

Announcing the establishment of the

SARNIA-LAMBTON Cycling Advocacy Network

An initial meeting was recently held in Sarnia to explore the potential creation of a citizen-lead interest group advocating for the creation of a **BIKE-FRIENDLY** environment in the community of Sarnia-Lambton.

This meeting was surprisingly well attended despite the short notice and scheduled time, with over 30 enthusiastic and engaged individuals representing a wide range of cycling interests from across the community. Many others indicated regret due to unavailability, but expressed definite interest in participating as things developed in the future.

This diverse group of individuals represents:

- Commuters and students
- Senior Citizens
- Parents of young children
- Fitness, Exercise and Competitive cyclists
- Off road and Road cyclists
- Leisure cyclists and shoppers
- Non-cyclists who would like to start cycling, but do not feel safe in the present environment
- Cycling related business owners, and businesses interested in being more “bike-friendly”

The conclusion of the participants at this meeting was overwhelmingly in favour of gathering together as private citizens to form an independent advocacy group that would work to transform Sarnia-Lambton into a leading community in providing a cycling-friendly environment for everyone of all ages both from within the community and for those visiting the area.

Since that time, a core group has formed an executive and have had several follow-up meetings to look at just how to proceed. This has led to the formation of the group which will be known as the *SARNIA-LAMBTON Cycling Advocacy Network*.

The group has also affiliated itself with a wide network of cycling advocates across Ontario known as **ONTARIO CAN!** which was formed out of the **SHARE THE ROAD COALITION** (www.sharetheroad.ca). **OntarioCAN!** is working to improve road safety in Ontario by increasing provincial and municipal support for bicycling infrastructure, education and awareness.

Sarnia-Lambton CAN'S VISION

"Sarnia-Lambton is a bike-friendly community"

OUR MISSION

"To develop the vision of Sarnia-Lambton as a bike friendly community through advocacy, education, and encouragement"

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

1. Be a unified voice for cycling in Sarnia-Lambton to decision makers at all levels of government and local private sector interests.
2. Engage the community as a whole to promote cycling.
3. Advocate for an interconnected network of both on-road and off-road safe cycling routes in Sarnia-Lambton which connect residential areas with schools, workplaces, shopping, and entertainment.
4. Advocate for improved engineering to facilitate cyclist traffic including infrastructure such as proper traffic control systems, adequate lane widths, and signage

Questions & Answers

QUESTION:

What are the advantages for a community to be Bike Friendly??

ANSWER:

The advantages are many! Here are just a few...

Cycling Safely

People want to cycle, and want to be able to do so safely! Interest in cycling, whether it be for sport, exercise, leisure, or as a means of transport is growing leaps & bounds.

Recent surveys in Ontario indicate that while 17% of adults cycle at least weekly, 58% would prefer to bicycle more often.

Vehicle Traffic congestion and the Environment

For every bike on the road, that means one less car:

- reduced greenhouse gases
- less road congestion
- reduced wear and tear on our community transportation infrastructure.

The ever rising costs of Healthcare

Bicycle friendly communities can help save healthcare dollars and battle many health issues in Ontario today including obesity, and heart disease.

Type 2 diabetes alone costs Ontarians \$4.9B each year. Bike friendly communities can help in prevention through encouraging healthy activities and lifestyles, thus reducing the burden on taxpayers.

A BOOST for the Economy!

Many other jurisdictions have shown that having a bicycle friendly environment would be economically good for the community, with such spinoffs as:

- Increased pedestrian/cyclists spending money in local businesses
- increased property values
- growth in cycling travel and tourism
- ability of community/industry to attract not only the younger generation, but attract those contemplating locating for retirement to the community

A steady stream of research across North America confirms without a doubt the economic benefits of investing in bicycle infrastructure. Bicycling has a significant positive influence on business districts, employment, and on households.

Here are just a few examples from some of these studies:

TORONTO – study of businesses on Bloor St. show that people who bike spend more money per month than those who drive.

State of Wisconsin – bicycle recreation and tourism contributes \$925M annually to the economy, with annual health benefits totalling \$409M.

San Francisco, California – 2/3 of merchants indicated that new bike lanes on Valencia Street have improved their business, and support more traffic calming measures.

Indianapolis, Indiana – Property values increase 11% for those homes that are a half mile closer to that community's cycling trails.

An increased sense of COMMUNITY

Getting people out of their cars and interacting with the friends and neighbours brings a community alive, and increases the vibrancy and health of the community.

It really is straightforward - this community **NEEDS** to become more bike-friendly!

The video in this link, entitled “The Boulder Bike Story” expresses the potential within every community:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvG9b6A9AC8>

QUESTION:

As a motorist, I pay for the roads through taxes on gas, vehicle licensing – why should cyclists get off “scot-free”?

ANSWER:

In actual fact, cyclists and pedestrians pay MORE than their fair share to support the infrastructure within a community. The revenue from driving permits and gas taxes are provincial and don't in any way come near to covering the high cost of building roads. When it comes down the local levels, much of these costs are covered by municipal taxation – and cyclists pay their share!

Cyclists (and pedestrians!) put much less wear and tear on the roads, and in reality pay a higher tax rate per kilometre of road travelled than the regular motorist using the road. (and of course, many of these cyclists do own vehicles and pay the same licensing fees and gas taxes even though they may be using their vehicles less).

A 2003 study (“The Ottawa Cost of Travel Study”) found that a trip by bicycle cost the public \$0.24 per trip, while the cost per car-passenger trip was \$2.50 of public funds.

Another study by the Transport Policy Institute of Victoria (2004) calculated that shifting local trips from cars to bicycles and/or pedestrian traffic would create a savings to the public purse of \$0.32 per kilometre.

The savings identified in these two latter studies don’t even begin to look at the impact on the cost of healthcare by having a more active and healthy community.

Bottom line? Cyclists are taxpayers too!

QUESTION:

In these tight economic times, how do you think new initiatives can be funded?

ANSWER:

There are all kinds of great and compelling initiatives competing for the limited funding available. Therefore, there is no expectation to turn things around and create everything overnight.

However, it is important to not let our community fall behind all those others that are working hard to create cycling friendly environments for all those reasons mentioned earlier – economics, health, safety, and community.

The Ontario Government can help begin transforming the province and municipalities towards a more bicycle friendly community in three easy steps:

1. The 2012 Provincial Roads Budget totalled \$2.3B. The Ontario Government is asked to reallocate a very small portion of this budget (.125% or a total of \$25M) towards helping municipalities build safe bicycling facilities.
2. The Ontario Government is asked to officially adopt a Bicycle Policy to build safe and accessible bicycling facilities across the province and in municipalities such as Sarnia-Lambton. The Ontario Bicycle Policy released over a year ago remains in draft form only, and needs to be revised based on the public feedback, and formally adopted.

3. Enact legislative changes to modernize the Ontario Highway Traffic Act in support of improved cycling safety, and reflect the significant increase in the number of cyclists on our roads and trails. Changes include:
 - The **Safe Passing Bill** – requiring motorists to provide at least 1 metre of space when passing a cyclist;
 - Bill 9 -“**The Transportation and Highway Improvement Amendment Act**” (2011) – which improves safety and enhances travel and tourism by requiring paved shoulder implementation on Ontario Roads.

The local Governments of course needs to also help by supporting and actively lobbying the Province for these above-mentioned initiatives.

But that’s not all!

Local Government is called upon to establish their own long term strategy in support of developing this community into a bike-friendly environment.

- Adopt their own Bicycle Policy to build safe and accessible bicycling facilities. This policy would provide a statement of commitment to support cycling as both a mode of transportation and recreation in this community.
- On a permanent basis re-allocate a small portion of the transportation budget towards building and maintaining bicycle infrastructure in the community.
- Engage local cyclists, the public, and businesses to identify and actively pursue the ways and means in which everyone can work together towards improving the safety and efficiency of the infrastructure for all modes of transport through education, infrastructure design, and enforcement.

So, what are our next steps, and what can I do to help?!

Sarnia-Lambton CAN will continue to develop our medium and long term strategic plan, refining our goals and objectives and begin to focus on specific initiatives that we can pursue in order to achieve our vision of Sarnia-Lambton as a Bike Friendly Community.

However, in the short term there are three very specific activities that we need active participation and engagement from the cycling community:

1. **City of Sarnia Transportation Master Plan**

This plan, which will define the City of Sarnia’s strategies for how we get around the city over the next couple of decades – whether we drive, walk, and/or bicycle.

This plan will be released publicly in the very near future, and cyclists are encouraged to maximize the cycling community's participation in the public consultations on this draft plan. Sarnia-Lambton CAN would also welcome any of your comments or feedback on the plan as well so that we speak on behalf of the cycling community.

Keep an eye out for any announcements regarding public consultation on this key piece of policy for the City of Sarnia, and be prepared to have your own voice heard! Sarnia-Lambton CAN will send out any information it finds out about the Transportation Master Plan as soon as it is received.

2. **Sarnia-Lambton Share The Road Memorial Ride**

Monday June 24 @ Sarnia City Hall

10 km Memorial Ride & Presentation starting at City Hall

With Post Ride Celebration at finish in Canatara Park.

Registration is from 5 to 6 pm.

Participants are asked to donate \$10 in support of the Share The Road Cycling Coalition

This ride will be lead by Eleanor McMahon, the founder of ShareTheRoad (www.sharetheroad.ca) following the death of her husband, OPP Sergeant Greg Stobbart who was killed while cycling in Milton in 2006.

This is OUR chance to show the city the strength, diversity, and sheer numbers of citizens in this community that are cyclists. We need to get every man, woman, and child that has a bike, wants to bike, and wants to bike in a safe and friendly environment to come out and take a short spin around town in support not only of Share The Road, but for making Sarnia-Lambton a more bike friendly community.

Encourage your friends, neighbours, families – everyone and anyone you can think of to come on out and show City Council just how many cyclists really do exist here in Sarnia-Lambton!

3. We need to mobilize cyclists and those who share our vision of Sarnia-Lambton as a bike friendly community!

Please utilize all your personal networks of friends and acquaintances to encourage others to join Sarnia-Lambton CAN. All it takes is an email from individuals expressing their interest in a bike friendly Sarnia-Lambton. Sarnia-Lambton CAN will then add these people to our list of “constituents” and contact list to let them know of activities and things of interest to cyclists in the area. The email address is sarniacyclingadvocates@gmail.com

Why is this important? We need to be able to demonstrate to the decision makers that we are a valid representative voice for cycling in the community. And of course, the larger our constituency, the more serious they’ll take us!

IN CLOSING...

Thank you for your continued support and interest in improving our roads and trails for enjoyment and safety of all cyclists. Now that the weather is finally improving (well except for the forecast this weekend!), please stay safe and bicycle often.

(and please help us out in every way possible with the three items above!)

Your Sarnia-Lambton CAN Board

Helge Buddenborg	Conrad Coleman	Paul & Margaret Eastman
Paul Ferrera	Larry Green	T. Joseph Hill
Sue Lyons	Scott McPhee	Peter Smith
Anita Trusler	Steve Wilson	