

To:	Warden Milne and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	September 28, 2023
Subject / Report No:	EDTC-CW-14-23
Title:	Cycling and Trails Master Plan Preliminary Implementation
Prepared by:	Savanna Myers, Sean Potter
Reviewed by:	Randy Scherzer
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	All
Status:	

Recommendation

1. That report EDTC-CW-14-23 regarding Cycling and Trails Master Plan Preliminary Implementation be received for information.

Executive Summary

Over the past 18 months, County staff have worked with our insurer and consulted with senior leadership in all nine member municipalities to set a plan for preliminary implementation of the Cycling & Trails Master Plan, endorsed by Council in 2020. While County staff are comfortable with a preliminary and well-defined implementation plan, municipal support remains varied across the County. Staff are providing this update to move forward with implementation on County roads and on local roads where supported, while alleviating expectation or pressure among member municipalities who are not ready or willing to proceed.

Background and Discussion

Active transportation is a key priority of climate change and a central theme shared between transportation and tourism industries. Grey County is well known for its cycling and this reputation attracts thousands of cyclists each year. In 2020, after a lengthy consultation and development process, and supported by Strava data, the Cycling & Trails Master Plan was endorsed by County Council.

To date, little has been done to implement the plan given the priority shifts throughout the pandemic. Over the past 18 months, staff have worked with our insurer and consulted with each

of our member municipalities to determine the best approach to move forward with implementation.

Staff do not intend to cause pressure locally or set expectations of participation. When a member municipality is interested in participating, staff will be happy to collaborate.

Based on the current approved funding available, staff will proceed with the purchase and installation of signage on appropriate County roads and will also purchase the signage for municipal installation where supported. Staff will continue to offer this support until such time as the funding runs out, or the contract expires, on December 31, 2024.

The following outlines the preliminary implementation plan.

Routes

Transportation and IT staff collaborated to develop a [GIS](#) map that illustrates the current proposed routes as approved through the 2020 Plan. Municipal staff from all nine municipalities reviewed the mapping and, in some cases, made recommendations to re-route concerning sections. In other cases, municipalities were not yet ready or willing to have routes promoted or signed on local roads. Staff will continue to take direction from municipal staff and amend the routes as necessary or hide the routes until such time as the municipality provides approval. The initial changes will be actioned following Council approval of this report.

Bike Facilities

At this time, the County does not intend to create or encourage the development of bike lanes or designated bike facilities. There is also no expectation for the County or member municipalities to upgrade any surfaces outside of already planned projects (i.e. County paved shoulder policy). The County will however be improving education through promotions to set expectation of environment, from paved shoulders to gravel roads, highlighting winter closures and road maintenance plans. Not only does this reduce infrastructure and maintenance demands, it also enables the promotion of a variety of cycling enjoyed throughout the region.

Signage



* The standard share the road sign Grey County utilizes is merged into one complete sign.

The two proposed signs for installation include the green 'route' sign and the yellow 'share the road' sign pictured above. Of key concern was understanding the liability implication of signage on the roadway. Our insurers indicated that knowing cyclists are already on the road, the signage is understood to educate and raise awareness of all road users' joint responsibility to share the road.

It is also now understood that signage can start and stop where supported. For example, all County roads could be signed without municipal roads following suit. The signage route does not have to be continuous, though it will reduce the user experience and could harm our reputation.

Given the varying support, and to provide a positive user experience, staff recommend proceeding with signing routes on County and municipal roads where supported, ensuring a complete route can be achieved. Otherwise, to reduce reputational risk, staff will work to avoid abrupt signage stops where a County and municipal road meet.

Marketing & Promotion

Our insurers also reiterated the importance of setting expectations through education and communication channels before cyclists take to the road. This would include the Cycling Brochure, website and social media. Staff intend to update the Cycling Brochure based on this feedback, in addition to feedback received from municipal staff, to better educate and prepare cyclists for their journey. This late in the year, staff intend to begin work on the edits but carry forward the approved printing budget to bring the brochure back to market in 2024.

Staff will also work to develop an education and marketing toolkit that can be shared with our member municipalities to help raise awareness about share the road etiquette and expectations.

Off-Road Promotion

The County has just completed a significant investment in completing the CP Rail Trail. At the same time, staff field a lot of questions about family friendly routes, many are owned and operated by our member municipalities, closely accessible to downtown, which helps to promote the economic spinoff. Given the significant local and regional investment in community off-road trails, economic development and tourism staff plan to coordinate with member municipalities to develop an off-road trails promotional piece, to support use of community trails. Staff will include this project in the 2024 budget for consideration.

Phased Approach

While the plan has many recommendations, staff will focus on routes, signage, and promotion/education to begin implementation. With that, we will pause for a bit of time to get comfortable and make sure all is well before deciding what next steps should be considered. Staff will bring information reports forward to Council as implementation phases progress.

Financial and Resource Implications

The County was successful in receiving the federal Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP), designed to create long-term economic growth, build inclusive, sustainable and resilient communities, and support a low-carbon economy. The funding supported both CP Rail Trail Stone Dusting and Cycling and Trails Signs.

All project expenses related to signage and updates to the cycling brochure were included in the approved 2023 budget.

Education and marketing toolkits as well as the off-road trails brochure, will be included in the 2024 budget for consideration.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal: Deputy CAO, Transportation Services
 - AODA Compliance (describe)
 - Contribution to Climate Change Action Plan Targets (Community Action 8 – Active Transportation)
- External: All member municipalities, Marsh

Appendices and Attachments

[EDTC-CW-16-20 Grey County Cycling & Trails Master Plan](#)

[Cycling Brochure](#)