists to plan on taking a cycling vacation within the Niagara area in the next year (15% versus 6%).

## 6. EDUCATING CYCLISTS AND MOTORISTS

Public education and communication are required to address concerns about cycling in the Region of Niagara.

The principle issue is one of perceived carelessness, and the public seems to be engaged in a "he said, she said" debate. For example, one-in-five respondents (17%) say their number one concern about cycling in the Region are cyclists who don't obey the rules and laws. Non-cyclists (21%) hold this as their highest concern as do recreational cyclists (18%). Utilitarian cyclists indicate their major concern is careless drivers (20%).

These views are reflected in the public's views towards cycling on and off the road. Almost all utilitarian and recreational cyclists are comfortable cycling on residential streets (92% versus 90%) and bike trails or paths (91% and 82% respectively). Only one-quarter (25%) of all cyclists are comfortable cycling on roads without bike lanes with no notable difference between utilitarian and recreational cyclists. When looking specifically at comfort levels when cycling on major roads with bike lanes, utilitarian cyclists are significantly more likely to indicate they feel comfortable than recreational cyclists (73% versus 51%).

These findings will provide a foundation for a public education campaign where respective concerns can be addressed effectively.

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