

## Halton Hills Community Cycling Forum

Hosted by the HH Bike It Working Group in partnership with the Town of Halton Hills  
Transportation Division

Held on March 20<sup>th</sup> 2024 at Alcott Hall

The second Halton Hills Community Cycling Forum was designed and hosted by the volunteer members of the Bike it working group which also hosted the previous forum in 2019. The purpose of the second forum was to report back to the community about the progress that has occurred in advancing the Town's desire to improve cycling culture and to identify future investments and programs to improve the cycling culture in Halton Hills.

Halton Hills is a participant in the Bicycle Friendly Community program which is operated by the Share the Road Coalition. The program recognizes investments by municipalities in cycling infrastructure and efforts to promote safe cycling via a series of levels. The Town is currently recognized at the bronze level and is working towards achieving a silver designation. The programs offered by the Bike It Group are integral to the Town's efforts to raise the bar on bicycle friendliness.

The Forum attracted 24 participants in addition to the Bike It volunteers.

The forum was widely publicized through the Town's social media channels and on-line publications.

By show of hands, it was observed that about 2/3 of the attendees were avid cyclists and about a third considered themselves to be casual cyclists.

### **Format**

The participants were welcomed by Councillor Jane Fogal in her role as Chair of the Town's Active Transportation Advisory Committee and the Bike It working group.

There was a review of Bicycle Friendly Community program requirements and a review of Bike It initiatives through the years including the following 2024 program:

- Bike it to the Market
- Used Bike Swap
- Group rides
- Pop -Up Safety events
- Designing the first HH bike map
- Hosting the Cycling Forum

Stephanie Mazhari from Halton Region spoke about the new Halton Cycling Map and the Bicycle Friendly business program.

Ivan Drewnitski, Transportation Planning Coordinator, described the bicycle infrastructure improvements the Town has made during the past 5 years as well as other initiatives such as the bicycle scavenger hunt, and new bike repair stations.

Facilitated table discussions covered the 5 aspects of bicycle friendliness as prescribed by the BFC program that include: Engineering, Encouragement, Education, Evaluation, and Equity.

Discussion 1 focused on Engineering/ Infrastructure followed by a discussion focused on Encouragement, Education, Evaluation, and Equity.

After reporting back on the discussions, participants were asked to think about all the items raised and to rank them using coloured dots with the most important item getting a red dot, followed by the second priority indicated with a green dot and the third priority noted with a blue dot.

In order to rank the items and help with interpretation of the data, the dots were given a numerical value of Red= 3 Green =2 and Blue =1. There is no valid reason for these values but the resulting totals give an indication of relative importance.

It should also be noted that the cyclists present were predominantly avid cyclists. Likewise, there were 2 students who participated. It is recognized that this is not a cross-section of the cycling community and the results should be interpreted in that context.

## **Results**

The raw data can be found in **Attachment 1**.

### **Interpretation of Engineering comments**

All of the comments and suggestions have merit and can be taken at face value. However, there are themes that emerged.

#### **Connecting the network within Halton Hills and to adjacent municipalities.**

There is a strong desire to have better cycling infrastructure that would connect Brampton Georgetown, rural Halton Hills, Acton and further west to Rockwood and Guelph areas. Brampton/Peel has invested in paved shoulders on rural roads and Halton Hills should do the same. It was noted that paved shoulders pay for themselves over time as they protect the integrity of the road surface. Every opportunity taken to add paved shoulders on rural roads would significantly improve safety and connectivity.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Line repaving transformed a formerly good cycling road into a narrow speedway for drivers with no safe space for cyclists. It was suggested that the Town take advantage of the hydro corridor between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Lines to create a safe cycling and walking trail. The Town secured a right of first refusal on this corridor and should take advantage of it. It could link municipalities north and south of Halton Hills. (editor's note: Consultations with those municipalities may offer an opportunity to create a significant cycling/hiking opportunity.)

### **Connectivity within Halton Hills**

Safety of cyclists was emphasized throughout the discussions. Off road paths and separated bike lanes were recommended to make cyclists feel safer. Continuity of safe cycling infrastructure is important and there should be a gap analysis done to prompt filling the gap measures.

There were several comments about safe, convenient crossings at major intersections. The Guelph Street/Hall Road crossing currently is not signalized but would benefit from being upgraded. The 15<sup>th</sup> Sideroad at Regional Road 25 signal needs to be properly located.

Maintenance of on-road bike lanes both in town and out must be considered. These lanes need to be swept regularly to make them safe for cyclists.

Mountainview Road needs to have more than just a sidewalk. Perhaps there are creative solutions such as making the sidewalk a multi-use path in the sections that have heavy traffic and zero room for cyclists.

In the new developments, the routes to school should be mapped and priority given to create a safe route to bike to school. This was also discussed with respect to students living on 15<sup>th</sup> Side Road west of Trafalgar Road wanting to ride their bikes to school. It was noted that the hills in between Trafalgar Road and 6<sup>th</sup> Line do not have a safe space for cyclists and therefore the students are not allowed to ride to school, much as they would like to.

(editor's note: Likewise cycling routes to commercial areas should be mapped in advance of decisions on the road design and accommodation of cyclists and pedestrians)

Consideration must be made for accommodating E-Bikes as there is a significant trend emerging showing a rise in E-Bike use (Editor's note: E-Bike parking will likely become more of an issue in the future)

Bike parking at all local commercial areas needs to be encouraged. Although bike parking is required in new commercial buildings, the older buildings do not have consistent bike racks. (Editor's note – perhaps the town should have an incentive program to address this issue.)

The attendees indicated that roundabouts are safer for cyclists than intersections and would encourage building more roundabouts.

Overall, there was a recommendation that the Town increase its budget for cycling infrastructure and that chip and tar not be used on rural roads as this is very difficult for cyclists and presents a significant safety hazard on the edge of the road where the gravel accumulates.

There was a desire for mountain bike trails that are formally created and monitored. And an abandoned rail line near the WWTP in Acton was identified as a possible safe route into Acton as an alternative to 3<sup>rd</sup> line/Glen Lawson Road.

## **Interpretation of Everything Else – Education, Encouragement, Evaluation, Equity**

### **Education of drivers and cyclists**

Education of drivers on the issue of safety for cyclists was the top issue raised. There was concern that drivers do not know what the 1 Meter Law means, or they don't know it exists, they also thought that drivers don't understand that bikes are vehicles that are allowed on the roads and do not make allowances for passing them safely. There was concern that drivers do not know what bike sharrows are, nor do they understand pavement markings at intersections. Although new driver training was identified as needing to include a section on cyclists, this was added to the driver's manual several years ago. However, existing drivers do not benefit from this training.

More community and/family group bike rides were identified, however, it was noted that existing group rides are not publicized broadly enough.

Education of safe cycling for children was a major issue with the suggestion that the Town take advantage of the Ontario Hop On education program which could be offered through the Recreation Department. Bike rodeos were also recommended and skills courses for all children was an identified need.

### **Other Issues**

Other issues included the lack of a full-time bike shop and the lack of a Halton Hills bike club, both of which are important for developing a robust cycling culture. A bike club would facilitate offering more group rides and would help with communication regarding cycling initiatives and education.

The possibility of offering a bike lending library was discussed as has been developed in other municipalities.

Open Streets such as happens on Sunday mornings in Ottawa would be a great feature to encourage cycling.

Mountain bike trails were also identified to help increase cycling and cycling culture in the town.

## **Conclusion**

The 2024 Halton Hills Community Cycling Forum provided an opportunity for citizens to discuss the future of cycling in Halton Hills. The format, as facilitated by the Bike It working group, yielded valuable information for input into future Town investments in cycling infrastructure and the safety of cyclists as it pursues reaching higher levels in the Bicycle Friendly Community program.

The Town thanks the members of the Bike It working group for organizing the Cycling Forum. The members include Glenn Price Jones, Ramona Hendry, Heather Price-Jones, Adam Lennie, Nelson Barros, Hamant Chaohan and Councillor Jane Fogal.