



VÉLOROUTE
VOYAGEUR
CYCLING ROUTE

**Eastern Ontario Expansion
Mobile Workshop
Route Evaluation Report**
September 2019



This report was authored by Discovery Routes Trails Organization as part of the ongoing expansion of the Voyageur Cycling Route through Eastern Ontario. For more information on the project visit the website at www.discoveryroutes.ca or contact the organization directly.

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Project Partners



This project is supported by:



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The Eastern Expansion of the Voyageur Cycling Route has been made possible with funding support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is an agency of the Government of Ontario, and one of Canada's leading granting foundations. OTF awarded more than \$120 million to some 700 projects last year to build healthy and vibrant communities in Ontario.

Background

Once complete, the Véloroute Voyageur/ Voyageur Cycling Route will span over 645km from Sudbury to the National Capital Region. The cycling route follows the path of the Voyageurs along the great heritage waterways that supported transportation and trade for several thousand years. The route shares alignment with The Great Trail at the east and west ends and is part of the foundational Province-wide Cycling Network with connections to the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail and Quebec's La Route verte.

A project of such scope requires strong partnerships and collaborations to realize its potential as a major tourism experience bringing prosperity to rural and Northern communities while also supporting local objectives in recreation, active travel and overall well-being. Discovery Routes Trails Organization based in North Bay has been the lead agency coordinating the implementation of the Voyageur Cycling Route in partnership with stakeholders across the multi-jurisdictional route. As the cycling route evolves, new partnerships will be essential to its continued success.

A 2015 feasibility study identified the first 380km of the route connecting communities across Northeastern Ontario. With the endorsement of all road authorities including the Ministry of Transportation, the first phase of the Voyageur Cycling Route was launched in June 2018 with wayfinding signage and cyclist supports in place. With funding support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation granted in 2017, Discovery Routes has partnered with the Ottawa Valley Cycling and Active Transportation Alliance and Eastern Ontario Active Transportation network partners to expand the Voyageur Cycling Route an additional 250km through the County of Renfrew, Lanark County and the National Capital Region.

In support of the expansion, Discovery Routes hosted a Mobile Workshop along the trails and low volume roadways in Eastern Ontario that form part of the cycling route. The workshop took place over four days from June 3-6, 2019 and was coordinated in partnership with stakeholders across Eastern Ontario including the County of Renfrew, Lanark County, the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Valley Cycling and Active Transportation Alliance. The objectives of the Mobile Workshop were to:

- Evaluate the tourism and recreational potential of the expanded route
- Inventory cycling facilities and amenities along the route
- Experience the Voyageur Cycling Route and determine its appeal to a variety of market segments

Stakeholders were privileged to have the Waterfront Regeneration Trust along for the ride. The Waterfront Regeneration Trust is the leader in trail and community building in the province facilitating the development of the 3000km (and growing) Great Lakes Waterfront Trail. David Meyer, Project Manager for the Waterfront Trail shared his knowledge during the presentation sessions and also biked each segment of the cycling route providing invaluable feedback.

The current report outlines the evaluation methodology and provides a summary of the feedback received during the Mobile Workshop. Recommendations for cycling route priority improvements are provided at the end of the report.

Evaluation Methodology

A group of twelve experienced cyclists from outside the region and unfamiliar with the communities, trails and roadways that will be designated as the Voyageur Cycling Route were selected to evaluate the route. Having cyclists from outside the region participate ensured an objective assessment and that observations were true to a visiting cyclist unfamiliar with the area. The evaluators represented a diverse cross-section of experiences, demographics and market segments including the leisure, recreational and touring cycling markets. They were also riding on a variety of bicycle types including

road, touring/hybrid, mountain, cyclo-cross (gravel bike), pedal-assist (e-bike) and tricycle/ recumbent. The *Voyageur Cycling Route Marketing Strategy* has a detailed description of these market segments, the daily distances they typically ride and the tourism experiences that appeal to each rider type. A short description introducing each evaluator is presented at the end of this report.

Each day's workshop opened with a series of presentations from experts on cycle tourism, infrastructure and services, and local cycling partners. A variety of provincial, regional and local stakeholders interested in learning how the Voyageur Cycling Route compares to long-distance cycling routes in other jurisdictions participated in the daily workshops. Participants included elected officials, community leaders, economic development agencies, tourism development agencies and local cycling advocates. Presentations made during the workshop are available for download at <http://discoveryroutes.ca/vcr/2019-mobile-workshop/>. Following the presentations, participants were invited to join in a sectional ride of the local Voyageur Cycling Route.

The route was divided into eight sections ranging in length from 15-42km. Each section was evaluated separately under the following categories: overall impressions, strength and challenges, surface and slope, notable scenery, safety, services and maps/ wayfinding. These evaluation criteria were selected based on a tool used by the Ministry of Transportation to assess candidate routes for the province-wide cycling network.

The four-day route breakdown was as follows:

June 3: Presentations in Ottawa – Ride Ottawa to Kanata (25km) to Carleton Place (28km)

June 4: Presentations in Carleton Place – Ride Carleton Place to Pakenham (27km) to Arnprior (12km)

June 5: Presentations in Arnprior - Ride Arnprior to Storyland (27km) to Beachburg (25km)

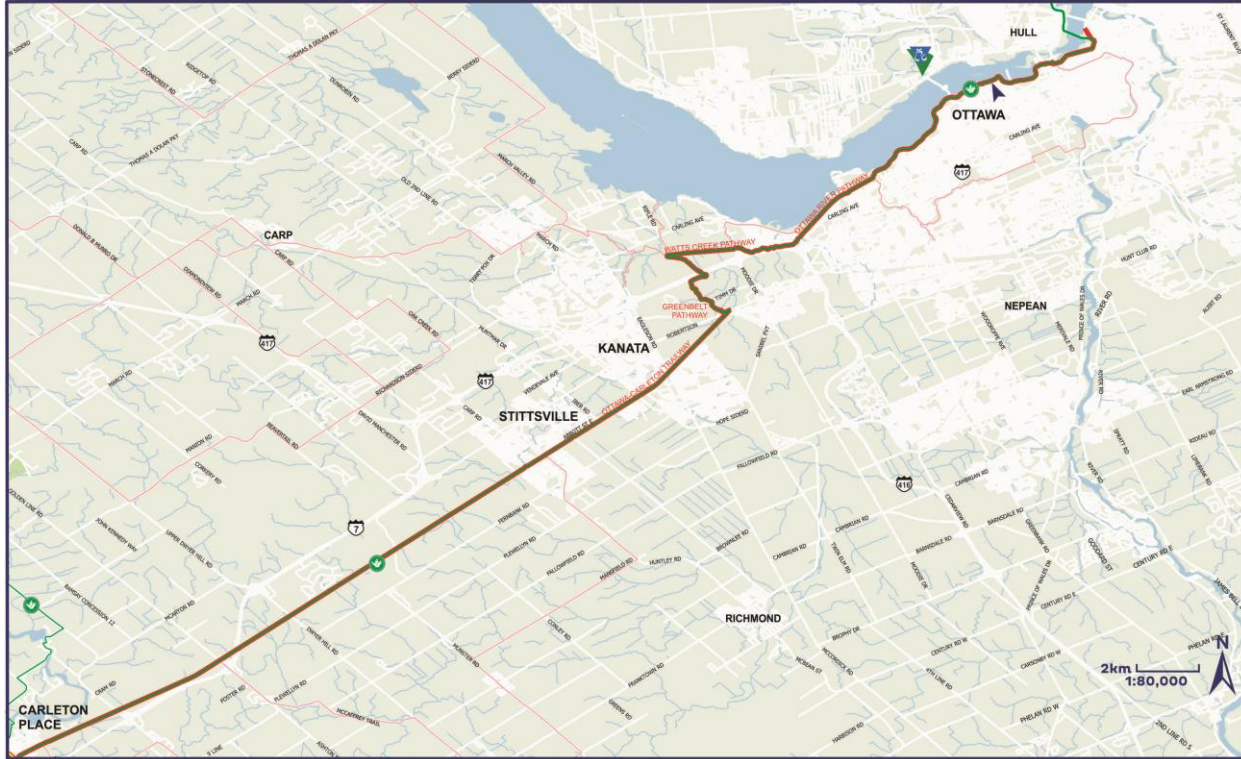
June 6: Presentations in Beachburg - Ride Beachburg to Pembroke (26km) to Petawawa (16km)**

**North of Petawawa, the Voyageur Cycling Route follows Highway 17 as an interim route until the alternative off-road trail is available. The Mobile Workshop did not travel north of Petawawa due to the high traffic volumes and speeds on Highway 17 and the absence of bicycle specific infrastructure.

Day 1: Ottawa to Carleton Place

On Monday, June 3, the Mobile Workshop kicked off with presentations at the Lord Elgin in the heart of Ottawa. Presentations were made by Discovery Routes Trails Organization and Waterfront Regeneration Trust (available for download). Representatives from Ottawa Tourism shared details on some of the extensive cycling programming in the City. A representative from the National Capital Commission was on hand and described the challenges of managing a wildly popular pathways network. The impact of recent flooding on the Ottawa River is still unknown with pathway closures in effect for more than six weeks at the time of the workshop. Also participating was a representative from the Prescott-Russell Recreation Trail. The organization is interested in a partnership that could lead to a further expansion of the Voyageur Cycling Route into Southeastern Ontario. Jeff Mills, a cycling advocate from Almonte presented The Friendship Trail; Mississippi- Ottawa Cycling Loop, a new cycle route that loops from Ottawa to Carleton Place along the proposed Voyageur Cycling Route and through the communities of Almonte and Pakenham, to return through Carp and Ottawa's western rural neighbourhoods.

The map below shows the intended route that evaluators were to follow out of Ottawa to Lanark County. However, extensive damage caused by flooding on the Ottawa River resulted in closure of the Ottawa River Pathway. The closure of the Pathway caused a scramble for organizers to find an alternate route out of Ottawa to connect to the Ottawa-Carleton Trailway in Kanata.



Rider Feedback - Ottawa

Due to the closure of the Ottawa River Pathway, feedback provided in this section does not include an evaluation of the infrastructure and focuses instead on the visitor experience while staying in the downtown core.

Staff at the Lord Elgin, while quite knowledgeable on the attractions in the City, could not produce a cycling map or provide clear direction by bicycle to certain attractions such as Nepean Point. For example, cyclists were directed to a pedestrian pathway crossing the canal system where bicycles had to be physically lifted over the narrow locks; a difficult effort for riders with e-bikes and tricycles/ accessible bicycles.

Nepean Point is not at this time a bicycle-friendly attraction. Cyclists cannot access the viewpoint on a bicycle without illegally riding on the sidewalk creating a potential hazardous situation for pedestrians. It is understood that renovations at Nepean Point will be underway in the near future. Stakeholders should ensure that cyclists have been considered in the plans.

The Canal Pathway was a picturesque route leaving the downtown however finding a suitable east-west connection to Kanata without local knowledge created a challenge with not enough information readily available on road conditions and traffic. While most of the evaluators were comfortable in most traffic situations, certain market segments such as families and recreational cyclists may not be. Navigation when off the formal pathways network was difficult, but most cyclists were equipped with mobile apps that track the activity of local cyclists and share routes within the cycling community.

Rider Feedback – Ottawa–Carleton Trailway

Once on the Ottawa-Carleton Trailway at Kanata, cyclists enjoyed the experience reporting good trail conditions and easy wayfinding to Carleton Place.

Strengths

The Ottawa-Carleton Trailway is a peaceful trail with picturesque landscape features like the expansive wetland pictured below that stretches as far as the eye can see. Through the suburban communities of Kanata and Stittsville cyclists enjoyed stops at a café adjacent to the trail and referenced the heritage rail and outdoor piano at the Village Square Park in Stittsville as an attraction. This is a family-friendly ride that could be done in a day or over a weekend.



Challenges/ Safety Concerns

No significant safety challenges were observed, however there were a couple of areas noted by the evaluators where trail authorities could improve trail conditions.

The trail crossing Main Street in Stittsville is off-set from the signal lights pushing cyclists to use the sidewalk to cross at the controlled intersection.

While most evaluators found the road crossings in the rural area west of Kanata to be unchallenging, road authorities could consider pavement markings to alert motorists of the rural road crossings where posted speed limits are as high as 80km/hr. Signage on the road alerting motorists of the trail crossing is also recommended.

Surface and Slope

The fine, crushed stone surface is well packed with gentle grades making for an easy ride. It is a good surface for gravel and touring bikes and surprisingly easy rolling on the narrow road bike tires. The trail width was reported as good for the social ride allowing cyclists to double up with adequate room for passing oncoming trail traffic. Evaluators did note a few areas where farmers are using the trail and causing some surface damage. Similarly, some ruts in the trail were observed where motocross bikes have spun tires.

Trail authorities should be aware that the grassy centre present along some sections of the Ottawa-Carleton Trailway caused some challenges for the individual riding the accessible trike. Cyclists hauling a chariot or trailer would experience similar challenges.

Wayfinding: Maps and Signage

Directional Signs:

Once on the Ottawa-Carleton Trailway there is easy wayfinding to Carleton Place. Kilometer markers would be appreciated.

Trailhead/ Amenity Signs:

Signs indicating amenities near to the trail would be helpful and encourage exploration off the main trail. While cyclists raved about the stop at Quitters Café in Stittsville, the group may not have found the stop without local knowledge. It is businesses and amenities like these that need to be brought to the attention of visiting cyclists to fully appreciate the experience and maximize the economic impact of cycle tourism.

Maps:

The National Capital Commission in partnership with the City of Ottawa and Ottawa Tourism produce the *Cycling Map: Ottawa-Gatineau and the Outaouais* that includes all trail and cycling connections across the City of Ottawa including the western suburban areas. Lanark County also produces a cycling map. The Voyageur Cycling Route is not yet included on these two existing resources. In terms of digital mapping, evaluators used STRAVA and other GPS apps with ease.

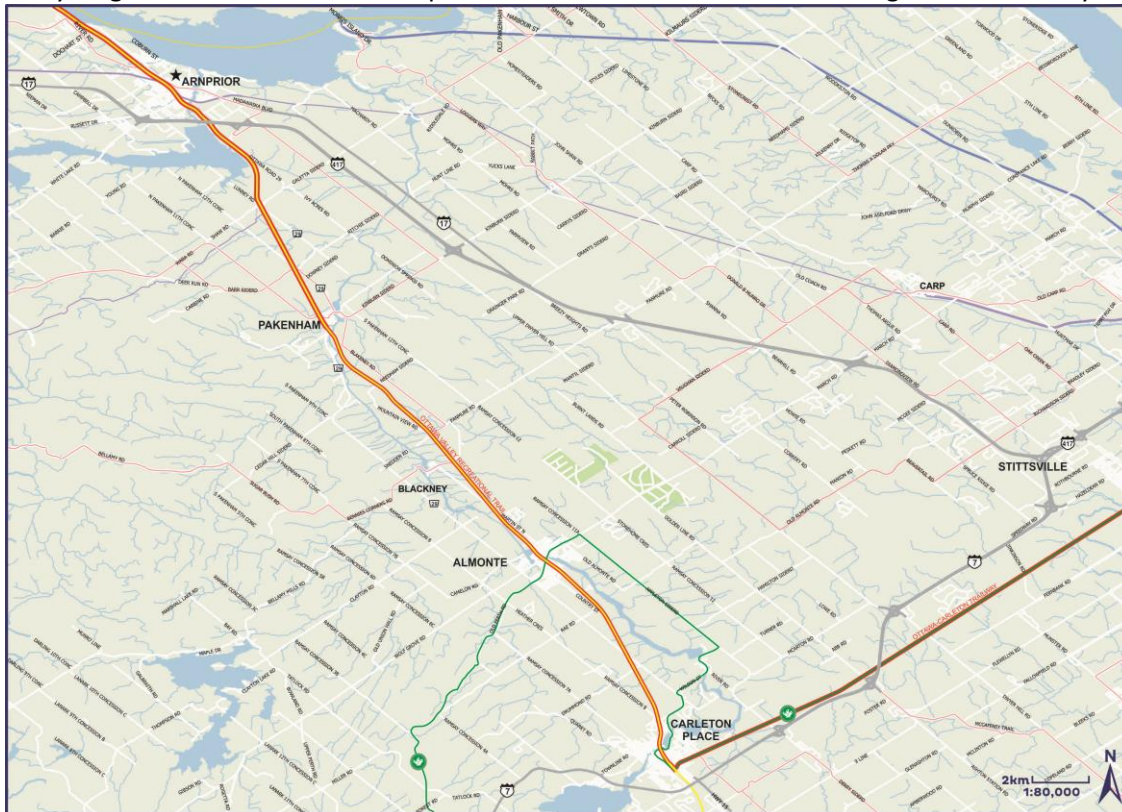
Day 2: Carleton Place to Arnprior

On Tuesday, June 4, 2019, the Mobile Workshop kicked off with presentations at The Grand Hotel in Carleton Place. 25 individuals participated in the workshop with special guests; Richard Kidd, Warden of Lanark County; Christa Lowry, Mayor of Mississippi Mills and; Linda Seccaspina, Councillor for the Town of Carleton Place. Also participating were staff from Lanark County and Carleton Place, Carleton Place Chamber of Commerce and local cycling advocates.

Presentations were made by Discovery Routes Trails Organization and Waterfront Regeneration Trust (available for download). Chris George, a local cycling advocate presented the Friendship Trail: Mississippi- Ottawa Cycling Loop. This is a new cycle route that loops from Ottawa to Carleton Place, through the picturesque communities of Almonte and Pakenham, to return through Carp and Ottawa's western rural neighbourhoods. The cycling loop is one of the first of many itineraries to be developed using the Voyageur Cycling Route as its spine.



The presentations were followed by a 49km sectional bicycle ride from Carleton Place to Arnprior along the Ottawa Valley Recreational Trail. The group was treated to a guided tour of Almonte and Pakenham by local cycling advocates. Below is a map of the route that was followed through Lanark County.



Rider Feedback: Carleton Place to Arnprior

All of the route evaluators unanimously agreed that Lanark County has a spectacular cycling facility in the Ottawa Valley Recreational Trail (OVRT). The communities of Carleton Place, Almonte and Pakenham are spaced at ideal distances to attract every demographic of rider. Family, senior and recreational cycling markets affectionately known as “slow riders” often prefer an off-road trail that is physically separated from motorized traffic. With the connection to Ottawa along the Ottawa-Carleton Trailway/ Trans Canada Trail and the pathway network in the City, the opportunities for these types of cyclists are endless. The evaluators representing the touring cyclist also appreciated the safety and relative low volume of other trail users along the route allowing them to ride at a comfortable pace. They were aware of the numerous on-road ride extensions throughout Lanark County like the Friendship Trail and Blackney off-shoot that would allow them to log greater distances and experience various terrains while touring. Providing cyclists with a variety of options in terms of route length, elevations gains, trail and road surfaces widens the appeal of a destination.

Strengths

The proximity of the OVRT to the Mississippi River was stated by all riders as one of the primary features of the cycling route. These statements are consistent with market research presented in the *Voyageur Cycling Route Marketing Strategy* that indicates the natural environment as having significant appeal to cycle tourists.

Every demographic of rider was keen to hear the stories of the area’s history interpreted in the villages and by local cyclists accompanying the evaluators.

The separation of pedestrian and cyclist to motorized trail user in Carleton Place will be a tremendous asset as the trail becomes more popular with all users.

The services and amenities near to the cycling route in Carleton Place, Almonte and Pakenham were highlighted as being important for touring cyclists to say longer and spend more while visiting the area.



Challenges/ Safety Concerns

The connection between the Ottawa-Carleton Trailway and OVRT in Carleton Place along Coleman Street west of Queen Street was reported as “awkward”. Cyclists are pushed off the trail with no clear indication of where to ride. It also presents a potential hazard to pedestrians if cyclists choose to continue along the sidewalk.

The OVRT intersects County Road 29 and a few other roads with posted speed limits of 80km/hr. These road crossings should be marked for motorists to warn of the trail crossing. On-road signage warning motorists of the trail crossing is also recommended.

There are a few sections of the trail that have re-claimed asphalt chunks that can be hazardous for cyclists.

The multi-use aspect of the OVRT was discussed. Since only one ATV passed the group in Lanark County and was respectful, slowing down and giving lots of passing space it was not an issue for evaluators. The low volume of ATVs may have been a result of the timing of the ride eg. late morning, weekday in June. Weekend and end-of-day trail traffic may be different and should be evaluated. As the trail becomes more established, the multi-use aspect needs to be monitored to ensure that all trail users are respectful.

Surface and Slope

Overall the evaluators found the surface and slope to be great for cycling. The trail between Carleton Place and Almonte was noted as being fairly loose gravel as compared to the surface between Almonte and Pakenham. The surface should improve over time as it becomes more compacted with use.

The decking on the bridge just south of Pakenham was rough and uncomfortable for cyclists.

Wayfinding: Maps and Signage

Signage and mapping is discussed in greater detail in the ‘Trail-wide Considerations’ section of the report.

Directional Signs:

Since the OVRT/ Voyageur Cycling Route through Lanark County is easy to navigate for the most part as there are few decision points, wayfinding signage will serve more as awareness of the cycling route while also bringing local attention to the multi-use nature of the trail.

Trailhead/ Amenity Signs:

While the riders understood that the trail is in its infancy, the lack of amenity signage was noted by all evaluators. Since evaluators were not familiar with the communities they did not know where to get off the trail for services like public washrooms, drinking water and restaurants.

Maps:

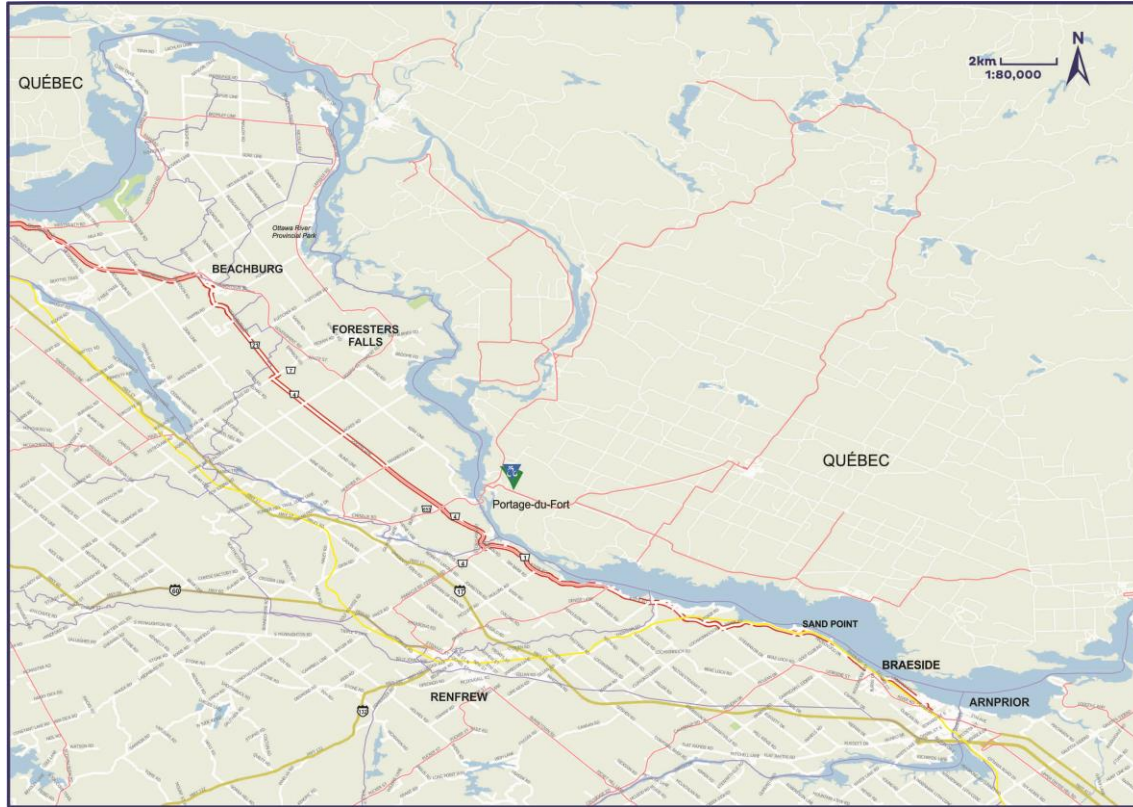
Lanark County Tourism produces a cycling map and they also provide cycling content on their website. The Voyageur Cycling Route is not yet included on these two existing resources.

Day 3: Arnprior to Beachburg

On Wednesday, June 5, 2019, presentations for the Mobile Workshop were at the J.A. Gilles Recreation Centre in Braeside. 23 individuals participated in the workshop including Heather Lang, Councillor Township of McNab/ Braeside, County of Renfrew/ Ottawa Valley Tourist Association staff and local cycling advocates and business owners.



The presentations were followed by a 57km sectional cycle ride from Braeside to Beachburg with a wonderful lunch stop at Elements Luxury Camp on Storyland Road. The ride started on the completed section of the Algonquin Trail north for approximately 5km and resumed along County roads to Beachburg. Below are the maps of the route that was followed through the south end of Renfrew County.



Rider Feedback: Arnprior to Beachburg

Riders left Arnprior along the Algonquin Trail to the end of the completed section just north of Braeside near Sand Point. While evaluators enjoyed the time on the trail, by the third day they welcomed the change to road riding and a varied terrain. The low traffic on the roads with good sightlines and some moderate intensity elevation changes but otherwise slow rolling hills made for a very enjoyable ride. The elevation gains and longer distance between services were not a concern even for the senior riders using the pedal-assist bicycles. These “e-bikes” are allowing more riders to travel longer distances over more challenging terrain. This is an important consideration because the distances between services are greater as the Voyageur Cycling Route reaches into Renfrew County and beyond into Northeastern Ontario.

Strengths

Evaluators commented on the spectacular views of the Ottawa Valley, Ottawa River and Quebec. The quiet country roads offered some welcome elevation changes giving cyclists some variety. While not part of the Mobile Workshop, cycle tourists will have the option to stay on the Algonquin Trail through to Renfrew if trail riding is preferred.

The Algonquin Trail’s proximity to the Ottawa River north of Braeside was a picturesque backdrop that also provided some shelter from the headwinds that are often present when travelling northwesterly. The lighthouse in Braeside was a nice stop. Many riders commented on the scenic farms and agricultural lands.



Challenges/ Safety Concerns

The distance between natural resting stops was mentioned as a challenge for some riders. While it is a general rule that cyclists can ride up to 25km between basic amenities like rest rooms and drinking water, some cyclists prefer more frequent stops to rest.

Since the Mobile Workshop took place on a weekday in June traffic volumes were minimal. Concern was expressed regarding potential traffic volume increase on River Road on weekends or at the height of summer travel. This concern would be even more pronounced on the road where the pavement was broken and rough and has not yet received hardened shoulders.

Surface and Slope

Generally smooth pavement however some sections were broken and rough. Hardened shoulders are expected on the remaining sections of River Road as part of the County of Renfrew's annual road rehabilitation program. Once hardened shoulders are complete, it will improve conditions for cyclists on this section. There were a few hills but nothing too challenging.

Wayfinding: Maps and Signage

Signage and mapping is discussed in greater detail in the 'Trail-wide Considerations' section of the report.

Directional Signs:

The route offered easy wayfinding for cyclists with the directions pre-programmed into personal GPS apps, however directional signs at intersections and at intervals along the route would be helpful and bring awareness amongst other road and trail users.

Trailhead/ Amenity Signs:

As with Lanark County, there is very limited information on the trail about the services and amenities offered in the communities adjacent to the route.

Maps:

Renfrew County publishes an Ottawa Valley Cycling Map every couple years. In the latest edition, there the Voyageur Route is one of 16 routes identified on the map and it mostly follows the routing of the Voyageur Cycling Route. In future editions of the cycling map, it is recommended that Renfrew County

use some of the branding tools that emerge as the Voyageur Cycling Route Marketing Strategy is implemented.

Day 4: Beachburg to Petawawa

On Thursday June 6, 2019, presentations for the Mobile Workshop were at the Whitewater Inn in Beachburg. Being the final day of the Mobile Workshop, the in-house session took a less formal format with a general discussion amongst evaluators on the Voyageur Cycling Route experience. Participating in the discussion were representatives from Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization (RTO11), Ottawa Valley Tourist Association, Cindy Jamieson, owner of the Whitewater Inn and bicycle tour guide, as well as members of OVCATA, Discovery Routes and Great Lakes Waterfront Trail. The discussions were focused on the bicycle tourist; how they get information about a destination, and what experiences would attract cycle tourists to the Voyageur Cycling Route and its host communities.

The morning discussions were followed by a 26km sectional bicycle ride from Beachburg to Pembroke along county roads. In Pembroke, the group was greeted by officials to recognize the contribution that the Ontario Trillium Foundation has made to the support the expansion of the Voyageur Cycling Route across Eastern Ontario. Officials on hand to welcome cyclists included: Nikki Berry, Constituency Assistant to John Yakabuski, MPP, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke; Ray Westgarth, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Grant Review Team volunteer; Mike LeMay, Mayor of Pembroke; Renfrew County staff in tourism, economic development, development and property; and, members of OVCATA.



Algonquin Trail, Pembroke



Gearheads, Petawawa

Cyclists got back on the Algonquin Trail in Pembroke for the final 16km ride to Petawawa. In Petawawa, the group was welcomed by Mayor of Petawawa and Chair of the Ottawa Valley Recreational Trail Committee Bob Sweet. Mayor Sweet has been the driving force behind the rail trail with the vision that economic growth, tourism and active transportation objectives can be accomplished through the development of a multi-use rail and multi-jurisdictional partnerships.

Below is a map of the route that was followed on the final day of the Mobile Workshop.



Rider Feedback: Beachburg to Petawawa

Through the Township of Whitewater Region east of Beachburg, cyclists enjoyed the quiet country backroads but noted the lack of paved shoulders on sections. There was a great deal of concern expressed about traffic volumes on Greenwood Road/ County Road 40 as cyclists entered the City of Pembroke. It is understood that route authorities are working with the City of Pembroke to open the Pembroke section of the Algonquin Trail. This will be a critical section of trail keeping cyclists separated from the high traffic volumes entering Pembroke.

Strengths

Cyclists enjoyed the picturesque agricultural landscape outside of Beachburg. It was noted that bringing cyclists into Pembroke's downtown will be a tremendous asset once the trail provides a safer entry. The Algonquin Trail between Pembroke and Petawawa is a great family friendly ride with the distance between communities just right and amenities in both communities that make for great end-of-trip attractions.



Algonquin Trail, near Petawawa

Challenges/ Safety Concerns

Every cyclist regardless of their experience expressed concern regarding the high volume of traffic on Pembroke Street East where there is no cycling facility. Traffic approaching Pembroke was heavy and while riders did not feel that drivers were discourteous, they felt pressed in much more than on the rural roads.

Another situation that was brought to attention was the intersection of the Algonquin Trail and Pembroke Street West. Sightlines from the trail are poor and without a controlled intersection, crossing Pembroke Street can be dangerous.

Surface and Slope

Paved shoulders where they are installed are excellent. The other roadway sections are poor with broken pavement along stretches. It is understood that these sections will be improved with hardened shoulders as part of the County's rehabilitation cycle.

North of Pembroke on the Algonquin Trail, the section that has the sandy surface caused some concern for the riders on road bikes with narrow tires. The trail surface into Petawawa was great for all riders.

Wayfinding: Maps and Signage

Signage and mapping is discussed in greater detail in the 'Trail-wide Considerations' section of the report.

Directional Signs:

Voyageur Cycling Route wayfinding signs should be added to roadway sections and along the Algonquin Trail.

Trailhead/ Amenity Signs:

While the Algonquin Trail is easy to navigate, cyclist will venture off the trail to explore the area and visit restaurants, attractions and accommodations. Wayfinding aids would be useful to maximize the economic impact of the trail. Both Pembroke and Petawawa could benefit from trailhead maps that identify amenities in the communities.

Maps:

The Ottawa Valley Tourist Association produces a cycling map for Renfrew County. The Voyageur Route is one of 16 routes identified on the map. In future editions of the cycling map it is recommended that Renfrew County use some of the branding tools that emerge as the Voyageur Cycling Route Marketing Strategy is implemented.

Trail-wide Considerations

Wayfinding: Maps, Signage and Amenities

A well-planned wayfinding and information strategy is key to maximizing the economic benefits derived from cyclists and other trail visitors.

Directional Signs:

Wayfinding signage consistency will be critically important across the Voyageur Cycling Route. The Great Lakes Waterfront Trail is a leader in the province in trail development with a network exceeding 3000km. Part of their success from a trail awareness perspective is in the consistency of signage recognizable across network. In 2017, Discovery Routes launched a wayfinding signage program that

implemented signage along 200km of the Voyageur Cycling Route in Northeastern Ontario. Since the Voyageur Cycling Route along most of the Eastern Ontario section is relatively easy to navigate, wayfinding signage will serve more as awareness and local attention to the shared facility for both the multi-use trail and roadway sections. Discovery Routes will work with trail and road authorities to create a signage plan for the Voyageur Cycling Route in Eastern Ontario that will be consistent with signage along the route in Northern Ontario while also complementing other signage along the OVRT and other designated trailways and routes in Eastern Ontario.

Trailhead Signs and Amenities:

This is a crucial time for trail authorities to understand the needs of all trail users as the signage plan is developed and staging areas are planned along the OVRT. While many trail users have similar needs, individual user groups such as snowmobiles, pedestrians and cyclists will have different needs related to their activity. Cyclists specifically will travel up to 5km off their planned route to access certain amenities like a great lunch stop or business area where they are able to experience the local culture. Public spaces are great spots to point trail users for washrooms and potable water, but from an economic development perspective it is beneficial to get cyclists into local businesses so providing secure bike storage where cyclists can feel comfortable to leave bikes while spending time in the community is an important element of the trail signage and tourism plan. It is important to involve tourism and economic development agencies at the planning stages so that details of the different user groups' needs can be incorporated into the design.

Other trip planning tools and supports

All communities in Eastern Ontario along the Voyageur Cycling Route have some form of digital and print materials that either reference cycling or provide more specific information on suggested routes and amenities. In 2018, the Voyageur Cycling Route Marketing Strategy was completed to assist communities to develop the cycling experience beyond a local activity to an attraction of provincial significance. In order to accomplish this collaborations between jurisdictions must continue beyond the implementation of the cycling route itself. While each community and region have different experiences to offer and to celebrate, the impact of a collaborative marketing approach will create a far greater impact and benefits to all host communities, maximizing the return-on-investments.

Charging stations for e-bikes

A great deal of discussion surrounding the advent of the pedal-assist/ e-bike occurred. Sales of pedal-assist bikes have sky rocked in recent years and they are allowing a new generation of cyclists to go farther, along more challenging terrain providing tremendous opportunity for stakeholders to attract cyclists to Northern and rural Ontario where distances between services may be farther. To grow this market, stakeholders could consider charge stations or encouraging businesses to allow cyclists to charge batteries while they explore a community.

Flooding and Route Closures

Severe flooding along the Ottawa and Mattawa Rivers this year caused a state of emergency in many of the host communities of the Voyageur Cycling Route for much of the cycling season. The Ottawa River Pathway, a beloved path for cycling and pedestrian use and major attraction for visitors to the City received extensive damage caused by the high water levels and may not be fully open for trail use for many more months. From a bicycle destination development perspective, closures like these must be communicated to visitors and assistance provided to determine alternative, safe routes to ensure a good visitor experience.

Support local trail ambassadors

Since a large part of the Voyageur Cycling Route across Eastern Ontario is managed as a multi-use trail with motorised and non-motorised trail users sharing the corridor, a trail ambassador program should be developed in partnership with local trail clubs and advocacy organizations. As the trail becomes more established and all modes of trail use increase, volunteers can help monitor and evaluate use of the trail to ensure that all users are respectful and enjoy the trail in a safe and responsible manner. A strong trail and cycling ambassador program can also be called upon by tourism agencies that may not have in-house bicycle experts. The Ottawa experience during the Mobile Workshop was a great example of when an ambassador program could have been valuable to the visitor cycling experience. The need arose to re-route the bicycle tour at the last moment because the planned route was closed due to flooding. An active trail ambassadors program could be called upon to suggest alternative cycle-friendly routes that allow visiting cyclists to navigate trail and road closures.

The trails, pathways and roadways that form the Voyageur Cycling Route across Eastern Ontario are existing and for the most part present an experience that, once established and integrated into the region's marketing and awareness campaigns, could become one of Ontario's premier cycle tourism experiences. To realize the opportunity, continued cooperation amongst jurisdictions and stakeholders as has been established through the development of the OVRT is critical. These collaborations must include active involvement of the route authorities that manage the infrastructure, tourism agencies that market the experience, businesses that provide services and NGO's with complementary objectives in public health, active transportation, environment and safety.

Appendix One: Meet the Evaluators

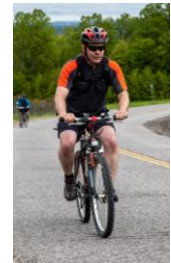


Jim and Mary are long-time cycle tourists in their seventies. They coordinate a senior bike club in Durham that travels to cycling destinations all over Ontario, Quebec and internationally. They have hosted ride breaks on the Great Lakes Waterfront Adventure and are members of the Durham Region Cycling Coalition and the Clarington Cycling Club. Jim and Mary were riding pedal-assist bicycles.



Neil and Leslee have cycled across Canada. They prefer self-guided cycle tours using mobile technology to plan and map their trips. They enjoy the challenge of elevation gains and descents and will log long distances on their road and touring bikes.

David M brings a wealth of experience as the Waterfront Trail Project Manager coordinating the most recent expansions of the Waterfront Trail. Father of three school-aged kids, he explores backroads and small towns with his young family and is always on the lookout for that local, hidden gem. David rode a mountain bike during the Mobile Workshop.



Cora is a long-time volunteer cycle guide on the annual Great Waterfront Trail Adventure rides. She runs a shop called Hamilton Trike and 'bent selling all manner of trikes and accessible bikes. Cora rode a recumbent or trike during the Mobile Workshop.



Jackie has been a guide on the Waterfront Trail Rides for 10+ years and cycles instead of drive most often. She hosts cycle tourists in Air BNB in her hometown of Burlington



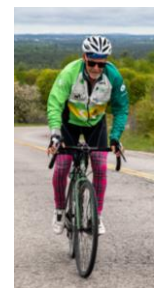
Ted has over 20 years bicycle guiding experience. He has been a trusted guide for the Great Lakes Waterfront Adventure in its 12th year in 2019. Ted rides a touring bike.



Dave G. is new to cycling having been a recreational road cyclist for four years, but as a self-proclaimed hammer-head, he likes to ride long distances, fast. As an economic development professional, he has assisted with implementing cycle tourism infrastructure initiatives and advocated for cycle tourism development throughout the Almaguin Highlands Region.



Dave W. has travelled to international destinations including Colombia, Alps and Pyrennes to cycle. He is one of the founding members of Almaguin in Motion, a local riding group in Northern Ontario that also initiated a bike-share program and encouraged businesses in the small village of Magnetawan to become Ontario by Bike certified.



Jen is the reluctant rider in the group but determined to ride as much of the Voyageur Cycling Route as possible. As coordinator of the expansion, firsthand experience of riding the proposed route is essential as learned from the gurus of trail development: the Waterfront Trail.



Ron is along for the ride! He is an active member of the Ottawa Valley Cycling and Active Transportation Alliance and an enthusiastic volunteer dedicated to advancing opportunities for all forms of active transportation across the Ottawa Valley.

