

October 30, 2014

Heather Edwardson
Team Lead
Ministry of Transportation
Policy and Planning Division
Transportation Planning Branch
Environmental Policy Office (St. Catharines)
301 St. Paul Street Floor 2
St. Catharines, Ontario
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Re: Supporting Cycling Skills Training, EBR Registry Number: 012-2432

Dear Ms. Edwardson,

I am writing on behalf of the Toronto Centre for Active Transportation (TCAT), a project of the registered charity Clean Air Partnership. TCAT's mission is to advance knowledge and evidence to build support for safe and inclusive streets for walking and cycling.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Ontario Ministry of Transportation's Policy Proposal regarding Supporting Cycling Skills Training. To support cycling training delivered by stakeholders up until March 2016, this time-limited funding of up to \$400,000 in total is part of Ontario's Promotion, Celebration and Legacy Strategy for the 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games.

In 2010, the Share the Road Cycling Coalition released "When Ontario Bikes, Ontario Benefits – A Green Paper on Bicycling in Ontario". This evidence-based report provided an assessment of the barriers to cycling in Ontario and recommendations for improvement. One critical component that the report identified was that existing cycling training programs are "sporadic and inconsistent" across the province. There is an urgent need for a more formalized, comprehensive, fully funded approach to cycling skills training in Ontario.

A provincial cycling skills training approach needs to address the unique needs of both adults and children since cycling is a transportation choice, unlike driving, that children can and do participate in. As such, the Green Paper recommends, "The Ontario government, through the Ministry of Education, should institute and formalize road safety and cycling safety education as part of the curriculum." Due to the absence of such a program, there are millions of citizens in the province of Ontario who have never had the opportunity to participate in cycling skills training. Thus, the vast majority of Ontarians have not gained basic knowledge or confidence about how to operate a bicycle safely and legally as a vehicle under the Highway Traffic Act.

Respectfully, this is not a situation that will be fixed with a time-limited fund of \$400,000. Nevertheless, TCAT applauds the Ministry for making this initial step in allocating resources to improve the safety of vulnerable road users. If used wisely, this program could form the basis of a plan for the Ministry to move forward and implement a comprehensive cycling skills training program for all Ontarians.

MTO has identified a number of factors that can contribute to successful cycling training in Ontario and proposed to provide funding to support: 1) training for additional instructors through current service providers, and 2) cycling education and curriculum development (e.g. promotional material, promotion of existing cycling training opportunities, development of new or user-specific cycling curricula). Below are TCAT's responses to the two questions posed by the Ministry to help obtain additional information to guide the final development of the time-limited program.

1. Additional factors that contribute to successful training in Ontario that MTO should consider.

- An eligibility requirement that any funding application must include a comprehensive evaluation component of the program and provide concrete recommendations for scaling up for the entire province.
- That only those initiatives will be funded that can demonstrate how they will contribute to helping the province move forward in implementing a comprehensive cycling skills training program for all Ontarians at the completion of this time-limited funding opportunity.
- That the funds be allocated to a limited number of organizations (e.g. 1-3) for high-quality large-scale programs with a robust evaluation component and a long-range strategic plan for continuity, rather than small amounts of funds to multiple stakeholders for one-off projects.
- That if more than one organization is awarded funding that the programs be sufficiently different from each other to reflect the different geographic contexts and the diverse characteristics, needs, and barriers of potential cyclists, and to provide a basis for evaluating which programs work the best for the Ontario context.
- That concerted efforts are made to ensure that Ontario's cycling training curriculum is free from ideological bias (e.g. "cyclist-inferiority phobia" in John Forester's *Effective Cycling* program.)

2. How can cycling education/training be made more convenient (e.g. time involved and locations it is offered) and responsive to the diverse needs of Ontario's communities?

In the long-term, the Ministry of Education should offer cycling skills training as a regular part of the school curriculum for every child in Ontario. Even once this curriculum is in place, though, there will always be a role for the Ministry of Transportation to play in ensuring that all adult Ontarians are provided with the opportunity to gain the basic knowledge and handling skills to operate a bicycle safely and legally. The development of a consistent approach to cycling training programs that can be shared across municipalities would be beneficial. Using a network of stakeholders, messaging can be delivered through a number of channels for public outreach, for example a local municipality may be promoting new types of cycling infrastructure while at the same time training can be offered as a cross-promotion. Further, the development of interactive programs to engage the public through the Ministry's website can augment in-person efforts, similar to online health and safety training. Convenient methods of delivery could be to offer courses at community centres across the province and on-site workshops at large workplaces.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on this initiative. We welcome a further discussion with the Ministry should clarification be required for any of our recommendations.



Nancy Smith Lea
Director, Toronto Centre for Active Transportation