



Bike to Work Day – Bike Friendly Business Program Announcement

by David Laing, Chair – BikeBrampton, May 25, 2015

Anybody who knows me knows I want Brampton to become a Bicycle Friendly Community; not just because I like to cycle; which I do! Not just because I think more people should cycle for fun and fitness and to help curb traffic congestion and clean up the environment; which I do! But because cycling represents a direct pathway towards sustainable economic prosperity for the citizens of this beautiful city! Don't take my word for it...

Plenty of cities in North America have built their economic future on the foundation of utilitarian and recreational cycling. Case in point: **Pittsburgh PA**; a city of just over 300,000. In the early 2000's Pittsburgh was struggling under the economic collapse of the steel industry and the decimation of North American based manufacturing. In the words of William Peduto, Pittsburgh's mayor, "it was bombed out, burnt out, flooded-out, with its economic heart cut out". Peduto knew the city needed a new approach. He reached out to community leaders and a conversation with Andrew Moore, VP at Google and CMU professor hit home. Moore said, "Google wants to grow its offices here in Pittsburgh but to do that we need the best and brightest recruits from CMU to stay here and work here after they graduate. Let me tell you", he said, "**our recruits could care less about free parking in the downtown. They want clean water, clean air and access to work via transit and walkable, bikeable communities!**"

Peduto took those words to heart and put vision into action. Starting in 2003 and taking under a decade, Pittsburgh went from ranking the 5th worst city for cycling in the U.S. to ranking in the top 30, with over 70 miles of on-street bike infrastructure, including 5 miles of segregated bike lanes, much of it replacing on-street parking, 7000 bike parking spaces, a complete streets policy that shifted significant dollars from road development to bike infrastructure development; all in a city with cold winters and more hills than San Francisco!

Synergy between cycling and economic prosperity paid off. Today **Pittsburgh is home to over 1,600 technology firms from Google to Uber**, is 2nd only to Chicago and New York City in corporate headquarters employment across a range of industries, and has been ranked as 6th best in the country for job growth. It has been awarded "America's Most Liveable City" by Places Rated Almanac.

Closer to home, City of Hamilton is also undergoing its own **economic renaissance** based substantively on encouraging more cycling. Hamilton has recently installed dedicated bike lanes along Hunter and Cannon Streets; 2 major east-west thoroughfares, complimenting hundreds of kilometres of Hamilton's on and off-road biking network. Recognizing how important cycling is to business development, as well as how important it is to encourage employers to support and encourage their employees to cycle, Hamilton has teamed **with Share the Road Cycling Coalition plus two other Ontario municipalities** to bring the amazingly successful **Bike Friendly Business Program to Ontario!**

Bike Friendly Business started in 2008 in the U.S. by the American League of Bicyclists, the largest cycling advocacy organization in North America. Over 950 businesses, including hundreds of Fortune-500 companies, have been recognized as being Bicycle Friendly. These businesses have invested in programs and infrastructure that encourage more of their employees to cycle to and from work more frequently. The benefits are significant: to employees through better health and morale; to employers through higher employee productivity and retention, lower absenteeism and overall better quality of work; and to the community, lowering healthcare costs, reducing traffic congestion, safer roads, improved economies and reduced environmental emissions.

So what has this to do with Brampton and Bike to Work Day? Earlier I mentioned that Hamilton had teamed with Share the Road and 2 other municipalities to bring the BFB program to Ontario. I am pleased to announce that Thunder Bay and Brampton are those 2 communities. The Brampton program will be rolling out before the end of Bike Month. The application, scoring guidelines and "What does it take to become a BFB" resource kit will be available in the next few weeks. The first application deadline will be September 11, 2015 and the first Brampton based BFB award ceremonies for successful applicants will held this coming October.

Bike Brampton is thrilled to have helped bring BFB program to Brampton. In a few months' time we will have **high-profile business champions** that recognize the importance of making cycling a priority, helping us to advocate for improved infrastructure and stronger municipal policies that will support cycling in this city! **The challenge is on, Brampton:** Rogers Communications, Canadian Tire Corporation, Nestlé, Algoma University, Sheridan College, and all Brampton businesses! Applications will be available soon!