



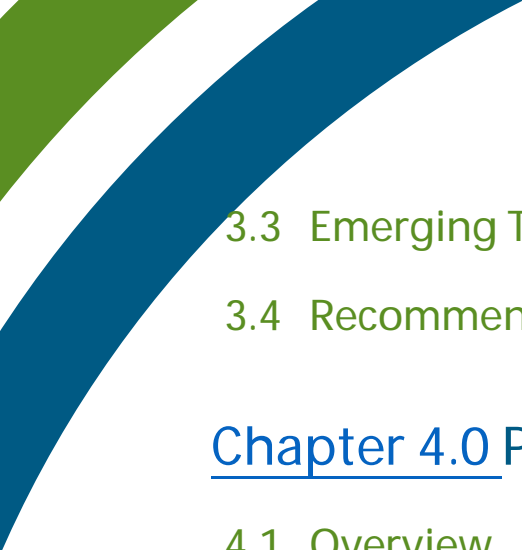
2021 CYCLING MASTER PLAN

Phase 1 Report



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1

SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0

Cycling Master Plan Introduction

Oxford County is one of southwestern Ontario's leading destinations for tourism-based cycling and has the future anticipated growth which will require a more robust and equitable transportation system.

In 2019, Oxford County adopted their Transportation Master Plan (TMP) update which identified the development of a Cycling Master Plan (CMP) as a strategic priority. At a higher level, Council has adopted a sustainability framework that includes three core priorities which can be further supported and enhanced by a greater emphasis on active transportation and cycling.

The intent of this report is to...

Provide an overview of the foundation and background behind the development of the Cycling Master Plan for Oxford County.

Section 1.0 specifically addresses the approach, assumptions and the actions that were undertaken to complete Phase 1 of the project which focused on learning, assessing and identifying potential improvement for consideration in Phase 2 which will address the identification, design and implementation of a County-wide cycling network.

1.1 Developing the Plan

The Cycling Master Plan is being developed using a two-phase planning and design approach which is being undertaken consistent with the requirements of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (MCEA) process. The process was designed with the intent of achieving six project objectives:

1. Build on County and Local Plans
2. Detail a Blueprint for Future Planning Decisions
3. Align with Accepted Guidelines
4. Provide an Implementation Tool for Staff
5. Offer Long-term Policy Guidance
6. Assist with Programs and Partnerships

The outcomes of the process will be assessed based on the way in which they are able to achieve these objectives as well as the overall strategic priorities identified by County Council. The overall project is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2020 with Council adoption and implementation in 2021. An overview of each of the project phases is presented below. Phase 1 was completed between March and September 2020. Phase 2 will be completed between October 2020 and March 2021.

Phase 1 Establish Foundations

Purpose...

Establish a strong existing on and off-road cycling infrastructure and conditions.

Outcomes...

- + Establish vision and objectives
- + Confirm existing conditions
- + Assess relevant policies and programs
- + Identify potential improvement

Phase 2 Developing the Network

Purpose...

Identify a connected and continuous cycling network and supportive implementation strategy.

Outcomes...

- + Confirm cycling routes
- + Identify preferred facility types
- + Identify costing considerations
- + Prepare design guidelines

Ontario Municipal Commuter Cycling (OMCC)

Program Funding...

The development of the Oxford County Cycling Master Plan was made possible by the Ontario Government, through funding available from the Ontario Municipal Commuter Cycling (OMCC) Program. This program was originally identified with the intent of supporting upper and lower-tier municipalities with the development of long-range strategic planning documents to establish guidance for cycling as well as the design and construction of cycling routes and facilities. While the program is no longer available, the impacts of these investments are felt Province-wide. The intent of the funding is to provide support to facilitate the implementation of cycling improvements which encourage commuter cycling. The funding requirements and objectives provided additional guidance on the project timeline and master plan approach.

The Municipal Class Environmental

Assessment (MCEA) Process...

The Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (MCEA) process remains a foundational process and set of requirements for both master plans and infrastructure projects. To facilitate efficient implementation, it is in the best interest of any master plan to demonstrate the fulfillment of Phases 1 and 2 of the MCEA process. While many cycling infrastructure projects are pre-approved i.e. do not require further investigation and documentation; other cycling projects have a low enough anticipated budget that they fall within the A or A+ category of projects. In both cases, the information contained within this Cycling Master Plan report will likely be sufficient to address any environmental concerns.

Additional details regarding the MCEA process, the potential impact of provincial funding and next steps will be documented later in the project process. The intent is to leverage these processes to facilitate the implementation of the recommended improvements identified in the Cycling Master Plan.

1.2 Vision & Goals

A functional master plan such as this Cycling Master Plan is designed to provide topic specific direction building upon recommendations, policies and strategies identified in high-order policies such as the County's Official Plan and Transportation Master Plan.

A critical component of any functional master plan is the development of a vision statement which is meant to articulate the desired future for the community. A strong vision statement not only looks to the future but identifies opportunities for alignment with and articulation of wider community goals and objectives.

The vision that has been prepared for the future of cycling in Oxford County was developed based on input from staff, stakeholders and community members and is as follows...

"To create an integrated and connected cycling network that promotes active transportation, tourism, and low carbon travel options as part of a sustainable multi-modal transportation network."

While the vision is a statement that articulates the ultimate desired outcome, it requires additional clarification to confirm the specific outcomes that are intended to be achieved in the form of cycling specific goals.

In 2015, Oxford County adopted the Future Oxford Sustainability Plan "which creates a vision of a sustainable community that will achieve specific goals and targets for Oxford's future" with the overarching goal of improving quality of life for generations to come. The 70 recommendations and actions outlined within the Future Oxford Plan are organized into three categories to balance

"Oxford's unique **social**, **environmental** and **economic** interests".

In a number of instances, the actions identified within the Future Oxford Plan provide significant foundation and support for the development of the Cycling Master Plan. As such, the goals that support the cycling vision, have been developed to reflect these three categories and to provide additional detail specifically related to the future of cycling in its role as a viable form of transportation for the residents and visitors of Oxford County.

1.0 Introduction

The cycling specific goals and the supportive actions as identified in the Sustainability plan are presented below.

Economy

Action 1iiA – grow a sustainable economy

Cycling Goal #1 - Cycling is a sustainable mode of transportation which contributes to the economic viability and sustainability of the County and helps to stimulate investment and growth.

Community

Action 1ib - accessible transportation options

Action 1iE - engagement in decision affecting the public good

Action 1iiB - community dialogue on sustainability issues

Cycling Goal #2 - Cycling is part of the culture of Oxford which is created through effective communication and engagement. Major communities and larger hubs within and outside of Oxford or accessible by bike for both recreational and commuting purposes.

Environment

Action 3iB – move away from fossil fuels and enhance low carbon transportation

Cycling Goal #3 - Cycling is integrated and enhanced by equitable and accessible programs and initiatives which is encouraged through partnerships, programs and incentives and part of a wider Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategy.

Cycling goals for Oxford County...

The intent of the goals is not to provide a prescriptive set of measures but to provide a foundation upon which the existing cycling conditions, policies and programs can be assessed and new recommendations can be identified.

1.3 Shaping the Plan

The Cycling Master Plan builds upon the significant efforts and successes realized by Oxford County and its municipal partners as well as its cycling and trails committee members.

The intent is **not to**...

“reinvent the wheel”

but **to create a strategy around...**

“rolling together”

to create a safe, comfortable, enjoyable cycling experience throughout Oxford County and to surrounding areas for day to day trips as well as recreational purposes.

The Cycling Master Plan was developed with two core inputs and considerations. The first is the robust engagement and consultation program that was developed and was implemented and the second are a set of cycling assumptions that were identified based on discussions with County staff and stakeholders. The details are provided on the following pages.

We should talk about COVID-19...

At the time the Cycling Master Plan was starting, our knowledge of the impact of COVID-19 was unknown. The significant public health restrictions and impacts have meant that more than ever, people are looking to cycling and other forms of active transportation for healthy, recreation and day to day travel options. However, it also means that large group meetings and engagement are no longer possible in-person. The opportunities and challenges associated with COVID-19 will be discussed throughout the document where appropriate.

Community Outreach & Engagement

Consultation and engagement is an essential part to developing the Cycling Master Plan. In particular, engaging with key audiences and community representatives is an important means of:

- + Informing members of the public and key stakeholders of the Cycling Master Plan's development;
- + Educating and promote cycling in Oxford County;
- + Gathering experiential input on existing and proposed on and off-road cycling facilities from various stakeholders; and
- + Informing recommendations listed within the Oxford County Cycling Master Plan.

An overview of the audiences that were intended to be engaged throughout the Cycling Master Plan process are presented on the right-hand side of the page. The consultation and engagement strategy that was prepared in April 2020 and identified a range of opportunities for engagement using a two-round approach:

Round 1 . focused on confirming the existing cycling conditions including routes, facilities and programming and identifying the opportunities and challenges related to infrastructure, design, policy and programming. The intent was to establish the basis from which recommendations were identified. The first round of engagement was completed along with Phase 1 of the technical work program.

Round 2 . focused on reviewing and confirming the proposed cycling network and identified potential network priorities, phasing and programming.

The input gathered was used to shape the content of the Cycling Master Plan report including implementation recommendations and supportive strategies.

Stakeholders

Not all stakeholders have the same preferences for engagement. Where possible a tailored approach is needed...

INTAC



Within Round 1 of the engagement plan two working sessions were held with members of the internal technical advisory committee (INTAC) and the external technical advisory committee (EXTAC).

Both meetings were held virtually, and discussion was facilitated around the network review process as well as the opportunities and challenges using the online engagement tool Miro. A presentation was provided which documented the work completed to date as well as the proposed approach for network development that was undertaken in Phase 2 of the project. The following are key themes that emerged from the meetings.

INTAC Meeting.

- + Alignment with other County projects e.g. Future Oxford. The result was the development of the three project goals.
- + Consideration was raised over the importance of ensuring the cycling network connects to areas surrounding the County, (whereby requiring close collaboration with Tourism Oxford and other key stakeholders)
- + Recommended the CMP's vision and objectives more explicitly reference relevant municipal priorities, such as decarbonizing the transportation sector
- + Comments were mentioned regarding the relevancy of electrically-assisted mobility, including e-bikes, within the plan.

EXTAC Meeting.

- + Encouraged engaging with local corporate entities (i.e. Toyota) as possible partners to support and sponsor CMP recommendations
- + Stressed the need to consult private cycling groups for their feedback in developing the cycling network, including the Oxford Cycling Committee
- + Long distances and low existing cycling demand identified as key challenges in improving cycling connectivity between communities
- + Suggested the CMP recommend the hiring of a cycling coordinator to secure funding for new facilities and coordinate cycling events

Online engagement summary of input received...

With health officials advising that the best way to prevent the spread of Covid-19 is by practising physical distance and limiting gatherings to groups of ten people, it became clear that in-person public engagement would not be possible for the first round of consultation. To gather public input an online engagement tool was prepared and launched using the tool MetroQuest and promoted through the County's "Speak up Oxford!" engagement platform.

This tool included three interactive engagement activities which included:

- + The identification of priorities and objectives to help shape potential recommendations and network conditions;
- + An interactive mapping tool to populate existing conditions, major cycling destinations, barriers, new potential and missing links and design improvements; and
- + Survey questions to establish a cycling profile for those individuals who currently cycle or people who are interested in cycling within Oxford County.

A total of **274** responses were submitted

The survey was held between **July 7th** and **August 31st, 2020**.

The responses were comprehensive and extremely informative to the Phase 1 outcomes. The following is a summary of the key responses from each of the three activities. The detailed responses are found in Appendix A.

Reasons not to Cycle

- + Too many barriers to cycling (52% of responses)
- + Cycling network too inaccessible (28% of responses)
- + Cycling network too inaccessible (15% of responses)
- + Cycling network lacks proper connectivity (9% of responses)

Reasons to Cycle

- + Improve resident health and quality of life (26% of responses)
- + Connections to natural sights (15% of responses)

Cycling Improvements

- + Major Improvements: shoulders or shoulder paving (32% of responses)
- + Major Destinations; natural areas and shops (24% of responses)
- + Major Barriers; highways and lack of shoulders (12% of responses)

Shaping the plan through...

cycling assumptions

Cycling assumptions refer to considerations that are the foundation for developing the Cycling Master Plan for Oxford. The cycling assumptions help to establish a common understanding of the direction and the purpose of the Cycling Master Plan during development and once the plan has been adopted. These assumptions were developed based on discussions with County staff and key stakeholders and are specific to Oxford County while also reflecting cycling planning and design best practices and lessons learned from comparable jurisdictions.

assumption

1

The focus of the master plan was primarily on on-road improvements for cycling with opportunities to connect with existing and planned off-road trails as per the Trails strategy.

assumption

2

The focus of the master plan was on County roads and does not provide recommendations related to improvements on local roadways unless previously identified in a locally adopted master plan or the Province-wide Cycling Network.

assumption

3

The network builds upon previously adopted plans and policies including but not limited to the Trails Strategy, Transportation Master Plan and Future Oxford to align with wider strategic priorities.

assumption

4

Cycling improvements were considered based on their ability to fulfill two key criteria, connectivity / accessibility as well as route feasibility.

assumption

5

The Cycling Master Plan aligns with and reflects recently accepted cycling design guidelines and standards as well as the unique needs and experiences of local cyclists.

assumption

6

The Cycling Master Plan builds upon and leverages the County's existing paved shoulder policy and prioritizes improvements in areas where conditions are considered favourable for improvement.

assumption

7

The Cycling Master Plan will establish long-term change when it comes to cycling, focusing on future trends and policies and community education and outreach.





2

SECTION TWO

INVENTORY

2.0

Inventory of Conditions

The foundation of any cycling master plan is the identification of a set of routes and facilities that typically form a continuous and connected “network” of recommended cycling improvements. As noted in Section 1.0, the intent is not to “reinvent the wheel” with Oxford County’s Cycling Master Plan. The intent of the process is to build upon the significant efforts of Oxford County, the area municipalities, local committees and interest groups as well as other agencies to leverage past efforts and identify new opportunities. Since the development of the Oxford County trails strategy quite a lot has changed when it comes to the design of cycling routes and facilities. The past efforts to identify cycling improvements though valid and valuable do not necessarily reflect the most up to date guidelines and standards.

With overall user experience, comfort and safety in mind, it is critical that this master plan:

- + Provides realistic recommendations based on conditions;
- + Establishes a foundation and inventory of assets to support management; and
- + Integrates the previously planned and promoted routes and facilities adopted prior to the development of the CMP.

Section 2.0 of the report documents the outcomes of a considerable existing conditions inventory, highlights the shift in cycling planning and design since the adoption of the trails strategy and provides an overview of the approach that will be used to inform the development / identification of the proposed cycling network in Oxford County.

2.1 Inventory of Existing & Planned Conditions

The provision of safe and comfortable infrastructure remains a key determinant of the willingness of many to consider cycling, either for commuting or recreation purposes. Oxford County's cycling network is not being developed without acknowledging the considerable planning and promotional efforts from Oxford County and its partners such as Tourism Oxford as well as external agencies such as the Ministry of Transportation Ontario. The network will be built as a layered approach which identifies, reviews and refines the previously planned and previously promoted cycling routes and facilities as well as the routes and facilities that are currently "on the ground today". This Section provides an overview of the existing cycling conditions upon which the cycling network will be developed in Phase 2 of the project.

Previously Planned Routes

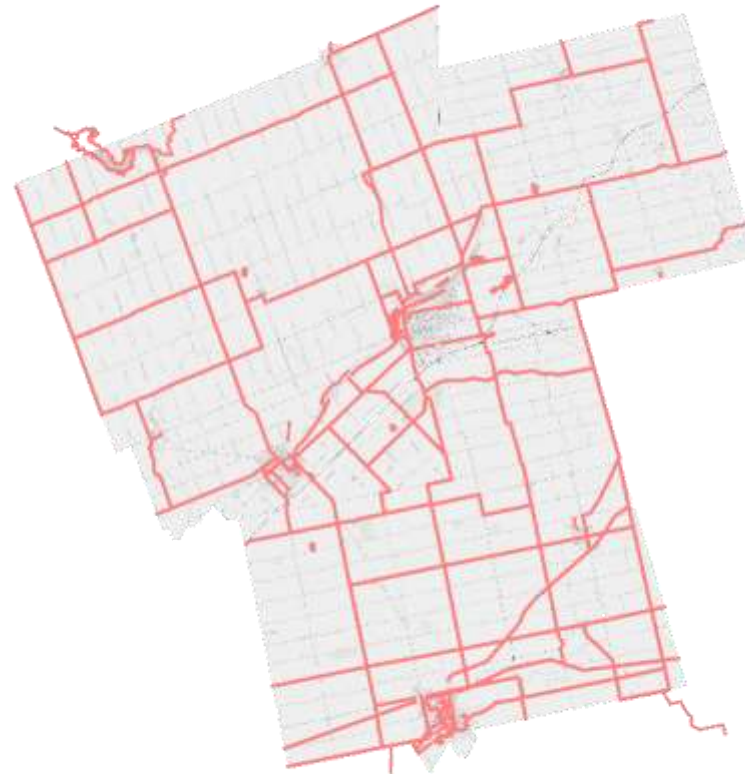
Refers to networks, facilities or routes which have been identified in an adopted master plan at a local or County level or by agency partners.

MTO Province-wide Cycling Network



38 km County roads
20 km Local Roads / Other
Developed by the Ministry of Transportation to enhance inter-regional connectivity between major communities.

Oxford County Trails Master Plan



289 km County Roads
458 km Local Roads / Other
Developed to connect communities, built-up areas and trail destinations across the County.

Previously Promoted Routes

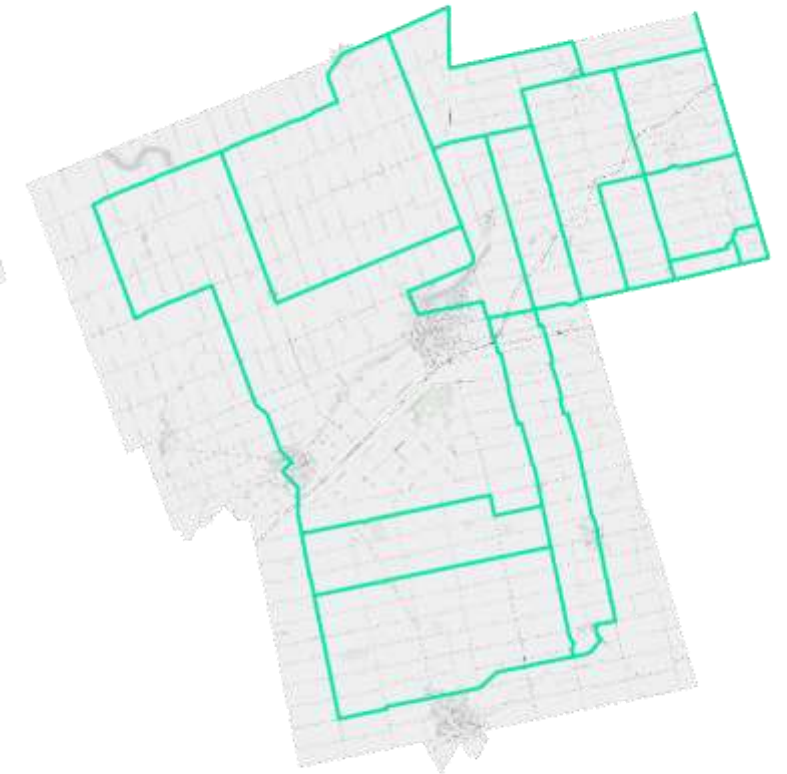
Refers to networks, facilities or routes which are currently being promoted or identified by partners or agencies but not formally adopted by the County.

Tourism Oxford Cycling Routes



143 km County Roads
379 km Local Road / Other
First Gravel Road cycling routes in Ontario, promoted by Tourism Oxford.

Cycling Advisory Committee Routes



291 km County Roads
127 km Local Roads / Other
Routes identified by the Cycling Advisory Committee as desirable for cycling.

Existing Cycling Conditions

Previously planned routes do not always mean that the routes “exist”. Without a comprehensive understanding of the existing conditions of County roadways it can be a challenge to determine and confirm potential routes and cycling improvements. An inventory of County roads with a focus on cycling conditions and opportunity was undertaken through a detailed inventory and investigation. A two-part approach was used starting with an in-field investigation and documentation of shoulder conditions followed by a desktop review to provide further confirmation. The information gathered was supplemented by input from the County based on recently built capital projects and context specific conditions.

The intent is not for this inventory to provide comprehensive information on the roadway conditions or specific information transition and change in the roadway conditions. The inventory was developed as a master plan level asset management tool which is intended to be used during the network development process to confirm preferred routing and to support the implementation of the cycling network following adoption. This activity will ensure all recommendations were locally adaptive and respectful of existing network as well as the roadway conditions. A total of 7 conditions were observed on County Roads, reflecting both urban and rural cycling facilities. They are further organized into three categories and presented / illustrated below as well as on Map 1.

On-Road Facilities



Urban Shoulders
(23.5 KM)

Width: 1.2m or more
Parking Provision: Permitted or Time of use provisions



Bike Lanes
(3.7 KM)

Width: 1.5m
Parking Provision: Not permitted

County Shoulder Conditions



No Shoulders
(56.7 KM)

Width: 0m
Parking Provision: None



Narrow Gravel Shoulders
(154.1 KM)

Width: Less than 1.0m
Parking Provision: None



Full Gravel Shoulders
(234.2 KM)

Width: Greater than 1.0m
Parking Provision: No restrictions



Partial Paved/ Gravel Shoulders
(202.2 KM)

Width: 0.5 – 1.0m
Parking Provision: No restrictions



Paved Shoulders (6.3 KM)

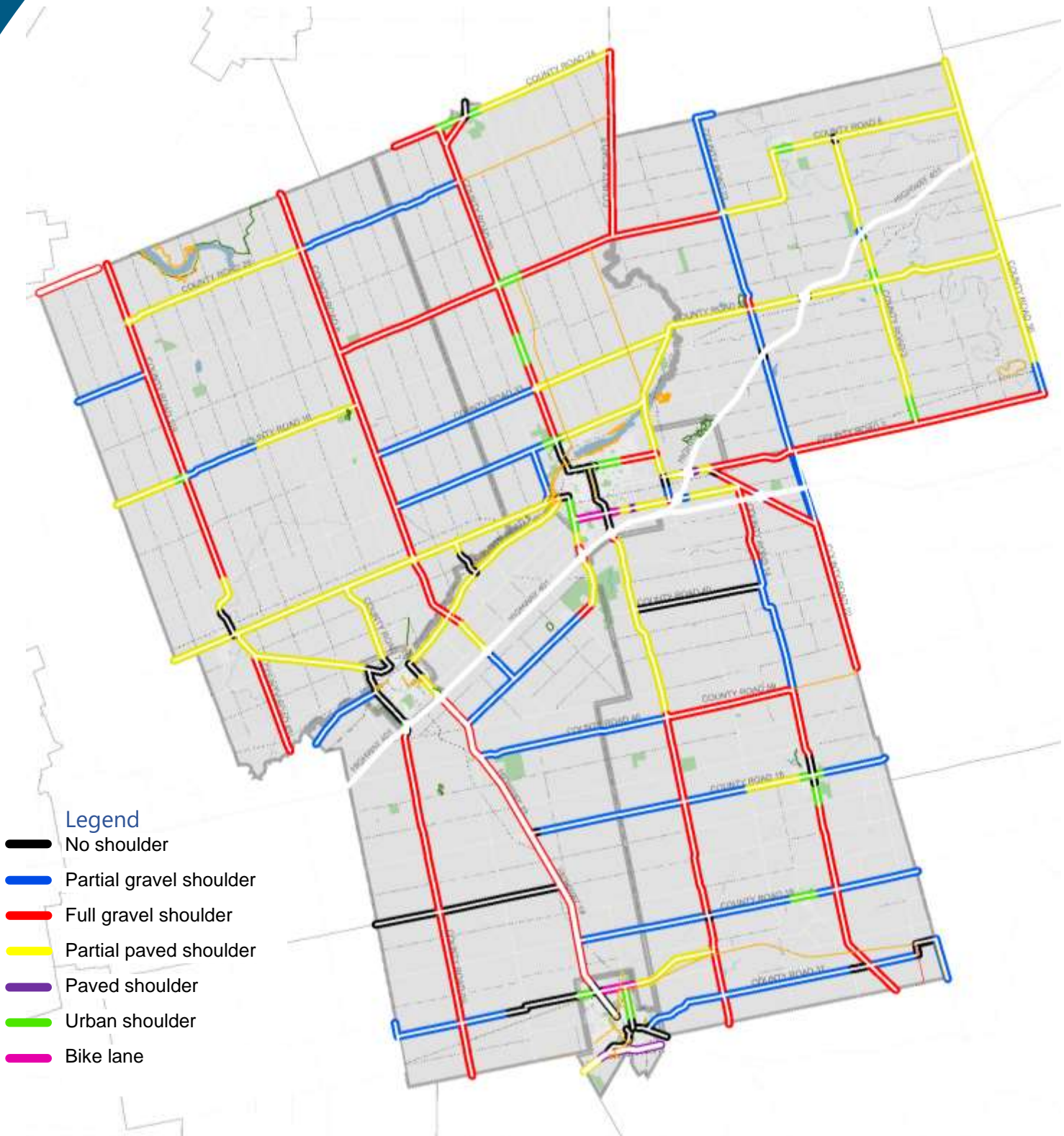
Width: 1.0m+
Parking Provision: No restriction

Off-road Facilities

Off-Road Trail (32.3 KM)

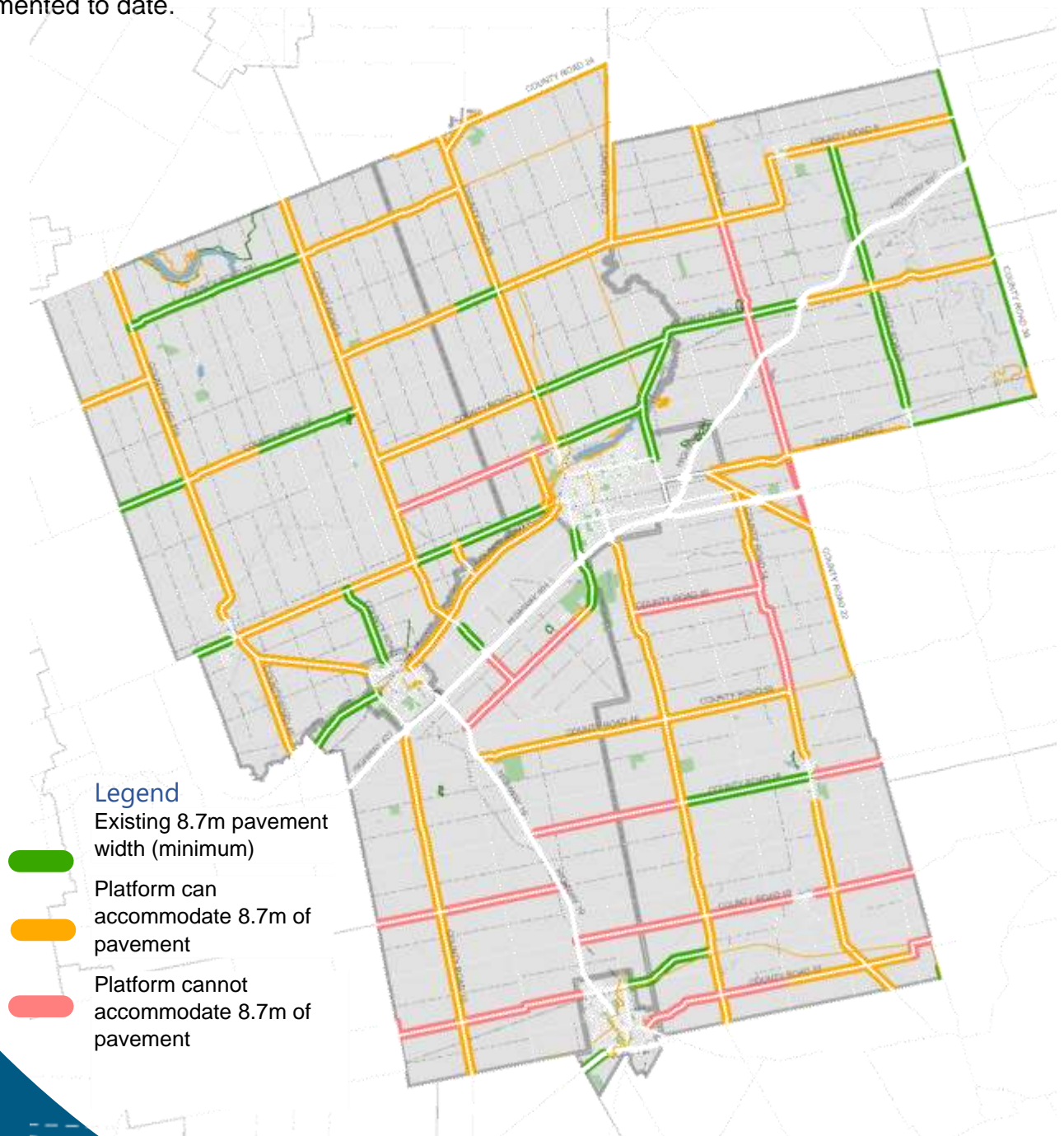
Width: <3.0m
Parking Provision: N/A

Existing Cycling Conditions



Paved Shoulder Policy

In 2015, the County adopted policy language that specified the implementation of paved shoulders along County Roads in rural areas. Since that time, approximately 131 kilometres of County Roads have been reconstructed with a 1.0m paved shoulder, implemented on both sides of the road; representing just under 20% of the County's overall road network. Paved shoulders provide cyclists with additional operating space on County Roads, preventing cyclists from having to share operating space with motor vehicles. The graphic below illustrates County roads where paved shoulders have been implemented to date.



2.2 Potential Improvements

Potential improvements refers specifically to how existing County Roads could be improved to accommodate cycling facilities that meet the design guidance of OTM Book 18 – see details on the approach and preliminary level of separation recommendations in Section 2.3.

There may be some existing conditions that can be easily retrofitted to accommodate cyclists in a safe and comfortable manner while in other locations the design needs would be considered too “great” i.e. costly, impactful, etc. to warrant the improvement. The following is an overview of the various existing cycling conditions and the potential for improvement.

Existing Cycling Conditions	Cycling Facility Potential
Paved Shoulders	Paved Shoulders
No Existing Shoulder	Rural Signed Route
Partial Gravel Shoulder	Rural Signed Route
Gravel Shoulder — — — →	Rural Signed Route, Paved Shoulder or Buffer Paved Shoulder
Partial Paved & Gravel Shoulder — →	Rural Signed Route, Paved Shoulder or Buffer Paved Shoulder
Paved Shoulder — — — →	Buffered Paved Shoulder
On-road Facilities	On-road Facilities
Urban Shoulder — — — →	Bike Lane or Advisory Lane
Bike Lane — — — — →	Buffered Bike Lane
Off-road Facilities	Off-road Facilities
No Cycling Permitted Trail — — ▶	Cycling Permitted Trail
Cycling Permitted Trail — — →	No Improvement Needed

The most notable opportunity to create new cycling facilities is through paving or widening existing County Road shoulders to either created paved shoulders or incorporating buffers to those that have existing shoulders or sufficient shoulder / platform width. Within urban areas, a similar opportunity exists with the commuting network, where urban shoulders can be converted into bike lanes by widened and designated space for cyclists.

2.3 How have things changed?

Since the development of Oxford County's Transportation Master Plan and Trails Master Plan, there have been a number of advancements in the way in which cycling routes, facilities and amenities as designed, operated and maintained. At the time the TMP was developed, Ontario Traffic Manual (OTM) Book 18 - Cycling Facilities as well as the Ministry of Transportation's Bikeways Design Manual had been implemented.

However, since that time these guideline have both been reviewed and updated to reflect the ever-expanding knowledge that is available regarding cycling planning and design. Oxford County's proposed cycling network must reflect the most up to date processes and practices while also taking into consideration emerging trends and considerations, reflective of leading industry practices.

One notable change in the OTM Book 18 guidelines is facility selection process i.e. the nomograph. In the first iteration of the design guidelines the nomograph only reflected one set of conditions.

In the new guidelines, a separate nomograph is provided for the urban environment and the rural environment. By distinguishing the appropriateness of different facility types between rural and urban settings, more contextually accurate recommendations are prescribed.

The nomographs are illustrated on the following two pages. Please refer to Section 5 – Facility Selection Process in OTM Book 18 for a more detailed description of the application and use of this tool.

Desirable Cycling Facility Pre-Selection Nomograph: Suburban / Urban Context

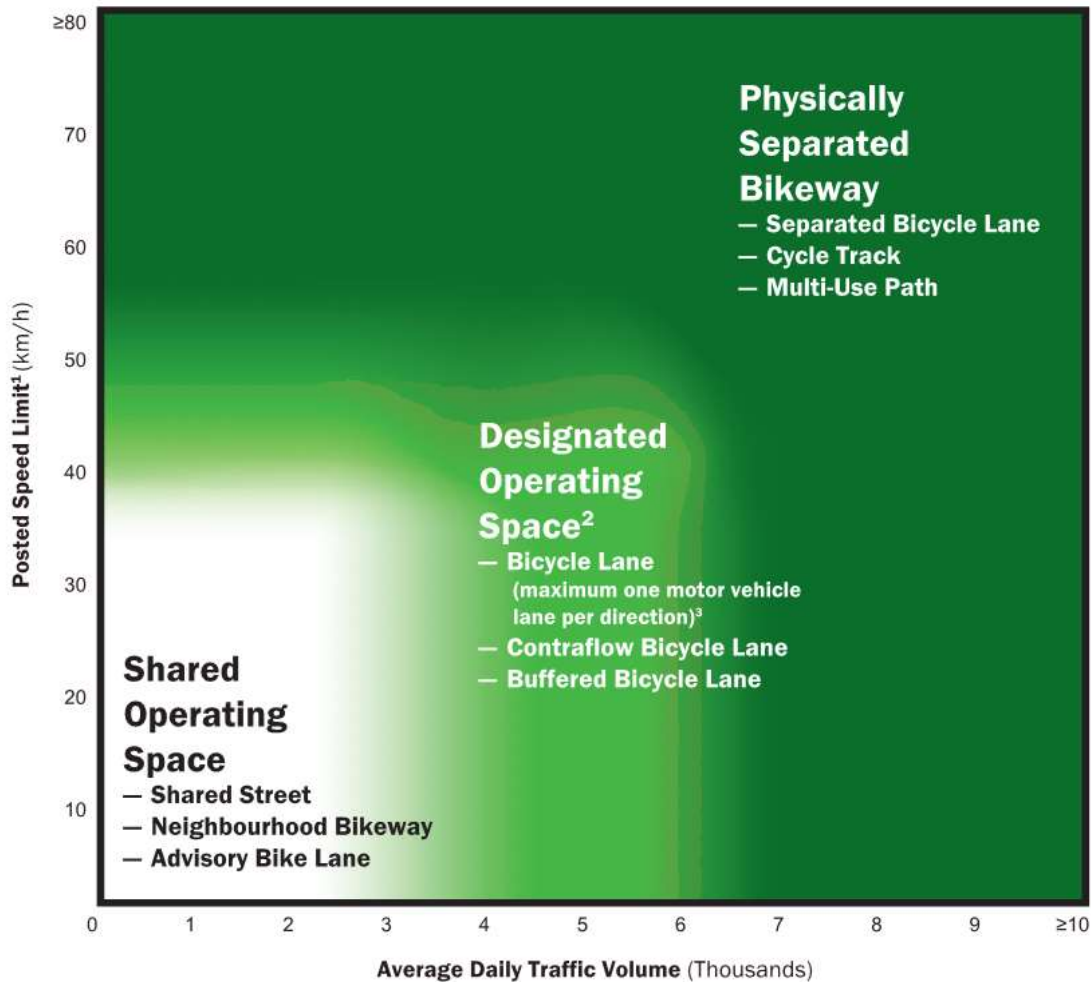


Figure 5.5 – Desirable Cycling Facility Pre-selection Nomograph – Urban / Suburban Context Source: OTM Book 18 (Page 118)

Notes:

1. Operating speeds are assumed to be similar to posted speeds. If evidence suggests this is not the case, practitioners may consider using 85th percentile speeds or implementing measures to reduce operating speeds.
2. Physically separated bikeways may always be considered in the designated operating space area of the nomograph.
3. On roadways with two or more lanes per direction (including multi-lane one-way roadways), a buffered bicycle lane should be considered the minimum with a typical facility being a physically separated bikeway.

2.0 Conditions

Desirable Cycling Facility Pre-Selection Nomograph: Rural Context

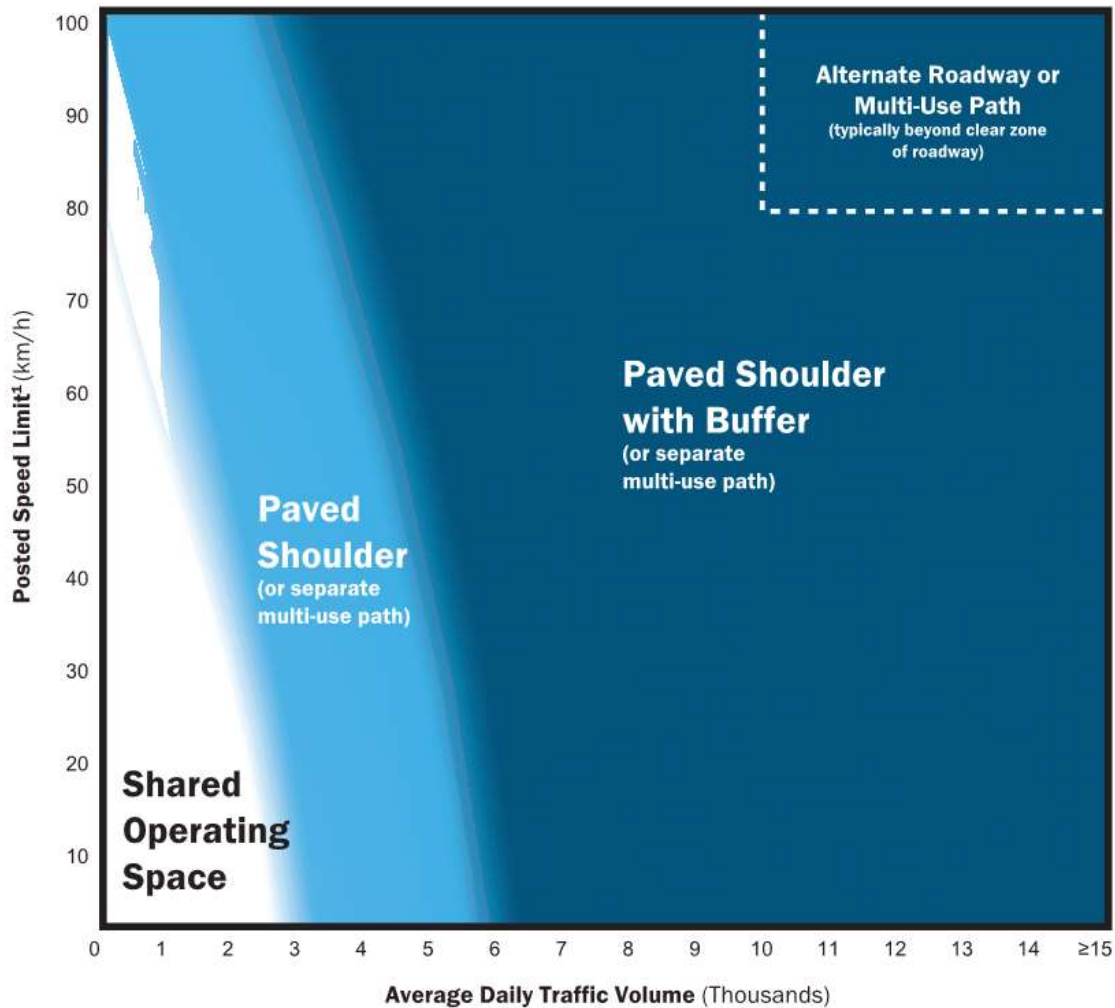


Figure 5.6 – Desirable Cycling Facility Pre-selection Nomograph – Rural Context
Source: OTM Book 18 (Page 119)

Notes:

1. In rural town / hamlet / village contexts, the urban / suburban nomograph may be used.
2. Operating speeds are assumed to be similar to posted speeds. If evidence suggests this is not the case, practitioners may consider using 85th percentile speeds or implementing measures to reduce operating speeds.

Facility design has also changed in such a way that the experience and overall comfort and safety of users as well as the surrounding conditions and context are prioritized. There are a number of examples of new cycling facility types and crossings which have emerged as a result of national and international best practices which are now being considered in the Canadian context. The following are examples of some of these “new” design concepts and their application.

Urban Advisory Lanes

Recognized as a shared facility, which consists of markings along a shared roadway which visually delineate space for cycling using dashed outer lane lines. Effective along local and neighbourhood streets where traffic volumes are low and slow and, space can be safely shared between cyclists and motorists without separation. Urban advisory lanes provide additional facilities for cyclists without major road construction or large space requirements.



Contra Flow Lanes

Recognized as a designated facility, which permit two-way bicycle travel on roadways restricted to one-way operation for motor vehicles. The design of a contraflow lane includes a bicycle-only lane in the opposite direction of other traffic flow and sharrows in the direction of motor traffic. Contraflow lanes enhance cycling network connectivity locally, without major road reconstruction and support traffic calming efforts.



At the core, the importance of cyclist safety and design for comfort has been prioritized while respecting the multi-modal nature of many of these major and minor transportation corridors.

Preliminary Level of Separation

OTM Book 18 identifies a three-step facility selection process of which the first step is the identification of a preliminary level of separation for cyclists. Using the average annual daily traffic volumes and posted / operating speed of the roadway, the nomographs were used to identify a suggested level of separation for all County Roads. The outcome is a preliminary recommended “high-level facility” which is presented in one of three categories:

Shared Facilities

Cyclists and motorists operate within a shared space. These facilities are recommended along roadways with low traffic volumes and posted speed limits, such as neighborhood streets.

Designated Facilities

Cyclists operate within a designated space that isn't fully separated from adjacent road traffic. These facilities are recommended along roadways with low speeds but higher traffic volumes or vice versa.

Separated Facilities

Cyclists operate within a space that is separated from adjacent traffic. These facilities are recommended along roadways with high speeds and high traffic volumes, such as urban arterials.

The findings are presented on Map 2 and demonstrate the need for a greater level of separation along County Roads in order to accommodate cyclists in a comfortable and safe manner. County Roads function primarily as higher order corridors meaning that improvements will not only require a designated space but some form of physical or spatial separation.

The preliminary level of separation is an effective tool to determine whether improvements are considered appropriate or feasible in Phase 2 of the project.

[Page intentionally left blank for Map 2]

Level of Separation



2.4 Developing the Network

Phase 2 of the Cycling Master Plan marks the points at which cycling routes, facilities and design treatments will be identified, phased and costed. The information gathered through Phase 1 of the project provides a strong foundation of understanding regarding the existing conditions, cyclist preferences, conditions and criteria.

Before embarking on Phase 2 of the project a decision will need to be made as to which approach should be used to develop / identify cycling improvements for Oxford County. With objectives and conditions in mind, two approaches have been identified.

Each bares its respective advantages and disadvantages, relative to a municipality's context of governance and infrastructure. In the case of Oxford County, key considerations in making this selection include its: governance structure as a two-tier municipality, its extent of existing cycling facilities as well as the County's various municipal priorities.

An overview of the two approach options are presented on the following page along with the pros, cons and outcomes.

2.0 Conditions

Option #1.

Improvement Approach

All County roads are considered 'part of the network' and a facility type and phasing strategy is identified for each. The County would then ensure there are provisions for these recommended cycling facilities within future planned roadway capital / infrastructure projects based on project objectives.

Pros.

- + Facilities are built based off a municipality's financial capacity
- + Provides savings through achieving 'economies of scale' with other capital projects being implemented.

Cons.

- + Reliance on other public works project may be too incremental and result in a fragmented network
- + Facilities may be cut back if bundled capital projects run over budget

Outcomes.

- + Guidance on recommended cycling improvements focusing on critical links and priorities.

Option #2.

Network Approach

Features of recommended cycling network based off set of criteria / assumptions. Projects are mostly phased as part of a separate implementation plan though, coordinated with other capital when additional funding is required.

Pros.

- + Enables investment to be more strategically targeted towards higher-order facilities.
- + Facilities are recommended using a consistent set of criteria based on community priorities.

Cons.

- + May miss opportunities to implement cycling facilities within road construction projects
- + Approach may neglect consideration for more local routes, leaving the network more disjointed

Outcomes.

- + Specific linkages identified along County Roads that form a defined cycling network
- + Phasing provided in the short, medium and long-term.



3

SECTION THREE

POLICIES

3.0

Policies

Policy is an essential component of any cycling program or initiative. Policies serve as mechanisms to enact planning direction and hold municipal staff accountable to regulatory promises established by their governing body. All municipalities are required to plan, adopt, and uphold policies ranging from topic-specific standards and guidelines to higher-order long-term visions and master plans.

Oxford County is an upper-tier municipality that has prepared and adopted policies and plans which not only “govern” their own lands and services but provide planning guidance and support to their area municipalities.

When it comes to cycling and other transportation related planning activities, policies can be extremely effective in setting the foundation of support, not only at a high-level visioning perspective but from the perspective of specific route and facility implementation tied to capital planning and budgeting. Oxford County’s existing Paved Shoulder policy is one such example.

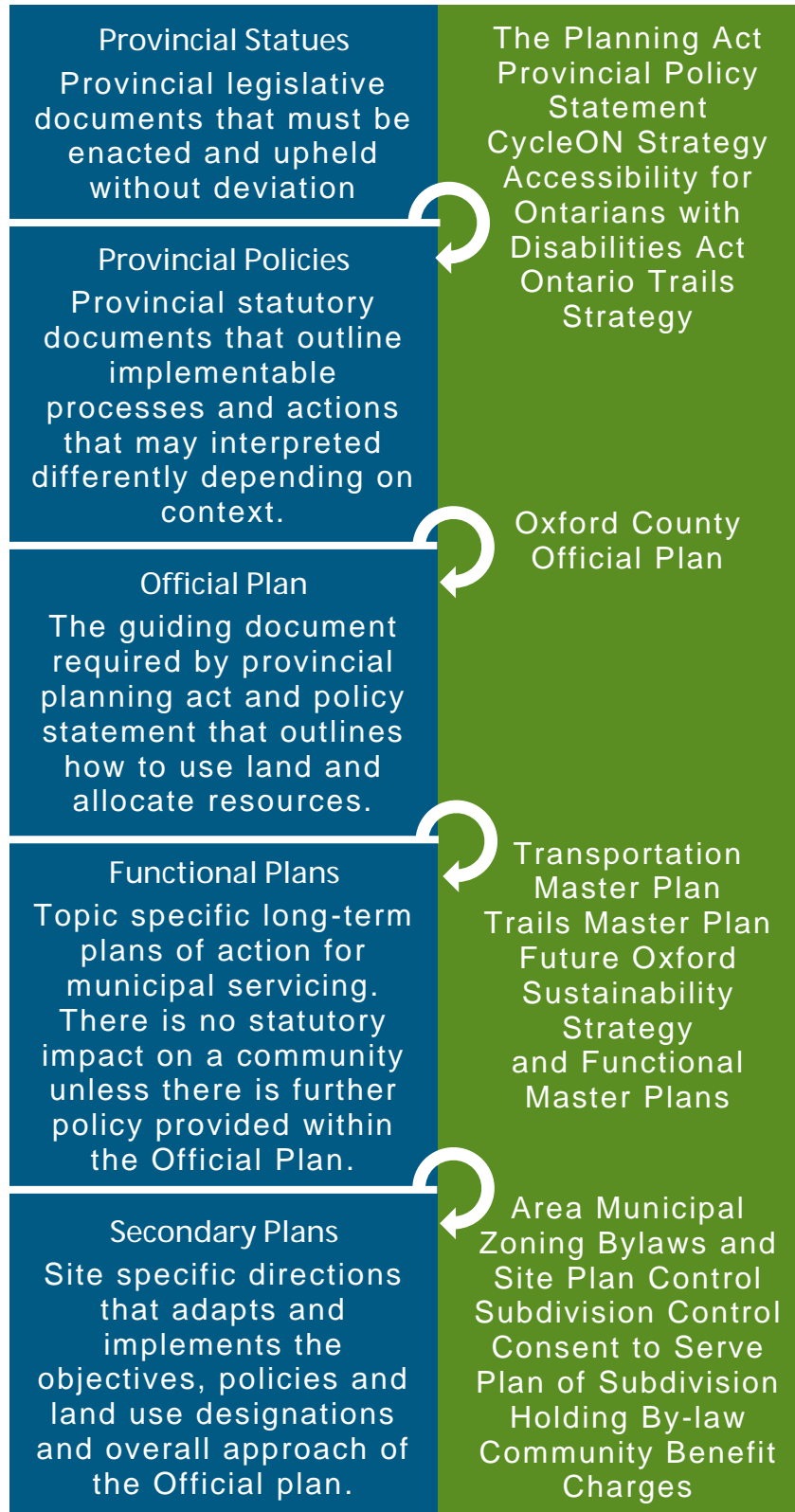
There are many roles and facets of policy. It is important to understand the policy that is in place, how it can be improved and opportunities for more future ready thinking to address trends. Section 3.0 provides an overview of the existing policy context, how the Cycling Master Plan fits into the policy structure and opportunities for enhancement and improvement to achieve wider County objectives.

3.1 Overview

Policies are the planning tools used by County staff and decision makers to influence where and how a community grows and infrastructure is planned. Policies serve as the foundation upon which all communities are developed and designed. Each municipality is required to adopt and adhere to a hierarchy of planning policies, including high-level visioning policies, topic specific strategies, prescriptive guidelines, and standards.

To the right is an overview of typical planning policy in the hierarchy and structure noted as well as the application in the Oxford County context.

Oxford County is an upper-tier municipality, with plans and policies related to matters and infrastructure under its jurisdiction. The Oxford County Official Plan provides comprehensive land use policy direction for both the County and area municipalities – there are no lower tier Official Plans in Oxford. However, each area municipality has a comprehensive Zoning By-law which implements the Official Plan policies at the local level.



3.2 Assessment

Given that all planning services in Oxford are provided by the County community planning office and there is a single Official Plan for the entire County, the incorporation of the Cycling Master Plan recommendations into local policy and planning documents should be relatively straightforward in Oxford. This is an advantage from a consistency and efficiency perspective, but also means it will be even more important that the County provide clear and supportive policy direction. For the purposes of the Cycling Master Plan, County policies and plans are the primary focus for policy review and consideration.

As noted above, policies are a powerful tool to create meaningful and lasting community planning and development. As such, it is important to ensure that the policy reflects the priorities and directions of the community and key stakeholders.

The policies noted in Section 3.1 have each been reviewed and a summary of key themes have been identified. Central to the policy assessment is the key take-away that...

In general, Oxford County has developed and adopted strong cycling supportive policies which provide the foundation for planning, design and implementation at all applicable levels of policy.

Does this mean that policy enhancements and improvements are not to be explored? No. It means that in its current state Oxford County could continue to implement existing policy and see some incremental changes towards a more cycling supportive environment. However, if additional policy enhancements were pursued it would be more likely that the Cycling Master Plan objectives would be achieved.

3.0 Policies

Oxford County Official Plan

2017

The County Official Plan guides growth and development across the County and within the area municipalities through a set of policies which promote effective land use management which reflect the community's visions. The Plan acknowledges that the development of a balanced transportation system requires coordination of municipal services, infrastructure, and connections

The Official Plan offers the highest degree of influence on Functional Master Plans (including the Cycling Master Plan). The Official Plan contains several policies across various policy themes which can influence the implementation and use of cycling networks.

Fundamentally, the built and natural environment influence the feasibility of cycling through factors such as mix and density of origins and destinations, topography, climate, and infrastructure. The County Official Plan is a critical Plan that influences these elements of the built and natural environments.

Policy highlights...

- + The Official Plan provides high-level active transportation related policies which support the development and implementation of a Cycling Master Plan. Specifically, Section 5.1.4 of the Official Plan provides the basis to prepare a Master Plan to be implemented through its continuous program of transportation network improvements (e.g., road reconstruction).
- + The Official Plan also contains several specific policies which seek to improve cycling connectivity. Within the land use policies for Woodstock, Ingersoll, and Tillsonburg, policies support cycling improvements in the Central Area for a range of purposes, including lanes leading to and within the Central Area (Section 9.3.2.2.6).

Oxford County Transportation Master Plan

2019

The first of two critical functional master plans is the Oxford County Transportation Master Plan (TMP) which establishes the comprehensive transportation vision for the County. Compared to the Official Plan, this document, the Transportation Master Plan speaks to the growth and development of a multi-modal transportation network County-wide while reflecting the sustainability priorities and interests of the County and its communities.

More specifically, the TMP is the most influential planning document related to cycling with exception of the Cycling Master Plan and establishes a 2038 mode share target which seeks to increase the proportion of residents who cycle or walk.

Policy highlights...

- + The TMP sets out the comprehensive transportation recommendations across the County and has influence on the implementation of cycling infrastructure. The TMP provides guidance for the Cycling Master Plan, including encouraging it to continue to develop a network of bike facilities throughout the County, including physically separated trails and paved shoulders (Section 6.3.2).
- + Figure 2.2 of the TMP delineates the proposed on-road cycling routes across the County.
- + Through the cycling component of the Transportation Master Plan, the County adopted a policy which requires that a paved shoulder be implemented along a road which is scheduled for reconstruction where the existing platform accommodates the additional asphalt. A paved shoulder can be used by cyclists, but also to facilitate stopped/disabled vehicles or emergency vehicles along the additional right-of-way.

3.0 Policies

Oxford County Trails Master Plan

2012

The second functional master plan is the Trails Master Plan which provides topic-specific guidance for the planning and design of trail infrastructure in Oxford. At the time of development, the focus of Oxford County and its volunteers was on off-road active transportation and recreation. Funding was provided to support the future design and implementation of trail infrastructure.

During the process, the lack of existing and potential connectivity inherently created by trails was acknowledged which led to the identification of a high-level on-road cycling network. The trails master plan functions more as a blueprint and design guide for off-road trail design with some consideration for cycling.

Policy highlights...

- + The Oxford County Trails Master Plan promotes a consistent County-wide approach to trail development to encourage the use of active transportation through a connected network of off-road trails.
- + The Trails Master Plan relies on walking paths and on-road cycling routes within rural areas and urban centres. While the Plan is intended to accommodate a range of on- and off-road trail users (e.g., pedestrians, hikers, cyclists), it provides a comprehensive network of trails and routes which will serve as a foundation for the Cycling Master Plan.
- + The master plan identifies some trail priorities but does not identify specific phasing horizons, costing or timelines for the implementation of the proposed trails network which is meant to be coordinated by the County in partnership with local volunteers if and when funding becomes available.

In addition to the two specific functional master plans, Oxford County has developed and adopted strategic planning documents which serve as more of a guide for high-level County-wide directions to achieve communal community goals. Both of the plans noted below address Oxford County's significant focus on climate change mitigation and adaptation and sustainability, a common theme

Future Oxford

2015

- + The Future Oxford Community Sustainability Plan was adopted to assist the County in becoming a leader in resiliency and sustainability. Future Oxford commits the County to achieving 100% renewable energy by 2050.
- + Goal 1i envisions an Oxford that is accessible for all citizens. Objective 1iB aims to develop accessible intercommunity transportation options to reduce reliance on personal automobile ownership and driving distances from 2007 levels.
- + Goal 3i works towards an Oxford that is recognized as a leader in environmental action, while Objective 3iB works to move away from fossil fuels and enhance low carbon transportation to develop a network of bike lanes through Oxford, including physically separated trails and paved shoulders.

100% Renewable Energy Plan

2018

- + The 100% Renewable Energy Plan was prepared by the County in 2018 to advance the goals of the Community Sustainability Plan and help the County achieve 100% renewable energy through the identification of baseline information, targets, and actions. The goal will be achieved when the annual renewable energy generated within Oxford equals 100% of annual energy consumed within Oxford.
- + The Plan encourages the adoption of active mobility, including walking and cycling, public transport, and mixed-use developments to develop a sustainable transportation sector.

3.3 Emerging Trends

AT Oriented Development
1

Health & Social Equity
2

Climate Change
3

Micro Mobility
4

Aging Population
5

Given the strong support for cycling (as demonstrated above) in other County policies and plans, the opportunity for Oxford County is in its ability to use the Cycling Master Plan as a means of looking to the future to identify emerging planning trends. Considering policy is a mechanism by which change can be made to the way a community grows and moves, it is policy that proves to be the opportunity for long-term integration.

Emerging trends refer to a shift in behaviour which occurs as a result of changes to the socio-demographic make-up of a community. They can be identified by reviewing and assessing how a community has changed and how it is predicted to change based on statistical information / data gathered and provided.

There are many emerging trends that could be selected ranging from micro-mobility, smart signals, aging populations, health and social equity to tele-commuting, pandemic readiness, active transportation-oriented development, climate change, sidewalk delivery / delivery drones, autonomous and connected vehicles, curbside management, and mobility-as-a-service.

While all are likely relevant in some way to Oxford County, for the purposes of this Master Plan, five key trends have been selected based on their high potential for influence and impact (see overview to the left). Each of the trends has been explored and an initial overview of each trends is provided, along with policy considerations. Further, the supporting elements from the various plans, policies, and strategies are identified as they relate to each trend.

By addressing these trends, the intent is for Oxford County to be better positioned to adapt to the anticipated future.

Active Transportation Oriented Design.

Description...

Active transportation-oriented development maximizes the amount of residential, commercial, employment, and recreational space which can be accessed by alternative modes of transport, including cycling, walking, and transit.

Considerations.

- + A reasonable cycling trip is 5km or less which can be integrated with other active modes;
- + Land use plans should be prepared with full consideration for and integration of the recommendations found in transportation plans to ensure consistency in design and application;
- + Cycling and walking infrastructure should be meaningfully integrated with transit routes as well as supportive amenities to encourage multi-modal trips; and,
- + Higher order roads should be designed to accommodate active transportation modes and should include spatial or physical separation to increase the overall sense of comfort of users.

Policy Supports.

- + The Official Plan requires Settlement Areas to develop with a mix of uses and densities which support active transportation. Further, it directs Residential Areas to provide direct pedestrian access to major roads and activity areas (Section 7.6.5).
- + The Transportation Master Plan aims to provide and support multimodal transportation choices, including transit, rail, walking, and cycling.
- + Action 52 of Future Oxford works to evaluate the impact of new developments on Greenhouse Gas Emissions and develop a transportation demand management strategy.

3.0 Policies

Health and Social Equity.

Description...

Health, economic, or social equity is reached when individuals in a community have the fair opportunity to reach their fullest health potential. It involves reducing barriers, addressing environmental factors, and being integrated into decision making and planning.

Considerations.

- + Cycling has a significant impact on an individual's physical health but can also contribute to a greater sense of belonging and mental health;
- + Barriers exist for individuals without access to the infrastructure or tools needed to facilitate those trips leading to more isolation;
- + Lack of access to services and jobs is common for marginalized communities causing a high likelihood of long-distance trips presenting barriers to cycling and other active modes;
- + Cycling facilities are less often co-located in the same area as affordable housing, resulting in lower cycling access and lower healthy community design; and,
- + Cycling is often associated with social deprivation and cyclists are often disregarded due to their perceived social impacts on municipal resources.

Policy Supports.

- + The Official Plan contains a range of policies that promote equity across the County from a land use and public facilities perspective.
- + The Transportation Master Plan uses a multiple account evaluation framework to compare four alternative planning solutions and speaks to social impacts of active transportation investments.
- + Future Oxford aims to provide high-quality social services, support programs, and housing to meet the needs of all citizens. This includes encouraging infill mixed-use development.

Micromobility.

Description...

Micromobility is the use of small-scale devices (such as e-bikes, e-scooters, and mopeds) to address key mobility gaps within a transportation network.

Considerations.

- + Micromobility has experienced rapid growth, often without community engagement leading to regulatory and operation challenges;
- + Cooperation and collaboration between operators of micromobility systems and municipalities is imperative to develop policy around micromobility;
- + As a new feature in communities and transportation system, there is a challenge and opportunity to regulate parking and storage of micromobility vehicles; and,
- + The need for longer distance trips can be minimized through mixed-use development by maximizing the potential for short travel times between day to day activities. This can also be reduced through a greater emphasis on live-work spaces as well as work from home policies.

Policy Supports.

- + The Transportation Master Plan identifies several actions to support the Sustainability and New Technology Strategy. This includes planning for the adoption of electric vehicles, autonomous vehicles, alternative fuel sources.
- + Future Oxford contains a comprehensive set of objectives under Goal 3iB to move away from fossil fuels and enhance low carbon transportation. This includes programs and incentives for ridesharing, active transportation, bike sharing, and workplace mode-shifts with a focus on marginalized residents.

Description...

Seniors will comprise an increasing portion of residents in Oxford County. Cycling is a beneficial form of low-impact exercise for aging bodies and provides a sense of independence that contributes to social and emotional well-being.

Considerations.

- + The proportion of the senior population is expected to grow to 23% of Canada's population by 2030;
- + New forms of mobility, including e-bikes and e-trikes, can prolong seniors' mobility;
- + Cycling-friendly built environments allow older adults to age in place and maintain social connections;
- + Cycling routes should minimize the travel distances between key destinations in a community;
- + The design of trail and cycling facilities should incorporate more frequent rest stations (e.g., benches) and cycling amenities; and,
- + Key information regarding cycling routes, including route difficulty (e.g., topography) and access (e.g., travel times) should be made available and clearly communicated.

Policy Supports.

- + The Official Plan contains policies to ensure that new or replacement pedestrian facilities as part of the County Road system provide barrier-free access from the road network for the disabled and elderly (Section 5.1.3).
- + The Transportation Master Plan contains actions to implement active transportation policy, including designing routes on the principles of accessibility, connectivity, continuity, directness, safety, convenience and comfort.
- + The Trails Master Plan recognizes that populations are aging and recommends trip end facilities and staging areas.
- + Future Oxford outlines an objective to provide high-quality and accessible social services, support programs, and housing to meet the needs of all citizens.

Climate Change.

Description...

Climate change is defined as a change in global or regional climate patterns, largely attributed to increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide produced by fossil fuels.

Considerations.

- + The design and implementation of infrastructure should consider the anticipated short- and long-term impacts of climate change;
- + Mitigation and adaptation measures are the ethical and social responsibility of staff and decision makers in response to anticipated trends and community impacts from a health and sustainability perspective;
- + Replacing car trips with bike trips has demonstrated a potentially dramatic impact on greenhouse gas emissions that is only elevated by the addition of increased multi-modal trips by other sustainable modes; and
- + Auto-centric transportation infrastructure including sprawl consumes significant amounts of land and requires longer distance trips with less potential for the use of cycling or sustainable transportation.

Policy Supports.

- + The Official Plan supports the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and climate change adaptation through land use patterns which promote the use of active transportation (Section 2.1.2). The Plan directs infrastructure to be provided in a coordinated and efficient manner that considers impacts from climate change (Section 2.1.1).
- + The policies of the Transportation Master Plan support achieving 100% Renewable Energy Plan through the promotion of alternative fuel sources, active transportation and technology as does the trails plan.
- + Future Oxford is predicated on the goal of building a sustainable Oxford and responding to the impacts of climate change. It establishes a target to increase the percentage of low carbon transportation by 2030, in part through developing a network of cycling infrastructure throughout Oxford.

3.4 Recommendations

Taking into consideration the content presented in Section 3.0, the recommendation to County Council is that...

1. As County plans and policies are updated, the policy trends included in the CMP should be consulted to inform updates and ensure integration across planning processes and decision-making.

The process of reviewing and updating policy can be a daunting one. While the Cycling Master Plan does not provide concrete policy amendments or additions, when considering cycling-supportive policy there are typically three categories which could be incorporated. These three overarching categories include: visioning, a dedicated policy section, and integrated policies. The following is a more detailed description of each with examples of how it could apply to an existing Oxford County Plan e.g. the Official Plan.

Visioning

Visioning refers to high-level guidance that typically includes motherhood statements or preamble text which establish overarching ambitions for the Official Plan. The content is typically not prescriptive, nor does it provide specific direction or action that needs to be taken but provides an underlying aspect of support.

Official Plan Application

The County Official Plan contains several planning principles (Section 2.1) which speak to promoting active transportation, including promoting efficient land use patterns and healthy, active communities. The Plan also aims to minimize the length and number of vehicle trips and supports existing & planned active transportation.

The Official Plan contains strong visioning statements which set the overarching goal of promoting active transportation. There may be an opportunity to including planning principles as they relate to cycling (active transportation) and the emerging trends discussed above.

3.0 Policies

Dedicated Section

A dedicated section means a section within an official plan, as listed in the Table of Contents, dedicate to cycling and active transportation policies.

Official Plan Application

The Official Plan contains a dedicated section in Section 5.1.4 – Bicycling. This section recognizes cycling as a viable mode of transportation and directs the County to prepare a “Bicycling Plan”. There may be an opportunity to amend Section 5.1.4 following Council’s adoption of the Cycling Master Plan to introduce appropriate references to the policies and recommendations contained in the Cycling Master Plan, including updates to Transportation Network mapping.

Policy tool #2

Integrated Policies

There is an opportunity to have specific policies that speak to cycling throughout the various infrastructure and land use policies in an official plan.

Official Plan Application

The current Official Plan emphasizes the importance of pedestrian movement through and to a site. The County Official Plan should be reviewed under the lens of the Cycling Master Plan to develop appropriate wording which can be considered through an Official Plan Amendment.

Policy tool #3

Through the adoption of the Cycling Master Plan, Oxford County has implemented a sufficient level of planning policy to guide future planning; however, additional enhancements could be explored by Oxford County in partnership with local area municipalities to further enhance the policy:

- + Review existing policies and plans – primarily at the Official Plan or functional master plans to integrate cycling related policies consistent with the directive provided in the Cycling Master Plan.
- + Investigate current County design guidelines and standards including road classifications and design standards to determine if there is an opportunity to make amendments or incorporate new standards which reflect cycling facility design (led by Public Works); and urban / community design guidelines and standards to reflect high-level land-use driven active transportation oriented planning and design considerations (led by County planning).
- + Consider formalizing the minimum maintenance standards associated with cycling infrastructure into current operations and maintenance policies and protocols.
- + Provide guidance to local area municipalities with regard to any updates pertaining to zoning by-law requirements.
- + Review site plan requirements to integrate cycling route and facility consideration as well as the design of trails and complementary amenities.

2.

Oxford County policies at all levels should refer to cycling as a strategic transportation mode and tourism priority and provide implementation support in the form of land-use planning policies, design guidelines and standards.





4

SECTION FOUR

PROGRAMS

4.0

Process & Programs

A shift in human behaviour and culture towards more cycling supportive and friendly community cannot solely rely on the implementation of routes and facilities and policies.

While the network and policy directives can help to establish community interest and institutional support it is the programming that will have the strongest influence on generating long-lasting human behaviour change and the processes that will embed cycling planning, design and implementation into day to day practice.

Through Phase 1 of the Cycling Master Plan development, a set of stakeholder interviews were undertaken to understand the current perceptions around programming and cycling process. The findings provide a strong understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as well as the potential improvements and recommendations that can be explored following the adoption of the cycling plan.

Within Phase 2 of the project, a comprehensive implementation and funding strategy will be prepared to support the day to day coordination and long-term implementation of the plan. The experience and information gathered through Phase 1 to generate these recommendations is documented in Section 4.0.

4.0 Process & Programs

4.1 Overview

Stakeholder interviews can provide significant and meaningful insights into aspects of coordination, collaboration and implementation that may not necessarily be discussed in a group or formal engagement setting. They can help to illuminate some of the core challenges as well as the opportunities on a wide array of topics or more focused issues depending on the questions asked.

A series of in-depth interviews with key stakeholders who play a role in making Oxford a better place to ride a bike were undertaken including...

8 interviews 13 stakeholders 7 questions

Purpose...

Gauge the support for and interest in the development of a stronger culture of cycling within Oxford.

Questions were posed in the same order for each group of stakeholders, and results were transcribed and summarized. The information presented in the following section provides an overview of key themes from the interviews, highlighting the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) relating to the implementation of new cycling infrastructure and programming in Oxford.

The key themes were presented to the internal technical advisory committee (INTAC) and the external technical advisory committee and stakeholder advisory group

(EXTAC/SAG) for confirmation and refinement as well as prioritization.

Part 1. Stakeholder Interviews

Interviews were conducted using Zoom Teleconferencing Software, allowing our team to record sessions for additional accuracy when transcribing sessions. Each interview followed the same format, with the following questions being posed to all interviewees, in order.

- + What is your vision for the future of cycling in Oxford County? What would you say is the single most important aspect that the Cycling Master Plan should focus on in order to best realize that vision?
- + What are some of the existing programs or events in place to educate people in the County about cycling or encourage them to ride their bikes?
- + What types of programs would you like to see with regards to cycling education in Oxford County - for example, learn to ride courses, public awareness campaigns or active school travel planning?
- + What types of programs would you like to see in place to encourage residents and visitors alike to ride their bikes for utilitarian purposes more often in Oxford?
- + How do you see the County's role in supporting these programs (Go through each item they have listed)? How can other partners support these actions?
- + Are there actions you have listed that you would be willing to assist in moving forward in the very near term (i.e. within 18 months following the approval of this Plan?) What other supports would you need to bring that program to fruition?
- + Is there anything else you would like to add?

4.0 Process & Programs

Part 2. Best Practice Interviews

In addition to the interviews with Key Stakeholders in Oxford, additional stakeholders from other communities were also interviewed regarding Best Practices and experiences that could be shared with Oxford. These interviews followed a much less structured format, but were focused on uncovering:

- + Suggestions for how a smaller community and a more rural regional municipality can become more bicycle friendly through policy and programs;
- + Programs and policies that have proven to be successful and impactful;
- + Challenges encountered when delivering new programs;and
- + Partnerships and relationships with external stakeholders and other levels of government that were important for implementation and success.

Best practice interviews with community stakeholders in The County of Essex, The Town of Saugeen Shores, The County of Simcoe and The Town of Collingwood all served to inform the list of suggested programs as outlined in this Chapter.

Part 3. INTAC and EXTAC/SAG Review

Following the development of the initial SWOT Analysis, the project team presented the preliminary findings to the INTAC and EXTAC/SAG using a virtual workshop session. Attendees were asked to assist in refining and adding to the SWOT Analysis, which helped to identify additional opportunities to improve cycling in Oxford County.

4.2 SWOT Outcomes

Strengths

Throughout the Interview Process, a number of key strengths emerged within the County of Oxford. Above all, these strengths reflect the existence of a strong foundation upon which the County can build an even stronger culture of cycling and active transportation.

- 1. Active and engaged volunteer community** – The Oxford County Cycling Advisory Committee is representative of a strong and growing desire to make the communities of Oxford County a better place to walk, bike and wheel. The Cycling Advisory Committee connects with local cycling groups and municipal advisory committees and helps to bring stakeholders together around a common goal of improving cycling in the County. The Oxford County Injury Prevention Team engages in actions like Ontario Active School Travel work, helmet and light giveaways and other safety training, and is supported by volunteers in the various communities in Oxford. In general, volunteer members of the Cycling Advisory Committee have shown a willingness to help make Oxford more bicycle friendly, but they require additional support from the County to ensure that their efforts bear fruit.
- 2. Effective avenues of communication** – Many stakeholders expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the County’s ability to communicate important messages with its residents. The existing social media and traditional media channels utilized by the County – particularly through Tourism Oxford - to share messages are a good place to focus efforts to share messaging about cycling and active transportation as well.
- 3. Local leadership and action on cycling issues** – Across Oxford County there are many examples of instances where local municipal leaders or local volunteers are instituting programs that have a positive impact on their community. From the Recycle Cycles program in Ingersoll, which saw the refurbishment and donation of hundreds of bikes in 2019, to Woodstock’s long-standing commitment to implementing their cycling plan, Oxford County is home to a number of unique programs that could be expanded.

Weaknesses

While the interviewees identified many positive aspects, the purpose of the interviews was to intentionally uncover some of the weaknesses and areas of opportunity within Oxford for improvement. With regards to weaknesses, a few key areas emerged as common themes as the interviews progressed.

1. Physical Infrastructure Gaps —

Unsurprisingly, most interviewees highlighted the lack of safe, connected and consistent cycling routes through the County as a barrier to getting more people cycling in Oxford. While many of these infrastructure deficiencies are addressed in earlier Chapters of this Plan, an area that should not be ignored as new infrastructure is built is the importance of safe, secure bike parking throughout the community. Bike parking was highlighted by many stakeholders as a gap that is holding back growth in cycling in the area.

2. Education and role modeling —

Another key weakness identified by several stakeholders was the lack of education about how to ride a bike safely and legally in the County. The lack of cycling education within schools, coupled with relatively low numbers of adults riding and setting positive examples for safe cycling behaviours means that both drivers and cyclists are often unsure of what their rights and responsibilities are on the roads.

This lack of awareness was best captured by one stakeholder who said...

“in general if you ask people who drive what they can and can’ t do, for example when you come to a stop sign and there is a bike in the bike lane, what they are supposed to do, and most of them wouldn’ t know. We’ ve lost the education about proper bike riding as well - rules of the road for people on bikes as well. So, we need more of those programs to be delivered to young people.”

3. **Public Awareness Campaigns** — Related to the lack of cycling education was a lack of messaging about important aspects of cycling and active transportation. Creating messages about sharing the road with people on bikes, about the role of various trail users and about the rights and responsibilities of various road users that can be shared across various traditional and social media platforms was something that many stakeholders expressed a desire to see in Oxford.

4. **Lack of institutional support for the Oxford County Cycling Advisory Committee** — Several stakeholders identified the cycling committee as an untapped resource when it comes to improving cycling in Oxford County. The Committee is made up of dedicated volunteers, but lacks the mandate, the budget and the level of staff support that would be necessary to institute new policies, projects and programs to improve cycling in the County. As a key County stakeholder indicated, “... **the Cycling Advisory Committee needs a stronger mandate - potentially to deliver on the education piece, providing them with some resources and budget to deliver projects.**”

Opportunities

The list of potential opportunities presented by the interviewees was long and varied. The project team analyzed the list of suggestions and has grouped those suggestions into Four Categories:

- + A focus on targeted infrastructure investments;
- + A county-led effort to “Scale Up” existing municipal efforts;
- + A reorienting of internal resources to ensure that Oxford County is well positioned to deliver on the suggestions from this Cycling Master Plan; and
- + A focus on youth education and engagement.

Each of these areas of opportunity have several suggested programs or policies associated with them, which will be explored within Phase 2.

Threats

While the opportunities for improvement are numerous and exciting, there are several threats that could substantially hinder the County’s ability to deliver on the stated goals of this Plan. These threats are outlined below.

1. Staff Capacity and Volunteer

Burnout — Every County-level stakeholder interviewed expressed concern about their department’s ability to take on additional work. This is a common theme in smaller municipalities when it comes to promoting and supporting Active Transportation, and it is also common to see these municipalities leaning heavily on volunteers. The challenge, of course, is that volunteers may move on to a new project, they may get exhausted and burn out, or they may move away from the community. When this happens, communities that were previously seeing many strong programs take place find themselves with a vacuum, one that is very difficult to fill.

2. Shifting Public Health Capacity

— With the creation of Southwestern Public Health, the roles and responsibilities of many public health staff shifted. Staff were settling into their new roles and were beginning to be able to bring resources to the active transportation efforts in Oxford County when the COVID-19 Pandemic struck, throwing many of the existing plans into question. The capacity within the Public Health department to support cycling and active transportation efforts as the province emerges from the pandemic is uncertain, so the County may have to plan on implementing aspects of this plan without their assistance.

4.3 Recommendations

This Plan envisions Oxford County taking a leadership role with regards to cycling. Building upon the information contained within Section 4.2, the approach to programming and coordination is recommended to be achieved by prioritizing three key elements:

1. Acting as an information hub for people on bikes and stakeholders in local municipalities;
2. Leading the way in the development of new cycling infrastructure; and,
3. Facilitating the development of new programs.

This section will present a series of recommendations that have been identified with the purpose of helping Oxford County establish itself as a leader in building a stronger culture of cycling among rural municipalities by acting on the opportunities presented in Section 3.2 and introducing new programs designed to affect behaviour change.

This section recognizes the role of shifting culture within a community as an important complement to infrastructure improvements, and aims to provide Oxford County with a clear, concise plan to deliver a wider range of cycling encouragement and education programming.

4.0 Process & Programs

Element #1 .

Oxford County as an Information Hub

The recommendations in this section are based upon the premise that Oxford County is the organization best situated to create new collateral for distribution by local municipalities. With the expertise in creating messaging and media connections that lie within the Tourism Oxford department and the Future Oxford network, the County is well suited to lead the creation of new messaging and programs, which can then be delivered on a local level by local municipal partners. This follows similar trends in County-level governments like Essex County, Simcoe County and Grey County, all of which help to produce materials to promote cycling, educate people cycling or driving and encourage more riding.

Recommendation #1.

Building a Brand

Foundational to the ongoing promotional efforts to encourage more cycling in Oxford County will be the establishment of an overall County identity or “brand” as it relates to cycling. This can help to promote the County as a place where transportation options are readily available, improve the visibility of the ongoing communications efforts and serve as an attractive feature to businesses who value transportation choice for their employees.

A dedicated brand can be an effective tool to market existing infrastructure and can create a shared identity that can be utilized to encourage people in Oxford County to participate. Many of the potential elements of a cycling brand for Oxford County have already been created through the development of this Plan – consider repurposing the various elements to continue to strengthen the identity of the County’s active transportation efforts, and ensure that the brand provides residents with a strong sense of the goals, the rationale and the benefits that can come with an increase in the levels of active transportation within the County.

Recommendation #2.

Marketing Campaigns

While the Brand should be cohesive and consistent, it should also have space for segmented messaging – especially messaging that markets cycling for different purposes within the community. The marketing campaigns will serve as a base for behaviour change efforts in the County. The campaigns will aim to produce a wide-scale change in perception and attitudes towards cycling in Oxford County and can help to “plant the seed” of change in residents. These marketing campaigns are anticipated to be “wide but shallow” campaigns – aiming to reach as many different populations within Oxford County as possible, even if only on a superficial level. The goal is to show cycling as an easy, fun and above all normal activity that can be done by a diverse set of people. These marketing campaigns will lay the foundations for programs that are more “narrow but deep” – programs that target specific demographics and provide more in-depth support for people as they endeavor to make their travel patterns more sustainable. The broad marketing programs to support more residents to think about cycling should be crafted by stakeholders in Oxford County like the Oxford County Cycling Advisory Committee, but some suggestions for campaign ideas can be found in Appendix A – Marketing Cycling.

County Role:

- + Brand development;
- + Develop promotional materials; and
- + Funding for campaigns.

Partner roles:

- + OCCAC to help inform the development of materials and distribute materials in local communities;
- + Local municipalities to deliver campaigns locally and assist with material development;
- + Public Health to assist with material development and message distribution; and
 - + Community partners including local businesses and cycling groups to distribute messages.

4.0 Process & Programs

Recommendation #3.

Toolkits and Shared Resources

As demonstrated in the “Strengths” Section, The County of Oxford is already home to a number of programs that occur locally that bring significant benefits to the community. With the success of these local programs, there is an opportunity for the County to support other municipal partners in the development and delivery of their own programs by making use of the knowledge housed within local municipalities.

The County could work with municipal partners to identify key tasks, resources and physical materials required for the successful delivery of an event and could then provide both a guide to planning the program and whatever shared materials may be required (for example, portable bike racks, event fencing, tents etc.) for use by local municipalities. The County can serve as a repository for knowledge as well as the agency that owns and maintains the physical materials needed, and can help local municipalities to deliver new programs in an effective, efficient manner.

County Role:

- + Develop Toolkits;
- + Purchase shared materials; and
- + Ensure that local municipalities are aware of resources through communications distributed by the OCCAC.

Partner roles:

- + Local municipalities to assist in the development of resources and guides; and
- + Local municipalities to monitor program delivery and suggest changes to guides and materials as necessary.

Recommendation #4.

Expanding the Oxford County Cycling Advisory Committee (OCCAC)

In any of the suggested actions in this section, the lynchpin of success will be the OCCAC's ability to connect local municipal stakeholders with the resources developed at the County Level. In order to ensure that the OCCAC is able to fulfill this mandate, it is suggested that the committee have its mandate expanded and have the level of resources available to it expanded commensurately. The OCCAC should:

- + Provide input into the development of new messaging and materials. As dedicated volunteers from local municipalities, members of the OCCAC should work to understand the concerns emanating from their communities, and work to bring those perspectives to the County for use in developing new resources.
- + Have access to funding in order to effectively promote and support active transportation. A small budget would allow the committee to deliver events, make strategic investments in physical infrastructure like signage, maps or bike parking, and could provide the committee with the ability to leverage funding (by providing matching funding to municipalities, for example) to deliver on programs or public awareness campaigns.
- + Serve in an oversight / supervisory role for a staff resource focused on active transportation. Creating a part time, summer-student position to bolster active transportation efforts during the summer months would have tremendous benefits to the culture of cycling in Oxford County. In order to ensure that staff resources at the County level required for supervision and direction are minimized, the OCCAC could potentially serve in that oversight and directing role.

By exploring these options, the County would leverage the tremendous human resources that are already in place through the OCCAC, bolstering the reach, value and efficacy of these dedicated volunteers.

4.0 Process & Programs

Element #2 .

Oxford County as a Leader in Infrastructure Development

As an upper-tier municipality, Oxford County is responsible for much of the infrastructure that connects the communities that make up the County. County Roads and County-owned linear assets like rail beds or hydro corridors all provide opportunities to create stronger connections for cycling across Oxford County, but investments must be made in a strategic, leveraged manner.

This section recommends a path forward for Oxford County that would see the County take a leadership role in the creation of All Ages and Abilities (AAA) cycling infrastructure along County-owned corridors, while also creating opportunities for local municipalities to leverage those investments by connecting county-wide routes with their own growing cycling networks.

Recommendation #1.

The Oxford County Spine Cycling System

One of the defining characteristics of successful cycling communities is the development of a complete network of all-ages and abilities infrastructure that takes residents and visitors alike to key destinations. While communities should continue to take advantage of the myriad opportunities to improve cycling with reconstruction or other capital projects, it is becoming recognized that a focused, deliberative strategy to build high-quality cycling infrastructure is the key to growing cycling within a region.

Throughout the conversations with stakeholders and through the examination of best practices, it became clear that Oxford County should focus their efforts on creating a signature route for cycling – one that adheres to an AAA standard and provides seamless, continuous and safe connections to key destinations within the County. This is not to say that the County should not pursue the goals of adding paved shoulders to rural roads when reconstructing or resurfacing those roads, but rather to say that those types of projects are best seen as a means of improving asset management and safety for existing riders, while creating spine system of AAA routes that connects the County’s major population and employment centres would generate new riders, and significant tourism benefit to the County. Through the development of this Plan, the spine network will be identified as a Short-Term priority, and the County should aggressively pursue funding to ensure the creation of a true AAA connection throughout the County.

County role:

- + Development supportive communication materials around the identification and prioritization of spine routes and design recommendations as per the Cycling Master Plan (Phase 2); and
- + Secure funding for infrastructure development.

Partner roles:

- + Local municipalities to assist with infrastructure development in urban areas; and
- + Local municipalities to provide safe connections to the County’s spine system.

4.0 Process & Programs

Recommendation #2.

Trails Connecting Communities Funding

Oxford County's cycling infrastructure is growing, but there are connections that will be required on local road or trails networks to build a seamless cycling experience for residents and visitors alike. Upper-tier municipalities in Ontario have been working to build more complete cycling networks by assisting local municipal partners to develop new trails or cycling connections through the strategic deployment of funding dedicated towards completing trails or cycling infrastructure.

A good example is Simcoe County's Trails Connecting Communities (TCC) Fund, which provides annual support for every municipality in Simcoe County to build new trails connections to connect with the County's growing cycling and trails network. Oxford County should consider a similar funding stream for local municipalities to leverage funding to create safer connections to the growing network of County-owned facilities. The guidelines from Simcoe County's Trails Connecting Communities Fund can be found in **Appendix A**.

County Role:

- + Establish funding and guidelines for TCC Fund.

Partner roles:

- + Local municipalities to provide matching funding for trails and cycling projects; and
- + Local municipalities to design and implement new infrastructure on an annual basis.

Recommendation #3.

Bike Parking Partnership

One of the areas identified throughout the review of existing infrastructure was a lack of safe, secure bike parking in Oxford County, particularly in commercial areas and retail destinations. There is an opportunity for Oxford County to lead the installation of new bike parking by taking advantage of the County's ability to purchase bike parking at scale and provide those solutions to local municipalities and other partners at a reduced rate.

Consider first identifying areas where bike parking is deficient by undertaking a bicycle parking inventory, potentially in partnership with the OCCAC to determine roughly the number of new bike parking spaces that would be required. The County could then purchase a large volume of bike racks that can be installed either on municipal or private property with the assistance of the local area municipalities.

The County could also work with local high schools to coordinate the fabrication of custom bike racks as a Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) beautification project, similar to what has been done in Elgin County. In this instance, the County would be best situated to work with the schools to procure the raw materials and establish the design criteria for the bike racks to ensure that they comply with Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP) Bike Parking Guidelines (see **Appendix B**).

County Role:

- + Establish guidelines for bike parking design;
- + Coordinate bike parking inventory with OCCAC;
- + Procure sufficient numbers of bike racks; and
- + Provide installation guidance and assistance as necessary.

Partner Roles:

- + OCCAC to develop bike parking inventory; and
- + Local municipalities, BIAs and other stakeholders to purchase and install bike parking from Oxford County at cost.

4.0 Process & Programs

Element #3 .

Oxford County as a Facilitator of new programs

Recommendation #1.

Cycling Into the Future

Oxford County is well situated to take advantage of one of Ontario's fastest growing and best recognized cycling education programs, Cycling Into the Future (CITF). Situated in Waterloo Region, CITF is a program that teaches grade 5 students to ride safely and legally, providing them with basic bike handling skills as well as an overview of the rules of the road as they apply to people on a bike. Oxford County could facilitate the introduction of the CITF program into the County's School Systems through the provision of funding and in-kind support and could lead the expansion of this well-regarded program outside of Waterloo Region.

County Role:

- + Funding and in-kind support.

Partner Role:

- + Public Health to facilitate connections with schools;
- + CITF to hire trainers and provide instruction in schools and provide bike for students who may not have access to a bike; and
- + Schools to provide space and calendar time for training.

Recommendation #2.

Social Rides

One of the most common, and easiest to deliver, methods of connecting to individuals and encouraging behaviour change is the hosting of regular bike ride events. Community bike rides provide residents with the opportunity to engage in an enjoyable, social activity while also exposing them to the possibilities that exist for getting around their community actively. Key ingredients for a successful community ride program include:

- + Regularity – rides should be held on a regular basis – whether that be monthly, biweekly or even weekly. Having the events occur at predictable intervals ensures that residents can engage with the events - even if they miss one, there is another event coming up.
- + Visibility – do your best to “brand” the rides as much as possible. Have ride leaders wear a branded vest or create a mobile billboard that can be towed on a trailer behind the leader of a community bike ride. The best advertising for these types of events is having people see them “in the wild”, or having information spread by word of mouth.
- + Accessibility – these are not training events – they are social events. Rides should be done at a pace that is family friendly, and allows for socialization. Ride distances should also be a length that is manageable for first-time riders or children. Ensure that routes have a shortcut built in if they are longer so that people can still join up with the larger group if they don’t feel up to completing the entire route.
- + Socialization – the idea of community rides is to provide people with an opportunity to meet their neighbours and explore their community – and that means introducing people to businesses and gathering places in their neighbourhoods as well! Ensure that each event ends in a place where attendees can gather and socialize – a local café, a park or even a local brewery!

County role:

- + Funding support for materials and promotions;
- + Provide insurance for ride leaders as necessary;
- + Promote events on County communications feeds;
- + Print and distribute promotional materials; and
 - + Provide incentives to local municipalities to host their own rides as part of the Oxford County rides series.

4.0 Process & Programs

Partner role:

- + Local municipalities and local volunteers to lead rides; and
- + Local businesses to donate materials for promotions and social events.

Recommendation #3.

Cycling Survey

Often, the only opportunity for residents to comment on cycling related issues comes when a specific project is being considered, and those vocally in support or vocally opposed to the project emerge to make their voices heard. In order to gain a better understanding of how the community feels about cycling, consider implementing a randomly selected survey to send out to households with their property tax information every 2-3 years. Aim to seek responses from between 2 and 5% of the population every year the survey is administered. Be sure to track responses and how attitudes towards cycling in Oxford County change over time.

County role:

- + Designing survey questions; and
- + Distributing information to local municipalities

Partner roles:

- + Local municipalities to include survey information in property tax bills; and
- + Local municipalities to help collect survey responses.

Recommendation #4.

Oxford County Active Transportation Coordinator / Transportation Demand Management Coordinator

A clearly defined best practice from Ontario and beyond is the presence of dedicated staffing resources to help move active transportation initiatives forward in a coordinated fashion. Throughout the SWOT Analysis, it became clear that cycling and active transportation are integrated into the roles of many County and local municipal staff, but that it was often a “side of desk” issue in many instances.

Having a dedicated staffing resource – even if that resource is a summer student position – can help to effectively coordinate many of the initiatives outlined within this section of the Plan and will help the County to achieve many of its stated policy goals as laid out in the Future Oxford Vision.

A coordinator can ensure that the OCCAC has the necessary support to deliver new programs, can help to lead rides and facilitate events, can contribute to the preparation and submission of grants and funding applications, and can be responsible for engagement related to new cycling infrastructure projects.

Even a relatively small investment in a coordinator position will have significant benefits in the implementation of this plan and is strongly recommended as a first step towards creating a stronger cycling culture in Oxford County.

County Role:

- + Hiring and supervising Active Transportation Coordinator.

Partner Roles:

- + OCCAC to assist in implementation and supervision.

4.0 Process & Programs

3.

As the County pursues the implementation of the Cycling Master Plan, costing and funding of support staff as well as dedicated funding for programming and outreach should be allocated on an annual basis.

As noted earlier in this document, the summary of existing conditions and inventory of potential, as well as the assessment of policies and programs marks the completion of Phase 1 of the Oxford Cycling Master Plan.

With this knowledge and understanding the County will proceed with Phase 2 focusing on the review and confirmation of cycling improvements as well as supportive implementation tools including costing, maintenance, roles and responsibilities and phasing.