

# 1.0

## INTRODUCTION

In Haliburton County, there is a well established and growing interest in cycling for recreation, health and transportation combined with potential for developing the area as a cycle touring destination. The Haliburton Highlands Cycling Coalition (HHCC) was formed in 2005 with the following vision:

***“Haliburton County provides and promotes safe and enjoyable cycling for all ages.”***

After undertaking several education and promotion-based projects, such as the Shifting Gears Cycling Festival, re-development of a cycling routes map, and development of a website, the HHCC decided that the next step in achieving this vision would be the creation of a Cycling Master Plan.

Haliburton County already enjoys a number of great assets for cycling including an extensive and varied road network, clean air, beautiful scenery, interesting destinations, and on many roads, low vehicle traffic volume. The picturesque cottage country setting amidst hundreds of lakes and rolling, forested hills provides the perfect backdrop for cyclists of all ages and abilities, whether they are out on a leisurely group ride with their cycling club, touring from out of province, on a hard training ride or commuting to work. In addition to many casual cyclists, Haliburton County has an active cycling community including the Haliburton Harriers, a dedicated group of fitness riders/racers who meet for regular weekly rides, and the Real Easy Ryders Cycling Club, an Ontario Cycling Association (OCA) affiliate with a membership of over 100 riders, including many retirees. Collectively these cyclists create an impressive presence on the local roads.

And while encouragement and promotion of cycling is important and plays a vital role in building healthy communities, it is not enough. Public education and awareness of the benefits of cycling and opportunities to do so must be supported by the physical infrastructure to accommodate cyclists on the roadways, as well as the related policy and planning instruments. There is an opportunity to expand the focus of transportation and roads planning to include cycling, in order to take advantage of the growing enthusiasm of local residents for cycling, as well as the tourism and economic development opportunities that an improved cycling network would provide.

Preparing a comprehensive Cycling Master Plan with input from stakeholders, decision makers and the community at large was the next logical step in the process of promoting cycling and supporting cyclists in Haliburton County, as the plan will provide a holistic framework to guide activities and decisions over the next 20 years. It is intended to be a living document that continues to be shaped and built upon as elements of the plan take life and new opportunities arise.

Turning vision into reality in Haliburton County will take time, commitment, creativity, and partnerships. Often, the first question to be raised is where the money will come from. Identifying the specific needs and attaching realistic costs is the first step. Collaboration is also pivotal, with key partners including the decision makers and staff with the County and four municipalities, tourism associations and operators, business community, schools and workplaces, and community groups with an interest in cycling and active living. If commitment to the vision exists and is agreed upon, then through partnership and creativity, the resources (financial, human and other) can be found to create the reality. Past successes show that it is possible. Achieving the vision will be a long-term effort but consistent and systematic implementation of recommendations within this Master Plan will move Haliburton County towards the reality of becoming a great cycling region and destination that provides and promotes a safe and enjoyable environment for cyclists of all ages.

### **1.1. Overview of the Cycling Master Plan**

This plan is organized into nine sections as follows. Section 1 outlines the scope of the plan as well as the vision, goals and objectives. It also provides an overview of the public consultation process. Section 2 presents background information about the benefits of cycling and identifies current trends and policy issues. It also includes a profile of Haliburton County to set the context. In Section 3, existing cycling resources, including infrastructure and programs, are described. Section 4 shifts the focus to reporting on the views of Haliburton County residents, including a summary of key findings from the consultation process. Opportunities and challenges are summarized in Section 5. These first five sections present a picture of the current situation and establish a baseline of information. Section 6 provides details on various types of bicycle infrastructure appropriate for Haliburton County and Section 7 presents the recommended cycling routes network. Section 8 outlines program and policy development. This feeds into Section 9, which



Courtesy of Haliburton Highlands Trails & Tours Network

focuses on implementation, including recommendations and priorities for all aspects of cycling in Haliburton County – from bicycle infrastructure to programs and education to policy development. Supplementary material can be found in the appendices.

## 1.2. Project Objectives and Scope

The Haliburton Highlands Cycling Coalition (HHCC) received funding from the Ministry of Health Promotion (Communities in Action Fund) and the Haliburton County Development Corporation (Community Capacity Building Fund) for this project. Marr Consulting Services was contracted to assist with the development of the plan. The final plan is a collaborative effort between the HHCC and Marr Consulting.

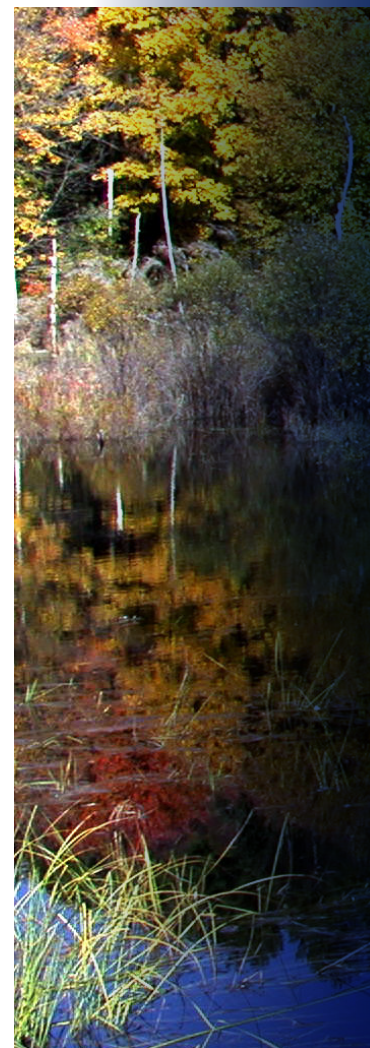
The purpose of the Cycling Master Plan is to:

- Provide a framework for integrating bicycling into transportation planning in Haliburton County.
- Develop a strategy to promote and encourage more cycling.
- Identify further opportunities to develop and promote cycling within the county.

The Cycling Master Plan includes:

- A review of the social, economic, health, and environmental benefits of improving opportunities for cycling.
- A proposed network of cycling routes in the county.
- A plan for implementation, including recommendations, priorities and evaluation.

The proposed cycling network focuses on cycling routes that are on-road, as these are most closely connected with transportation planning and decision-making. As a complement to the County's trail network, on-road cycling routes serve residents who bike for fitness, recreation and active transportation, and visitors who bike for recreation or touring. However, the HHCC recognizes that many people also want opportunities to cycle off-road and this plan identifies further steps that may be taken in this regard.



Courtesy of Yours Outdoors

The Cycling Master Plan also represents one strategy in the multi-pronged approach to develop healthy, active communities in Haliburton County. In healthy, active communities, the built and social environments support and enable healthy, active living by providing opportunities for people to engage in daily physical activity (Active Communities Charter, 2007 – Appendix A). Improving conditions for cycling, particularly around village hubs, will encourage more people to commute by bike and as such, the Cycling Master Plan also complements work done on active transportation planning by the Communities in Action Committee.

### **1.3. Project Vision, Goals and Objectives**

When the master planning process was initiated, a project vision was articulated with associated goals and outcomes.

#### ***Project Vision***

The Cycling Master Plan provides a long-term implementation strategy for improving cycling conditions and opportunities in Haliburton County, creating a safe and supportive environment so that more people will cycle for recreation, transportation, and tourism. Transportation in rural environments is typically equated with motorized vehicles. This plan provides strategies to add cycling into the transportation planning mix.

#### ***Goals***

1. The development of a network of safe, enjoyable on-road cycling routes throughout the County that will encourage more residents to cycle for recreation, fitness and transportation.
2. The network will provide a draw for tourists and an opportunity to promote Haliburton County as a premier cycling destination.
3. The development of promotional and educational programs and policies that will build awareness and skills among cyclists and other road users.



## **Objectives**

1. Measure existing cycling activity and determine concerns.
2. Partner closely with County and Municipal governments to ensure the development of a realistic and achievable plan.
3. Create language to include cycling in County and Municipal official plans.
4. Develop a cycling routes network utilizing existing roadways that includes appropriate routes to meet the needs of a range of cyclists including: families, commuters, recreational, and fitness riders.
5. Identify desired improvements on routes that do not presently meet preferred design standards.
6. Identify opportunities to increase cycle tourism.
7. Identify potential partnerships with appropriate businesses and other community groups.
8. Identify potential cycling support services that would enhance cycling (e.g. bike rentals, repair, etc).
9. Develop a strategy for ongoing education and promotion of cycling opportunities and safety.
10. Develop a realistic implementation plan over the short- and long term that includes recommendations for funding as well as ongoing maintenance.
11. Develop a strategy to evaluate progress of the implementation of the Cycling Master Plan.

## **1.4. Project Process**

The project was developed in four phases. Phases 1 and 2 included meeting with Marr Consulting to confirm methodology, identify overall project goals, review existing conditions, and plan for a stakeholder workshop. Phase 3 included the community survey and development of the proposed cycling routes network. Community open houses were also held to share information and gather community input. Phase 4 focused on development of the Cycling Master Plan, using information gathered in the previous phases.

### **1.4.1. Role of the HHCC Steering Committee and Marr Consulting Services**

The work of this project was managed by a task group of the Haliburton Highlands Cycling Coalition (HHCC) and implemented in partnership between the HHCC and Marr Consulting. Members of the task group included three representatives from the HHCC as well as individuals from Haliburton County Tourism, Haliburton Highlands Trails & Tours Network, and U-Links Centre for Community-Based Research. Throughout this report, the task group will be referred to as the HHCC.

Responsibilities for the development of the plan were shared between the HHCC and Marr Consulting. The consultants provided guidance in terms of overall project direction, timelines and strategy. They planned and facilitated a stakeholder workshop and community open house. The consultants played a key role in the development of the recommended network, as well as the implementation strategy, priorities and planning/design guidelines (Sections 6-9). Marr Consulting Services were also responsible for the editing, design and production of the final report

The HHCC was responsible for gathering information and writing Sections 1-5 of the Cycling Master Plan. They also completed an inventory of potential cycling routes and worked with U-Links Centre for Community-Based Research to conduct a community survey analyzing existing cycling needs and interests. The HHCC hosted three of the four community open houses. It was the responsibility of the HHCC to communicate and liaise with County and Municipal councils and to link with staff as needed.