

Aurora pedals forward on cycling master plan

By Brock Weir

If you're a cycling enthusiast or even someone who just goes for a fun weekend pedal you might have found an obstacle in your path to veer around, but Council took a sharp right turn this week in a direction that could make the self-propelled commute a little bit easier down the road.

Council signed off on a notice of motion brought forward last week by Councillors Sandra Humfries and Tom Mrakas, which will set in motion a new Cycling Master Plan for the Town of Aurora.

In their motion, the Councillors pointed out cycling is not only a viable and cost-effective way to travel, but also the mode's environmental credentials.

A Cycling Master Plan would create and improve opportunities throughout the Town of Aurora for active recreation and active transportation for all residents and visitors, said the Councillors. The development of active transportation infrastructure, policies and promotion strategies are also supported at the Federal, Provincial, County and local municipal levels of government. The purpose of a Cycling Master Plan is to guide the development of a long-term, comprehensive, Town-wide on- and off-road commuter and recreational bicycling network. [It] will help support the Town of Aurora's pursuit of becoming Canada's most active municipality.

The recommendation called on Town Staff to work with the municipal Trails and Active Transportation Committee to develop the Plan and, speaking to the motion, the Councillors emphasised how much this would mean to achieving that overall goal of activity Aurora has set for itself with an eye to 2020.

We have been discussing this as far as the Trails Committee for quite a while, looking at developing a cycling master plan and I, along with Councillor Humfries, figured it was time we worked on it and thought it is time to move forward, and have the Trails Committee begin to do a lot of work in developing this, said Councillor Mrakas, noting they didn't think there would be any need to bring on consultants to finish the job.

We don't feel there is a need to go to anything exterior. We feel this can be done in house. We have a great committee and they will be excited to move forward on this. The thought is not just to create a Cycling Master Plan for the Town of Aurora, but we need to look at how we can interconnect with all the other municipalities and with the Region's Cycling Master Plan they developed back in 2008. We need to have that connection between all of them so if someone wants to go from Georgina through Richmond Hill on their bike they should be able to safely, and so I think that if we put forward that plan and let it out there and work with the other municipalities we can create an excellent bike movement throughout York Region.

Speaking to their motion, Councillor Humfries reiterated the excitement felt by the Committee in moving this forward and gave Council a sneak peek at what's to come.

[This Master Plan] is just one of the things the Trails and Active Transportation Committee would like to do [including] a Bike Aurora Day next year, she said. We are really excited that they are taking [this] on and I can't wait to get moving on it. You'll hear more about it shortly.

While Council waits to hear more about Bike Aurora Day, they voiced their overall support of the proposal.

Councillor Michael Thompson, for instance, said he agrees that it aligns well with other initiatives the Town has either recently completed or still have in the works including the most active community goal and Aurora's Sports Plan.

I look forward to [this] coming back he said, suggesting that once the framework for developing the Cycling Master Plan is established that the Town's Parks and Recreation be invited to provide their input.