

2014 11 20 David Laing to Brampton Staff re Meeting Report on BBAC future

**From:** David Laing [mailto:david@daylelaing.com]

**Sent:** Thursday, November 20, 2014 10:33 AM

**To:** Henrik Zbogor; Oliveira, Andria; John Spencer; Jacqueline Svedas; Nelson Cadete

**Cc:** Marilyn Ball; Craig Kummer

**Subject:** City of Brampton Meeting follow-up -re BBAC

Thank you all for meeting with Dayle and me this past Tuesday morning to discuss the future of Active Transportation in Brampton and the role that the Bicycle Advisory Committee (BBAC) should play in 2015. We covered a lot of ground and I wanted to send out a summary of the main points that we discussed.

### **1. City Reorganization**

We spoke about how the recent realignment of city functions will be a positive change for furthering Active Transportation in the City. While BBAC will continue to liaise with Public Services for cycling events such as Bike the Creek, all functions affecting the planning and management of active transportation facilities now are contained within the Planning and Infrastructure Services organization. This should result in better coordination of Active Transportation Planning between on and off-road facility requirements. It should also result in better communication, both inbound and outbound, regarding active transportation facility issues. We applaud this move and the resulting focus it will create for active transportation priorities.

### **2. Budgeting process**

We talked about the fiscal challenges facing the city and the difficulty in getting sustained funding for AT infrastructure investments, particularly where capital must come from “tax” based as opposed to “development charge” based revenues. There was discussion about the need to remain “cost neutral” where funding for AT projects comes from various budget sources and where the costs must be offset by savings in other areas. As a taxpayer, I understand the need for fiscal responsibility and I empathize with the challenges expressed. That said, as I indicated, other municipalities in and around the GTA are facing similar challenges yet have been more successful than Brampton at providing stable and substantial funding for active transportation infrastructure development. In many cases this is being done with a lower population base hence, I assume, a lower tax and development charge base as well. Assigned priority level perhaps is the difference based on a clearer recognition of the imperative to create a substantial mode shift over the next 10-15 years from single occupancy vehicle transport to a combination of active and public transportation choices. I recognize that raising the priority of active transportation infrastructure development will take political will and leadership combined with increased public support. We need to ensure that our newly elected Council members are informed about the infrastructure realities that accompany growth and increased urbanization. We need them to know that the historical approaches to suburban development are creating patterns of behaviour that are unsustainable as our community becomes ‘built out’. We need them to exercise leadership with the public and to communicate that the protection of many of

the beneficial elements of suburban living will require changes to our traditional transportation habits. I, along with my fellow BBAC members would look forward to any opportunity to introduce and cement these messages. But we cannot do it alone. We need to find/develop AT champions both at City Council and City Staff as soon as possible.

### **3. Active Transportation Network Coordinator position**

We spoke about the status of the ATNC position and that there is still optimism the job will be posted and filled before the end of the year although the name and responsibility of the job will likely change to reflect a more senior supervisory function. As indicated, we feel that this role will be a very challenging one within the city structure. Elements of active transportation, even with the reorganization, are still being handled across multiple city departments and, historically, there has been no AT focus running across the various city functions. Therefore creating a job with the appropriate responsibility level and selecting a candidate with the right skills will be critical to the City's ability to move forward on this file. I am frustrated with the length of time this process is taking especially given the commitment of the City's CAO last January to filling this position by mid-year 2014. I can only offer encouragement that it be filled as soon as is conceivably possible.

By the way, my recommendation is that the job should be focused on the following 4 priorities:

- a) Laying out a **roadmap** for Brampton to become a **Bicycle Friendly Community**, starting at Bronze and then progressing through to Platinum status over a specified and realistic time period. This would be more than program achievement. It would, instead, represent 'a state of mind' that would permeate the vision, strategy and implementation planning for the majority of functions within the City. Migration toward bicycle friendly status implies that the city will be more liveable as we become an urbanized centre.
- b) Laying out the **strategic direction** for AT in the City including the update of the 2002 Pathways Master Plan, the integration of that plan into the updated Official Plan and the current Strategic Plan and the migration of its implementation strategy into the new Transportation Master Plan. In my opinion there is no need to spend the time and money required to redesign the 2002 Pathways Master Plan from the ground up. Contrary to a popular misconception the plan in its current revision does include a comprehensive strategy to address utilitarian as well as recreational cycling needs as long as a commitment is made by the city to create and or upgrade on-road connection points to better and more safely accommodate cycling traffic. Recently acquired trip data available from Peel Region should be included in the analysis as should technical advancements since 2002. In addition, the plan should include a focus on routes within school catchment areas to support youth cycling/ walking to and from school.
- c) Establishing a list of short, medium and longer term infrastructure priorities. The short and medium term priorities would be based on demand creation estimates and accompanied by specific projects along with budget estimates and possible funding options. The success of the job should be largely tied to the effectiveness

of the completion of these projects and to the success of creating a substantial AT mode shift as quickly as possible. The worst case scenario is a 1-2% share. A 'few' bicycle users on a given roadway is insufficient to reduce traffic congestion and only creates a bottleneck that confuses motorists and puts the small number of cyclists at greater risk. An 8-10% AT mode share on the other hand would take sufficient cars off the road to make a noticeable difference in congestion and would make the roads safer for all road users. It should be noted that multi-use pathways are likely not going to be sufficient by themselves to meet the needs of utilitarian commuter cyclists therefore on-road infrastructure must provide a substantial portion of the service. That said, cyclists are the most vulnerable road users and therefore conscious thought should be given to how they are protected. The objective should be to create a network along with an education program that would allow the majority of cyclists and would be cyclists, including children and those with mobility issues, to feel safe on the vast majority of the City's AT network.

- d) Establishing a Community engagement and communications outreach program. Communication should be an integral part of the strategy documents but it is so important to creating public acceptance that it should have its own stand-alone focus. The Brampton Cycling Advisory Committee (or whatever name it ends up being), should play a key part in that community outreach strategy.

#### **4. Brampton Cycling Advisory Committee**

We discussed that the creation of a Brampton Cycling Advisory Committee could move forward independently of the hiring of the ATNC position. The wording of the October 30<sup>th</sup> 2013 Committee of Council carried motion connects the creation of BCAC to the approval of the Active Transportation Coordinator position in the 2014 budget. Can BCAC be created without passing another Council motion? Either way, let me know if it would be beneficial for me to delegate to Council early in the new year to make a fresh request.

Thank you once again for the meeting and for your time and commitment to making Brampton a better city for cycling. Brampton has unique potential so it will be exciting to watch as it progresses with your leadership and guidance from 'laggard' to 'leader' in Active Transportation in the GTHA!

All the best,

David

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