

Active Transportation Working Group Minutes of a meeting, Dec. 11, 2014, Pembroke

Chair: Shawna Babcock. Co-chair, Physical Activity Network.

Introductions:

Ivan Burton, Planner, Town Renfrew, said he has been working with AT planning group in the Town.

Anthony Hobbs, recently hired by the County as forestry and trails tech

Angie Schultz, GIS, Technician Development and Property, County of Renfrew

Ron Moss, of Pembroke, an active volunteer with the working group

Brian Brohart, Health Promoter, Renfrew County and District Health Unit

Mike Pinet, P. Eng., Manager of Infrastructure, County of Renfrew

Colin Coyle, Program Coordinator, Town of Petawawa Parks and Recreation

Jason Davies, County of Renfrew

Steve Boland, Director of Public Works, County of Renfrew

Damien McCarthy, Co-chair, Physical Activity Network, Owner, Gearheads

Ish Theilheimer, Working Group Secretary, co-founder, Bike Renfrew County,

George Hodgkinson, involved from the start former Councillor, Township of Laurentian Valley, now retired

Betty Biesenthal, Friends of Bonnechere Park, Kid Active

Shawna spoke of her satisfaction with the group's record of accomplishment in three years. The group has become deeply involved in planning activities with and around the County. It put together factsheets with a Trillium grant. She feels there is lots more to communicate on AT. She wants to change the perception that AT is special interest and, instead, see AT integrated into all planning. She spoke of the need to review and update the Matrix of County roads and how they fit with AT planning, the group's original priority.

Damien displayed the Active Transportation Route rating Matrix and spoke of how it was put together, using a detailed scoring system, rating roads for factors such as safety, usage, scenery, suitability, state of repair - in all eight different categories. This was used to develop a priority system for planning such improvements as shoulders and signage. Now, he said, we've reached the point where we need to review update, amend, and revise priorities.

He said an important goal was to link all points of interest through the Matrix, including schools, shopping, trails, bike routes, paved shoulders, and so on, link them, develop shared formats for use throughout country so signage will look similar and so tourists would see the same things everywhere in the County and maps that would be made up with legends.

There was discussion of how group members could see, and thereby comment, on the Matrix, with agreement that although it is not a public document to which the County has subscribed, it should be available to group members online via Dropbox. It was not clear who was going to be responsible for posting it.

Steve Boland spoke of the County's involvement in AT. Since 2010, he said, the County has built about 92 km of AT infrastructure at a cost of about \$1.7 million. Approximately 40 share-the-road signs have been put up in a variety of locations. In 2014, County Council approved an AT policy for the County and made an annual allocation in support of it of \$190,000. Staff is moving forward in that vein with draft budget submission for 2015. Staff, he said, is "looking to close some of gaps" in the network of bike routes. 2015 construction projects include County Rd 6, from Renfrew to Goshen, Cty Rd 58, (Round Lake Rd), Boundary Rd in Pembroke to Hwy 17, Cty. Rd. 19 (Mud Lake Rd.) P Martin Rd to Whitewater Road, and others subject to funding by the County to the Ontario Community Infrastructure Program.

Recently, Public Works staff has been meeting with municipal representatives, talking about how they can integrate AT strategies, and mesh them with what is happening at the County level.

He said there has been a mixture of feedback, generally positive, to shoulders hardening. One criticism is that paved shoulders are not quite wide enough for motorized wheelchairs.

He noted that Highway 62 south of Barry's Bay was rehabilitated but didn't get paved shoulders, and there was discussion of how this is an important route both for cyclists doing loops and cyclists travelling to and from the Bancroft area.

There was discussion of AT factsheets Shawna is working on that will focus on what has been done in recent years and what is being planned. A public launch was discussed, and the possibility of releasing the fact sheets over time.

Betty mentioned work on preparing a series of downloadable online information and a guide for engaging kids in activities. A media release is needed to acknowledge work done by the County and working group, he said. Betty mentioned Trillium has never been formally acknowledged.

The involvement of lower-tier municipalities was discussed, beginning with Ivan talking about Renfrew, which has developed AT routes and policies in draft form. He and others have been working with Ron Moss since February 2014 on these, in consultation with County staff, to develop recommended routes that will access points of interest, shopping areas, and trails. Before the Town's Council will allocate money, they want to adopt a policy that will guide them.

Staff from the town has also been talking with staff of neighboring municipalities to attempt a coordinated approach. The idea is to incorporate policies into the Official Plan and have a network and a marketing plan.

Damien suggested the group use Renfrew as a pilot for development of AT policy for others municipalities.

Mike Pinet warned of the need for care with the development of policies. If you start to get into something like developing routes and trails, they require certain standards, which can be very expensive. The approach of County at this point is "enhanced approach," so that roads and routes "enhance" AT rather than be designated cycling routes. You have to be clear whether you're doing an actual route or enhancing a use. For instance, Petawawa Blvd. enhances cycling as best possible.

Steve said liability becomes a concern as soon as you designate something for a purpose. County has taken the position it will enhance AT but will not designate bike lanes or stroller lanes for this reason.

George Hodgkinson asked if Renfrew County used the strategy from the Ontario Ministry of Transportation, which, he said, is a viable document and good to use when looking for provincial funding. This is a good time, he said, to talk with municipalities about collaboration, with many new people around council tables.

Ivan said that for Highway 132 rehab, the Town obtained funding through Ontario's Infrastructure program, which will be used to rehabilitate the existing overly wide road without actually designating bike lanes but will hopefully be accomplished later once there is policy in place.

Opportunities

It was noted by several that few municipalities have planners looking at AT and that there might be an important role for the working group in doing outreach to them.

George Hodgkinson said an opportunity is coming up in fall to connect with majority of communities in Renfrew County at the Ontario Municipal Conference in Kingston, which is seeking subjects for presentation, with a deadline of January 31.

Steve Boland said his department will be developing a 10-year implementation strategy for the County road network. Angie Schultz said at least two or three municipalities are doing official plan reviews: Petawawa, Laurentian Valley, and Renfrew.

Shawna reported on a very well attended in October in Pembroke on the CP Rail proposed trail conversion. In total, there are 302 km from Smiths Falls to Mattawa. Jason gave update on this, saying the Country is in direct negotiations with CP, which is not talking to other parties at this point. The County is aiming at a launch of some sort in 2017 as part of the 150th anniversary of Canada. CP, he said, is not inclined to give the right of way away. He also mentioned discussion of the former CN line from Algonquin Park to the Quebec border.

There was discussion of the need for a link between North Bay and Ottawa, which one of the rail lines might meet. Highway 17, all agree, is completely unfit and unsafe reported that Marlaine Kohler and the Waterfront Trail has been pivotal in bringing significant dollars to develop a trail network around Ontario. There's a gap, however, and that gap is Renfrew County.

Anthony reported that the County has received funding to do major upgrades to the K&P trail between Renfrew and Calabogie. He said the County is developing a trails strategy, which it aims present for adoption this year to County Council. Part of his mandate for this year is to get information from all municipalities that have trails. Mapping and outreach are big needs, others said.

Shawna mentioned the possibility of applying to Ontario Sport and Recreation Community Fund for a project related to trail knowledge, public education and outreach.

Damien talked about the Greater Petawawa Trails project, of which he is on the executive. With the Town of Petawawa interested as a way to develop tourism, the group aims to develop networks of mountain bike trails that will make the area a mountain bike tourism destination. He told of a presentation by Jeff Jackson (Algonquin College) showing the economic potential and popularity of mountain bike tourism. Forest Lea, by next year, should have 35 km of mountain bike trails linked with a network of gravel roads. Beachburg has an additional 20-30kms of trails and roads. Together, these two areas offer two full days of riding for visiting tourists, which is the minimum needed to attract mountain bike tourists. His group has submitted a substantial Trillium application for trail-building equipment but would have to come up with alternative financing plans if need be should that application not succeed. The group has a five-person executive and is incorporated as a not for profit. By 2017 they will be attending shows in mass markets like Toronto and Quebec attempting to establish the area as a world-class mountain biking destination. He said that in visiting many other areas, he doesn't see others that compares with this area in terms of trails and tourism infrastructure.

Matrix update.

Damien noted the need to review and update the Matrix as part of the AT planning process for the County and local municipalities. Ron Moss provided a matrix and route map update overview.

AT summit.

Damien and Shawna spoke of the success of last year's AT Summit in Almonte, a two-day event supported by range of orgs and departments. One of the initiatives associated with it was the Silver Chain Challenge, which doubled participation.

Shawna spoke said Petawawa is considering hosting an AT Summit this year. In discussion, several suggested that hosting a summit in the County could be a good way to fulfill a number of objectives, including public education and promotion, outreach to municipalities, promotion of integrated approaches to AT policy, involvement of municipal planners, and "myth-busting" on some of the roadblocks to AT development such as the questions that always arise about liability.

May 28 and 29 were identified by group members as good ones for holding an AT summit

The next meeting of the group was set for Thursday, January 8 at 10 a.m., with the following one being in April.

ACTION /FOLLOWUP ITEMS

Plan communications strategy to let public know about progress on AT and solicit participation.

Post Matrix to Dropbox for working group members.

Develop process for reviewing Matrix (see attached matrix and route map update overview)

Circulate draft fact sheets for comment/review

Inform public of online info available, and acknowledge Trillium

Liaise with and inform municipalities about AT planning

Offer a presenter to the Ontario Municipal Conference (deadline January 31)

Consider applying to Ontario Sport and Recreation Community Fund for a project related to trail knowledge, public education and outreach

Develop plans for AT Summit, including venue, partners, funding, organizing help, etc.

Secure meeting room for next meeting.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION RENFREW COUNTY MATRIX AND ROUTE MAP UPDATE 2015

OVERVIEW

1. Several County Roads were rehabilitated over the last few years. In this regard the Matrix is in need of update to reflect the construction improvements. Perhaps additional rating columns could be added.
2. A review of the existing Route map with the intent to revise, add or delete routes being put forward to the various cycling groups involved in the initial Active Transportation Route map being prepared in 2012. Also a review of the matrix ratings regarding changes such as truck traffic and vehicular traffic volume changes.
3. Consideration for the addition of the CP Rail corridor and CN rail trails with the intent to discuss with various groups the impact on item 2 above and if this will change the Active Transportation Routes. Discussions may include the elimination of some AT Routes in exchange for safer and more accessible rail trail environment.

REVIEW TEAM

Damien McCarthy will head this team.

Ron Moss has a background in infrastructure updates (Municipal Roads) and could be included on the review team.