

Presentation to Council, Town of Pelham

July 13, 2020

Pelham Active Transportation Committee

The Pelham Active Transportation Committee (PATC) has been an active advisory committee since 2008, providing Council and staff with advice and recommendations based on input from Pelham's residents and the evidence that active transportation – walking, cycling, moving with mobility devices - has a positive effect on physical and mental health, the environment, the local economy and the overall quality of life in a community.

The Town of Pelham has invested considerably in active transportation by embedding active transportation (AT) principles in planning policy, adding sidewalks, bicycle lanes and other AT infrastructure such as benches, bike racks and multi-use pathways and by supporting the PATC in its efforts to promote AT safety and education in the community. The Town of Pelham is the only community in Niagara that has achieved both Walk Friendly (bronze) and Bicycle Friendly (silver) recognition. In addition, the Active Transportation Master Plan (ATMP) was approved by Council in 2016, with significant input from the PATC and the community, to guide future planning and investments in AT.

At its June 16th meeting, the Pelham Active Transportation Committee discussed the status of the Ontario Municipal Commuter Cycling grant and Council's recent decision. Committee members agreed that it was important to convey the PATC's position and its recommendations by providing the background and history of this grant, the rationale behind the recommendation that was made, and the importance in making this investment.

Bea Clark
Chair, Pelham Active Transportation Committee

Brian Baty, Vice-chair
Rhys Evans
Bob Fish
Lisa Gallant, Recorder
Dave Nicholson
Barbara Rybiak

Ex-officio:
Diana Huson, Regional Councillor, Town of Pelham
John Wink, Councillor, Town of Pelham

The Ontario Municipal Commuter Cycling (OMCC) grant

The Pelham Active Transportation Committee urges Council to approve and use the Ontario Municipal Commuter Cycling grant funds to support active transportation in the Town of Pelham. All four options available to Council were developed in consultation with the PATC and reflect input received from residents who attended PATC community events since 2010. All four options are acceptable to the PATC, though some may be beneficial to more residents, more affordable in the current fiscal year and more practical at this time.

Background/History of OMCC:

The history of the OMCC grant is outlined in Appendix A. It was an integral component of the former provincial government's Cycle ON strategy and was intended to be a multi-year fund available to municipalities to support and improve cycling infrastructure, thereby increasing commuter and recreational cycling.

The Town of Pelham developed its application based on the Pelham Active Transportation Master Plan (ATMP), input from the PATC and input from residents which the PATC had gathered at numerous community events over the years.

The year one project "Signage" was approved in December 2017, a \$60,000 grant, with a plan to proceed in spring 2018. In March 2018, the Town received an increased, actual grant of \$ 75,415.80. The OMCC program was subsequently terminated by the newly elected provincial government in June 2018, but the Town received approval to use the grant for one of the four projects originally submitted. The grant must be used by December 31, 2020 and the Town must contribute a minimum of 20% towards the overall cost of the project.

Rationale for the PATC Recommendation:

The PATC was asked to provide a recommendation regarding the four options available to the Town and proceeded to review each option thoroughly, using the information in the original application, its knowledge of current circumstances, and a recognition of fiscal realities.

Project #1: Signed Bike Routes

This project involves the implementation of signed bike routes, as per Pelham's Active Transportation Master Plan.

Signage is an important component of any active transportation network, guiding residents and visitors and increasing safety for all road users. This option would require considerable time to consult with the community and stakeholders to ensure consideration and review of the routes, wayfinding signs, options and safety considerations. Also, the Region of Niagara will be examining signage requirements for the active transportation network across the region and will likely begin this consultation in 2021. For these reasons, the PATC decided that there was insufficient

time available to conduct local consultations, and it would be prudent to participate in the Region's efforts to ensure consistency and to improve signage on roadways and trails.

This project is affordable, would require consultation with stakeholders but might be difficult to complete before December 31, 2020. It would be out of step with the signage standards and recommendations which the Region hopes to introduce next year.

Project #2: Paving the Steve Bauer Trail from Port Robinson Road to Line Avenue

This project involves paving the Steve Bauer Trail from Port Robinson Road to the southern Pelham boundary.

The Steve Bauer Trail is heavily used in Pelham. This section is especially well used by pedestrians and cyclists, as it links to East Fonthill and the Meridian Community Centre. It also creates a better, safer route for those commuting to Niagara College, to work or for cyclists wishing to link to Welland's recreational trail system and the Greater Niagara Circle Route. A paved trail will not only support cyclists, but it will also provide better and safer access for pedestrians and residents using mobility devices.

This project is desirable and is requested frequently by cyclists, pedestrians, seniors and residents seeking an accessible trail in Pelham. It will provide good linkages to the MCC, to East Fonthill, to Niagara College and to Welland's paved trail system.

This project is affordable, would likely benefit the greatest number of residents and could be completed before December 31, 2020.

Project #3: Paving the Spur Line from Rice Road to Station Street

This project involves constructing and paving an off-road commuter cycling trail that runs from Station Street to Rice Road and creates a link between Pelham and Thorold.

The City of Thorold is interested in completing its section of this off-road trail, which is much longer and requires considerable funding. The completion of the Fonthill/Thorold spur trail would mean that cyclists could travel to Brock University, to work or other destinations in Thorold or St. Catharines using a completely off-road trail.

This project is desirable and often requested by residents but is considerably more costly, could not be completed by December 31, 2020 and, therefore, not feasible in 2020.

Project #4: Canboro Road Cycling Improvements

This project involves improving Canboro Road by means of bike route signs, road widenings, paved shoulders, removal of rumble strips, adding edgelines and sharrows. Canboro Road is a primary link between the villages of Fenwick and Fonthill, yet its

configuration is not conducive to cyclists. Widening the road, removing the rumble strips, paving the shoulders and creating sharrows will make this a better, safer commuter cycling route. The project requires extensive road work and simply removing the rumble strips will not improve the safety of the road for all road users.

The project is desirable and often requested by residents but is considerably more costly, could not be completed before December 31, 2020 and, therefore, not feasible in 2020.

In Summary, the PATC is asking Council to:

1. Please use the approved OMCC funds for one of the four options. Returning the funds would not be wise and may impact future grant opportunities for the Town of Pelham. It should also be noted that every opportunity for significant infrastructure funding, federal or provincial, requires municipalities to demonstrate their ongoing commitment to active transportation.
2. The PATC recommends the option to pave the Steve Bauer Trail from Port Robinson Road to Line Avenue. This option:
 - will provide better and safer route for cyclists and better access for other vulnerable road users. It will benefit more residents in the short term.
 - is affordable.
 - can be completed by December 31, 2020.
 - provides desirable linkages within the Town of Pelham and to other communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Appendix A:

Background/History of OMCC

In 2017, the provincial government announced a significant multi-year funding opportunity which encouraged municipalities to improve cycling infrastructure, as part of the province's overall Cycle ON strategy. Municipalities were invited to submit proposals for multi-year funding (3 years), demonstrating that this funding would be used to improve commuter cycling routes and increase the safety of cyclists. The province indicated that only municipalities that secured year one funding would be allowed to access additional funding in years two and three.

The Town of Pelham submitted a number of projects, including cost estimates, as part of the three-year plan, recognizing that the Town would be responsible for 20% of the overall project costs. The proposed projects reflected the input received from hundreds of Pelham's residents through the PATC's community outreach efforts. The PATC supported all of the projects proposed in the submission to the province.

The projects proposed for this three-year plan included:

Year	Project	Grant Requested	Town of Pelham
2017 (Year 1)	Signage for bike routes, etc.	\$60,000	\$12,000
2018 (Year 2)	Paving Steve Bauer Trail from Port Robinson Rd to Line Ave	\$200,000	\$40,000
	Paving Spur line from Station St to Rice Road to link to Thorold trail	\$850,000	\$170,000
2019 (Year 3)	Canboro Rd cycling improvements including road widening, paved shoulders, removal of rumble strips, edge line and sharrows	\$1,407,000	\$281,400

The process was competitive and the Region of Niagara as well as five municipalities in Niagara were successful in securing funds for year one: Lincoln, Niagara Falls, Pelham, St. Catharines and Thorold. *Retrieved: Ontario Newsroom:*
<https://news.ontario.ca/mto/en/2017/12/ontario-municipal-commuter-cycling-program-omcc-recipients.html>

On December 4, 2017, the Town of Pelham received approval for an initial \$60,000, to proceed with the year-one project "Signage".

In March 2018, the province sent notification that Pelham would receive \$75,500 with the Town required to contribute 20% to the overall cost of the project.

The Town of Pelham was also eligible to apply for a Safe Cycling Education grant. This was approved and the Town received \$7,500 for printed materials including the printing of the Cycling in Pelham map.

In June 2018, the OMCC program was subsequently cancelled by the newly elected provincial government.

In April 2019 the Town signed an amending agreement which allowed consideration of the four projects originally submitted in 2017. The grant of \$75,500 must be spent by December 31, 2020 on one of four projects identified in the original proposal and the Town is required to contribute to the project.

Given these circumstances, the PATC was asked to make a recommendation regarding which project should move forward recognizing the \$75,500 grant funding and the requirement that the Town contribute 20%.

At its June 18, 2019 meeting, the PATC passed the following motion:

The PATC recommends that the OMCC funding be used, as originally intended to pave the section of the Steve Bauer Trail between Port Robinson Road and Quaker Road. Paving this section of the trail will provide a critical commuter cycling route within Pelham, and to destinations such as Niagara College and adjacent cycling routes in Welland. Paving this section will make the trail accessible for vulnerable road users including pedestrians, cyclists and those using assistive devices.