

Bikes could put Toronto on the map; [ONT Edition]

Tammy Thorne. **Toronto Star**. Toronto, Ont.: Oct 17, 2007. pg. AA.8

Abstract (Summary)

Co-founder Jake Irwin says, "One of the striking things for me is that there aren't a lot of options for tourists if you don't have your own bike. You can rent bikes in Niagara so we should at least have the same option in Toronto." Bike tourism is part of the city's official bike plan. "We're accomplishing the city's objective ... for free," says Irwin.

[Justin Lafontaine] muses, "Wouldn't it be great if Toronto was the hub for Bike Train?" He refers to the city, but the idea of a service hub for cyclists at Union Station is one that has been bandied around cycling circles for some time. The city recently completed a second survey regarding secure, monitored bike parking at Union. But it is unlikely that cyclists will see anything resembling a bike service station - like the one in Chicago's Millennium Park - at Union Station anytime soon.

Lafontaine bemoans our lack of cycling infrastructure. "We're never ahead of the curve. Bike tourism could help put Toronto on the map, especially if developed before other North American cities. Imagine in 20 years if Toronto was known as the Green City - the Copenhagen or Amsterdam of North America."

Full Text (612 words)

Copyright (c) 2007 Toronto Star. All Rights Reserved.

While the city scrambles to catch up on the belated bike plan, bicycle tourism entrepreneurs in Toronto are forging ahead with plans of their own.

If you didn't hear about the Bike Train this summer, it is because project leader Justin Lafontaine did not want to have to say, "I'm sorry, we're sold," more than he already had to.

For four weekends this summer cyclists were greeted at Union Station by the illuminated words, "Welcome Bike Train Passengers" on the arrivals board.

The pilot project took bikes onboard specially designated VIA luggage cars between Toronto's Union Station and Niagara Station. This is the first time that fully-assembled bikes were allowed on VIA trains.

The pilot was so successful it is expected not only to expand service to Niagara next year, but also to extend to other cities. Although he can't say for sure, Lafontaine says the cities that make sense for immediate Bike Train expansion are Ottawa, Montreal, Kingston and Windsor.

The report on the pilot will be completed in October and will include information from 300 surveyed passengers. He says he was most surprised to see that many of the cyclists departing from Toronto actually came from nearby cities. The Bike Train also received high marks regarding the ease with which cyclists were able to access the trails.

The Niagara trail system is extensive and easy to connect to, but at Toronto's Union Station there is nary a bike path or trail in sight. So then, what is a cycling tourist in Toronto to do? They could call Sights on Bikes, a relatively new outfit that offers guided tours.

Co-founder Jake Irwin says, "One of the striking things for me is that there aren't a lot of options for tourists if you don't have your own bike. You can rent bikes in Niagara so we should at least have the same option in Toronto." Bike tourism is part of the city's official bike plan. "We're accomplishing the city's objective ... for free," says Irwin.

He says the biggest challenge for groups is navigating their way along Queen's Quay to the ferry terminal. Their most popular destination is Toronto Island. He describes that stretch of road as dreadful and dangerous. "It was awesome last year when they closed off the whole lane. That got me pretty excited."

Irwin is referring to the "Quay to the City" - a Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation pilot project that restored the Martin Goodman Trail to its original wholeness - which reconnected the trail from Bathurst to Parliament Sts.

The Waterfront Regeneration Trust manages the Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail, which is a feature Bike Train trail. Potentially, the Bike Train could run along the entire trail.

Lafontaine muses, "Wouldn't it be great if Toronto was the hub for Bike Train?" He refers to the city, but the idea of a service hub for cyclists at Union Station is one that has been bandied around cycling circles for some time. The city recently completed a second survey regarding secure, monitored bike parking at Union. But it is unlikely that cyclists will see anything resembling a bike service station - like the one in Chicago's Millennium Park - at Union Station anytime soon.

Lafontaine bemoans our lack of cycling infrastructure. "We're never ahead of the curve. Bike tourism could help put Toronto on the map, especially if developed before other North American cities. Imagine in 20 years if Toronto was known as the Green City - the Copenhagen or Amsterdam of North America."

Tammy Thorne writes for Spacing and I Bike TO on cycling issues, and sits on the steering committee for TCAT, the Toronto Coalition for Active Transportation.

Indexing (document details)

Companies:	Union Station (NAICS: 488210)
Author(s):	Tammy Thorne
Document types:	Editorial
Section:	Opinion
Publication title:	Toronto Star. Toronto, Ont.: Oct 17, 2007. pg. AA.8
Source type:	Newspaper
ISSN:	03190781
ProQuest document ID:	1366735881
Text Word Count	612
Document URL:	http://proquest.umi.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/pqdweb?did=1366735881&sid=3&Fmt=3&clientId=12520&RQT=309&VName=PQD

