

Ontario Municipal Cycling Infrastructure Announcement remarks by David Laing, Chair, BikeBrampton March 18, 2016

I feel like a kid who has just been handed a double-scoop of ice cream, despite the cool weather today. The number of cyclists present today is a testimony to the importance of this announcement. This project is a crucial active transportation connection. It is a symbolic recognition by various government levels that cycling and walking are key components in an overarching strategy for both economic and physical well-being of our communities.

This project has been in the works for 10 years. The number of interested parties involved in this 2 km piece of land rivals the United Nations General Assembly! Involved have been private and public landowners, HydroOne, Enbridge Gas, two municipalities and at least 2 provincial ministries (Transportation and Environment). In addition, no fewer than 8 City of Brampton departments have or continue to be involved in the project.

Ironically, this project started because of the amount of illegal off-road activity. Dirt bikes and ATVs were tearing up the ground and creating danger. Initially there was no discussion about active transportation. This fact lends extra importance to why this announcement today is so exciting.

The completion of this trail will provide the first off-road connection between Brampton and Mississauga, making cycling between the two cities safer and more accessible to a broader audience, whether for recreation or utilitarian purposes. It will also allow for a mostly off-road cycling route, connecting the Waterfront Trail to Caledon, and hopefully soon to the Greenbelt Trail. This will put Brampton at the geographical centre of a growing and vibrant cycle tourism industry.

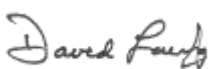
The fact that this trail is being talked about today as being part of an active transportation network for the Province of Ontario, for the Region of Peel and for the City of Brampton, shows just how much progress we have made. Active transportation is becoming main-stream and that's good news for all of us, whether or not we cycle!

Out of the long list of people who should be thanked for getting us to this point, I want to single out Henrik Zbogor, City of Brampton Manager Transportation Planning, for quietly but consistently beating the active transportation drum when it previously was not the political topic of the day. Jake Mete, City of Brampton, who has been working as Project Manager on this file for several years and who has borne the brunt of my emails and phone calls. Vince D'Elia from Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, who with his team, has designed and redesigned the route, working with Jake to get the permits and jumping over numerous hurdles that were put in their path. Andria Oliveira and Nelson Cadete from City of Brampton who ensured we submitted a compelling provincial application and had a shovel-ready project.

I want to thank Regional Councillor Medeiros, who personally champions cycling, and who represents a new focus in Brampton that has created a Cycling Advisory Committee, and will shortly be commencing an Active Transportation Master Plan. The City will be matching this Provincial grant of \$325,000.

I want to thank Minister Del Duca and the staff at MTO for expediting the Highway #410 widening so we may be able to get shovels in the ground this year, and for the excellent Provincial #CycleON strategy.

Last, by not means least, I want to thank Harinder Malhi, MPP Brampton-Springdale, for working to get this application accepted, for believing in active transportation, and for being a female role model for active transportation.



David Laing – Chair BikeBrampton, www.bikebrampton.ca