

Cycling Education Programs

Date:	October 25, 2012
To:	Public Works and Infrastructure Committee
From:	General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Acting General Manager, Transportation Services
Wards:	All Wards
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SUMMARY

City Council, at its meeting in July, 2011, directed the Acting General Manager, Transportation Services, and the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, to consult with stakeholders on ways and means to develop more robust cyclist training programs. This report provides an update on staff's investigation into the feasibility of developing a new approach to cyclist training in the City of Toronto.

The Parks Forestry and Recreation Division currently delivers the Canadian Cycling Association's CAN BIKE cyclist training program through community centres and children's summer camps. However, the program has not attracted significant participation, in part due to the structure of the program and a shortage of accredited instructors. A new approach is needed to achieve the Toronto Bike Plan objective to expand access to cyclist skills training.

City staff are in preliminary discussions with the Share the Road Cycling Coalition on a potential project, in partnership with the Ministry of Transportation, to develop a new Ontario cycling education program. If successful, the City could pilot the new program in Toronto. Parks, Forestry and Recreation and Transportation Services will report further in the second quarter of 2013 on the feasibility of piloting a new Ontario-based cyclist training program in Toronto.

Financial Impact

The receipt of this report will have no impact on the Operating Budgets of the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division or the Transportation Services Division.

DECISION HISTORY

City Council, at its meeting of July 12, 13 and 14, 2011, adopted the June 9, 2011 staff report entitled, "Bikeway Network – 2011 Update" (Public Works and Infrastructure Committee, Item PW5.1) and directed the Acting General Manager, Transportation Services, and the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, to consult with stakeholders on ways and means to develop more robust cyclist training programs and to report back to the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2011.PW5.1>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The Parks Forestry and Recreation Division (PF&R) delivers cyclist training programs using the CAN-BIKE Program curriculum. The program was developed by the Canadian Cycling Association with support from several agencies, including the City of Toronto. The program includes different training courses for a range of cycling skill levels, from children to beginner adult cyclists to experienced cycle commuters.

Toronto Bike Plan (Recommendation 6-3), adopted by City Council in July 2001 recommended "that the City continue to improve access to, and the delivery of, CAN-BIKE courses." Since that time City Planning, Transportation Services and Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff have worked in partnership to improve the CAN-BIKE course materials, to modify the curriculum to serve different audiences and to expand the locations where CAN-BIKE is available. PF&R currently delivers the program in community centres and children's summer camps across the City.

Despite our best efforts, public participation in the CAN-BIKE program has not grown to a point where the program is sustainable. Several issues have been identified which are obstacles to the success and expansion of the program, including:

- The existing courses require a significant time commitment by participants;
- The on-road instruction requires a very low student-to-instructor ratio;
- There is a shortage of accredited CAN-BIKE instructors; and
- The CAN-BIKE "brand" is not well recognized by the public.

COMMENTS

Staff made attempts to consult with the Toronto District and Catholic School Boards. Both Boards do not have any formal policies on cycling education programs although there are informal programs that occur (Toronto Police Service visits on cycling safety). The Toronto District School Board indicated that initial discussions could lead to a future integrated approach to cycling programs but again resources would need to be allocated to do so. The Toronto Catholic Board did not respond to our request to meet.

In looking for new program delivery approaches, PFR and Transportation Services are exploring a partnership approach with other service providers. Neither division has significant resources to carry a new and expanded program on its own. This approach will be more cost-effective and will reach out to a broader spectrum of potential participants. Discussion regarding the development of a cycling centre to support program delivery will be deferred until such point as a new program delivery model is established.

A preliminary meeting took place with the Share the Road Cycling Coalition, the Canadian Automobile Association and a CAN-BIKE instructor to discuss the potential for a new approach to the provision of cycling education in Toronto. The Share the Road Cycling Coalition is looking for municipal and provincial partners to develop and pilot a new cycling education program based on the U.K. Bikeability Program. Bikeability is the national program for cycle training in the United Kingdom. The program includes three levels of cyclist training for children and adults, based on age and cycling proficiency. In the U.K., Bikeability is delivered through schools for children and other venues for adults, generally with funding by the Department for Transport.

The Share the Road Cycling Coalition is a non-profit organization that works in partnership with other non-profit organizations, the business community and government to improve safety and enhance access for cyclists across Ontario.

Preliminary discussions have led to an informal working group to begin discussions with the Ministry of Transportation and other potential sponsors for a new Ontario cyclist training program. The development of a fully-supported Ontario program could resolve the current obstacles to expanding the City's cyclist training programs. City staff will continue to investigate potential opportunities for the City's involvement as a partner in the development of a provincial program. Parks, Forestry and Recreation and Transportation Services will report further in the second quarter of 2013 on the feasibility of piloting a new Ontario-based cyclist training program in Toronto, in partnership with the Share the Road Cycling Coalition.

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