

Enhancing cycling safety in Ontario

Introduction

ONTARIO'S DOCTORS HAVE LONG ADVOCATED THAT PATIENTS FIND TIME FOR EXERCISE, AND HAVE SUPPORTED POLICIES WHICH FACILITATE THIS ENDEAVOUR. INCREASING CONCERN ABOUT THE CHRONIC DISEASES THAT RESULT FROM BEING OVERWEIGHT AND INACTIVE REQUIRES A MORE DETAILED EXAMINATION OF ACTIVITIES THAT CAN PROVIDE MUCH NEEDED EXERCISE FOR ONTARIANS, AND THE BARRIERS THAT CURRENTLY EXIST TO PARTICIPATING IN THIS FORM OF EXERCISE.

Bicycling is an activity that offers the opportunity for both recreational exercise, and exercise that can be incorporated into the tasks of daily life. It provides an easy and cost-effective way for many Ontarians to meet Canada's physical activity guidelines, is accessible to young and old alike, and burns more calories than many other physical activities (see Appendix). However, safety concerns pose a barrier to cycling, as thousands of Ontario cyclists are injured each year.

Ontario's doctors have found that those who cycle for utility or for pleasure are at risk of injury on Ontario's roads, and those who do not cycle regularly report that they are dissuaded by their perceived lack of safety. The OMA hopes to encourage more people to take up this beneficial activity by recommending a number of actions that should be taken to improve cycling safety.

Collisions and injuries to cyclists

Cycling can be a fun and accessible way for people to add physical activity to their daily lives. Bicycles can replace cars or public transit for many trips that people need to take to school, work, or when running errands. However, streets can be dangerous for cyclists who have to make a place for themselves on the road with cars and trucks.

One study reports that "all surveys in both Canadian and American cities clearly indicate that more bike paths and lanes would most encourage people to cycle."¹ The perception that cycling on the road is dangerous is an important barrier to the promotion of this active form of transportation and ultimately a barrier to a healthier population.²

What people fear the most is the chance of getting hit by a car or larger vehicle, and in Ontario this fear is currently warranted. Studies have shown that the perception of safety on the streets is a factor which can encourage or discourage cycling. When people perceive a safety issue, they are less likely to cycle themselves, and will discourage their children from doing so.

Many cyclists are injured and some killed each year in Ontario. According to the Ontario Injury Compass 2009 special report on cycling, there were 26,300 emergency department visits and 1,374 hospitalizations for cycling injuries in that year. These statistics translate into a provincial rate of 11.1 hospitalizations per 100,000 people.³

Whereas falling from the bicycle was the most common cause of injury, 20% of all cycling injury hospitalizations were the result of a collision with a motor vehicle. Of these hospitalizations, the most common injuries were those of the upper limbs, followed by the lower limbs and head injuries. The majority of cycling emergency department visits are for children and youth.

The Ontario Road Safety Annual Report (ORSAR), published by the Ministry of Transportation, looks specifically at collisions. The most recent data show that 12 cyclists were killed and 2,015 injured in reportable bicycle-vehicle collisions in 2008.⁴ Although still high, the reported injuries have decreased since the early 1990s, but bicycle fatalities do not show a clear trend up or down. *Much more has to be done by provincial and municipal transportation departments to make this form of exercise safer.*

Intersections

Although there is evidence of collisions involving bicycles in a variety of traffic settings, intersections pose a particular challenge. Approximately two-thirds of bicycle-car collisions happen at intersections,⁵ suggesting that there is either a problem with the way intersections are designed or the way they are used. The rules of bicycle-vehicle rights of way are not clearly understood by all cyclists or all drivers, and it is likely that cyclists may require special consideration in intersection design.

A great deal is already known about how to engineer safer intersections, and some jurisdictions are currently acting on this knowledge. *Transportation planners must be charged with implementing bicycle safety solutions that have been proven in other jurisdictions, and work to solve any additional challenges that intersections pose for cyclists and drivers sharing the road. Similarly, the OMA recommends that both driver and cyclist educators emphasize intersection-specific challenges.*

Where children ride

Collisions happen frequently when cyclists are riding on the sidewalk and cross on the crosswalk rather than using the road and crossing the intersection with traffic. Not surprisingly, these collisions involve children more frequently than adults, and may happen because drivers are watching for pedestrians and do not see the quickly approaching bicycles on the sidewalk.

It is likely that many of the children riding on the sidewalk are doing so because they or their parents perceive the sidewalk as a safer place to be than riding alongside traffic on the road.

The 2003 Toronto Bicycle/Motor-Vehicle Collision Study showed that young cyclists (under age 16) were over-represented in collisions involving cyclists riding into traffic from the sidewalk. In almost 30% of all collisions, the cyclists were riding on the sidewalk immediately prior to the collision. It was determined that young cyclists were much more likely than adults to have been riding on the sidewalk. This will not come as a surprise to parents, who either instruct their younger children to ride on the sidewalk because it is considered safer, or are aware that their older children choose to ride there for the same reason.

Many municipalities currently permit children to ride on the sidewalk. Due to their cycling skill level and inability to understand and adhere to the rules of the road, it is obvious that very young children should not ride in traffic and should be closely supervised when riding on any road, or for that matter on the sidewalk. It should go without saying that children riding on the sidewalk should be taught by their parents to stop whenever they have to cross a roadway, and make sure that it is safe to cross before proceeding. For young children, the parent or guardian should determine when it is safe to cross, and supervise them doing so.

Apart from the dangers of cyclists riding off the sidewalk into traffic, or crossing intersections or crosswalks when drivers don't expect them to be there, sidewalk riding is not ideal for pedestrians or cyclists. If there were safer, designated places to ride, children might feel more comfortable riding on streets and their parents might be more willing to permit this.

As an overall goal, Ontario's doctors believe that a cycling infrastructure of bike lanes and paths should be safe and seamless enough for parents to feel comfortable letting their children ride on the road in these lanes. It is especially important that bike lane networks are connected, and cyclists aren't left stranded in mixed traffic. Bike lanes that are separated by a barrier from vehicle traffic may prove to be a little safer, especially for young cyclists, but the spatial separation from vehicles that comes from a simple painted bike lane is a significant improvement over many current shared road options.

The suburbs

It is important to note that there is a difference for cyclists between major arterial roads in suburban settings and smaller city streets. Suburban thoroughfares are generally larger and traffic travels faster than the tighter downtown streets, regardless of the urban centre examined. These streets are less bicycle-friendly because of vehicle speed issues, but they are also less likely to have bike lanes. They are perceived as more dangerous by cyclists, and by parents of young cyclists. More densely populated urban centres may be where the majority of cycle commuters currently reside, but *investments in cycling infrastructure are equally needed in suburban settings.*

Rural cycling

If suburban roads are considered to be more car-friendly, rural roads present even more of a problem for the cyclists who use them. *Connected networks of roads with paved shoulders would allow for much needed separation between cyclists and fast-travelling vehicles on single-lane rural roads.* Education plays an important part here too though. Both drivers and cyclists need be trained on how to interact on a fast-moving rural road, just like they must better understand the rules of urban intersections.

Bicycle helmets

Approximately 20% of emergency department visits and hospital admissions related to cycling are for head injuries. Although there are other serious types of cycling injuries, significant attention has been given to head injuries and the protection that bicycle helmets provide. In 1995, bicycle helmets became mandatory for everyone in Ontario under 18 years of age. Cycling-related head injuries have decreased by 45% in provinces with mandatory helmet legislation.⁸ *The use of bicycle helmets is recommended, on and off road, for children and adults alike.*

That said, the prevention of collisions and falls is the much preferred solution. There are many head injuries that bicycle helmets cannot protect against, so the ultimate goal must be to prevent the falls and collisions that result in cyclists hitting their heads.

Critical mass

Interestingly, bicycle-car collisions (as well as collisions involving other vehicles, and pedestrian fatalities) have been observed to decrease as the number of cyclists increases.^{7,9} This is because in places where cycling is well-established, more cyclists on the road has led to both greater driver awareness of cyclists and increased cycling infrastructure, which means fewer cars on the road and lower-speed collisions between different kinds of travellers.

In the Netherlands, for example, where cycling comprises approximately 26% of utility trips (to school, work, the grocery store, etc.), cycling is much safer.⁹ The rates of cycling fatalities in the Netherlands have been tracked against rising and falling cycling rates between 1950 and 2005; when the rates of cycling dipped, the rate of cycling fatalities increased, and vice-versa.¹⁰

Cycling infrastructure

Ontario lags behind four other provinces and two Territories in terms of its bike share of work-trips, and infrastructure may play a part in this.¹¹ While Quebec has a well-established provincial-municipal partnership for developing cycling routes across the

province called la Route Verte,¹² and the government of British Columbia provides partial funding to specific municipal cycling projects as part of the BikeBC program,¹³ Ontario has no such program for cycling infrastructure.

There have been some very small investments by the provincial government to facilitate cycling. Recently (in 2008), the Ontario government introduced the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) grant program, which "provides financial assistance to Ontario municipalities for the development and implementation of TDM plans, programs, and services that promote alternatives to driving alone such as cycling, walking, transit, or carpooling."¹⁴ This program is in its infancy, and works with a total budget of \$250,000. To date, it has provided 35 municipalities with assistance for various transit and active transportation projects, a few of which have been cycling-oriented.

For example, the Town of Ajax received \$10,695 of the \$22,310 cost for its Bike This Way project, the City of Oshawa introduced the Pedestrian and Cycling Routes project and has been awarded a grant for \$15,500, and the City of Windsor received \$5,000 for its Wayfinding Signage for Cycling Facilities project, which the City will match.

These provincial seed-money contributions are dwarfed by the budgetary contributions of other provinces. Quebec has dedicated \$88.5 million since 1995 to help fund its Route Verte bicycle routes in collaboration with Velo Quebec and various regional partners, and BikeBC has a budget of \$30 million.

Certain municipalities have taken the initiative to encourage cycling and build infrastructure. For example, the City of Ottawa has taken measures to increase bicycle safety and already has more than 540 km of bike lanes and paths.¹⁵ Ottawa's official 20-year plan is to have over 2,500 km of lanes and paths, and cyclist fatalities in the summer of 2010 prompted a cyclist survey to see which streets need the most urgent attention.¹⁶ Smaller cities, like Barrie and Thunder Bay, are developing networks of paved trails, unpaved trails, bike lanes on city streets, and safe bike parking areas.^{17,18}

As of October 2010, the City of Toronto has created nearly 430 km of bike paths and lanes stretching through parks, rail corridors, the lakeshore, and increasingly in the downtown and nearby neighbourhoods. Toronto still has a long way to go to reach the goal of its 2001 Official Bike Plan, which set out to have 1,004 km of bike paths and lanes by 2011.¹⁹ While some municipalities are taking significant steps toward creating a safer environment for cyclists and encouraging active transportation, the number of bike paths in Ontario pales in comparison to Route Verte, with 4,377 km of bike paths and lanes.²⁰

Ontario's small funding initiative is focused on providing seed money for projects that promote alternatives to car travel, but they are not specific to cycling and have a number of drawbacks. First, the funding allotments are small, and no funds have been allotted to date for large projects like the construction of paved bike paths or separated lanes. Second, the funding is organized such that there is no inter-municipal coherence to projects such as there is in Quebec.

The TDM program leaves the prioritization and planning of cycling infrastructure (and other local transportation projects in general) to municipalities, instead of putting the provincial government in the lead in creating an integrated cycling plan. Given that there is no overarching provincial plan to promote active commuting and to fund bike lanes and paths, the progress in developing cycling infrastructure in Ontario may continue to be disjointed and slow.

Improving cycling infrastructure, i.e., creating safe, connected routes with dedicated cycle lanes, is essential to reducing injury and also reducing the barrier that safety concerns play in dissuading people who might otherwise consider bicycle trips. Ontario needs a comprehensive policy that supports municipalities in building a safer infrastructure for cycling.

The OMA recommends that the provincial government develop policy and programs, including funding, to facilitate cycling infrastructure. Municipal governments have the responsibility to build a significant portion of the much-needed cycling infrastructure, and it is the OMA's hope that they will redouble their efforts. Improved infrastructure will make cycling a safer activity.

Driver and cyclist education

Oregon is considered the most bicycle-friendly state, and has reported a very significant modal shift to cycling for utilitarian trips.²¹ The state has revised its Driver's Manual to include a section called Sharing the Road, which outlines the laws and etiquette surrounding driving on roads used by cyclists.²²

With respect to education and awareness, the Ontario Drivers' Manual includes very little information about bicycles on the road.²³ The current manual provides information about the turning hand-signals cyclists use, and that drivers should be aware that cyclists may be on the road if there is a sign that indicates a bike lane (images of signs are shown). However, the manual does not include any information about intersection rules, lane sharing, and road-use etiquette for cars and bikes together. It does not outline for drivers that bikes are obliged to behave like cars, and that the same rules apply to cyclists as to drivers.

The manual does not include images of bike lanes or sharrows (shared lane markings) in the section that shows pictures of lanes in streets and explains how to change lanes. Given that there are a variety of ways that bike lanes can be marked, adding images of what these look like for a new driver will assist them to learn how to operate their vehicle where these lanes are present. There is also no section in the manual that explains how to safely cross a bike lane when a driver wants to turn at a street or parallel park.

Further, the manual does not provide information about bike boxes or bike traffic lights, or what drivers should do when these are incorporated into an intersection. There is no explanation for how to determine who has the right of way in certain circumstances — for example, when a cyclist who is travelling straight ahead, and a driver who is turning right, are stopped beside each other at an intersection, who goes first?

Finally, the manual does not indicate to drivers that bikes might change lanes, or how they would change lanes, or that cyclists are expected to use the left-hand turning lane, when there is one, to make a left-hand turn.

According to ORSAR, the blame for bicycle-car collisions in Ontario, in terms of who is following the proper rules of the road and

safety precautions, is split fairly evenly between cyclists and drivers.

It is clear that cyclists must become better informed about the rules of the road with respect to motorized vehicles, and drivers must become better informed with respect to the rights of cyclists.

As a first step, *the OMA recommends that the Ontario Drivers' Manual include a comprehensive section on vehicle-bicycle interaction, and furthermore that Ontario's Drive Test also include this important information in the examination of new drivers.* As most adult cyclists are also licensed drivers, this education would serve a dual role of educating cyclists too.

The OMA also recognizes the importance of the ongoing delivery of bicycle safety education for young children, through such programs as Can-Bike, but believes that bicycle safety training is so important that it should be mandatory for all Ontario primary school students.

Conclusion and recommendations

Creating a safe environment for cyclists of all ages is an important step toward a healthier population. Ontario needs to take steps to address bicycling safety in a comprehensive manner. There is a clear need for the provincial government to take the lead in the creation and maintenance of a safe environment for cyclists in both urban and rural settings. It is the legal right of cyclists to use the roads along with drivers, and it is of the utmost importance that they be able to do so safely and without fear.

Besides preventing many deaths and injuries each year through infrastructure investment and education, the province has a great opportunity to improve population health by facilitating the exercise that cycling provides.

The problem of inactive and unfit children and adults is well-known and has garnered a lot of media and scientific attention of late. Our aging population often faces a limited set of opportunities for physical activity, and cycling is an excellent way for older people to get outside, stay active, and to maintain mobility within their communities. Encouraging active transportation is one very easy and effective way for Ontario to address these health issues.

Cycling is an important form of exercise and the OMA hopes to encourage this beneficial activity by recommending a number of actions to improve safety. Creating a safe environment for cyclists is a crucial part of creating a healthier population. Toward this goal, the OMA recommends the following:

- That both provincial and municipal transportation departments do more to make cycling safer.
- That the provincial government develop policy and programs, including funding, to facilitate safe cycling routes.
- That municipal governments, which have the responsibility to build a significant portion of the much-needed cycling infrastructure, redouble their efforts to do so.
- That bike lane and bike path networks should be safe and seamless enough for parents to feel comfortable permitting their children to ride on them.
- That bike lane networks be connected so that cyclists aren't left stranded in mixed traffic.
- That transportation planners in Ontario be charged with implementing solutions that have been proven in other jurisdictions, and work to solve additional challenges that intersections pose for cyclists and drivers sharing the road.
- That investments in cycling infrastructure be made in suburban settings as well.
- That connected networks of roads with paved shoulders are needed in rural settings, to allow for the much needed separation between cyclists and fast-travelling vehicles on rural roads.
- That the Ontario Drivers' Manual be revised to include a comprehensive section on vehicle-bicycle interaction, and furthermore that the Ontario's Drive Test include this in the examination of new drivers.
- That the ongoing delivery of bicycle safety education for young children through such programs as Can-Bike be supported, and that such training be mandatory for all Ontario primary school students.
- That education material for both drivers and cyclists emphasize intersection-specific dangers.
- That the use of bicycle helmets is strongly recommended, on and off road, for children and adults alike.

Appendix:

Health Benefits of Cycling

The health benefits of cycling have been clearly demonstrated and documented.²⁴⁻²⁷ Two-thirds of Canadians are inactive and 24% are obese.²⁸ These are serious health threats that put individuals at increased risk of chronic disease and pose a significant burden on the health-care system.

The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology recently updated the Health Canada physical activity guidelines. These guidelines recommend that to achieve health benefits, everyone 18 years of age and older should accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week, in bouts of 10 minutes or more.²⁹

This is considered to be a minimum activity threshold for health, and to help prevent chronic illness, with more activity considered to be better for health outcomes.

The exercise guidelines of the American Heart Association are similar, and along with The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), they recommend that to lose weight or maintain weight loss, 60 to 90 minutes of moderate exercise five days a week, or from five hours to seven-and-a-half hours per week, is required. Bicycling can offer this moderately intense workout.

Cycling also provides the opportunity for exercise during non-recreational, utility trips to work, to shop, for food and for entertainment. Cycling is both a viable mode of transportation as well as a recreational opportunity, especially in urban centres where approximately 85% of Ontarians live.

For the many people who think that they are too busy to designate time for exercise, or don't want to go to a gym, active

commuting can provide the recommended amount of weekly exercise. Only a few Ontarians live close enough to walk to work, but many more live within cycling distance and could achieve the recommended weekly exercise by bicycling, at least for the spring, summer and fall.

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Print

It's Time to Make Cycling Safer: Ontario's Doctors

Toronto, August 10, 2011 - The most recent report on cycling injuries revealed that in 2009, there were 26,000 emergency department visits and over 1,300 hospitalizations in Ontario. With increasing interest in cycling across the province, Ontario's doctors are urging the provincial government to make cyclists' safety a priority.

Dr. Stewart Kennedy, President of the Ontario Medical Association, released a comprehensive and in-depth report, "Enhancing Cycling Safety in Ontario," before he cycled through downtown Toronto to raise money for the Heart and Stroke Foundation's Big Bike event. The report included a number recommendations aimed at increasing cyclists' safety. Among the recommendations, Ontario's doctors are calling for:

The provincial government to develop policy and programs, including funding, to facilitate safe cycling, and for municipal governments to redouble their efforts to build much-needed cycling infrastructure;

Connected networks of roads with paved shoulders in rural settings, to allow for the much needed separation between cyclists and fast-travelling vehicles on rural roads;

The Ontario Drivers' Manual to be revised to include a comprehensive section on vehicle-bicycle interaction, and furthermore that the Ontario's Drive Test include this in the examination of new drivers;

Ongoing delivery of bicycle safety education for young children through such programs as Can-Bike, and that such training be mandatory for all Ontario primary school students; and

Education material for both drivers and cyclists that emphasizes intersection-specific dangers.

A safer environment for cycling is crucial to creating a healthier population. Ontario's doctors want to make sure that Ontarians feel safe when riding their bicycles.

For the complete list of recommendations from "Enhancing Cycling Safety in Ontario" please visit www.oma.org

Quotes

"Two-thirds of Canadians are inactive, putting them at greater risk of chronic disease. Cycling is a great way to stay fit and a way for people of all ages to add essential physical activity to their daily lives and improve their health."

Stewart Kennedy, MD, President of the Ontario Medical Association

"The debate about bicycle infrastructure is so often politically driven, but should really be about the health of the population and safety of those who choose to cycle. Ontario's doctors are committed to working with the province and municipalities to create a safer Ontario for our cyclists."

Stewart Kennedy, MD, President of the Ontario Medical Association

Quick Facts

Annually more than 2,000 cyclists are injured in vehicle-bicycle collisions alone;

68 per cent of car-bike collisions happen at intersections and these most frequently involve children riding off of the sidewalk; and

In the past five years cycling fatalities from these collisions have averaged 20 per year.

For more information please contact:

OMA Media Relations at (416) 340-2862 or toll-free at 1-800-268-7215 ext. 2862

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April 28, 2011

Hon. Kathleen Wynne
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Re. Provincial Policy Framework for Cycling Infrastructure

On behalf of member Medical Officers of Health, Boards of Health and Affiliate organizations of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) I am writing to urge you to commit to the development and permanent funding of a provincial policy on cycling infrastructure as per the recommendations of the Share the Road Campaign's Green Paper recommendations (attached).

The design of our communities has a potent effect on the health of the public in a number of ways. One is through its influence on people's ability to be physically active and to reduce their emissions from automobile use. With this in mind, alPHa recommends the development of a provincial policy framework and annual fund to support over time the creation of world-class integrated and comprehensive infrastructure for cycling as a means of transportation throughout the province of Ontario.

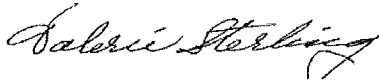
The benefits of cycling are of major significance addressing a range of public health needs, including physical activity and its accompanying reduction in obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer. Cycling as an alternative to driving also reduces the annual toll of disease and death secondary to air pollution, and also helps to prevent climate-changing carbon dioxide emissions. Investing in cycling infrastructure is also very important in order to reduce the risk of injuries and deaths from collisions between cars and cyclists. Investments in cycling infrastructure enables enhanced walking infrastructure with further improvements in the health of the public.

Numerous countries around the world as well as some notable examples of communities in North America have had tremendous success in creating a healthy and dynamic cycling culture achieved through vision and the dedicated application of a cycling framework. There is no reason why this cannot also be achieved in Ontario for the benefit of our citizens.

In support of the Share the Road Campaign's Green Paper recommendations, we urge the provincial government of Ontario to develop a provincial policy on cycling infrastructure and to support it with an Ontario Bicycling Investment Fund (OBIF). Share the Road has recommended

that the amount of this fund be \$20 million annually reflective of the provincial revenue from the application of the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) to bicycles. Although this is actually a modest sum compared to cycling programs in British Columbia and Quebec, and when compared to other transportation infrastructure, it would still be a most welcomed demonstration of leadership for positive change. It is also important to know that investment in cycling infrastructure is offset by resulting reduced medical costs and other society economic impacts with avoided injury and mortality. Over time this approach would have a substantial impact on the health and wellbeing, as well as the quality of life of Ontarians.

Sincerely,



Valerie Sterling
President
Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA)

Copy: Hon Margaret Best, Minister of Health Promotion
Hon. Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario
Tim Hudak, Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario
Andrea Horwath, Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario
Marlaine Koehler, Executive Director, Waterfront Regeneration Trust
Eleanor McMahon, President and Founder, Share the Road Cycling Coalition

Encl.

Hon. Kathleen Wynne
Minister of Transportation
Ferguson Block 3rd Flr
77 Wellesley St W
Toronto ON M7A1Z8

August 10, 2011

Re. Provincial Policy Framework for Cycling Infrastructure

On behalf of member Medical Officers of Health, Boards of Health and Affiliate organizations of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) I am writing to express alPHa's support for the recommendations contained in the Ontario Medical Association's new Policy Paper, *Enhancing Cycling Safety in Ontario*.

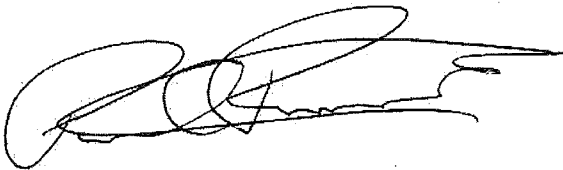
You will recall from earlier correspondence that alPHa has called on the Province to make what we feel is a modest annual investment of \$20M to support the development of a provincial policy framework whose goal should be a world-class integrated and comprehensive infrastructure for cycling as a means of transportation throughout the province of Ontario. We believe that the recommendations contained in the OMA paper provide a menu of areas into which investments should be made.

Taken together, these recommendations represent a strategy that will make cycling a safe and attractive option for both active transport and recreation through the creation of safe cycling routes and improved driver and cyclist education. The goal of the strategy is to create a safe and accessible environment for cyclists, thereby encouraging those who avoid cycling due to feelings of endangerment to take up this easy, economical and fun physical activity.

As more people choose this activity, its demonstrated health benefits will only magnify throughout the population, as increasing rates of physical activity can be expected to reduce rates of injury, obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer, and their associated medical and economic productivity costs.

Much has been written on the negative effects of "car culture" on our communities, with its strong associations with the proliferation of poorly planned communities, widespread environmental degradation, reductions in physical activity, and economic losses due to gridlock. We believe that it is time to start reflecting what has been written on the positive effects of cycling culture in public policy, because the environmental, economic and health benefits are clear. We look forward to congratulating the Government for acting on these recommendations.

Sincerely,



Dr. Paul Roumeliotis
President

Copy: Hon Margaret Best, Minister of Health Promotion
Dr. Stewart Kennedy, President, Ontario Medical Association

Recommendations for Priority Areas of Concern

1. Infrastructure Recommendations:

- **Give municipalities the tools they need to build safe cycling environments.** The province of Ontario needs to demonstrate flexibility in its approach to accommodate the needs of municipalities as regards active transportation design. (See also the Complete Streets recommendation in the Legislative section of the Green Paper.) In particular this should include the re-consideration of long-term right-of-way needs in transportation facility management.
- **Improve active transportation infrastructure planning on overpasses.** Overpasses continue to be an issue for municipalities and their residents who walk or cycle; they are notoriously unsafe for cyclists and pedestrians. MTO needs to consider these vulnerable road users and must work with municipalities to make these critical points for death and injury safer. This is in keeping with recommendations listed in the Chief Coroner of Ontario's report in 1998 which followed a number of cycling fatalities in the City of Toronto, and has as its objective improving the safety of cyclists in Toronto and in the province: "Recommendation #13 – that the City of Toronto identify potentially dangerous locations for cyclists including high frequency accident locations and cyclist-identified problem areas where site specific improvements can be made to prevent bicycle collisions."
- **The MTO should place an enhanced emphasis on including effective and formalized communications and consultations with active transportation stakeholders as part of its strategic planning.**



- **Encourage innovation, and in particular research into innovative practices and best practice sharing.** To this end, the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) should create an "Active Transportation Infrastructure Innovation Funding Program" – to fund research at Ontario colleges and universities – as currently exists for highway infrastructure innovation. This would encourage basic and applied research into active transportation infrastructure in Ontario and enhance the ability of municipalities to access best in class designs and approaches.
- **The provincial government should amend the Development Charges Act of Ontario to ensure that "growth pays for growth" – including sustainable growth like active transportation.**
- In his 2008-2009 Annual Report the Environment Commissioner of Ontario said: "While its straightforward street grid and relatively flat topography give Toronto the potential to become a great cycling city, this potential is unlikely to be achieved without leadership and support from the Ontario government to develop a cycling infrastructure." **We urge the Ontario government to support the following recommendation from the Environment Commissioners report:** "... that Ontario ministries that oversee municipal planning encourage municipalities and planners to engage cyclists in their deliberations on planning and uphold the spirit of the Provincial Policy Statement 2005. To facilitate improved planning that promotes cycling and walking in Ontario communities, the Ministry of Environment should consider ordering the Municipal Engineers Association (MEA) to prepare modifications of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment, as it did in 2007 to promote public transit."
- **The Ontario government should invest in bicycling infrastructure in municipalities and regions across Ontario via a bicycling tourism initiative such as Quebec's "Route Verte."** This network should be created via an inter-Ministerial approach involving MTO, the Ministry of Environment, and the Ministry of Tourism and should be developed in partnership with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, as well as bicycling tourism experts and advocates in Ontario. Such an initiative would support



tourism growth potential as outlined in MPP Greg Sorbara's Tourism Competitiveness Study (2009).

- A tourism working group convened by the Coalition has determined that first steps in creating such an initiative should include: **funding research to explore the economic potential of cycling tourism** and working to define pilot projects that would leverage existing tourism initiatives and assets such as the Waterfront Trail and the Bike Train.
- **The Ontario government must improve the integration of bicycles on public transit.** This includes outfitting more buses and increasing the number of buses with bicycle racks and enhancing the availability of trains including outfitting existing train cars and or providing special "bicycle only" train cars. Ontario also needs enhanced bike parking at public transit stations. Well lit, well positioned, secure bike parking at train stations in addition to ensuring access for bicycles on all public transport: trains, metro, ferries and buses are seen as an important priority in terms of encouraging bicycling throughout Ontario and building on existing infrastructure assets.

2. Education Recommendations:

Education for Bicyclists

- We urge the government of Ontario, in particular the Ministry of Health Promotion, to work with stakeholders to ensure sustainable funding for CanBike. Feedback on improving CanBike included ensuring that programs are low cost, accessible, limited in terms of time commitment and conveniently located i.e. close to transit routes.
- Special consideration should be given to groups and organizations seeking to educate new Canadians. For example, Culture Link and the Toronto Cyclists Union have a program in place to address new Canadians, but it suffers from a lack of funding.



Cyclist Education for Children

- **The Ontario Government should provide, through Green Communities Canada, enhanced funding in order to accommodate pilot projects which would incorporate Bicycling as part of the Active and Safe Routes to School initiative.**
- **As well, we urge the government of Ontario to invest in research which will serve to quantify the importance of providing safe routes to school, and in particular safe cycling routes to school for children.** This research would serve to make the case for enhanced investments by federal, provincial and municipal governments in active and safe routes to school programs.
- Other countries have invested in research topics which include linking academic performance and cycling/walking to school, the economic benefits, the benefits of physical activity generated the impact of children walking/cycling to school on parental behaviors and corresponding modal shifts, and finally its contribution to overall cycling safety and the rates of cycling. The Ontario government should do the same.
- **The Ontario government, through the Ministry of Education, should institute and formalize road safety and cycling safety education as part of the curriculum.** While existing initiatives like bicycle rodeos and safety villages are seen as helpful, their use is sporadic and inconsistent. Further, these initiatives help with bike handling skills but don't always help with 'real life' on the road decision making. Research has demonstrated the need for curriculum-based learning approaches supported by situational training.

Motorist Education - Recommendations

- **The Ontario Driver's Manual must be updated throughout to increase the awareness of the rights and responsibilities of all vehicles sharing the road - motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians.** The updated manual should reflect the growing prevalence on Ontario's roads and stress the importance of careful, courteous driving. It



should also contain several “situational” examples of how to treat cyclists, given that they are vehicles under the Highway Traffic Act. The Ontario government should ensure that driver training includes education on how to share the road with cyclists, and ensure that the driver’s exam includes questions on cyclists. Suggestions for education tools include a cycling safety video for viewing during classes and on the internet.

- **The Ontario government should work with its policing and other partners, including active transportation and cycling experts, to create television, radio and print public safety announcements as part of an overall awareness campaign focused on motorists to reinforce the importance of sharing the road.** Law enforcement agencies should be encouraged to implement “blitzes” targeted at motorists, focusing on education and awareness and distributing material on how to share the road with motorists.
- **The MTO should work with regions and municipalities in Ontario to ensure the placement of “Share the Road” signage across the province as an effective driver education and awareness tool.**

3. Public Awareness and Promotion Recommendations:

- **Research Funding:** Research is critical to effective marketing and promotion. Research into existing cyclist behaviors, how to encourage enhanced participation, and research into understanding how, why and when car users might be willing to alter their travel habits are excellent examples that can be leveraged and utilized by communities throughout the province. **As such, research should be encouraged and eligible for funding by the Ontario government.** Since the evaluation of promotional activity and strategies is important for future campaigns and for creating and sharing best practices, funding for evaluation should be included and evaluation should be mandatory.



- **In partnership with cycling advocates and the business community, the Ontario government should support the creation of Bicycle Friendly Business programs across Ontario in order to encourage businesses to embrace the creation and promotion of cycling facilities such as bike parking, lockers and showers for employees, bicycle training and repair, bicycle sharing programs.** Employers who encourage cycling should be recognized and best practices highlighted. Such initiatives can be combined with legislation to encourage cycling to work. (See Legislation section for more on this.)
- Supporting community events such as Car Free Sundays and “car free zones” is an important way for the Ontario government to encourage cycling. Such events celebrate community, generate enthusiasm and public support and should be encouraged. As pointed out by Velo Quebec: “people will not throw themselves into a bike lane if they haven't ridden for 20 years, but they will if they ride on Saturday and Sunday.”
- Cycling events such as large public rides, which mobilize community resources and involve a wide variety of stakeholders – for example, local cyclists, Chambers of Commerce and BIAs, cycling retailers, local officials and politicians – in their development and execution are excellent ways of raising awareness via cross pollination and should be encouraged.
- **Signage, symbols and logos are an important tool for expressing a common vision and encouraging safety.** While signage may be a regional and municipal responsibility, establishing a common provincial symbol (i.e. Share the Road, way-finding signs) is viewed as desirable and this is an area where the Ontario government can provide leadership and support.
- **The Ontario government should, in partnership with the Share the Road Cycling Coalition, establish a “Share the Road” license plate for purchase at MTO locations.** The option to purchase these plates could be promoted to those willing to support the “Share the Road” principle with part of the revenues distributed to bicycling advocacy



initiatives such as education and awareness initiatives. Such initiatives are in place in a number of U.S. states.

4. Bicycling Policy and Legislation Recommendations:

- **The Ontario government should pass “Complete Streets” legislation to ensure that all users of the transportation system, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, children, older individuals, and individuals with disabilities, are able to travel safely and conveniently on and across provincially funded streets and highways.** The provincial government should work to urge the federal government to adopt similar legislation.
- The Ontario government should amend the Highway Traffic Act (HTA) to:
 - Include a “three foot” (one meter) passing law. This amendment should also reinforce recognition that people on bikes are vulnerable road users. Motorists found guilty of failing to comply with this legislation and other offences involving bicyclists should be required to undertake mandatory cycling education programs in addition to prescribed fines and other penalties.
 - Permit two-way access by bicycles on one-way roads.
 - Legislate the creation of “safe cycling zones” in the same vein as “community safety zones,” including the provision for greater fines for speeding in these zones. Lowering speed limits and or adding ‘speed bumps’ in designated zones and neighborhoods has contributed to traffic calming in many cities in Europe, encouraging the numbers of cyclists – particularly children and families – by working to ensure their safety. Such measures should include enhanced awareness, education programs as well as heightened fines and enforcement programs to ensure compliance.
- **As recommended in the Big Move, the Ontario government must ensure that Official Plan policies to support active transportation be adopted.** Where appropriate, the bonusing provisions under the Planning Act should be used to require that any



application for major commercial, employment or multiple residential development, particularly in a mobility hub, provides appropriate facilities for cyclists and pedestrians such as secure bike storage, showers and change rooms.

- **The Ontario government should change the Municipal Act to permit municipalities to fast track or by-pass provincial approvals needed to build new bike lanes.**
- **The Ontario government should pass Trip Reduction legislation in support of the province's 2014 GHG reduction targets and to incent employers to reduce vehicle dependency.**
- **The Ministry of Transportation should broaden its Climate Change Action Plan to include enhancing the use of bicycles as a mainstream mode of transportation.**
- **The Ontario government should increase the funding for and awareness of the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Municipal Grant Program** established in June 2008 to provide financial assistance to Ontario municipalities for the development and implementation of TDM-related initiatives. Many municipalities are not aware of the program's existence. This increase in funding should be an interim step before this funding is incorporated into the Ontario Bicycling Investment Fund.
- **The Ministry of Transportation (MTO) should establish an Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) position focused solely on Bicycling and Active Transportation.** This would enhance the development of expertise within government – particularly within MTO – to address needs such as active transportation planning, the ability to provide needed services, and the management of services that continue to be outsourced. This would create a focal point for bicycling and active transportation stakeholders and would send a strong signal that the Ontario government is serious about incorporating bicycling and active transportation into its planning and processes.



- The Ontario government should consider extending tax breaks for bicycles as a means of incenting alternative transportation.
- The Ontario government should implement provincial and municipal tax credits and incentives for employers who promote "bike to work" programs.
- The Ontario government should establish a **Working Group on Bicycling to provide counsel and advice to government.** This Working Group would act at arms-length from government. It would be a forum for innovation and for dispute resolution in the interest of providing advice to government on creating bicycle friendly communities in Ontario and in the spirit of similar constructs at the State level in the U.S. Its first step would be to put priorities from the Green Paper into action. This Working Group would be led by the Share the Road Cycling Coalition and be comprised of stakeholders having an interest in promoting bicycling in Ontario. Members could include: municipal representatives (including the Association of Municipalities of Ontario), planners and engineers, the bicycling industry, bicycling advocates, law enforcement, bicycling tourism experts, economic development representatives (i.e. Chamber of Commerce representative) and government officials (MTO, Ministry of Health Promotion, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Tourism).



