



The Intermunicipal Partnership for Active Transportation
Waterloo Region Cycling Forum

SUMMARY REPORT

30th November, 2016
Subscribers Lounge
Kitchener Memorial Auditorium

Executive Summary

In 2015, the Intermunicipal Partnership for Active Transportation (IMPACT) identified “creating a positive and supportive cycling culture” as their focus for future educational campaigns. They hosted the Waterloo Region Cycling Forum in November 2016 to identify targeted approaches to encourage new cyclists and support current cyclists to ultimately increase the overall number of cycling trips in the region. Over 80 attendees representing a variety of community stakeholders attended the forum.

For the purposes of the forum, cycling culture was framed using three roundtable discussion themes: Safety and Education, Promotion and Outreach, and Bikes and Businesses. After the forum, the roundtable discussions were analyzed to identify key messages and action items to inform IMPACT’s future strategic direction. Many of the proposed projects are now currently in progress whereas other action items have been earmarked for future work in the coming years. Potential projects were also identified for community stakeholders to undertake recognizing the unique strengths of the local cycling community.

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Who is IMPAcT?

The Intermunicipal Partnership for Active Transportation (IMPAcT) works collaboratively to plan for and promote safe walking, cycling, and other forms of active transportation in municipalities across Waterloo Region.

The work of IMPAcT is supported by the Region of Waterloo Strategic Plan for 2015-2018 under the focus area of Sustainable Transportation and the following strategic objective: build infrastructure for, and increase participation in, active forms of transportation (cycling and walking). Under this mandate, IMPAcT aims to set annual priorities and objectives that will meet local needs, address strategic issues and be supported by available resources.

Members include:

- City of Cambridge
- City of Kitchener
- City of Waterloo
- Region of Waterloo
- Student Transportation Services of Waterloo Region
- Waterloo Regional Police Service
- Region of Waterloo Public Health & Emergency Services
- Sustainable Waterloo Region
- Ministry of Transportation
- Canadian Automobile Association
- Community Access Bikeshare/The Working Centre
- Climate Action Waterloo Region

Acknowledgements

The 2016 Waterloo Region Cycling Forum brought together over 80 attendees representing local government, members of municipal Council, cycling clubs, bike-related businesses, community associations, post-secondary institutions and various non-profits.

IMPACT wishes to thank participants for their contribution to the discussion on building cycling culture in Waterloo Region. This input will be instrumental for shaping IMPACT's strategic direction over the next couple of years.

IMPACT would particularly like to thank keynote speaker Jared Kolb, Executive Director of [Cycle Toronto](#), Master of Ceremonies Ron Schirm of the City of Kitchener, as well as forum panelists Jane Snyder of [Community Access Bikeshare](#), Graham Roe of [Berlin Bike Café](#) and Phil Martin of [Cycling into the Future](#). Each of these participants were instrumental in shaping the forum discussions through sharing their personal expertise in building cycling culture.

What is Cycling Culture?

Cycling culture is created by local/federal governments and their citizens through policy, infrastructure, and programming designed to actively support the use of bicycles for transportation, recreation, and competition with the aim of making cycling a part of life for a greater number of people.

It can also refer to a mainstream culture or subculture that supports cycling.

Why Cycling Culture?

In early 2015, IMPAcT identified “creating a positive and supportive cycling culture” as the focus for future educational campaigns, especially amongst young families. Goals included:

- Move people who are primarily drivers, interested but concerned about cycling but not currently cycling to start recreational cycling.
- Move people who are currently recreational cyclists to become commuter cyclists.

The purpose of supporting the development of cycling culture in Waterloo Region is to both encourage new cyclists and support current cyclists so that the overall number of cycling trips increases, and that a greater diversity of residents feel comfortable cycling and identifying as a cyclist. Ultimately, IMPAcT is seeking to contribute to a positive feedback loop where increases in the number cyclists leads to higher rates of cycling and better safety outcomes. Increasing the number of people cycling can provide “safety in numbers” as motorists may be less likely to collide with a cyclist when there are more of them visible. This positive feedback loop has been recognized by the Region of Waterloo, the Area Municipalities, as well as other jurisdictions.

As mentioned earlier, building infrastructure and increasing participation in active modes, such as cycling, was identified as an objective in the Region of Waterloo’s 2015-2018 Strategic Plan. Additionally, there has been a great amount of local interest in supporting cycling tourism and demonstrating the business case for cycling (e.g. bike-friendly shops and designations, etc.).



Forum Proceedings

After the opening remarks, Jared Kolb, the Executive Director of Cycle Toronto, delivered the keynote address. He spoke to Cycle Toronto's experience in building local cycling culture through advocacy, education and encouragement, and discussed how this could be applied to Waterloo Region.

Participants then had the opportunity to participate in three roundtables sessions to discuss building local cycling culture from the perspectives of: Safety and Education (refining cycling safety messaging and campaigns); Promotion and Outreach (improving and diversifying the public perception of cyclists); and Bikes and Businesses (building the local business case for accommodating cyclists). These tables were facilitated by a representative from IMPAcT.

Key Roundtable Questions

Safety and Education

- How can we promote safe and responsible cycling (and driving)?
- What are the key safety concerns in our community?

Promotion and Branding

- How can we encourage more people to cycle?
- What are the barriers to cycling?

Bikes and Businesses

- How can we encourage businesses to recognize cyclists/cycling tourism as economic drivers?
- Is there value in encouraging businesses to join existing bike business designations, or a cycling friendly BIA designation?
- How can we support existing bike-related businesses? How can we encourage the creation of new bike-related businesses?

The themes of Safety and Education, Promotion and Outreach, and Bikes and Businesses were selected for the roundtable discussions as these are key components for building local cycling culture. The facilitation questions were developed to draw out information that could be used to identify potential projects and action items for IMPAcT, as well as the broader cycling community, that will contribute to building a supportive cycling culture across Waterloo Region.

Jane Snyder of the Working Centre, Graham Roe of Berlin Bike Café and Phil Martin of Cycling into the Future, in addition to keynote speaker Jared Kolb, were then asked to close off the day’s conversations by commenting on barriers to cycling as well as their aspirations for enhancing local cycling culture.

Post-Forum Online Feedback

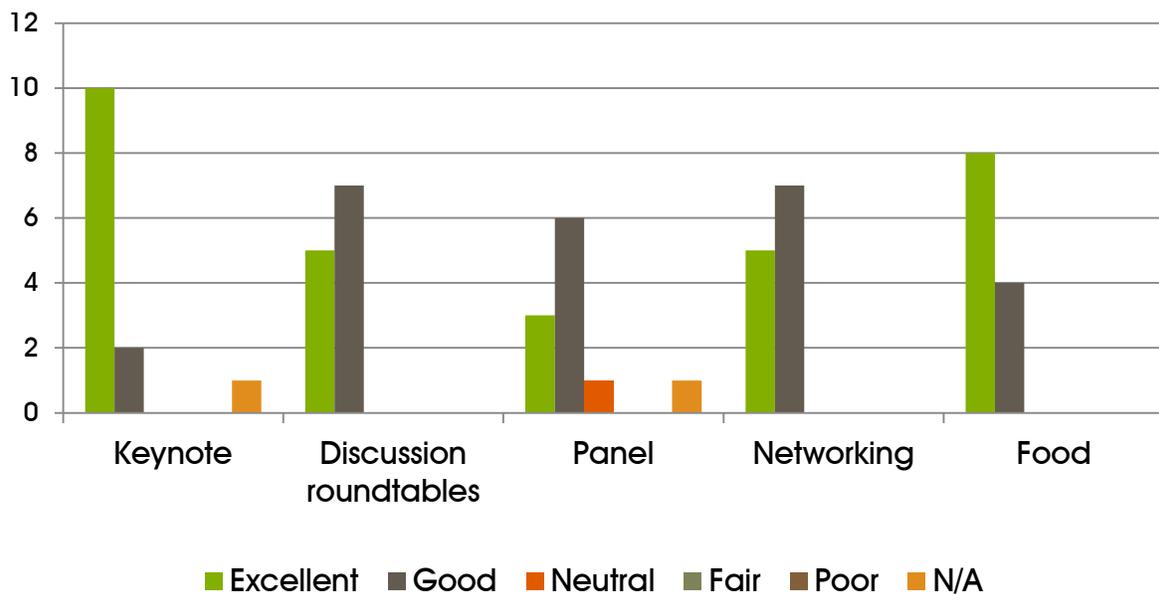


Figure 1: The chart above illustrates the online feedback received from 14 forum participants

Key Messages

Once the forum proceedings were transcribed, key messages and action items were identified. Below are the themes that emerged from the roundtable discussions, listed in no particular order.

Theme 1: Normalize cycling

Participants spoke to the need of positioning cyclists as part of the broader community (people who use bikes, as opposed to cyclists as a fringe group), and moving past the dichotomy of cyclists versus drivers. There was lively discussion surrounding a potential, “who’s a cyclist” media campaign that could make use of print and/or social media ads or videos that feature community members who cycle along with other attribute(s) that make up their identify, and connect them to the community (e.g., teacher, parent, student, etc...). This would be accompanied by messages that promote safe driving, similar to [Bike Pittsburgh’s Drive with Care](#) campaign.

In order to appeal to the wider Waterloo Region community, it was suggested that campaigns and messaging should also focus on the economic and public health benefits of cycling. Additionally, cycling should also be framed as part of a multi-modal travel approach that can be used as a way to close gaps between other modes, such as transit.

Theme 2: Promote road sharing

To further address adversarial perceptions of cyclists and drivers and to promote road sharing and improve safety, it was suggested to encourage two-way communication, by using messaging like IMPACT’s 2014 [Thumbs Up](#) campaign. In addition to addressing issues of



communication between cyclists and drivers, it was suggested that cyclists should be encouraged to take safety into their own hands and cycling safety courses, such as CAN-Bike, should be promoted.

Theme 3: Link promotion to infrastructure

Much of the forum discussion questions were focused on “soft changes” that could promote cycling culture, such as promotional and education campaigns, as these activities align within IMPACT’s mandate and capacity. As such, questions were purposefully designed to focus discussions away from infrastructure concerns. However, IMPACT members recognize the importance proper infrastructure plays in supporting cycling culture and therefore encouraged attendees to voice these concerns to the appropriate municipal committees

Participants mentioned that promotion and education can only go so far, and that a complete cycling network with good infrastructure is required. It was noted that poor cyclist behavior is often symptomatic of poor infrastructure and unclear/cumbersome regulations. It was recommended that campaigns should be used to promote the use of, or educate on the proper use of, new infrastructure developments.

Theme 4: Focus on youths

Participants shared that it may be more impactful to focus on younger cyclists as they are typically more receptive to adopting new behaviours, and they can in turn influence their parents. They are also the next generation of cyclists. Participants recommended targeting education efforts on post-secondary students, especially international students who may be less familiar with local cycling safety practices.

Theme 5: Organized advocacy

Participants shared that community advocacy could be effective in supporting efforts to promote cycling, by gaining political support through engagement with elected officials. Community members can advocate in a less formal way and reach different audiences

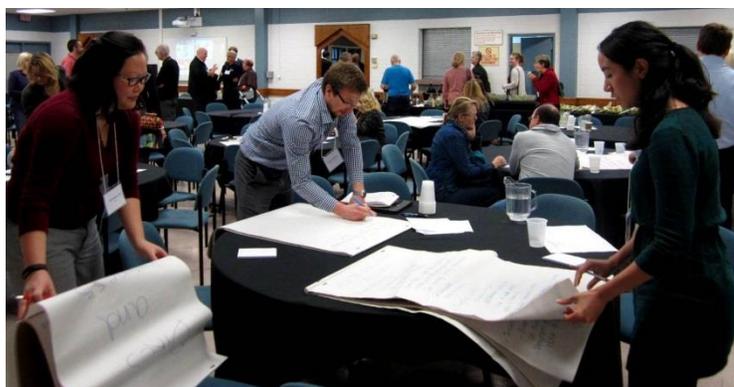
than municipal and regional organizations can. This can include advocating for cycling infrastructure improvements.

It was also noted that there is no formal cycling advocacy group in Waterloo Region that is comparable to Cycle Toronto or other mid-size cities such as Windsor who have member-based advocacy groups. Discussions focused on opportunities for a group to help structure community advocacy by rallying local cycling champions as well as interested volunteers. Other activities that a local cycling advocacy group could undertake include, providing services such as a bike valet or hosting community rides.

Theme 6: More consistency and collaboration

Some participants commented that cycling-related information provided by the Region and the municipalities may not be universally accessible and that existing online platforms hosting the information are difficult to navigate, which may be limiting the effectiveness of outreach efforts. In order to reach more community members, it was

advised that IMPAcT members consult with key target populations using communication channels already in use within these communities to determine resource needs and the best ways to share future information. Furthermore, it was



recommended that resources be consistent across jurisdictions to avoid confusion and that there should be an online hub for region-wide resources.

Fortunately, IMPAcT has already created a “one-stop-shop for all things cycling in Waterloo Region,” BikeWR.com. However, conversations from the forum indicated there is a greater need to promote this resource and there may be value in IMPAcT developing a social media strategy to do this.

More broadly, participants articulated that open communication and true collaboration amongst municipalities and the Region are required. Also mentioned was that follow-up is important after projects, such as this forum, in order to communicate results and to understand the challenges, opportunities, and areas for future improvement. Likewise, building cycling culture requires consistent support, commitment and enthusiasm from staff.

Theme 7: Address barriers

There was the recognition amongst participants that within Waterloo Region the barriers to cycling are similar to other mid-sized Canadian cities. One of the main barriers includes challenges with improving cycling infrastructure due to financial and political pressures. Other barriers are felt directly by potential cyclists, such as the cost of cycling equipment, the perceived safety of cycling and cultural barriers. As such,

participants noted that the community would benefit from educational and promotional programs to address some of these barriers. Specifically education should be provided on proper safety



practices, cycling skills, and information on how to use available infrastructure. It was recommended that IMPAcT work towards identifying the specific barriers experienced by different populations groups to develop targeting educational and promotional materials. It was also suggested that IMPAcT engage with elected officials to gain the political support that is required to achieve change locally that will create a supportive cycling culture across Waterloo Region.

Proposed Projects in Progress

Many of the projects that were proposed by attendees of the forum are actually currently underway through collaborative efforts between the IMPAcT committee, the Area Municipalities, the Region of Waterloo and School Transportation Services of the Region of Waterloo, as well as the Working Centre.

Here are a few examples:

- Create an online hub hosting local cycling resources with single image or graphic (BikeWR.com)
- Showcase cycling initiatives (municipal by-annual cycling reports)
- Develop grants for bike parking and other cycling fixtures to help subsidize costs
- Provide financial assistance to subsidize CAN-BIKE
- Explore opportunities for enhancing bike sharing in the Region
- Develop wayfinding and/or route planning tools
- Create a cycling-specific map and/or app
- Explore opportunities to provide more bike storage/parking
- Engage with businesses along priority network to support their staff in cycling to work
- Promote links between GRT/VIA/GO and cycling
- Launch a neighbourhood campaign showing cycling travel time from LRT stations
- Develop a cycling priority network and winter maintenance grid
- Promote TDM checklist for new developments amongst developers
- Advocate to include “Cycling into the Future” into grade 5 school curriculum
- Provide bike parking for kids at schools
- Work with a champion within Waterloo Regional Police to further develop partnership

Moving Forward

The table below organizes project ideas that arose during the roundtable discussions that fall under the mandate of the IMPAcT committee. These projects have been organized by the committee in terms of importance and priority for implementation.

Recommended IMPAcT Action Items

IMPAcT Short-Term Project Recommendations	
High Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create cycling information packages for different audiences (e.g. data on the benefits of bike-friendly businesses for BIAs and data on the bikeability of developments for property managers, etc...) • Conduct a scan of available educational materials and identify gaps, including accessibility concerns • Connect participants interested in forming an advocacy group • Deliver a “Get Lit” campaign and/or “Who’s a Cyclist” campaign
Medium Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with Explore WR to support continued engagement with businesses/cycling tourism • Connect with Ontario by Bike to discuss cycling certification • Invite post-secondary institutions to join IMPAcT • Conduct a scan of best practices/guides for reporting on cycling related collisions to develop a local resource for the media. Identify point person(s) to comment on cycling collisions. • Develop communications/social media strategy to promote BikeWR
IMPAcT Longer-Term Project Recommendations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with stakeholders (Multicultural Centre, post-secondary institutions, Easy Riders, Working Centre, Neighbourhood Associations...) to design a research project to better understand motivations and barriers to cycling for certain socio-demographic groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conduct outreach to seek feedback ○ Develop promotional and educational materials in multiple languages 	

How Can Forum Participants Help Build Cycling Culture?

A number of the projects that were recommended by forum participants fell outside of IMPACT's Terms of Reference and were therefore considered to be out of scope. Most of these projects were those related to advocacy. IMPACT met with a facilitator from the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition to identify potential adopters from the community for the remaining action items, as these proposed projects are undoubtedly important for building local cycling culture.

Safety and Education	
Action	Potential Adopters
Target local driving schools to provide cycling education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members • Advocacy group(s)
Lobby to have bike manufacturers provide all the required accessories as well as safety info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bike shops • Community members • Community clubs/groups • Advocacy group(s)
Advocate for more AT funding (implementation of more projects)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members • Advocacy group(s) • Advisory committees
Advocate for improved infrastructure, minimum grid, maintenance standards, bikeshare enhancement, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members • Advocacy group(s) • Advisory committees
Advocate for better enforcement of cycling regulations (e.g. helmet, sidewalk), and driver/cyclist interaction (e.g. 1m rule, parking in bike lane, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members • Advocacy group(s) • Advisory committees
Advocate to provincial government to make policy changes and update driver's handbook to include cycling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members • Advocacy group(s)
Encourage Mayors and Councillors to participate in group rides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy group(s) • Advisory committees
Host bike safety rodeos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood associations • Community clubs/groups
Conduct neighbourhood bike rides/safety rides/education rides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood associations • Community clubs/groups

Promotion and Outreach	
Action	Potential Adopters
Ask politicians for AT-supportive policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members • Advocacy group(s)
Host neighbourhoods rides (in partnership with businesses and/or restaurants) where people are encouraged to wear non-athletic clothing to show the versatility of cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIAs • Bike shops • Neighbourhood associations • Community clubs/groups
Help promote BikeWR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members • Advocacy group(s) • Advisory committees
Volunteer with cycling promotion campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members • Advocacy group(s) • Advisory committees
Host bike valets at local community events to encourage use of active transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIAs • Bike shops • Neighbourhood associations • Community clubs/groups • Advocacy group(s)
Educate new Councillors on cycling related issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy group(s) • Advisory committees

Bikes and Businesses	
Action	Potential Adopters
Promote bike friendly businesses through social media (#BikeWR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bike shops • Community members • Advocacy group(s)
Communicate support for bike-related projects (both infrastructure and programming)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members • Advocacy group(s)

Please contact BikeWR.info@gmail.com if you are currently working on any of the projects listed above. Thank you!

Calling All Cycling Advocates:

Conversations from the forum point to the value of having an organized and collaborative approach to cycling advocacy in Waterloo Region.

Cycling advocacy groups, such as Cycle Toronto and Bike Windsor Essex, are well-positioned to garner political support/commitments from elected officials by demonstrating the community's support for cycling. The strength of a local advocacy group can be built by bringing together a diverse group of community cycling champions who share common goals.

Project ideas for a local advocacy group:

- Campaigns for improved infrastructure, minimum grid, maintenance standards, bikeshare enhancement, etc...
- Advocate to provincial government to make cycling-supportive policy changes and to update driver's handbook to include cycling.
- Promote BikeWR.com and #BikeWR
- Volunteer with cycling promotion and education campaigns

IMPACT has been working with local community groups interested in forming a cycling advocacy group.

For updates, or to learn more about this opportunity, please email:

BikeWR.info@gmail.com