



# Marketing Strategy for the Véloroute Voyageur/Voyageur Cycling Route

**Ontario By Bike/  
Transportation Options**  
in association with  
The Economic Planning Group &  
Amplitude Consulting

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Photo Credit: Voyageur Cycling Route, Discovery Routes Trails Organization

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Views expressed in this publication are the views of the recipient and do not necessarily reflect those of the Province.

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# Executive Summary

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In 2018, with the support of and funding from a number of partners, Discovery Routes Trails Organization issued a request for proposals (RFP) to engage consultants in the development of a marketing strategy for the Véloroute Voyageur/Voyageur Cycling Route (VVCR). This summary provides some of the key findings and recommendations. The reader is encouraged to review the full document for detailed insights.

## MARKET INTELLIGENCE ON CYCLE TOURISM

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### Cycle Tourists

In Ontario, a cycle tourist is an individual travelling greater than 40km from their place of residence for the purpose of pleasure and where cycling is incorporated in the trip in a variety of different experiences. Cycle tourists can be broken down into the following market segments: Leisure/family; recreational; experienced/touring; race and competitive; mountain biking/specialty.

### Types of Cycle Tourism Experiences

Most types of cycle tourism trips incorporate one or more of the following types of experiences, which can be exclusively on roads, trails or a combination of both: destination riding; day rides and urban cycling; bicycle touring; events and tours.

### Cycle Tourism in Ontario

In Ontario<sup>1</sup>, there were 1.7 million cycling visits (representing 1.2% of a total 141.9 million visits) in 2015 with a total visitor spend of \$500 million. The majority (86%) of those participating in cycling come from within the province.

Further details on Ontario cycle tourists can be found within the report and are derived from secondary research data and primary research conducted specifically to gain insight on the needs, expectations and appeal of the VVCR to cycle tourists. Additional insight into the Quebec market and findings from comparable bicycle routes in Europe, US and Canada are included. Interviews with cycling event coordinators and bike tour operators provided considerable market intelligence to draw from for marketing plan recommendations.

## MARKET READINESS ASSESSMENT

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The market readiness assessment was completed by the consulting team incorporating input from stakeholder consultations, field work, market expertise and a SWOT assessment.

The VVCR in its entirety is still under development, with significant sections requiring infrastructure improvements to safely accommodate cyclists. For analysis and within the report, the VVCR was

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<sup>1</sup> Source for all data on cycle tourists in Ontario: Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, Tourism Research Unit, Ontario Cycling Tourism Statistics 2015, Winter 2018

divided into geographic sections that best reflect the type of cycling experience, current market readiness status and target markets. While there are a number of sections that are market ready, the end to end concept is long term. The table below summarizes the status of each section and identifies the target markets.

VVCR Section	Current Status	Target Market/s
<b>SUDBURY TO HAGAR (~37KM)</b>	Not market ready	N/A
<b>HAGAR TO STURGEON FALLS (~115KM)</b>		
Hagar to Noelville (40km)	Market ready	Experienced/touring cyclists, experienced recreational cyclists
Noelville to Lavigne (45km)	Market ready	As above
Lavigne to Sturgeon Falls (30km)	Market ready	As above
<b>STURGEON FALLS TO NORTH BAY (~30KM)</b>	Not market ready	N/A
<b>NORTH BAY TO MATTAWA (~90KM)</b>		
North Bay to Callander (18km)	Market ready	Family/leisure cyclists, recreational cyclists
Callander to Mattawa (70km)	Market ready	Experienced/touring cyclists, experienced recreational cyclists
<b>MATTAWA TO DEEP RIVER (~110KM)</b>	Not market ready	N/A
<b>DEEP RIVER TO ARNPRIOR (~130KM)</b>		
Deep River to Pembroke (47km)	Not market ready	N/A
Pembroke to Arnprior (83km)	Market ready	Experienced/touring cyclists, experienced recreational cyclists
<b>ARNPRIOR TO CARLETON PLACE TO OTTAWA (~90KM)</b>	Market ready	Family/leisure cyclists, recreational cyclists, Experienced/touring cyclists

## MARKETING PLAN

The overall goal for the marketing plan is to develop and execute strategic marketing and promotional tactics targeting the identified market segments so as to achieve, over the long term, the overall vision for the Voyageur Cycling Route.

*"The vision is that the Voyageur Cycling Route will become part of the foundational provincial cycling network with direct connections to the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail, the Georgian Bay Cycling Route, and the National Capital Region".<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>2</sup> The Vision for the VVCR was provided in the RFP for this project.

We have identified one over-arching theme for the VVCR: The Voyageur Cycling Route is for **Adventurers and Explorers** connecting cyclists of all ages and abilities to the land, the people, the places and the heritage, past and present. There are a number of key sub-themes that include: Voyageur heritage; Water and land; Indigenous People and Places; Gastronomy and drink; Francophone experiences; and the Hosts.

Recommended target markets, as described in further detail in the report, vary by section of the VVCR route and include: experienced touring cyclists; recreational cyclists; and leisure/family cyclists. Primary geographic markets within Ontario and Quebec as well as secondary markets have been identified with specific regions named.

### *Objectives*

#### **SHORT TERM OBJECTIVES**

In the short term, the objectives of the marketing plan are to:

1. Increase awareness of the vision for the VVCR as a long distance cycling route connecting Sudbury and Ottawa among cyclists, residents, municipalities and tourism partners.
2. Increase brand awareness of the VVCR among primary markets about sections of the VVCR that are currently market-ready and increase the number of cyclists using these sections.
3. Encourage cyclists using market-ready sections of the VVCR to take trips that involve overnight stays and to experience the appeal, attractions and amenities on these sections, thereby creating economic impacts in host communities.
4. Increase the number of cycling events and tours along the VVCR.
5. Work with partners to strengthen the VVCR brand by integrating its experiences into ongoing tourism marketing efforts, and creating itineraries using market-ready sections of the route.
6. Provide comprehensive information to targeted cyclist markets on the cycling opportunities and support facilities, infrastructure and services currently available throughout the VVCR.
7. Build the local cycling culture with local residents and tourism businesses. Include safety messaging.

#### **LONG TERM OBJECTIVES**

1. Gain profile for the VVCR as part of Ontario's province-wide cycling network.
2. Increase the number of cyclists travelling on sections of the VVCR on multi-day cycling tours.
3. Increase the number of cyclists travelling the VVCR end to end.
4. Increase participation from visitors from outside the region at cycling events throughout the VVCR.
5. Increase awareness of the VVCR in identified secondary geographic target markets, including southern Ontario, Quebec and US Border States.

### *Promotional Tactics*

A list of recommended tactics to bring the market-ready sections of the VVCR to market is provided, along with recommendations on metrics, tracking and how to analyse the results. As well, there is a summary of where partners would be involved along with priorities and the level of budget required.

The tactics outline what is immediately necessary for the shorter term marketing of the route. Once the VVCR route’s cycling infrastructure is completed, the same tactics can be used with some modifications given the time lapsed and changes in the marketplace during that time. A list of longer term tactics has also been provided. Both the short term and long term tactics are summarized in the table on below.

<b>SHORT TERM MARKETING ACTIONS</b>	<b>LONG TERM MARKETING ACTIONS</b>
(MOST WILL BE ONGOING WITH SOME MODIFICATIONS)	
<p><b>Print Marketing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VVCR Rack Cards</li> <li>• Itinerary Sheets</li> <li>• Route Map Pages for Market-Ready Sections</li> </ul>	<p><b>Print Marketing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fold-out Map or Brochure</li> <li>• Map Book</li> </ul>
<p><b>Digital Marketing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website Development (housed within existing website)</li> <li>• Social Media</li> <li>• Content Development</li> </ul>	<p><b>Digital Marketing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand-alone Website</li> <li>• Influencer Relations</li> <li>• Trip Planner</li> </ul>
<p><b>Events, Tours &amp; Packages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumer Shows &amp; Events (with partners)</li> <li>• Support Existing and New Cycling Events</li> </ul>	<p><b>Events, Tours &amp; Packages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumer Shows &amp; Events (as lead)</li> <li>• Welcome &amp; promotional package for events and tours</li> <li>• Packages (self-guided)</li> <li>• Signature Cycling Event</li> <li>• Supported Tours</li> <li>• Partner with Other Events</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital Asset Library</li> <li>• Community Outreach Plan</li> <li>• Wayfinding Signage</li> <li>• Cycling Clubs Relations</li> </ul>	<p><b>Other</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Print Advertising</li> <li>• Digital Advertising</li> <li>• Travel Media/FAM Tours</li> </ul>
<p><b>Industry Awareness and Support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase VVCR profile and industry information</li> <li>• Grow the cycling culture</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Marketing Partnerships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with existing organizations on new promotional tactics</li> </ul>	



## MOVING FORWARD

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To date, the Discovery Routes Trails Organization (DRTO) has been the recognized lead in the development of the VVCR, working with a variety of partners across the geographic area the route traverses. Moving forward, work will need to be carried out on three fronts:

1. Further infrastructure development of the VVCR sections that are not yet market-ready.
2. Enhancing the market readiness of communities along the VVCR including services, amenities and cycle-friendly businesses.
3. Market development and promotional activities.

While the consultants have considered a number of alternatives and sub options, as outlined in the report, our recommended implementation model is for Discovery Routes Trails Organization to continue as the lead for the VVCR with its role expanding from development into market readiness, market development and promotion. A strong option within this preferred approach is for Discovery Routes to take the lead on market readiness, market development and promotion for that part of the VVCR within its geographical jurisdiction (West Nipissing, North Bay to Mattawa.) with another organization(s) becoming the leads for the more south-eastern sections of the VVCR, working closely with DRTO.

Moving forward with the implementation of the marketing strategy and activating short and longer term tactics from the recommendations included within the promotional plan will require further funding. Funding sources with the potential to support further market development and promotional activities have been identified. These funding sources may also provide support for infrastructure development and market readiness activities.

# Chapter 1: Introduction and Context

## 1.1 ABOUT THE VÉLOROUTE VOYAGEUR / VOYAGEUR CYCLING ROUTE (VOCR)

The Véloroute Voyageur / Voyageur Cycling Route (VOCR) will be a 630km cycling route that when complete will traverse northern Ontario, from Sudbury to North Bay to Mattawa, with routing into eastern Ontario to Ottawa. The route largely follows four heritage waterways and the path of the early Voyageurs through rural and natural landscapes connecting smaller towns and villages, and several larger urban centres, across a total of 25 communities.



The VOVR in its entirety is still under development, with significant sections requiring infrastructure improvements to safely accommodate cyclists. While there are a number of sections that are market ready, the end to end concept is long term.

The initial concept and plans to develop the route from Sudbury to Deep River were formed in 2013 with the collaboration of a number of partners lead by Discovery Routes Trails Organization, a charitable organization based out of North Bay. In 2015, an extensive feasibility study and implementation plan was completed by consultants for the 380km initial northeast arm of the route, helping identify the recommended routing for this section of the VOVR. In subsequent years plans were developed to further extend the route from Deep River to Ottawa, with work commencing in 2017. In 2016, a mobile test ride was completed to further evaluate the route sections between Coniston and Mattawa. In 2017, wayfinding signage was installed along 208km of the northern route, with trailhead signs installed in 9 communities.

For more information see:

- Discovery Routes website and additional background Information: [www.discoveryroutes.ca/vcr](http://www.discoveryroutes.ca/vcr)
- The 2015 Feasibility Study and Implementation Plan: [www.bit.ly/2Qdl0lY](http://www.bit.ly/2Qdl0lY)

## 1.2 ABOUT THIS PROJECT

In 2018, with the support of and funding from a number of partners, Discovery Routes issued a request for proposals (RFP) to engage consultants in the development of a marketing strategy for the Véloroute Voyageur/ Voyageur Cycling Route. (See the Acknowledgement page at the beginning of the report for list of funding and in-kind partners.)

A successful bid was submitted by our team of consultants led by Ontario By Bike/Transportation Options in association with The Economic Planning Group and Amplitude Consulting.

As set out in the RFP, the overall goal was to develop a comprehensive marketing strategy to increase the tourism competitiveness of the Voyageur Cycling Route's host communities in a growth industry by branding these communities as premier destinations for cycle tourists. It is also to incorporate recommendations relating to cycle tourism destination development as well as market readiness needs for the communities connected along this route.

### 1.2.1 THE MARKETING MODEL

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As suggested in this overall goal, a marketing strategy is much more than the tactics employed to attract customers. It incorporates activities ranging from the development of compelling experiences and services through contact with target market segments, to purchasing and the ongoing customer relationship. A marketing strategy combines all four elements (the 4 Ps) of the Marketing Model – Product, Price, Place and Promotion.

For the VVCR, it is the Product and Promotion elements that are critical to the overall strategy:

#### **Product**

Product is what the consumer, in this case the cyclist, purchases or uses. It includes the full range of product features – the cycling infrastructure, the signage, the availability and quality of experiences, the services and amenities provided along the route. Market Readiness is an important part of the Product – it refers to the state of preparedness of the VVCR in delivering all of these important product features. The Product will vary by type of cyclist and the experience they are seeking on a particular trip.

#### **Promotion**

Promotion is the tools used to take the product to market – to develop the market and attract users, e.g. online marketing, advertising, social media, print guides, itineraries, signage, etc. Each of these tools must be supported by, and reflect, the product brand and themes.

It's important that there is a strong connection over the long term between Product and Promotion – those responsible for the promotion of the VVCR need to have a solid understanding of the

product and its market readiness so that the experience delivers on the promise sold in the brand and accompanying promotional activities. As such, the implementation model is crucial to long term success.

### 1.2.2 THE WORK PLAN

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Our consulting team undertook the following four phase work plan between August and November 2018.

#### **Phase I: Situational Analysis**

- Stakeholder interviews – The report draws heavily on information collected from interviews with identified tourism agencies and community leads including Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs), Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), municipalities, Indigenous Tourism Ontario, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. A list stakeholders consulted can be found in Appendix I. The consultants reached out to over 200 contacts and received input from 52.
- Inventory of cyclists' services, facilities and amenities – In-depth field work was undertaken to assess the market potential and market readiness of both the route and communities.
- SWOT Assessment – Looked at the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

#### **Phase II: Market Potential and Cycle Tourism Destination Development Needs and Opportunities**

- Identify and Assess Potential Target Markets – Primary and secondary research was conducted to assist with market analysis including: An on-line survey specific to VVCR (185 completed); use of Environics' Analytics PRIZM5 consumer segmentation system; information from stakeholder interviews; field work; Quebec market research; and interviews with select cycling event coordinators and bike tour operators (9 in total).
- Comparable Route Research – To learn from other long distance cycling routes, the following routes were examined: Natchez Trace (USA); Sea to Sea/C2C Cycle Route (UK); The Great Allegheny Passage (USA); and The Great Lakes Waterfront Trail/Lake Erie (Canada).
- Assess Market Readiness of Communities and Businesses – This was completed drawing from learnings in all project phases.

#### **Phase III: Develop Marketing Plan and Implementation Recommendations**

- Identification of priority target markets, overall goals and objectives for marketing the VVCR, a tactical promotional plan with timelines and recommendations for implementation and partnerships.

#### **Phase IV: Final Report and Presentations**

- Incorporating comments from presentation and review of the report by Discovery Routes and the VVCR Marketing Strategy Steering Committee, a final report was completed and delivered in November 2018.

## 1.3 PROVINCIAL CONTEXT – CYCLING AND DESTINATION MARKETING

### 1.3.1 CYCLING AND CYCLE TOURISM IN ONTARIO TODAY

Cycling and cycle tourism are increasingly recognized by the Ontario provincial government as an activity in which an increasing number of Ontario residents participate and an invaluable sector of the tourism market. The province has a growing network of cycling routes, trails and networks that are administered, maintained and promoted through a variety of channels. More commonly the jurisdiction that owns the roadway or trail has direct responsibility for the infrastructure that forms what can be viewed with a tourism lens as the cycling product.

- **MUNICIPAL CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE AND NETWORKS** – Cities, regions and many towns in Ontario have significant and growing cycling networks that consist of a mix of on road and off-road cycling infrastructure. These networks are being developed with the primary purpose of increasing active transportation options for residents. However, this same infrastructure can be attractive to cycle tourists and when packaged and promoted into a tourism experience can be a draw for and used by cycle tourists. In a number of jurisdictions the VVCR uses routing identified by municipalities and regions as part of their cycling network.
- **TRAIL NETWORKS** – There are a number of trail networks (many that incorporate a mix of on road and off-road cycling infrastructure) that cross multiple jurisdictions and are largely administered and promoted by organizations independent of the municipalities and regions but working closely with them to increase and advocate for trail infrastructure improvements. Examples include: the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail (Waterfront Regeneration Trust), the Greenbelt Route (Greenbelt Foundation), and the Great Trail (Trans Canada Trail.) The VVCR is a natural extension from Sudbury to the Lake Huron North Channel Waterfront Trail (part of the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail). The VVCR from Sudbury to North Bay and Callander uses the same routing as The Great Trail.
- **PROVINCE WIDE CYCLING NETWORK** – In 2013 the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) published the [Ontario Cycling Strategy](#) with the purpose of growing cycling and increasing cycling safety. The Strategy included five strategic directions, one being to increase cycle tourism opportunities. Under that direction, the identification of a province-wide cycling network was one of the recommendations.

In spring 2018, a province wide cycling network study was completed to identify a network of on and off-road cycling routes to best support the growing trend of cycling as a means of transportation, recreation and tourism. This study was commissioned by the Government of Ontario (the Ministry of Transportation in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport). With the network identified through extensive consultations, the next steps include infrastructure work and further consultations, deemed necessary for implementation. Due to the complexity and large scale of the proposed network (9,800km) the promotion of a fully completed, connected and continuous network is a longer term

plan. However, many sections of the province wide network are infrastructure-ready as they incorporate municipal cycling infrastructure and trail networks across various jurisdictions. The VVCR is identified as part of the province wide cycling network.

The province has also recognized the value of the growing cycle tourism sector and has provided clear direction in the 2017 [Tour By Bike Ontario's Cycle Tourism Plan](#), to support further development and prioritization of Ontario as a leading cycle tourism destination.

### 1.3.2 TOURISM DESTINATION MARKETING IN ONTARIO

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Tourism destination marketing in Ontario is undertaken by a large number of organizations at the provincial, regional and local levels:

- **DESTINATION ONTARIO** – The provincial government agency responsible for marketing tourism. It works with industry partners to provide services to the industry, design and implement promotional programs and undertake research.
- **REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATIONS (RTOs)** – Thirteen RTOs are independent, not-for-profit organizations largely funded by the provincial government. These organizations work with the industry and destination marketing organizations to foster the growth of tourism through planning, research, product development, training and marketing. The VVCR crosses three of these RTOs including: Destination Northern Ontario (RTO13); Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization (RTO11); and Ottawa Tourism (RTO10).
- **DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATIONS (DMOs)** – DMOs are usually found at the municipal level; they may be independent not-for-profit organizations, municipal departments or associated with Chambers of Commerce. Their responsibilities often include visitor services, product development and marketing of their local destination area. DMO's in the same geographic area as the VVCR include: Sudbury Tourism; Tourism North Bay; Northeastern Ontario Tourism; Ottawa Valley Tourism Association; Lanark County Tourism.
- **SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS** – There are also a number of sector organizations involved with tourism in Ontario, such as Attractions Ontario, Boating Ontario, Camping in Ontario, Ontario By Bike, Société de l'Économique Ontario (SÉO) (promoting Francophone tourism and La Route de Champlain). Some of these are member-based organizations, others are not-for-profit groups; they promote their sector and in some cases act as advocacy organizations for issues related to their sector.

# Chapter 2: Market Intelligence

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This chapter provides an overview of the cycle tourist market in general and specifically in the Ontario and Quebec markets. It is a gathering of market intelligence established through a variety of research undertaken for this project and complemented by the knowledge and expertise of the consulting team. These insights provide context to the selection of target markets which is presented in Chapter 7 – The Marketing Plan.

## 2.1 CYCLE TOURISTS

In Ontario a tourist is defined as an individual travelling greater than 40km from their place of residence for the purpose of pleasure. Expanding on this definition, a cycle tourist is an individual travelling greater than 40km from their place of residence for the purpose of pleasure and where cycling is incorporated in the trip in a variety of different experiences (see 2.2 Types of Cycle Tourism Experiences).

Cycle tourists have a wide range of interests, abilities and participate at a variety of ages. They include young families, couples or larger groups, cycling clubs, single riders, retired persons, long-distance road racers and first-time tour riders. Based on profiles created by Ontario By Bike and widely accepted, cycle tourists can be broken down into the following market segments and types:

- **LEISURE/FAMILY CYCLING MARKET** – Cycling is not the main purpose for a trip and is considered a secondary activity while on a trip or visiting friends/relatives. Cycling is incorporated among a variety of other activities in a destination. This market prefers off-road cycling paths or trails; they favour loops and generally travel 20km or less each ride.
- **RECREATIONAL CYCLING MARKET** – Cycling is either a main reason or an important activity on a trip. This market is comfortable riding on roads, as well as on off-road cycling paths/trails (they have a preference for the latter). This market can cycle between 20 to 80km/day with frequent stops at attractions and other locations in a destination. They prefer roofed accommodation or staying with friends/relatives.
- **EXPERIENCED / TOURING CYCLING MARKET** – Experienced cyclists are those who prefer longer distances of riding, either as a day trip or on multi-day cycle touring trips. Daily distances can reach up to or over 100km. This market prefers good quality, paved roads with lower traffic volumes and a variety of terrain and elevation. As with other markets they have a preference for safe cycling infrastructure (bike lanes or paved shoulders). They tend to stop less frequently while cycling.
- **RACE & COMPETITIVE CYCLING MARKET** – This market consists of experienced cyclists who visit an area specifically to participate in a competitive event or race, or to train. This market consists of group rides with a team or club, as well as individual cyclists. These individuals have a higher than average fitness level and usually ride very expensive bicycles. They enjoy

long and challenging rides on roads with preference for cycling infrastructure (bike lanes or paved shoulders) and can ride up to, and over 100km.

- **MOUNTAIN BIKING/SPECIALTY CYCLING MARKET** – Primarily a younger male market with growing female and older rider segments they range from casual to highly skilled riders. The appeal of a destination relates to the variety and difficulty of terrain, number of trails, and scenery. The mountain bike segment of this market typically rides in designated mountain bike facilities, conservation areas or provincial and national parks. Other segments include gravel road riding, bike packing and cyclo-cross, who typically ride on a variety of terrain including gravel roads, rail trails and other range of technical trails.

An individual cyclist can fit into several different segments, depending on the specific occasion. Hence a touring/experienced road cyclist might also be a mountain biker, and on occasion a leisure and family cyclist.

## 2.2 TYPES OF CYCLE TOURISM EXPERIENCES

Most types of cycle tourism trips incorporate one or more of the following types of experiences, which can be exclusively on roads, trails or a combination of both.

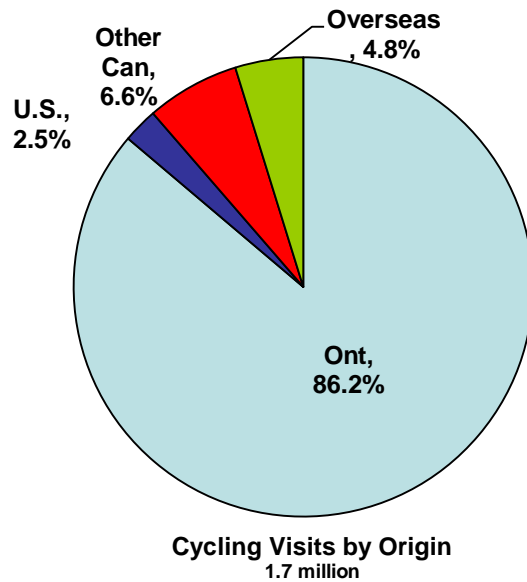
- **DESTINATION RIDING:** Overnight cycling trips that focus around a specific destination and the cycling available in that area. Sometimes referred to as 'Drive and Ride' or 'Hub and Spoke' trips, where a vehicle is used to travel to a destination.
  - E.g. Collingwood residents drive to North Bay incorporating several days of road riding trips in and around the North Bay area.
- **DAY RIDES AND URBAN CYCLING:** Day cycling trips that focus around a specific destination and the cycling amenities available in that area.
  - E.g. Sudbury residents drive and ride on Manitoulin Island, Ottawa residents drive to Almonte to ride on Ottawa Valley Rail Trail. Can be exclusively on roads, trails or a combination of both.
- **BICYCLE TOURING:** Independently organized, multi-day bike trips. Self-supported or accompanied by companion vehicle. Typically on linear or longer cross-regional looped routes.
  - **Bike Packing/Bike Camping:** As a sub-section of Bicycle Touring, this segment is more actively looking to incorporate trails or less used or more remote paved/gravel roads on their trips and have a greater preference for camping compared to roofed accommodations.
  - E.g. Cycling from Montreal to Toronto following the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail and carrying all necessary equipment and gear in one's panniers.
- **EVENTS AND TOURS:** Visitation to a region due to specific cycling events, races or tours hosted in that area. Can be single day or overnight experiences.
  - E.g. 5-day supported Great Waterfront Trail Adventure from Ajax to Quebec. Guided day tours in 1000 Islands.



## 2.3 CYCLE TOURISTS IN ONTARIO

In Ontario<sup>3</sup>, there were 1.7 million cycling visits in 2015 (representing 1.2% of total 141.9 million visits). According to Statistics Canada's Travel Survey of Residents of Canada and the International Travel Survey, these visitors spent \$500 million, accounting for 2% of total visitor spending in Ontario.

The majority of cycle tourists in Ontario come from within the province, 86%; a figure comparable to the origin of all visitors. Beyond provincial visitors, 6.6% of cycle tourists are Canadians (of which 62% from Quebec); 2.5% are American; and 4.8% are international cycle tourists (predominantly from France, UK, Germany). Within Ontario, the biggest market is cyclists from Toronto (22%) and Hamilton Halton Brant (15%).



Although Ontarians represented 86% of cycle tourists, they accounted for only 61% of spending. 24% of spending came from overseas visitors and 11% from other Canadians. These proportions are similar to the spending patterns for all visits in Ontario.

According to the [Ontario Cycling Tourism Statistics 2015](#) (data for this report came from Statistics Canada's travel surveys), Northern Ontario (RTO 13) received 7% of all cycling visits in Ontario.

### 2.3.1 PROFILE OF AN ONTARIO CYCLE TOURIST

The demographics and spending habits detailed below were sourced from the *From Niche To Now: Cycle Tourism in Ontario* sector report (2015), developed by Transportation Options.

- **Age:** 45-64 age range is the largest market; also significant is 35-44 age range
- **Gender:** More males are participating in cycling, but female riders are increasing

#### Lessons Learned

- Ontario cyclists are of a slightly older demographic, more commonly male, affluent and well-educated.
- Cycling visitors in Ontario frequently stay overnight on their trips; spending more and staying longer than non-cycling visitors.
- Cycling events are popular with Ontario cyclists and could present a valuable demand generator for destinations along the VVCR route.

<sup>3</sup> Source for all data on cycle tourists in Ontario: Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, Tourism Research Unit, [Ontario Cycling Tourism Statistics 2015](#), Winter 2018

- **Education:** Well-educated with nearly two-thirds being university educated
- **Ability:** A larger percentage of cyclists tend to identify themselves as experienced road cyclists and having cycled for more than 5 years
- **Income:** Cyclists have higher than average household income

### 2.3.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ONTARIO CYCLE TOURIST

Spending habits and characteristics detailed below were sourced from the *From Niche To Now: Cycle Tourism in Ontario* sector report 2015, Transportation Options, as well as Statistics Canada’s Travel Survey of Residents of Canada and International Travel Survey 2015, and the Ontario Cycling Tourism Statistics 2015 report prepared by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

- Cycling visitors spent an average of \$299/trip compared to \$179/trip for non-cyclists
- Cyclists spend a larger proportion on accommodation, food and beverage and entertainment than other visitors
- Majority of cycling visits are overnight. An average of 3.7 nights were spent on cycling visits
- Majority of experienced cyclists participate in more than 3 cycling events annually
- Nearly half of leisure/family cyclists attend a cycling event annually

## 2.4 ENVIRONICS' ANALYTICS RESEARCH ON CYCLISTS

Environics Analytics is a Canadian polling and market research firm based in Toronto. Utilizing privacy friendly data, Environics Analytics has created advanced market segmentation tools that create customer profiles according to shared demographic, lifestyle and behavioural traits.

The following information was identified using Environics' PRIZM5 consumer segmentation system, which assessed over 2,600 postal codes and associated city/town names that had been collected by Ontario By Bike through mail fulfillment requests from 2016-2018. Access to Environics' segmentation tools was made available through a partnership between Ontario By Bike and Ontario's RTO7 (Regional Tourism Organization 7 - Bruce Grey Simcoe). The data was presented to Ontario By Bike in July 2018.

### Lessons Learned

- Ottawa, Greater Toronto Hamilton Area and London present a clear geographic target market area in the long term.
- Incorporating visible minorities in marketing materials may resonate with a growing segment of cyclists in southern Ontario.
- There is an opportunity to build cycling packages with local hotels, attractions and perhaps a complementary nature-based activity.
- Access to nature, proximity to provincial parks and availability of nature-based activities along the VVCR will appeal to these segments.
- Social media will be an effective marketing and communication channel for the VVCR.

Based on this data, further segments were extrapolated for southern Ontario, including those who indexed high or very high for the variable *Frequency of Participation – Cycling (mountain/road biking)*. The identified consumer segments rank highly with the neighbourhoods of the people who requested cycling fulfilment orders from 2016 to 2018 and were determined to contain the 'best bet' profiles for recreational cyclists located in southern Ontario.

**Demographic Profile:**

- Between the ages of 35 to 54
- 3 or more person households, married (or common-law couples)
- Average household incomes of nearly \$135,000
- Most live in relatively new single detached houses that they own
- Predominantly English-only speakers, with segment of market speaking both English and French
- Nearly half are visible minority, with larger contingents of South Asian and Chinese backgrounds

**Travel Profile:**

- Spent \$1,600+ on last vacation
- Typically stay in hotels, with friends and relatives, at bed & breakfasts or use RV/Campers
- Many take 3-4 out-of-town vacations each year

**Interests & Activities:**

- Visit local attractions (such as sporting events, racing events and air shows)
- Visit national or provincial parks
- Enjoy outdoor / nature-based activities including camping, hiking, backpacking , as well as golf
- Visiting art galleries, museums and science centres
- Enjoy water-based activities, particularly canoeing and kayaking
- Enjoy photography

**Media Consumption Profiles:**

- 'Light TV Viewers' – (movies, home renovation shows, sit coms)
- Medium/Heavy Radio Listeners' – Mainstream/Top 40, news/talk, adult contemporary
- 'Heavy Online Use'
  - Social Media – Facebook, YouTube, Instagram
  - Top Activities – Map/directions, food/recipe content, health-related content, news, restaurant guides/reviews

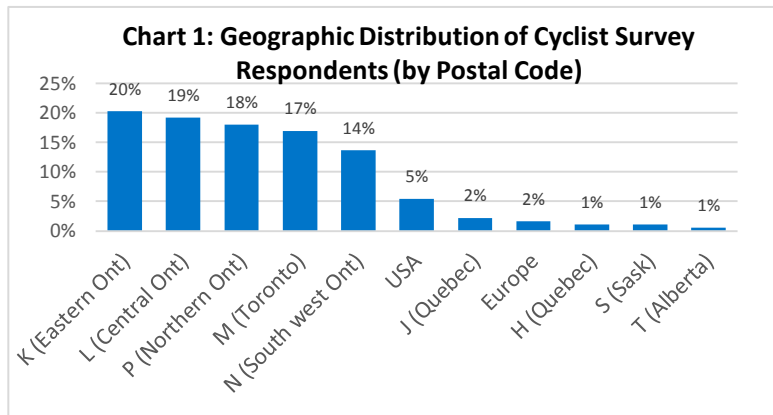
## 2.5 ONLINE CYCLISTS' SURVEY

An online survey was developed specifically for this project to assist in determining the appeal and the needs of cyclists. The results were collected using Survey Monkey, a popular and reliable online survey service. The link to the survey was included in Ontario By Bike's September e-newsletter, which reached 14,768 cyclists and was distributed through a variety of social media channels. The

final result was 185 completed surveys. Full survey responses can be found in Appendix 2. The key findings from the survey are described below.

### Who were the respondents?

- 64% of survey respondents were male, while 36% were female
- 45% of survey respondents were aged between 45-64, while 39% were aged between 25-44
- 49% of survey respondents identified themselves as an *experienced touring/road cyclist*, while 38% of survey respondents viewed themselves as a *recreational cyclist*
- 56% of survey respondents prefer self-guided, self-supported cycling experiences
- The majority had little interest in guided tours or events
- Respondents are avid cyclists, with 44% who took 3 or more multi day cycling trips in the past 2 years and over half (55%) who took more than 10 single day cycling trips in the past 2 years.
- Chart 1 illustrates the origins of respondents based on postal codes supplied. 17%- 20% came from each of Eastern Ontario (K), Central Ontario (L), Northern Ontario (P) and Toronto (M).



### What are their needs as cyclists?

- The following amenities and services were indicated as the most important by survey respondents (*not route specific*). Respondents provided a rating between 1 and 5, where 5 is very important.
  - On road cycling (e.g. paved shoulders): 4.07
  - Communities with services every 80-100km: 3.98
  - Washrooms every 80-100km: 3.80
  - Note: Nearly 75% indicated On road cycling (e.g. paved shoulders) was 'important' or 'very important'
- The following information and resources were indicated as the most important by survey respondents while on cycling trips

### Lessons Learned

- The demographic and cycling profile of the respondents reflects past research on cyclists in Ontario.
- Respondents are avid cyclists with a greater preference towards self-guided and self-contained cycling experiences.
- Showcasing scenic sections of the VVCR route with an emphasis on accessibility to nature and unique communities may resonate with cyclists.
- Insufficient cycling infrastructure on sections of the route with high volume traffic (including trucks) will considerably lessen the appeal of the VVCR route.

(not route specific). Respondents provided a rating between 1 and 5, where 5 is very important.

- Wayfinding signage on routes: 4.18
- Full information website: 3.99
- Print maps of route: 3.52
- Respondents were provided an overview of the Voyageur Cycling Route and the following attributes appealed most to survey respondents. Respondents provided a rating between 1 and 5, where 5 is very important.
  - Scenery: 4.54
  - Access to nature: 4.28
  - Small towns and communities: 3.97
- Respondents were provided with an overview of the Voyageur Cycling Route and asked what makes this route less appealing (open-ended). The responses are summarized below with details in Appendix 2.
  - 66% of survey respondents responded with comments that included references to "Roads", "Traffic" and/or "(Paved) Shoulders".
    - Increased to 76% when including references such as "Highway", "motorized" and "Safety".

## 2.6 MARKET POTENTIAL: CYCLING EVENTS AND BIKE TOURS

The growing number of cycling events and bike tours in Ontario are an indication of increased participation and interest in cycling and cycle tourism across the province. Research shows that 66% of cyclists in Ontario participate in cycling events, with the largest participation level being experienced cyclists who average 3 or more cycling events annually. While 69% of cyclists in Ontario take overnight or day trips cycling, only 24% had an interest in a guided tour.<sup>4</sup>

In order to gain insight into the market potential for the VVCR to be included or featured as part of an event or tour, we reached out to a number of cycling event coordinators and bike tour operators to get their input as to what opportunities, appeal and needs would encourage them to bring cycling events and tours to the VVCR.<sup>5</sup>

### Overall Appeal of the VVCR

- Nature and remote aspects of the route have potential for unique appeal to some cyclists.
- The route needs to be fully completed in order to do an end to end event or tour; until then there may be some potential to use sections of the route.

<sup>4</sup> From Niche to Now (2015) Transportation Options. [www.ontariobybike.ca/from-niche-to-now](http://www.ontariobybike.ca/from-niche-to-now)

<sup>5</sup> Personal interviews. (2018). Bike tour operators: Escape Bicycle Tours and Rentals; Humdinger Bicycle Tours; Pedal Pushers Cycle & Spa Clinics/Tours; OK Cycle Tours. Cycling event coordinators for: Crank the Shield; Great Waterfront Trail Adventure; Le Tour de Norfolk; Manitoulin Passage; West Nipissing Cycle for Charity.

- Ottawa Valley/Renfrew, Lanark, Ottawa with a larger number and range of services and amenities, give this part of the VVCR area an overall larger appeal for events and tours at present.
- Routing along the scenic Ottawa River.
- Francophone communities and operators.
- There needs to be complementary experiences to enhance the appeal to visitors in general and also to cyclists e.g. there needs to be more to do than just cycling.

### Needs and Considerations

- A local contact or operator is essential for the coordination of events and tours to make it easier to navigate approvals and obtain letters of support required for the use of infrastructure. (e.g. MTO, municipality, Police, Fire, EMS). Smaller groups, tours and events often do not need to get approvals.
- Local champion/s can assist with the development and marketing of events and tours.
- Good and safe infrastructure – events and tours prefer routing using quieter roads with low traffic volumes.
- Maintenance of infrastructure – roads that are swept clean; trails well maintained.
- There needs to be interesting small communities with a preference for short distances between communities and points of interest.
- Distances between communities and start/end points for any route will dictate the type of cycling market the event or tour will appeal to.
- There are a large number of logistical considerations which include: availability of host venue, parking, accommodations, catering, facilities including washrooms, transportation and locations for rest stops.
- The quality of services, accommodations and food services in particular, will directly relate to the type of cyclist the route, and any events or tours, will appeal to.
- Availability of caterers that can provide the quantity and quality of food for tours and event participants.
- Provision of support services including logistics for luggage transfer and return transportation if a linear routing is used for the tour or event.

### Lessons Learned

- High need for local contact, knowledge and champion.
- Scale of any event or tour may be dictated by logistics.
- The quality of services, accommodations and food service, will dictate the type of market the route, and any event or tour, will appeal to.
- Good cycling infrastructure is key.
- Start with the development of smaller events using sections of the VVCR.
- Looped routes are easier for event and tour coordination.
- Need for complementary activities.
- The remote aspect of VVCR may have some appeal to certain market segments, but there needs to be excellent information resources on routing and expectations of cyclists need to be managed.

- TICO requirements for tour operators selling packages present a challenge for small tour operators. Insurance costs can be prohibitive for smaller events and tours.
- Price point for event registration.
- Ensuring dates of any new events or tours do not complete with others already established, to avoid the cannibalization of market or logistical challenges.
- Signage on established routes and maps to assist with navigation.
- Availability of bike rentals.
- Securing sponsors for events.
- Securing volunteers to assist with events.
- Cell phone coverage for emergency support.
- Marketing will need to overcome challenges of getting cyclists from southern Ontario to come north.
- Full disclosure is crucial – Need to manage expectations, match overall quality of experience and type of infrastructure with the type of cyclist.

### **Opportunities and Recommendations**

- Market as a bucket list challenge event or adventure tour.
- Host events or tours that incorporate sections of VVCR rather than end to end routing.
- Events can help celebrate and increase awareness of new sections of the route as it opens.
- Start small with events targeting locals, to encourage cycling, active and healthy living, and then grow events to appeal to a wider market. E.g. Appeal to closer cycling markets such as Sudbury cyclists.
- Cycling events present an opportunity to reach and engage local businesses and the community and increase awareness of the route.
- Looped routes work best for logistical reasons. However, an event or tour can help cyclists do a route that may not be easy to complete as a self-supported rider.
- Camping could help alleviate limited roofed accommodation options.
- There may be potential to feature the route (or part thereof) and partner with the Waterfront Regeneration Trust for a future edition of the Great Waterfront Trail Adventure event.
- Create a loop with VVCR route and single track return on the section between North Bay and Mattawa which will appeal to the adventure cycling touring market and bike packers.

## **2.7 THE QUEBEC MARKET**

Part of knowing your visitor is learning about where they are from. The province of Quebec is known to its residents as “la belle province” and is the 2nd most populated province after Ontario with 8 million people; representing nearly 25% of Canada’s population. While the official language of Quebec

is French and 80% of the population use French as their first language, 50% can communicate only in French<sup>6</sup>.

Cycling is a popular activity for Quebec residents and when travelling. They have a strong culture of cycling on dedicated cycling routes, infrastructure and paths, in part due to a well-established provincial cycling network called La Route verte. The Quebec cycling market presents a significant opportunity for destinations developing and promoting cycling to visitors.

The following information is an overview of both Quebec tourist characteristics and preferences in general, as well as those specific to Quebec's cycling tourists. The aim is to provide context to the selection of target markets which is presented in Chapter 7 – The Marketing Plan.

### Preferences of Quebec Tourists

- The most common length of stay in Ontario is 7 days;
  - 36% of visitors stay between 4 to 6 days
- The following are popular accommodations preferences:
  - 45% prefer to stay in hotels or motels
  - 25% in motorized/trailer campers
  - 10% camp in back country
- The following are popular activities of Quebec visitors:
  - Walking
  - Visiting historical sites/museums
  - Shopping at chic boutiques
  - Boating
  - RVing
  - Visiting local festivals, farmers markets and wineries
  - Visiting amusement parks
  - Visiting beaches
  - Discovering local products
  - Visiting large cities
- Quebec visitors enjoy visiting cities that are walkable
- Quebecers prefer to travel in large groups, where at least one person is comfortable speaking English
- Quebecers often plan ahead and make use of guides and visitor information services

### Lessons Learned

- The Quebec cycling market is larger, more evenly balanced between male and female and slightly younger than Ontario's.
- Large segment of Quebec cyclists are experienced with high expectations for safe cycling infrastructure.
- Preference is for self-guided road riding.
- Younger Quebec cyclists, while cycling shorter distances on trips have a greater tendency to carry luggage.
- Providing clear information about the type of cycling infrastructure and quality is important when promoting to Quebec cycle tourists.

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<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada (2011). French and the francophonie in Canada. Language, Census of Population



## Profile of Quebec Cycle Tourists<sup>7 8</sup>

- A significant portion of the market are avid and experienced cyclists who place importance on road and path quality in terms of separated facilities, surface quality, low car traffic and overall security
- Leisure/family cyclists also make up a considerable portion of the cycling market and place importance on the diversity of activities and experiences
- 36% of Quebec residents enjoy cycling
- 66% are between the ages of 46 and 65, while 25% are aged between 18 and 45
- More than half of Quebec cycle tourists work full time and 30% are retired
- More than half of Quebec cycle tourists are empty nest couples
- 55% of Quebec cyclists are men and 45% are women
- 35% have a household income over \$100,000 (slightly lower than other jurisdictions)

## Characteristics of Quebec Cycle Tourists<sup>910</sup>

- Spending for a group of two Quebec cyclists is an average of \$554/trip or \$210/day
- Self-guided road riding is the most popular type of cycling
- 34% ride between 200 and 499km/trip (10% ride 500km+)
  - There is a tendency to ride longer distances along provincial cycling network, La Route verte
- Average 3.8 hours/day of riding or 21 hours of riding/trip
- 76% use bikes as their main mode of transportation while at a destination
- Most are interested in purchasing local products, culinary experiences and visiting parks while on a cycling trip
  - Have a greater interest in hiking and camping while on cycling trips than cyclists from Ontario or the United States
- 40% carry their luggage on their bike, more among cyclists aged between 18 to 45

### Lessons Learned

- Clear and precise route markings (signage) is essential and best supported by a comprehensive website and practical cycling map or print-based lure.
- Digital marketing with attractive web presence will be effective in engaging this market.
- Targeted distribution of print materials should be timely and reflect the overall lead times in trip planning process.
- Having a French language map and marketing materials is not essential, however having a base-level of French content on a website is important.

<sup>7</sup> Cycling in Quebec: A Portrait of a Customer (2015). University of Quebec and Montreal. Transat Chair of Tourism

<sup>8</sup> Claude Péloquin and Claudine Barry (2018). Presentation to Tourism Excellence North's Quebec Best Practices Mission. October 10, 2018

<sup>9</sup> Cyclists Survey: Montreal Cycling Show (2014). The Economic Planning Group of Canada and Direction Ontario

<sup>10</sup> Velo Quebec (2014). Grand Tour Participant Survey. Conducted by Amplitude Consulting for Waterfront Regeneration Trust

- One of 4 cyclists aged 55+ use a luggage transfer service
- The 'destination' itself is one of the motivating factors when deciding on a cycling vacation
- They desire clear and precise route markings

### **Trip Planning Preferences of Quebec Cycle Tourists<sup>1112</sup>**

- 40% take 1 month or more to plan their cycling trip
  - Younger demographics take less time planning their trip
  - There is a strong correlation between length of stay and lead time of planning
- 58% use the internet when planning their trip, while 35% rely on a bikeway network maps
- Paper maps are the most common referenced tool/resource when in a destination followed by Smartphones
- 58% prefer tourism services and information in French. However, over 40% indicated that they did not think any French language information or services were essential when choosing a biking destination. Websites were perceived as the most essential channels to incorporate French language information and services

### **Other Considerations**

Relevant to the VVCR there are a couple of additional considerations to be taken into account in developing and promoting the VVCR to the Quebec market.

- As a large majority of Quebec residents use French as their first language, and may not be confident with their English language skills, having some degree of bilingual promotional materials for the VVCR is important. Also conveying the message that many of the communities' enroute are Francophone will help appeal to this market
- With Quebec cyclists being fairly sophisticated and experienced riders with many route and cycle tourism options within their province and in the US border states, differentiating the VVCR as something they may not experience in other areas is essential, especially as the landscape in both provinces is very similar

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<sup>11</sup> Cyclists Survey: Montreal Cycling Show (2014). The Economic Planning Group of Canada and Direction Ontario

<sup>12</sup> Cycling in Quebec: A Portrait of a Customer (2015). University of Quebec and Montreal. Transat Chair of Tourism

# Chapter 3: Findings from Research into Comparable Routes

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Four comparable cycling routes were researched to gain insights into their markets, marketing practices and other lessons that could be valuable to VVCR. The four routes were:

- Natchez Trace, USA
- Sea to Sea/C2C Cycle Route, UK
- The Great Allegheny Passage, USA
- The Great Lakes Waterfront Trail – Lake Erie section, Ontario

## 3.1 NATCHEZ TRACE, USA

Natchez Trace is a 444 mile (715 km) parkway ([www.nps.gov/natr](http://www.nps.gov/natr)) running through three states (Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee) from south of Jackson, MS to near Nashville, TN. Described as ‘10,000 years of history’ following an historic travel corridor used by American Indians, slave traders and settlers, it is owned and managed by the US National Parks Service. Construction of the Parkway commenced in the 1930s with two final gaps completed in 2005.

### Key Features

- A US scenic route and a designated cycle route.
- A two-lane road largely without shoulders.
- Commercial traffic (trucks) is prohibited; use is limited to automobiles, motorcycles, recreational vehicles and cyclists.
- The maximum speed is 50 mph (80 km per hour).
- Traffic is reported as generally light other than near two main communities; however there are some multi-use paths that avoid some of these heavier traffic areas.
- Cyclists are required to ride single file, on the right hand side of the road.

The route is used by experienced touring cyclists for multi-day trips covering all or significant parts of the route as well as for day rides. There appears to be no data on the volume of cyclists but there are over 6 million visitors to the Natchez Trace overall, according to US National Park Service data.

Groups of 8 or more cyclists require a permit to use the route. While events are permitted there are some strict guidelines (e.g. cyclists must ride in single file, no racing and no support vehicles are permitted in front of or behind groups).

## Appeal and Amenities

Natchez Trace's appeals to cyclists include:

- Great scenery, vistas and landscapes as well as history with an abundance of natural and historic stopping points for breaks (close to 100 in total)
- No commercial services along the parkway, no buildings and no signs (and no stop lights) so the entire route is a natural environment.
- As a US Parks Service designated cycle route:
  - Park rangers patrol the road to provide assistance
  - There are cyclist only campgrounds
  - There are washrooms every 20 – 30 miles
- Traffic is relatively light and there are no trucks. (There are however reported concerns with safety for cyclists given that there are no shoulders and concerns that the parkway is used as a 'commuter' route).
- There are numerous side trails connecting with back roads some of which form loops back to the main route.
- While there are no commercial services on the road, there are small communities, many with bicycle-friendly accommodations, food and beverage services and bike services, close to the parkway, and they are located by reference to mile markers along the route and an accompanying list of what is available and distance off the route.
- Various companies offer supported rides and there are also companies that provide shuttle services to/from area airports and major communities.

## Marketing

The US National Parks Service does not do 'marketing' per se since their primary mandate is education not revenue generation or audience growth. Information on cycling the Natchez Trace, including the location of amenities and services, can be found on the US National Parks Service website for this park ([www.nps.gov/natr/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/natr/index.htm)).

As is the case with many US destinations, marketing is primarily the responsibility of the private sector. A number of private groups associated with commercial lodging and tourist bureaus in the area promote the Natchez Trace through social media. One group (NatchezTraceTravel) promotes travel throughout the area and hosts a website with a section dedicated to cycling; this site includes:

### Lessons Learned

- Easy access to basic services and amenities is important, but does not have to be directly on the route.
- Shuttle ride options make one-way trips doable, and are also important for cyclists arriving by air. Supported ride options also expand the appeal of the route.
- Loops, even if off the main route, add appeal and broaden the cycling options.
- Marketing is done primarily by the private sector and local/regional DMOs; the trail owner (National Parks Service) provides information through their website.
- There are very large resident markets within easy access/travel to the Parkway.

- Detailed information about cycling the Trace including amenities and lodging information
- Maps
- Cyclists comments and pictures
- Suggested itineraries including “out and back” bike trips that cover a section of the Natchez Trace, not the entire route
- Information on bike shops, public transportation, weather, where to find drinking water
- An ‘itinerary planning tool’ ( [www.natcheztracetravel.com/biking-the-trace/itinerary-planner.html](http://www.natcheztracetravel.com/biking-the-trace/itinerary-planner.html)) through which they will help individual cyclists plan their trip, provide tips from other cyclists

This group also promotes the Natchez Trace, including cycling, through social media but their social media sites are not dedicated to cycling.

## 3.2 SEA TO SEA/C2C CYCLE ROUTE, UK

This is a 140 mile (225 km) route from coast to coast, west to east, running from Whitehaven to Tynemouth in northern England. The C2C Cycle Route was established by Sustrans in partnership with local authorities, as part of the National Cycle Network, and opened in 1994. Sustrans is a UK charity whose mandate is to make it easier to cycle and walk in the UK, and is champion of the National Cycle Network. [www.c2c-guide.co.uk](http://www.c2c-guide.co.uk)

### Key Features

- Route is a mix of ‘car free’ sections (tracks, converted railways, approximately 46%) and quiet country lanes (50%) with the occasional busier road (4%).
- There are a number of loop options, some of them off-road and more suitable for mountain bikes.
- The route traverses a variety of landscape and there are some significant climbs; completing the entire route is described as challenging and requires 2 – 4 days.
- It is an iconic UK bike route and ‘Britain’s most popular long-distance route.’

### Lessons Learned

- The route’s mix of off-road and quiet roads is appealing.
- Trail use is a combination of those doing the full length and many more doing sections and loops.
- Availability of public transportation to starting/ending points and shuttle services maximizes its accessibility.
- The area is a popular tourist destination with numerous other cycling options.
- Marketing is done at three levels – through the national cycling organization (primarily information), private sector and local/regional DMOs.
- There are large markets with easy access to the route via public transportation.

C2C is suitable for sturdy touring bikes, hybrids and touring friendly mountain bikes. Reports indicate some 15,000 cyclists complete the route annually, with hundreds of thousands doing sections. Sustrans reports that C2C contributes £12 million per year to the local economies.

### **Appeal and Amenities**

- The route is very scenic with valleys and hills, travelling through the old industrial heartland of the UK. It bisects the Lakes District National Park, a popular recreational destination.
- The route goes through/by numerous small villages which offer basic services and amenities, including cycle shops, accommodations and sites to visit.
- The route is train accessible at the start and finish.
- There are options for luggage and bike transfer services along the route. This service will also return the cyclists to their starting point.
- There are companies that provide organized tours of the route.
- There are numerous other cycling trails in the area, some of which connect to or use parts of the C2C trail.

### **Marketing**

As part of the National Cycling Network, information on the route is available through Sustrans ([www.sustrans.org.uk/Sea-to-Sea-C2C-cycle-route](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/Sea-to-Sea-C2C-cycle-route)). The primary marketing/information source is through a private organization, Cycle Guides, which provides information on a number of northern cycle routes, including C2C ([www.c2c-guide.co.uk/the-route](http://www.c2c-guide.co.uk/the-route)). However, the website is old, and apparently in the process of being updated.

Cycle guides, maps and route profiles are available through this website, along with links to accommodations and services in each community, as well as bike tour and transportation companies. This company also hosts social media sites about C2C but they do not appear to be kept up-to-date. Cycling in the area generally is promoted by other groups such as the Lake District National Park, and destination marketing organizations which promote cycle routes, events, tours and support services.

## **3.3 THE GREAT ALLEGHENY PASSAGE, USA**

The Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) ([www.gaptrail.org](http://www.gaptrail.org)) a 150 mile (240 km) off-road trail from Pittsburgh, through the industrial heartland of Pennsylvania to Cumberland, with connections to routes that go into Washington, DC. It was established by the Allegheny Trail Alliance, a coalition of trail groups in the area. The Alliance was established in 1995; the GAP was completed in 2013.

### **Key Features**

- An abandoned rail line so it is fairly flat along its entire route.
- Packed crush limestone surface.
- Runs through a state park and traverses a variety of landscapes and scenic areas.

- Numerous ‘Trail Towns’ are adjacent to the trail providing a wide variety of amenities and services.
- There are a number of connecting trails and other connections planned. One of these connections will enable cyclists to travel from Pittsburgh International Airport by bike to the trail. Amtrak (train) also offers a bike service and has stops in Pittsburgh.
- Free and fee-based campgrounds along the trail.

The GAP is used by cyclists, hikers and some sections by equestrians. In 2017, total trail visits were estimated at about 1 million. Its economic impact is estimated at \$50 million annually, representing a significant portion of the regional economy.

### Appeal and Amenities

- An off-road, flat trail, the GAP appeals to all user groups including recreational cyclists and families.
- There are a full range of amenities and services along the route in cycle-friendly communities, including parking and easily accessible trail heads.
- A number of companies provide shuttle services.
- Many communities along the GAP have bike shops/bike rental services.

The Trail Town® Program ([www.trailtowns.org](http://www.trailtowns.org)) has been an important community economic development program along the trail, and significantly enhanced the appeal of trail communities. The Trail Town Program was developed by The Progress Fund, a not-for-profit Community Development initiative supported by numerous foundations and federal and state government departments; it supports small business in Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Maryland. Key elements of the Trail Town program include:

- The program was designed to stimulate economic growth, support local business growth and job creation, and improve infrastructure.
- The program helps communities become destinations associated with

### Lessons Learned

- As an off-road, mostly flat trail, the GAP appeals to a broad market.
- A full range of accessible amenities and services is important in attracting users and maximizing economic impacts.
- Significant efforts have been expended working with nearby communities to make them “cycle friendly” Trail Towns and encourage appropriate business development, helping to make them destinations for overnight stays.
- A coalition of stakeholders formed an Alliance to develop the GAP and they continue to promote it, working with a variety of tourism and private partners.
- Marketing is done primarily through digital tactics.
- Large nearby populations with easy access to the GAP, help the trail generate significant user numbers and economic impacts.

the GAP, and encourage overnight stays which generate significantly more economic activity than day trips.

- It helps communities become trail ready through five sets of initiatives:
  - Partnerships
  - Assessment and research
  - Connecting the town to the Trail
  - Business and real estate development
  - Marketing
- The program has a number of resources including tool kits and workbooks that:
  - Help communities evaluate whether they have suitable businesses and amenities
  - Identify gaps
  - Do research on trail use
  - Provide suggestions for trailhead development to make them cycle-friendly and encourage visits to the towns
  - Help develop the business district
  - Help communities and businesses find funding (The Progress Fund also provides small business loans)
- A ‘Trail Town Certified’ network identifies a common set of standards for business members who receive emblems identifying that they are bike friendly.

### **Marketing**

The Allegheny Trail Alliance is the primary marketing organization for the GAP. Key marketing activities include:

- A comprehensive website ([www.gaptrail.org](http://www.gaptrail.org)) which includes detailed information on the trail, along with links to all Trail Towns.
- Social media including Facebook (almost 24,000 followers) and Twitter (almost 4,000 followers)
- A print Trail Guide, for sale (\$10) and now in its 14<sup>th</sup> edition, including maps, town information, lodging and other services and amenities. The organization also sells other trail merchandise.
- A GAP Trail App to help users plan their trip and find locations along the Trail.

The Allegheny Trail Alliance’s logo is owned by the founding trail organizations who can use it for free. Other groups can pay a fee to use the logo; all must follow published brand guidelines for its use.

The GAP is also promoted by businesses along the trail, including bike tour companies, and by local/regional destination marketing organizations.

## **3.4 THE GREAT LAKES WATERFRONT TRAIL – LAKE ERIE SECTION**

The Lake Erie section of The Great Lakes Waterfront Trail (GLWT) is approximately 700 km in length. The route was established by the Waterfront Regeneration Trust as a continuation of the GLWT



([www.waterfronttrail.org/](http://www.waterfronttrail.org/)) along Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. The Lake Erie section has been in place since 2012 and now connects to a Lake Huron section, a part of the entire cross provincial route that is 2,100km in length.

### Key Features

- The route is a mix of off-road trails (abandoned rail lines), rural roads with paved shoulders, some gravel road sections and some high traffic roads without paved shoulders.
- The route is fully signed in both directions.
- There are numerous regional loop options that incorporate part of the GLWT. These are often promoted using both the GLWT brand and local/regional brands.
- The trail appeals to a variety of markets including touring cyclists, recreational cyclists and family groups on some sections.
- The route passes through or near numerous communities of varying sizes, as well as a variety of landscapes, natural appeals and attraction.

### Lessons Learned

- Have one lead organization responsible for development and marketing of the route.
- A continuous long distance trail can be better achieved by using, where possible, already designated routes, whether they be more local, or provincial or nationally recognized trail systems
- The annual cycling event has increased the awareness of GLWT.
- The market has been expanded with a variety of day trips and multi-day trip itineraries.
- Detailed marketing information and maps are available in a variety of formats.
- A range of partners is necessary including local community and municipal partners.

### Appeal and Amenities

Key appeals of the Lake Erie section of the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail include:

- Beaches and water access
- Wineries and breweries
- Several provincial parks and one national park
- Small villages
- Natural and cultural heritage
- Cuisine
- Access to a wide variety of outdoor adventures

The route is fully signed and maps of each section are available through the GLWT website. Each section has varied appeals which are described in the trail section maps. It is possible to connect into the US from western most sections of this route. The maps identify locations for key services and amenities and also note areas where cyclists need to take particular caution.

The GLWT website suggests same day and multi-day trips for a variety of market sections. Amenities and services are provided in numerous communities along the route. There are some train options for accessing route at either end.

### **Marketing**

The Great Lakes Waterfront Trail is marketed at three levels.

- The Waterfront Regeneration Trust is a charity and the primary marketer of this route, along with other sections of the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail. Digital marketing (comprehensive website; Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) are the main tools.
- Detailed and downloadable maps and an interactive digital map are available online for free. A softcover map book is available for purchase.
- The Great Waterfront Trail Adventure is a multi-day annual cycling event hosted along the GLWT in different communities each year.
- Regional tourism organizations promote cycle tourism in their regions, including sections of the GLWT, with links to the GLWT website for detailed information.
- Local municipalities and destination marketing organizations promote cycle tourism and trails in their areas, including sections of the GLWT.

# Chapter 4: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

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The SWOT assessment is based on insights gained from our field work, stakeholder interviews (a list of stakeholder consultations is provided in Appendix 1), review of background material and our consulting team's expertise in cycle tourism.

## 4.1 STRENGTHS

- Several full service 'anchor' urban communities to start end route.
- Small town community charm, rural towns.
- Heritage stories: Voyageurs, early settlers, logging, First Nations, rail, architecture, French Canadians, rivers/canals/waterways.
- Proximity and accessibility to a number of waterways and lakes, including three of Canada's Heritage Rivers.
- Accessible nature.
- Many camping options along the route that could provide a unique camping and cycling or bikepacking product.
- Potential to incorporate further sections of the Ottawa Valley Recreation Trail, (Mattawa to Petawawa) as it is developed to create a larger off-road route.
- Organized snowmobile and ATV clubs and trail user groups to partner with.
- Portions of the route have been designated as part of Ontario's Provincial Cycling Network.
- Alignment with The Great Trail (Trans Canada Trail) and connection to the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail.
- Close proximity to Quebec, with multiple crossings by bridges and ferry, providing access to the Quebec cycling market and links to La Route verte, the provincial cycling network, and regional cycling routes.
- Francophone operators in a number of communities.
- Provincial Park access.
- VVCR trailhead and directional signs, plus bike fix stations are already installed along some sections in the north-west and north-east (St Charles, Noelville, East Arm, Lavigne and Sturgeon Falls, East Ferris, Bonfield, Calvin).
- There are a number of already established cycling routes that loop off of the VVCR; also local area/community trail networks.
- Significant proportions of businesses in Northern Ontario are already engaged in the tourism industry.
- Ontario By Bike Network is established across all regions, with businesses certified as bicycle friendly.

- Engagement and support of numerous partners and champions including, municipalities, regions and tourism organizations, that the route traverses plus province-wide interest in cycle tourism, making timing good for development of the route.

## 4.2 WEAKNESSES

- Lack of safe cycling infrastructure on roadways and highways.
- Route includes some gravel portions on roadways west of Mattawa.
- Sections that are not market ready due to lack of infrastructure, with no clear timeline for completion.
- Long distances between communities, with limited services in between.
- Limited services, amenities and attractions in many communities.
- Many communities are not bicycle-friendly nor market ready for cycle tourism, and lack funding to assist with development.
- Quality of some tourist services may not appeal to certain market segments.
- Limited accommodations suitable for larger cycling groups.
- Many accommodations do not allow single night stays, reducing their appeal to touring cyclists.
- Lack of bike service and stores in many areas.
- Shorter cycling season than other areas in Ontario, with existing tourism operators and businesses at capacity during the main tourist season (July & August).
- Many services are seasonal and have varied hours, especially outside of the peak tourist season.
- Limited public washroom facilities on the route and trails beyond those in communities.
- Cell coverage may be weak depending on carrier.
- Lack of authorized and promoted overnight parking and day-use staging areas throughout for cyclists and other recreational trail users.
- Portions of the Ottawa Valley Rail Trail allow motorized users.
- Established transportation services that are currently available for linear route sections are limited to long distance bus routes, with limited space to carry bicycles.
- Not all of the route has a voyageur heritage story to tell, but other settlement themes may be a substitute.
- Distance from major markets.
- Multi-jurisdiction coordination required.
- Lack of existing measurement tools and practices to track the impact of cycle tourist activities and initiatives.
- Potential lack of leadership ongoing – no dedicated marketing lead identified.

## 4.3 OPPORTUNITIES

### 4.3.1 SHORT TERM

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- Develop regional day trip or overnight routes and itineraries along market-ready portions of the route, leveraging the larger end-to-end branding.
- Opening and completion of the Ottawa Valley Rail Trail between Arnprior and Carleton Place fall 2018.
- To get more locals riding, active transportation, commuting, health.
- Tapping into the increasingly popular bike-packing market and self-supported touring cyclists who require very few services.
- Develop and market a camping themed cycle touring option.
- Inter-provincial loops.
- Further engagement of tourism partners, creating stronger partnerships between regions and cross-regional tourism product.
- Some larger communities will soon have a new Municipal Accommodation Tax, which will increase budgets and the potential for product development and marketing of cycle tourism (Sudbury, North Bay).
- Potential to pair with culinary and agri-tourism as many areas are pursuing the development of these experiences or already have culinary product and culinary touring routes.
- Work with and support the growth of existing cycling events and to attract new cycling events to use the VVCR or pair cycling events with other tourism-generating events.
- Work with and support the growth of existing bike tour operators.
- Work with other recreational trail user groups, e.g. snowmobile clubs and ATV groups to improve infrastructure on shared trail sections.
- Increase number of Ontario By Bike certified bicycle friendly businesses.
- Promote cycling in less busy shoulder seasons.

### 4.3.2 LONG TERM

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- Future development potential of the Ottawa Valley Rail Trail/Algonquin Trail between Mattawa and Petawawa.
- Develop multi-modal cycling packages (e.g. Pedal and Paddle, Boat and Bike, etc.).
- Leverage Velo Quebec's marketing reach through the development and promotion of inter-provincial routes that incorporate La Route verte.
- New businesses to support and service trail users and the bicycle touring market.
- Develop overnight bike parking locations for cyclists and other recreational trail users.
- Improve transportation services and luggage transfer with services (public or private) that can support the needs of cyclists.

- When marketing information is complete, there is potential to partner with Destination Ontario to reach and access higher yield markets and Quebec markets through special marketing projects targeting francophone markets.

#### 4.4 THREATS

- Increasingly competitive environment for cycle tourism destinations and long distance cycling routes at provincial, national and international level, many of which are further developed.
- Proximity to La Route verte.
- Change in funding levels from Province for cycling infrastructure.
- Change in funding levels and direction from the Province that enabled funding for cycle tourism programs and projects.
- Many tourism partners have limited budgets for operations and marketing.
- Long time lines to develop infrastructure needed for end to end completion of the VVCR.
- Multiple trail and route names for the same route may confuse trail users, i.e. Trans Canada Trail, OVRT in Lanark, Algonquin Trail in Renfrew – and adding a new VVCR layer on some sections.
- Without some type of regional focus where the regions can see what's in it for them, it may be challenging to get them to participate in the marketing of the VVCR.
- If there is too strong of a regional focus, the VVCR brand and longer term end to end vision may be challenging to build.

# Chapter 5: Market Readiness Assessment

The market readiness assessment was completed by the consulting team incorporating input from stakeholder consultations (a list is provided in Appendix 1), field work and market expertise and assessment tools. To assist with analysis, the VVCR was divided into geographic sections that best reflect the type of cycling experience and current market readiness status.

The Product and Marketing Plan sections of this report (see Chapters 6 and 7) further reference product development, target markets and recommended promotional tactics. These can be used for sections of the VVCR that are not currently market ready, once infrastructure improvements have been made.

## 5.1 SUDBURY TO HAGAR (~37KM)

### ROUTE OVERVIEW

The routing for this section initially stretches from Coniston to Hagar, using Highway 17 for approximately 37km, with a short routing off Highway 17 into Markstay. Longer term plans are to extend the route west into Sudbury using Allan Street. When infrastructure improvements are made, this will provide a connection to the city centre and the Lake Huron North Channel Waterfront Trail cycling route. From Coniston to Hagar, there is no cycling infrastructure or paved shoulders, making it an unsafe option for cyclists, hence this section is not currently market ready.

### ROUTE AND COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Sudbury is the only full service community. The other communities Coniston, Wahnapiatae, Markstay and Hagar have very limited services and amenities that would be of use to cycle tourists. They all have limited appeal as far as attractions, points of interest and services of tourist quality. Coniston does have an attractive town park and arena area that may be suited in the future as a staging area, as well as a small hiking trail loop and unstaffed information kiosk just east of town on Highway 17.

Town/City	Services	Amenities	Market-Ready Status
Sudbury	Full	Full	Yes
Coniston	Limited	Limited	No
Wahnapiatae	Limited	Limited	No
Markstay	Limited	Limited	No
Hagar	Limited	Limited	No

### OPPORTUNITIES AND GAPS TO BE ADDRESSED

- Cycling infrastructure on Highway 17 needs to be built before this section is market ready.

- Full services and a range of accommodations are available in Sudbury. There are two motels on this short section, Markstay and Hagar, and limited food services, (cafes and restaurants) of varying qualities. This level of quality would not attract the higher-end cycle tourists.
- There are no bike stores or bike fix stations, however general stores, trading posts or similar retail businesses may want to stock basic bicycle parts and repair tools.
- The addition of some localized attractions or points of interest along this section may, in the future, increase the appeal of the route when paired with improved infrastructure.
- This section of the route is also designated as part of The Great Trail / Trans Canada Trail and the proposed on-road route for the province wide cycling network.

#### **TARGET MARKET/S**

This section of the route is currently not market ready.

## **5.2 HAGAR TO STURGEON FALLS (~115KM)**

#### **ROUTE OVERVIEW**

The routing for this section is along a combination of quieter and scenic secondary highways, country roads and town roads (Sturgeon Falls) and has been broken into three sub-sections: Hagar to Noelville; Noelville to Lavigne; Lavigne to Sturgeon Falls. While there is no cycling infrastructure, the lower traffic volumes and speeds, more scenic appeal as well as increased services and amenities make this section of the VVCR route market ready for specific types of cycle tourists. There are five VVCR trailhead signs on this section (St.-Charles, Noelville, Highway 64 rest area, Lavigne and Sturgeon Falls) plus four bike fix stations (St.-Charles, Noelville, Lavigne and Sturgeon Falls). Directional signage has already been installed on a portion of this section of the VVCR, with more expected.

#### **ROUTE AND COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT**

##### **Hagar to Noelville (40km)**

The small town of Noelville is the only full service community on this section, although accommodations are all located outside of town. The other communities of Hagar, St.-Charles and West Arm have limited services and amenities. 6km south of Hagar is the Boreal Berry Farm and Winery, which has appeal as an attraction for cyclists, however seasonal operations and hours present some challenges. The inclusion of VVCR trailhead signs and bike fix stations in St.-Charles and Noelville is an asset. The route takes cyclists through farm, rural and forested lands with a number of opportunities to view waterways and lakes. The section of the route between St.-Charles and West Arm (15km) is particularly scenic, and if combined with Highway 535, there is a potential for a 26km loop. West Arm offers great water views that stretch in both directions from the roadway along the Pine River, although there is only one lodge-style resort. The area is renowned for fishing and boating. In Noelville, Joe Chartrand Park or arena could be potential staging areas for cyclists.



Noelville as a town, while having the required services, may not have the standard or style of services needed to attract the higher end cycling market.

### **Noelville to Lavigne (45km)**

Apart from two restaurants as well as lodge-style accommodations, mostly off the route, there are no services on this section. However, there are a number of natural attractions, and access to water from lake side picnic areas and trails at Mashkinonje Provincial Park. Once in Lavigne, a full service community, there are a variety of accommodations including private campgrounds and a bicycle friendly tavern. The town centre being on the water, including a waterside parkette with picnic benches, makes the community a destination, attractive and well-appointed to cater to visitors. Again this area is known for its fishing and boating.

### **Lavigne to Sturgeon Falls (30km)**

This 30km section is flat and easy to ride, but since it is an alternate route to Highway 17 and shortcut from Sturgeon Fall to Lavigne, it has a slightly increased level of traffic to Noelville. There are no services or amenities to stop at enroute. A 3.5km (each way) detour from the route would bring cyclists into Verner, but with only the most basic services available and no attractions, there would be little reason to add this section unless cyclists wanted to connect to a known 60km loop through Field, north of Highway 17. Sturgeon Falls is a relatively large commercial centre, with a full range of services and amenities. These are, for the most part, centred around Highway 17 which traverses the town, on the main street and others close to town. There are several motel-style accommodations, lodges and private rentals and there is also a branded hotel (Comfort Inn) and campground (KOA) in Sturgeon Falls. There are several attractions that would appeal to cyclists including the local museum, Leisure Farms, a hydro dam, and the new Minnehaha Bay municipal marina with an upscale coffee shop, trailhead sign and bike fix station.

Town/City	Services	Amenities	Market-Ready Status
<b>Hagar</b>	Limited	Limited	No
<b>St.-Charles</b>	Limited	Limited	Yes
<b>West Arm</b>	Limited	Limited	No
<b>Noelville</b>	Full	Full	Yes
<b>Lavigne</b>	Full	Full	Yes
<b>Verner</b>	Limited	Limited	No
<b>Sturgeon Falls</b>	Full	Full	Yes

### **OPPORTUNITIES AND GAPS TO BE ADDRESSED**

- More tourist quality shops and dining opportunities in communities.
- Bike shop, service location and rental opportunity in Sturgeon Falls.
- All of the communities on this section have a strong francophone culture.

- Many of the roofed accommodations have minimum stays required, ranging from several days to a week. Touring cyclists would be looking for single night stays. Accommodations allowing for that should be identified.
- Alternatively, developing and marketing the area as a 'hub and spoke' destination for multiple days of riding out and returning to same accommodation as well as the inclusion of additional activities (many water based options are available) could provide additional opportunities while meeting the needs of cyclists.
- Ready-to-camp tents, already set up for campers at campgrounds.
- Identify more points of interest or attractions, as beyond nature, water and the route there are not many.
- Indigenous tourism experiences may be available at Dokis First Nation and should be explored further for packaging opportunities.
- Increase the number of certified bicycle friendly business locations that area part of the Ontario By Bike Network in area.
- VVCR trailhead and directional signs could be installed in Hagar, as this a possible start/finish location for section that is market ready.
- 60km loop off VVCR and north of route is attractive – Sturgeon Falls, Crystal Falls, Field, Verner, Cache Bay.
- Develop and refine a series of looped routes in/out of Sturgeon Falls and surrounding area
- This section of the route is also designated as part of The Great Trail / Trans Canada Trail and proposed on road route for the province wide cycling network.
- Offer a transportation service for cyclists wishing to ride one way only.

#### **TARGET MARKET/S**

This section would be best suited for experienced and touring cyclists or recreational cyclists that have more experience riding for longer distances, with limited services and cycling infrastructure.

### **5.3 STURGEON FALLS TO NORTH BAY (~30KM)**

#### **ROUTE OVERVIEW**

The routing for this 30km section follows Highway 17 once out of both communities. This section of the highway passes through Nipissing First Nation. The highway has a high volume of vehicle traffic, including trucks, and a posted highway speed of up to 90km per hour. There is currently not sufficient cycling infrastructure on the highway to make this a safe option for cyclists to connect to the VVCR coming west from Sturgeon Falls or south/east of North Bay. There is no alternate route available. As such, this section is currently not market ready.

#### **ROUTE AND COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT**

This section is an important connector for VVCR that has the potential to link market-ready sections of the route west of Sturgeon Falls and south out of North Bay and east to Mattawa. It is also bookended by two full service communities that have a full range of services and amenities that

would be attractive to cyclists. With Highway 17 running alongside the north shore of Lake Nipissing, this section does have a number of scenic viewpoints and several general stores, trading posts or similar retail facilities that would be of interest cyclists or possible rest stops.

Town/City	Services	Amenities	Market-Ready Status
Sturgeon Fall	Full	Full	Yes
North Bay	Full	Full	Yes

**OPPORTUNITIES AND GAPS TO BE ADDRESSED**

- Cycling infrastructure on Highway 17 needs to be built before this section is market ready.
- There are no bike stores in Sturgeon Falls.
- The further promotion of existing attractions or addition of new ones and points of interest along this section may increase the appeal of route when paired with improved infrastructure, in the future.
- Annual Pow-Wow hosted by Nipissing First Nation provides an indigenous tourism experience that may be appealing to cycle tourists.
- This section of Highway 17 is scheduled for rehabilitation within the next 5 years. There are currently a number of interested partners lobbying for cycling infrastructure improvements on this section.
- This section of the route is also designated as part of The Great Trail / Trans Canada Trail and proposed on-road route for the province wide cycling network.

**TARGET MARKET/S**

This section of the route is currently not market ready.

**5.4 NORTH BAY TO MATTAWA (~90KM)**

**ROUTE OVERVIEW**

The infrastructure for this part of the VVCR varies from urban city streets, paved trails, to quiet country roads with no cycling infrastructure. There is also a section that is on gravel roads and a small section (approximately 0.5km) on Highway 17 that connects route into Mattawa. In its entirety, this is a very scenic and attractive part of the VVCR primarily through naturalized forest areas, farmland and near a number of lakes and waterways. The Town of Mattawa sits on the scenic confluence of the Ottawa River and the Mattawa River, rivers steep in indigenous heritage and used by early settlers. For consideration of marketing efforts and appeal of route to different target markets, this larger section can be broken into two sub-sections: North Bay to Callander; Callander to Mattawa. There are three VVCR trailhead signs, each with an accompanying bike fix station, on this section (East Ferris, Bonfield, Calvin). Directional signage has already been installed or is ready to be installed on this section. Mattawa has a bike fix station at the tourism information centre on highway 17.

## **ROUTE AND COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT**

### **North Bay to Callander**

The route between North Bay and Callander, both full service communities, is approximately 18km in length. Over 12km is along the Kate Pace Way Trail, which follows a combination of off-road paved trail and quieter residential streets. Portions of this section follow close to Lake Nipissing with parkland facilities available in several areas. The 2.5km unpaved Cranberry Trail that is near Callander, and directly off the route, is a worthy excursion for views of marshlands, the lake and bay area. Callander has a waterfront beach and park area along with a number of small eateries, accommodations and campground nearby. A sizeable city, North Bay has bicycle services, a variety of accommodation choices, including branded hotels, a lively main street and shopping district downtown and a growing culinary scene with many restaurants to choose from. North Bay has an attractive waterfront and trail with a string of parks and beach area, as well as boat rentals, boat cruises and a boat bar restaurant.

### **Callander to Mattawa**

At over 70km this section of the VVCR connects a number of very small communities with limited services at points that are at well-spaced intervals. Overall however, this section takes cyclists through an area that is fairly remote. A popular cycling route from North Bay through East Ferris, the scenic and often hilly road follows close to the shoreline of Lake Nosbonsing and south of the small hamlet of Corbeil. Similar to Bonfield, Rutherglen and Calvin, services are limited to the occasional small grocery / convenience store, and several lake side or lodge accommodations. The Eau Claire Conservation Area and Gorge is a worthy and scenic stop in Calvin, however the gravel road to the trailhead may present a challenge for road cyclists.

Closer to Mattawa (approximately 20km west using VVCR route) secondary highway 630 provides access to the north end of Algonquin Provincial Park and Kiosk Campground, a 23km ride south off the VVCR from Eau Claire/Calvin. An additional connection to a Provincial Park and campground can be made from Eau Claire/Calvin riding 6km off route and north to Samuel de Champlain Provincial Park and the Mattawa River. Samuel de Champlain Provincial Park is also the location of the Voyageur Heritage Centre. The routing on this eastern end of this section and close to Mattawa, includes approximately 15km of gravel road riding over two separate sections: a 6km stretch west of Eau Claire, on Peddlars Drive, Mt Pleasant Road to Beckett Lane; and east of Eau Claire for a distance of 10km on Boundary Road, Papineau Road, Chenier Road until Richards Road, which would be a challenge for road cyclist riding on high end bikes or bicycles with narrow tire width. The town of Mattawa is a full service community with several accommodations, eateries, groceries, attractions, trails and a visitor information centre.

Town/City	Services	Amenities	Market-Ready Status
North Bay	Full	Full	Yes
Callander	Full	Full	Yes
East Ferris / Corbeil	Limited	Limited	No
Bonfield	Limited	Limited	No
Rutherglen	Limited	Limited	No
Calvin / Eau Claire	Limited	Limited	No
Mattawa	Full	Full	Yes

#### OPPORTUNITIES AND GAPS TO BE ADDRESSED

- Print trail and bike map for North Bay and larger regional area, with a tourism focus and themed, also including location of relevant services, amenities and attractions for marketing purposes.
- Hard surface roadway into Eau Claire Conservation Area and Gorge.
- Hard surface road sections of VVCR near Mattawa (Peddlars Drive, Boundary Road, Papineau Road, Chenier Road).
- Install bike racks, trailhead sign, bike fix station and/or stores providing bike services in Mattawa.
- The remote nature of this section, Callander to Mattawa, needs to be fully disclosed in all marketing information so cyclists can assess their ability and ensure they are carrying the appropriate supplies.
- Establish and promote designated staging areas near commercial areas in Callander and Mattawa for cyclists.
- Bring more of the Voyageur theme and heritage and that of the First Nations to this section of VVCR with interpretative signage or installations.
- Operating out of Samuel de Champlain Provincial Park, Voyageur Adventure Tours allows tourists to paddle a Voyageur Canoe on the Mattawa River.
- Operating out of Samuel de Champlain Provincial Park, Voyageur Adventure Tours allows tourists to paddle a Voyageur Canoe on the Mattawa River.
- Mattawa has a large number of carved wooden statues of historic figures throughout the town.
- There are a number of unique, rustic, wilderness, backcountry accommodation choices near Mattawa that include off-the-grid yurts and glamping.
- Traditional Indigenous Pow Wows open to the public in North Bay, Nipissing First Nation, Canadore College.
- There are a number of francophone communities within this section including: Astorville, Corbeil (East Ferris), Bonfield and Mattawa.
- Offer a transportation service for cyclists wishing to ride one way only.

- The North Bay to Callander section of the route is also designated as part of The Great Trail / Trans Canada Trail. The North Bay to Mattawa section is identified as part of the proposed on road route for the province wide cycling network.

#### **TARGET MARKET/S**

The North Bay to Callander section of the VVCR would be well suited to recreational as well as more experienced family and leisure cyclists. The incorporation of paved off road trails and quiet residential streets, numerous services and amenities, shorter distance and overall routing would appeal to these markets and make for a great day trip, riding the full distance of this linear route, returning the same way, or a smaller portion of it.

The Callander to Mattawa section of the VVCR is suitable for experienced and touring cyclists. The longer distances with limited services, terrain and infrastructure do not make this part suitable for other market sections. However the gravel road section may preclude a portion of this market; those riding higher end road bikes or bikes with narrow tire width not be suited to these conditions. All gravel surfaces must be disclosed in marketing materials to help cyclists with planning their ride in advance.

## **5.5 MATTAWA TO DEEP RIVER (~110KM)**

#### **ROUTE OVERVIEW**

There are two potential routes for this section, neither of which are market ready at present. Highway 17 has been identified as one option, but having limited paved shoulders, high volumes of traffic, and a posted highway speed limit of up to 90km/hr, it is not a safe option for cyclists and is unsuitable for promotion. Alternatively, the relatively recently abandoned rail corridor that extends south with possible connections to the Ottawa Valley Recreation Trail has potential. However this section, approximately 100km in length, is currently not usable and is posted as prohibited to trespassers

#### **ROUTE AND COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT**

Services and amenities along this 100km+ section are extremely limited regardless of the routing ultimately established. Should upgrades be made to include cycling infrastructure, the route on Highway 17 would offer easier access to a few more services and is far less remote than what would be easily accessible from any future rail trail. However, the rail trail for experienced touring and prepared cyclists would be a far more scenic and safer route option than a highway route with currently very limited paved shoulders. With both routes close to the Ottawa River, cyclists would enjoy spectacular vistas across the water and to the hills in Quebec whilst riding. Departing from Mattawa, the handful of services include a golf course and ski resort, several lodges, campgrounds, provincial park, private cottage rentals and a couple of convenience stores between Papineau-Cameron, Deux-Rivières, Stonecliff, Mackey and Rolphton, all of which are smaller communities.

Closer to Deux-Rivières, south on Brent Road provides another access to the north end of Algonquin Provincial Park and Brent Campground, a 40km ride on a gravel road south from the VVCR.

From Rolphton, and only accessible using routing off from Highway 17, a 2.5km ride would connect cyclists to a scenic bridge crossing the Ottawa River into Quebec and Pont Rapides Des Joachims. This small community has several services including seasonal lodges, café, visitor centre and trails. In Deep River, there are full services and amenities available with a many located along Highway 17 and more on a smaller main street in town, near a well-appointed marina and riverside park area. Deep River is an additional 6km ride from trail access point should the rail trail be used as part of the VVCR.

Town/City	Services	Amenities	Market-Ready Status
<b>Mattawa</b>	Full	Full	Yes
<b>Papineau-Cameron</b>	Limited	Limited	No
<b>Deux-Rivières</b>	Limited	Limited	No
<b>Stonecliff</b>	Limited	Limited	No
<b>Mackey</b>	Limited	Limited	No
<b>Rolphton</b>	Limited	Limited	No
<b>Pont Rapides Des Joachims</b>	Limited	Limited	No
<b>Deep River</b>	Full	Full	Yes

#### OPPORTUNITIES AND GAPS TO BE ADDRESSED

- Final route option needs to be confirmed.
- Either infrastructure that can support safe cycling needs to be installed on Highway 17 or considerable improvements to the rail bed need to be made to enable cyclists' safe passage and permission to access the rail bed granted.
- Use of the rail trail would require significant signage to assist cyclists in navigating distances through the remote area and to the next communities or services available.
- Cyclists would need to be made aware of how to be prepared for encounters with wildlife or any other emergency while cycling in remote areas.
- Interpretative signs or installations along the rail trail and/or at look outs or rest stops.
- Improved trail access points.
- An increased number of tourism services and amenities, including accommodations or campgrounds.
- Development of backcountry campsites with basic amenities along the trail.
- Installation of trailhead and directional signs.
- Signage into Deep River from the rail trail and trailhead signs installed, should this routing option be used.
- Bike parking and fix station in Mattawa and Deep River and additional locations where as possible.

- Mattawa to Deep River section both on Highway 17 and the Ottawa Valley Recreation Trail are identified as proposed route options for the province wide cycling network.

### **TARGET MARKET/S**

This section of the route is currently not market ready. Due to its remote nature and long distances, this section would only be suitable for experienced and touring cyclists and the niche bikepacking market, once the infrastructure is improved.

## **5.6 DEEP RIVER TO ARNPRIOR (~130KM)**

### **ROUTE OVERVIEW**

The proposed routing south from Deep River follows Wilie Road a quiet country road, and then connects to the trail again near Chalk River for 2km. The trail here is wide and still needs some work to make it suitable for cyclists. In Chalk River, the route crosses Highway 17 and follows a seasonal snowmobile trail on the east side of the highway. Alternate routing continuing on the abandoned rail line is not possible south of Chalk River due to its proximity to, and use by the Canadian Forces Base in Petawawa. In Petawawa, negotiations with the Canadian Forces Base need to be completed to grant access to trail traversing base or alternate routing needs to be established. Significant trail work has been completed and the unpaved trail is currently open for use through Petawawa and onward to Pembroke. From Pembroke the VVCR uses busier town roads until turning onto quiet agricultural country roads through Beachburg and Whitewater area and onward following River Road into Arnprior. While there are paved shoulders on a number of the roads in this section, those incorporated in the VVCR are quieter country roads / secondary highways, suitable for experienced cyclists to ride. More cycling infrastructure is expected to be installed in the next road rehabilitation phase.

### **ROUTE AND COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT**

There is a number of full service communities spaced at reasonable distances apart on this approximately 130km section. From the full service community of Deep River, the VVCR passes through the small town of Chalk River where services are limited to two fast food/diner style eateries. In Petawawa, there are a larger number and greater variety of services, branded hotel accommodations, attractions which include the military museum and a full service bike shop, with bike rentals. The majority of services and amenities in Petawawa are located on the main street, Petawawa Boulevard / Highway 51, alongside of which is the newly upgraded unpaved trail, suitable for cyclists. This trail, 16km in length, takes cyclists into Pembroke, a sizeable town offering full services, an attractive main street with shops and restaurants, a bike store, scenic bridge crossings and a waterfront park on the Ottawa River.

Between Pembroke and Arnprior, a distance of approximately 83km, the town of Renfrew is the only sizeable community with full services and amenities. Located 11km off the VVCR, cyclists would be wise to assess their needs before continuing onwards. Within the Township of Whitewater, the small



hamlets of Beachburg, Forester Falls and the somewhat larger Cobden do have an appeal to cyclists with original and unique stops that include several craft breweries, whitewater rafting outfitters and other country stores and smaller eateries. South of Renfrew, the route along River Road offers many scenic views across the Ottawa River, and several beachside rest areas namely in Sandpoint and Braeside.

Town/City	Services	Amenities	Market-Ready Status
<b>Chalk River</b>	Limited	Limited	No
<b>Petawawa</b>	Full	Full	Yes
<b>Pembroke</b>	Full	Full	Yes
<b>Beachburg</b>	Limited	Limited	No
<b>Foresters Falls</b>	Limited	Limited	No
<b>Cobden</b>	Limited	Limited	No
<b>Renfrew</b>	Full	Full	Yes
<b>Braeside</b>	Limited	Limited	No
<b>Arnprior</b>	Full	Full	Yes

#### OPPORTUNITIES AND GAPS TO BE ADDRESSED

- Trail development work still to be completed and/or enhanced south of Chalk River into Pembroke.
- Signage to assist cyclists in locating services and amenities nearby route and/or trail and to identify road route sections as a recognized bike route.
- Improved trail access points.
- Establish and promote designated staging areas in communities and within the Whitewater area.
- Bridge crossing between Ontario and Quebec south of Pembroke has paved shoulder and is suitable for cyclists. Secondary highway 148 connects directly to La Route verte in Quebec and cross border looped itineraries.
- Bike fix stations in communities with no bike shops.
- Extended season operations at certain businesses that would be attractive to cyclists (Whitewater Riverside Brew Pub and Simple Things café operations in Beachburg.)
- Township of Whitewater has a number of qualities that make it highly attractive to road cyclists.
- Install signage to direct cyclists off VVCR to full service communities of Cobden and Renfrew.
- Offer a transportation service for cyclists wishing to ride one way only.
- Identification of all scenic viewpoints and beaches along the Ottawa River, including Sandpoint and Braeside on future information resources. Consideration for installation of washroom facilities or parking locations at aforementioned areas that cyclists can use.
- Some sections of Deep River to Arnprior route align with the identified routing proposed route for the province wide cycling network.

## TARGET MARKET/S

Once trail work is complete on the section of the route from Deep River to Petawawa, this section would be attractive to families, leisure and recreational cyclists. The existing and recently upgraded section from Petawawa to Pembroke would already be best suited to the same market. From Pembroke to Arnprior, with the routing following attractive flat country roads, more experienced recreational, road or touring cyclists would be the ideal fit for this section of route.

## 5.7 ARNPRIOR TO CARLETON PLACE TO OTTAWA (~90KM)

### ROUTE OVERVIEW

This section is exclusively off-road and on trails, linking suburban communities, communities with small town charm and the Ottawa city centre. The recently opened and converted rail trail, 36km in length, between Arnprior and Carleton Place, once out of each town, cuts across farmland and agricultural landscapes. The Mississippi River that snakes between Almonte and Carleton Place, plus several old stone bridge crossings, add to the attractiveness of this section. From Carleton Place to Ottawa, the route follows the Ottawa Carleton Trailway (also designated as The Great/Trans Canada Trail) for 30km before connecting to the Capital Pathway network on the approach into the urban centre, which follows alongside the Ottawa River.

### ROUTE AND COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The new rail trail presents enormous market potential and opportunities for trail and cycle tourism in all communities situated on and connected to the trail. Cyclists can do a small portion of the trail out of these communities or a longer ride Arnprior to Ottawa, 90km, exclusively off road and on trails. With the exception of Pakenham and Stittsville, all communities offer cyclists service and amenities including Arnprior, Almonte, Carleton Place and Ottawa, from Kanata to downtown. Prior to the trail development, Pakenham and Almonte already attracted a larger number of road cyclists with the quaint river side setting, small cafes and overall visitor appeal. For all newly and previously connected trail towns, the installation of signage on trails to provide cyclists with information on distances between communities, services in each community or other locations near the trail would greatly enhance the economic benefits derived from trail users. With Ottawa being the start, or end, of the longer VVCR, and current hub for market-ready sections that follow the Ottawa River from Petawawa south to the city; having the wide range of visitor services, dozens of attractions and extensive urban cycling infrastructure, make it worthy of an extended stay.

Town/City	Services	Amenities	Market-Ready Status
<b>Pakenham</b>	Limited	Limited	Yes
<b>Almonte</b>	Full	Full	Yes
<b>Carleton Place</b>	Full	Full	Yes
<b>Stittsville</b>	Limited	Limited	Yes
<b>Ottawa</b>	Full	Full	Yes

## **OPPORTUNITIES AND GAPS TO BE ADDRESSED**

- Signage to assist cyclists in locating services and amenities near trail and distance markers to nearest communities.
- Improved trail access points.
- Establish and promote designated staging areas in communities and within the Whitewater area.
- Information resources that cover full trail section, Arnprior to Ottawa, with suggested day trip itineraries, out and back rides or with loops off trail.
- Promotion of businesses in communities or near trail. Increase number of businesses certified as businesses as bicycle friendly with the Ontario By Bike network.
- Increased trail-side facilities including washrooms, benches, scenic lookouts, picnic areas, interpretive signage and public art installations.
- Increased signage to ensure a seamless connection from Ottawa Carleton Trailway to the Capital Pathway network into Ottawa downtown.
- Transportation service to return cyclists from end nodes and enable the more experienced cyclists to complete the full 90km between Ottawa and Arnprior.
- Transportation and luggage transfer services and/or supported tours to facilitate multi-day one-way ride routes.
- There are a large number of cycling routes are either near or incorporate parts of the VVCR across Renfrew and Lanark counties and in rural Ottawa.
- Large potential to attract day trippers from Ottawa, and potential to increase length of stay to weekends and/or longer.
- In Almonte/Mississippi Mills and Carleton Place there is a shared bike program, Rightbike and other bike rental locations, with potential to grow rental fleets to service trail.
- Bike tours currently offered out of Smith Falls, also a community connected along by rail trail.
- The Arnprior to Ottawa section is identified as the proposed off-road route option for the province wide cycling network.

## **TARGET MARKET/S**

This section, in its entirety, is suitable for all types of cyclists. Key target markets include the family and leisure cyclist and recreational cyclists, all of whom enjoy off-road unpaved cycling infrastructure, and may wish to select smaller ride distances. Completing the entire route of 90km from Ottawa to Arnprior would be well suited to the more experienced recreational cyclist or long distance touring cyclist.

# Chapter 6: The Product – A Vision for VVCR Now and in the Future

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This chapter provides an overarching discussion of the cycling product on the VVCR, and a vision for both the short term and the long term. It also presents a series of themes that can be used in promoting the route, and in itineraries and packages, by the organization promoting the VVCR as well as local and regional tourism and municipal partners.

## 6.1 THE VVCR PRODUCT

As outlined in the market readiness assessment, there are a number of sections of the VVCR that are currently market ready. However the end-to-end route is not currently market ready, and given the myriad of partners involved, the level of infrastructure work required and funding realities its completion date is unknown. As such, our description of the product for VVCR is divided into two parts – the short term and the long term, or ultimate vision for the VVCR. There will obviously be an evolutionary period between these two scenarios as those sections not currently market ready are completed. However when complete, they can easily be added to the short term product.

### 6.1.1 THE VVCR IN THE SHORT TERM

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In the short term, the focus should be on market development, enhancing market-readiness and promotion of sections of the VVCR that are currently market-ready. These would be promoted as short (1- 3 day trips) based out of several full-service destinations or hubs including Sturgeon Falls, North Bay, Mattawa and the smaller communities of Lavigne and Hagar in the west, and the larger hubs of Pembroke, Petawawa, Arnprior, Almonte, Carleton Place and Ottawa in the east. Table 1 at the end of this section identifies the various short term options, as well as those for the long term. As indicated in the table, different sections would appeal to different types of cyclist although, for the most part, the primary market for the VVCR will be experienced touring cyclists.

In the short term, cycling experiences would be linear one-way (with return transportation) or return trips. In a number of cases, there are good quality loops that connect to the VVCR that could be added to create a more extensive experience. For example, there is a loop on Highway 535 in the vicinity of St. Charles and West Arm that provides a 256 km loop and there is a 60 km loop through Field.

The multi-day ride itineraries would require overnight accommodation using campgrounds or roofed accommodation. All of the sections promoted in the short term should be branded as part of the

VVCR and showcase the natural and cultural heritage of northern and eastern Ontario along with the appropriate themes as described later in this chapter.

There are also numerous opportunities in the short term to package cycling experiences on market-ready sections of the VCCR with outdoor activities such as paddling and hiking, cultural heritage activities including Indigenous experiences, and regional beverages and cuisine.

### 6.1.2 THE VVCR IN THE LONG TERM

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As noted, the end-to-end VVCR route is not currently market ready. However, in the long term when the route is fully completed, the VVCR will be a key section of Ontario's province-wide cycling network, providing a designated cycling route connection from the west (via the Lake Huron North Channel Waterfront Trail) and from south (via Manitoulin Island and the Georgian Bay Cycling; Route, currently in the planning stages) to Ottawa and south eastern Ontario (and the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail) and north to La Route verte in Quebec.

As stated on the VVCR website, *“The vision is that the Voyageur Cycling Route will become part of the foundational provincial cycling network with direct connections to the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail, the Georgian Bay Cycling Route, and the National Capital Region”*.

When completed, the VVCR will offer a range of cycling experiences appealing to several different market segments.

The ultimate experience will be the 630 km end to end route between Sudbury and Ottawa showcasing the best cycling in north eastern Ontario and along the Ottawa River valley, appealing to experienced touring cyclists and bike packers with a yearn for adventure and a love of the outdoors. Some of these cyclists will be exploring regions along the VVCR route or traversing the province from north to south; others may be crossing to/from Quebec while still others might be on trans-Canada adventures. Some will be 'going it alone', on self-supported trips either camping or staying in roofed accommodations; others will be on guided tours or even participating in 'adventures' that encompass most of the VVCR.

It is probable that, even when the end-to-end route is completed, many of the cyclists on the VVCR will only be doing sections, either as one-way trips requiring return transportation to their starting point, or as return trips. These sections may include extended loops that connect to the VVCR and /or include part of it, making logistics easier for cyclists not having to plan return transportation. Their experiences may include other outdoor activities and, like the 'end to end' cyclists they may be on self-supported trips, guided tours or participating in events. Some will be on day trips, others on weekend getaways or longer overnight trips. Many of these cyclists will be experienced touring cyclists but sections of the route will also appeal to leisure and recreational cyclists with a taste for adventure, and in some places, to family groups just looking for a day's cycling adventure.

**Table 1**  
**VVCR – Short-Term and Long-Term Products**  
**Target Cycle Markets**

Location	Description	Leisure/ Family Cyclist	Recreational Cyclist	Experiences /Touring Cyclist	Notes
<b>SHORT TERM</b>					
<b>Hagar to Sturgeon Falls</b>	Start: Hagar or Sturgeon Falls Return trip (115 km one way) with potential side loops to extend distance, overnights in Lavigne or camping		*	**	
	Start: Lavigne. Spokes out and back to Noelville, St Charles and/or Sturgeon Falls		*	**	
	Start: Sturgeon Falls Spokes out and back to Lavigne or Noelville and St Charles; extend with 60 km loop north through Field		*	**	
<b>North Bay to Mattawa</b>	Start: North Bay Return trip (18 km one way) to Callander	*	**		12km is off-road trail
	Start: North Bay or Mattawa Return trip (88 km one way) with overnight in Mattawa or North Bay			**	Currently 15 km of gravel road riding will be a challenge for road bikes
	Start: Callander or Mattawa Return trip (70 km one way) with overnight in either location			**	Currently 15 km of gravel road riding will be a challenge for road bikes

**Table 1**  
**VVCR – Short-Term and Long-Term Products**  
**Target Cycle Markets**

<b>Deep River to Arnprior</b>	Start: Petawawa to Pembroke Return Trip (16km one way)	**	**		Potential connection to La Route verte
	Start: Pembroke or Arnprior Return Trip (83 km one way) with overnight in either location		**	**	Extend with additional loops featured on Ottawa Valley Cycling Map
<b>Arnprior to Ottawa</b>	Arnprior to Carleton Place Return Trip (36 km one way)	**	**		Ottawa Valley Recreation Trail, off-road trail
	Carleton Place to Bells Corner Return Trip (30km one way)	**	**		Ottawa Carleton Trailway, off-road trail
	Carleton Place to downtown Ottawa Return Trip (48km one way)		**	**	Ottawa Carleton Trailway connects to Capital Pathway network, off-road trails
	Arnprior to Ottawa Return Trip (~90km one way) with overnight in either location		*	**	Extend with loop back using Ottawa rural cycling routes
<b>LONG TERM- All of above options plus those identified below</b>					
<b>Sudbury to Ottawa</b>	Linear route ~630km, one way or return. Part of longer Trans-Ontario/Quebec trip with connections to Lake Huron North Channel Waterfront Trail, La Route verte, routes from Ottawa south to Great Lakes Waterfront Trail			**	Currently not market ready, cycling infrastructure required
<b>Sudbury to North Bay</b>	Start: Sudbury or North Bay One way (180 km) or return with overnight stays			**	Currently not market ready, cycling infrastructure required

**Table 1**  
**VVCR – Short-Term and Long- Term Products**  
**Target Cycle Markets**

<b>Sturgeon Falls to North Bay</b>	Start: North Bay or Sturgeon Falls Return trip (30 km one way)		★★	Only route option is Hwy 17, cycling infrastructure required
<b>Mattawa to Deep River</b>	Start: Mattawa or Deep River Return trip (100km one way)		★★	Very limited services; cycling infrastructure may be on Hwy 17 or rail corridor, which may appeal to niche bikepacking market
<b>Deep River to Petawawa</b>	Start: Deep River or Petawawa Return Trip (30km one way)	★★	★★	Work still needed on trails



All of the cyclists on the VVCR will experience Ontario's wilderness, lakes, rivers and wildlife as well as the culture and heritage of the Voyageurs, indigenous tourism experiences, and the many communities along the route. These and other themes identified for the VVCR are described below

## 6.2 THEMES

The Voyageur Cycling Route, its heritage, natural features and landscapes lends itself to a number of themes. These themes can be featured in promotional material, in itineraries, in blogs and highlighted in social media posts as well as the other promotional tactics described in Chapter 7. They should be shared with partners along the VVCR who can use them, in combination with different cycling experiences, to create themed itineraries targeting the various market segments identified in the next chapter.

We have identified one over-arching theme and a number of key sub-themes, described below.

**The Story:** The Voyageur Cycling Route is for **Adventurers and Explorers** connecting cyclists of all ages and abilities to the land, the people, the places and the heritage, past and present.

- **ADVENTURERS** –The Voyageur Cycling Route challenges frontiers; physically, mentally and geographically
- **EXPLORERS** – The Voyageur Cycling Route inspires curiosity and reveals exceptional, undiscovered experiences to those that seek them.

**Key Sub Themes:** These sub themes are brand anchors that connect the marketing, and future product development of the Voyageur Cycling Route at a local/regional level and provide consistency to the overall cross-regional route. These sub themes are presented with an understanding that not all regions across the entire end-to-end route will embody the entire spectrum of themes, however based on stakeholder consultations, regional tourism partners should be able to align marketing or product development with one or more of them.

- **VOYAGEUR HERITAGE** – This is a story that is unique to Canada, Ontario and the region. With several destinations, attractions, and natural features along the Voyageur Cycling Route key to the story of French Canadian Voyageurs' exploration and trade there are many opportunities to inspire discovery of the route, aligning this theme with regional loops and a long distance cycling route.
- **INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND PLACES** – There are a number of First Nation indigenous tourism experiences and attractions that visitors can participate in to learn about the First Nation heritage across the area traversed by the VVCR. There is also a focus on growing indigenous tourism in Ontario, with Indigenous Tourism Ontario actively working with First Nation communities to further develop the tourism product.
- **WATER & LAND** – Diverse. Vast. Rugged. As a route that traverses over 630km, incorporates 3 heritage waterways and offers access to Ontario's rich wilderness (including several prominent provincial parks), the Voyageur Cycling Route embodies this theme. Already

considered key demand generators for visitors to regions along the route, cyclists also have interests in nature and nature-based experiences. This will be a motivating component to marketing smaller sections, or the entire route.

- **GASTRONOMY AND DRINK** – Offering a true sense of place through local culinary experiences are of interest to cyclists and a significant component to the overall appeal of the VVCR. Good food and drink should be showcased in marketing and promotions and fostered in future cycling product development and partnerships along the route.
- **FRANCOPHONE EXPERIENCES** – With the largest French-speaking minority community in Canada, Ontario boasts significant numbers of Franco-Ontarians living in both north east Ontario and the Ottawa area. This distinct cultural asset has appeal to both Quebec visitors, as well as Ontario visitors and should be weaved into marketing and materials for the Voyageur Cycling Route.
- **THE HOSTS** – The energy, effort and commitment that local individuals, businesses and communities express in support of the VVCR will resonate with target markets. Stories from these individuals and stakeholders along sections of the route can offer an authentic, welcoming and personalized message of the Voyageur Cycling Route. These *Hosts* can be route ambassadors.

# Chapter 7: The Marketing Plan

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As part of the overall Marketing Strategy, measurable objectives have been set to help meet the overall goal. To achieve the objectives, a number of short term and long term tactics have been outlined with details on delivery, tracking and measurement.

## 7.1 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

### 7.1.1 GOAL

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The goal for the marketing plan is to develop and execute strategic marketing and promotional tactics targeting the identified market segments so as to achieve, over the long term the overall vision for the Voyageur Cycling Route.

*"The vision is that the Voyageur Cycling Route will become part of the foundational provincial cycling network with direct connections to the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail, the Georgian Bay Cycling Route, and the National Capital Region".<sup>13</sup>*

### 7.1.2 OBJECTIVES

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#### SHORT TERM OBJECTIVES

In the short term, the objectives of the marketing plan are to:

1. Increase awareness of the vision for the VVCR as a long distance cycling route connecting Sudbury and Ottawa among cyclists, residents, municipalities and tourism partners.
2. Increase brand awareness of the VVCR among primary markets about sections of the VVCR that are currently market-ready and increase the number of cyclists using these sections.
3. Encourage cyclists using market-ready sections of the VVCR to take trips that involve overnight stays and to experience the appeal, attractions and amenities on these sections, thereby creating economic impacts in host communities.
4. Increase the number of cycling events and tours along the VVCR.
5. Work with partners to strengthen the VVCR brand by integrating its experiences into ongoing tourism marketing efforts, and creating itineraries using market-ready sections of the route.
6. Provide comprehensive information to targeted cyclist markets on the cycling opportunities and support facilities, infrastructure and services currently available throughout the VVCR.
7. Build the local cycling culture with local residents and tourism businesses. Include safety messaging.

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<sup>13</sup> The Vision for the VVCR was provided in the RFP for this project.

## LONG TERM OBJECTIVES

1. Gain profile for the VVCR as part of Ontario's province-wide cycling network.
2. Increase the number of cyclists travelling on sections of the VVCR on multi-day cycling tours.
3. Increase the number of cyclists travelling the VVCR end to end.
4. Increase participation from visitors from outside the region at cycling events throughout the VVCR.
5. Increase awareness of the VVCR in identified secondary geographic target markets, including southern Ontario, Quebec and US Border States.

## 7.2 TARGET MARKETS

The Voyageur Cycling Route will be 630km in length when completed. The route traverses a diverse landscape, has a variety of types of cycling products offered and, as a result, a range of types of cyclists the route will attract. For the majority of the route, this will be the experienced / touring cyclists, with a few sections appealing to recreational and leisure/family cyclists. For a review of all cycling markets see page 6. A specific type of cyclist has been identified for each market-ready section of the route to reflect this (see Table 1).

In the immediate to short term, the VVCR's primary geographic markets will be local/regional markets within the vicinity of the market-ready sections of the route. Given the distance from major markets, the competitive environment for cycling destinations and the fact that the end-to-end route is not yet complete, we recommend that, in the short term, the primary focus should not be on geographic markets further afield.

Over 1 in 3 cycle tourists in Ontario<sup>14</sup> originate from the Toronto Area. Southern Ontario as well as Quebec cyclists (Ontario's largest out-of-province cycle tourist source market) will become valuable target groups for the Voyageur Cycling Route in the long term. It is only as sections of the VVCR become market-ready and awareness of the route grows that expanded promotional efforts into further geographical areas outlined as '*Secondary / Long Term Markets*' below is recommended.

### Geographic:

- *Primary Ontario Markets:* Sudbury, North Bay, Ottawa and countryside, Renfrew/Lanark Counties, Muskoka/Parry Sound, Simcoe County.
  - *Secondary / Long Term Markets:* Greater Toronto (including Halton, Peel, York & Durham Regions), Hamilton, London and Waterloo Region.
- *Primary Quebec Markets:* Gatineau Area
  - *Secondary / Long Term Markets:* Greater Montreal Area, US Border States.

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<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, Tourism Research Unit, [Ontario Cycling Tourism Statistics 2015](#), Winter 2018

### Demographic:

- 45-64 Year olds
  - Secondary age bracket: 25-44 year old
- Single males or couples (empty nesters or no dependents)
  - Families (along those sections of route identified as suitable for this target group)
- Above average incomes and education levels

### Characteristics:

- *Activities:* Outdoor activities including visiting provincial parks and conservation areas, experiencing nature specifically hiking and water-based activities including canoeing and kayaking. Interest in cultural activities and attending cycling events.
- *Preferences:* Local food and drink as well as local attractions and other establishments.
- *Accommodations:* Lodge/hotel/motel and bed & breakfasts appropriate for short-term. Campgrounds should also be emphasized for certain markets (recreational/family and bike packing) where available and close to market-ready sections of route.
- *Cycling Club Riders:* Many experienced and touring cyclists are active members in cycling clubs in area of residence.

## 7.3 BRANDING

As outlined in further detail in Chapter 8, and for the purpose of the marketing plan, the use of the term 'implementation organization' refers to the organization that is responsible to further implement this marketing strategy.

The implementation organization for the VVCR must ensure an identifiable, consistent, and integrated brand proposition that aligns with the varying tourism partners' and other stakeholders' marketing and product strategies along the entire end-to-end route. This section briefly outlines tactics and assets that the implementation organization can leverage to encourage buy-in from partners.

**How to Participate with the Voyageur Cycling Route's Brand:** The implementation organization selected may wish to present key tactics through which to engage local and regional tourism partners to support the Voyageur Cycling Route on a cross-regional level.

1. Incorporate the Voyageur Cycling Route logo and/or website URL on print and digital marketing materials that promote experiences along sections of the route.
2. Work with partners to encourage them to buy into the VVCR brand and use it in association with their own brands when promoting sections of the VVCR in their region.
3. Share existing, new or annual cycling product (e.g. events, tours, itineraries, services, packages etc.) and promotional initiatives that incorporate sections of the VVCR with implementation organization to be housed in a central online platform and promoted through their chosen marketing channels.
4. Create or enhance a VVCR web page or cycling section on website.

5. Produce social media content on Facebook and Instagram with mention of the VVCR.
6. Develop cycling product that incorporates one of the key sub themes.

#### **Brand Assets:**

- **Logos** – High-resolution Voyageur Cycling Route logos should be made available to local and regional partners. Consider 2-3 design layouts that offer a variety of dimensions while maintaining original styling and colours. Also provide a black and a white version. All formats provided in both English and French. See logo guidelines for additional suggested parameters for usage.
- **Embeddable Map** – A digital, and branded routing of the map should be made accessible to partners along sections of the route. This presents partners with an attractive and marketable asset to leverage, while extending the brand of the Voyageur Cycling Route.
- **Visual Assets** – A library of visual assets, including images and videos, should be developed and shared with local and regional partners. Photo usage should be determined and managed by implementation organization. Consistent usage and source referencing can be ensured through signed photo release forms.
- **Hashtags** – Consistency in hashtag usage will create larger exposure for the Voyageur Cycling route (and all partners) and is encouraged across selected social media channels of partners and that of the implementation organization. It is suggested that the use of #RideVoyageur or #RideVCR, as well as their local, regional and provincial tourism hashtags are incorporated in broadcasts, where appropriate.
- **VVCR Welcome Kit** – Made available to new partners along route (e.g. community groups, chambers of commerce, Business Improvement Areas, municipal partners, businesses, etc.). This kit will include Voyageur Cycling Route promotional rack cards, a VVCR window poster and a post card outlining opportunities to leverage VVCR brand and assets (e.g. logo, embeddable map, visual assets, hashtags, product development, etc.).

#### **Logo Guidelines:**

The VVCR should develop logo guidelines and partners should be advised of these guidelines and asked to adhere to them when using the logo. Here are some examples:

- Altering the shape, proportion, color or orientation of the logo(s) is not permitted. Provide examples.
- Illustrate how padding or spacing should be included around the logo and communicate how this helps a logo appear clean and uncluttered. Provide examples.
- Provide a clear call-to-action in the event there are any questions about logo usage.

## **7.4 PROMOTIONAL TACTICS**

The following is a list of recommended tactics to bring the market-ready sections of the VVCR to market. Once additional product development and cycling infrastructure is completed on sections

that are not currently market-ready, the same tactics can be used, with some consideration to time passed and relevance of recommendations within that time frame.

The tactics outline what is immediately necessary for the shorter term marketing of the route. As well, a series of longer term aspirational tactics have also been provided that may be pursued based on the results of the initial promotional activities and resources available.

In Chapter 8, recommendations have been made regarding implementation models for the ongoing marketing of the VVCR, including an option where Discovery Routes Trails Organization is not responsible for the longer term implementation of the marketing plan. For the purpose of this marketing plan, the use of the term 'implementation organization' refers to the organization(s) that is subsequently chosen and given responsibility to further implement this marketing strategy.

All promotional materials should have some English and French language. Over the longer term and as resources allow, materials should be developed that are exclusively in English and in French. The French marketing materials should identify the francophone communities on the VVCR and businesses where operators speak French; this would be valuable information for attracting this market.

#### 7.4.1 PRINT MARKETING

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##### Immediate Short Term Tactics

###### VVCR RACK CARDS

A cost efficient promotional card can provide high level information on the product / experience with an attractive design and photos to increase exposure and drive traffic to the website for further information.

This piece of collateral would be distributed at events and shows attended by the implementation organization staff / volunteers or through partner channels, as well as through visitor information centres, bike shops and through all DMO or other partners' locations or events (both within and outside the region). Reference the primary geographic target markets on page 51 for priority geographic locations.

Tracking and Measurement: Rack Card	
Metrics	# of partner requests, # total of distribution.
Tracking Analysis	Ensure partner requests are tracked. Determine additional print runs required and success of previous year's distribution channels. Update accordingly.
Frequency	Annually.

###### ITINERARIES

Incorporating sections of the VVCR that are market-ready, the development of a branded series of cycling itineraries using themes and types of experiences, and targeting the recommended

markets/type of cyclists, need to be created using a standardized format. The themes for each itinerary should be aligned with partners’ strategic priority areas and decided upon in a collaborative effort with partners. The themes should also align with the recommended themes outlined in this report. When complete these itineraries should be made available in print format at shows/events, as well as digitally, accessible for download and printing. It is recommended that these itineraries include day and multi-day trips and are looped where possible, using market-ready sections of the VVCR and other recommended routing in each area.

The development of the itineraries should be coordinated by the implementation organization working with partner tourism organizations. While including detailed content, the format and design selected can have some aspects similar to a marketing lure, further incentivizing partner tourism organizations to develop these cycling itineraries so as to increase the profile of market-ready communities and sections of the VVCR within their jurisdiction. Information to include in the itineraries is:

- Distance, route surface, elevation chart, experience level, caution notes
- Vehicle parking staging areas
- Washrooms
- Any bike stores and rental locations
- Key visitor attractions and accommodation locations or hubs; bicycle friendly businesses
- List of services and amenities for cyclists in each community
- Tourism related information and tourism partners
- Map of suggested itinerary route
- Identification of Voyageur Cycling Route, as well as The Great Trail (if relevant)
- Basic safety messaging for cyclists and areas of caution. Web link to more information on website
- Inclusion of Voyageur Cycling Route brand messaging (include themes), logo and URL to Voyageur Cycling Route.

These itineraries can be supported by a distribution plan through targeted channels that may include tourism partner websites, social media, consumer shows, visitor information centres, local events, bike shops and regional tourism attractions.

<b>Tracking and Measurement: Itineraries</b>	
Metrics	# of consumer requests (print), # of website views, # of website downloads, # of partner requests (for digital files, or reciprocal links).
Tracking Analysis	Track print numbers and distribution channels. Determine additional print runs required and success of previous year’s distribution channels. Compare downloads by itinerary type, amend itineraries if possible.
Frequency	Annually.



## ROUTE MAP PAGES

Detailed maps for each market-ready section of the route should be produced and placed online for download. They should include information on route conditions and surfaces, distances, cautions, and general services and amenities along the route. Many cyclists find these types of resources helpful when planning and while on their trip. They will download these route maps and print them off to have while riding.

These will be important assets when communicating those sections of the route on which cyclists should use caution and those that are not market-ready.

Tracking and Measurement: Route Map Pages	
Metrics	# of website views, # of website downloads.
Tracking Analysis	Ensure website downloads are tracked through website or unique URLs. Update accordingly as sections become market ready. Compare views/downloads by market-ready section.
Frequency	Annually.

### Partner Activities

- Assistance with the distribution of rack cards from information centres and other locations.
- Assistance with the development of itineraries plus promotion of itineraries.
- Placement and promotion of route map pages online
- Include VVCR route and information on reprints of all partner cycling maps.
- Include information on VVCR in their general tourism marketing collateral.

### Longer Term Tactics – Print Collateral

- *Fold-Out Map or Brochure* – Production of a full sized, fold-out map or multi-panel brochure showing the end-to-end route with enough detail as can be supported by scale and references to further online sources would be popular with cyclists. Maps and brochures can act as marketing lures, grabbing the attention of and inspiring cyclists to consider riding the VVCR. They are good promotional items to assist with exposure.
- *Map Book* – The production of a bound map book that includes the detailed map pages, may want to be considered and made available for sale. To be considered once end-to-end route is complete. Opportunities to establish print and shipping on-demand relationships with printing house can mitigate inventory and shipping logistical challenges for DRTO.

## 7.4.2 DIGITAL MARKETING

### Immediate Short Term Tactics

#### WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT / UPDATES

The development of web pages dedicated to the VVCR should be a top priority. These web pages should be housed within DRTO's existing website or that of the implementation organization or independently, depending on implementation model selected. The web pages should incorporate visually appealing images, graphics and text that is relevant to target markets. If existing as pages on

a larger site, users to the website should be directed via prominent and easy navigation to the VVCR content from the website's homepage.

These web pages need to host a number of the recommended tactics including:

- **Interactive Route Map** – This asset showcases the entire end-to-end route and aims to inspire visitors to learn more about the VVCR. While there are several map-based platforms that could be incorporated it is recommended that this be integrated through Google Maps Platform. While not ideal for all forms of navigation while riding, this platform is recommended due to user-familiarity, ease of maintenance and management of content, as well as the wealth of information that can be shared with users. It will be important that the interactive route map clearly communicates sections that are not market-ready or require extra caution. Develop sections of the interactive map that reflect regional tourism organizational boundaries, or perhaps on a smaller scale (e.g. DMO boundaries). Share instructions on how to embed this on their website. This presents partners with an attractive and marketable asset to leverage, while extending the brand of the Voyageur Cycling Route.
- **Itineraries** –
  - Dedicated web page with recommendations and downloadable itineraries (PDF) on market-ready sections of the VVCR, as well as other longer rides to target experienced road cyclists, both visitors and local residents
  - Dedicated web page with recommendations and downloadable itineraries (PDF) on market-ready sections of the VVCR, as well as other shorter routes to target leisure/family and recreational cyclists, both visitors and local residents
- **Digital Mapping Platforms** - Each itinerary (and market-ready sections) should also be made available on other digital mapping platforms, including RidewithGPS ([www.ridewithgps.com](http://www.ridewithgps.com)), Strava ([www.strava.com](http://www.strava.com)) and a variety of downloadable GPS files. Having market-ready sections and itineraries made available with GPS files available for download is essential.
- **Themes and Branding** – Content (or dedicated webpage) communicating the core and sub themes of the VVCR should be included. Cycling information and tourism product relevant to target markets can then be featured on these pages.
- **Tourism and Municipal Partners** - Segmented by tourism regions (RTO13a, Ottawa Valley, Lanark County, Ottawa), consider developing sub-pages for each that showcase regional cycling information including maps, road routes, trail networks and mountain bike product in each region. Refer and link to respective tourism websites for more information. Consider including information and/or listing of Ontario By Bike certified bicycle friendly businesses.
- **Events and Tours** - Cycling event or bike tour calendar with information on each event that incorporates sections of the VVCR.
- **Other Inclusions & Considerations**
  - Create a direct URL to primary VVCR web pages if existing on a larger site (e.g. [www.discoveryroutes.ca/voyageurcyclingroute](http://www.discoveryroutes.ca/voyageurcyclingroute) or direct from another implementation organization's website).

- Safety messaging for cyclists and drivers, including rules of the road.
- Links to implementation organizations' social media accounts.
- Links to other partner organizations and connecting trail websites.
- Development of these web pages should incorporate current Search Engine Optimization (SEO) tactics and ensure that web analytics tools have been integrated to allow for frequent performance assessments and measurement of marketing campaigns.

Tracking and Measurement: Website	
Metrics	Search engine rankings for relevant keywords, # of unique visitors, # of page views, source web traffic, website content viewed, # of maps and itineraries downloaded, # of referrals to partner websites.
Tracking Analysis	Use Google Analytics (or proprietary web analytics platform) to prepare a custom dashboard and automated reports. View source traffic and content viewed to direct future content development and when planning other marketing initiatives.
Frequency	Quarterly review and high level report on website. Quarterly assessments with necessary action items and updates to content development, support marketing (e.g. social, digital advertising, etc.), page layout and SEO. Annual review of website.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Create dedicated Voyageur Cycling Route social media accounts or include VVCR content and promotions in the implementation organizations' existing social media accounts. Should DRTO be the implementation organization, create a 'Discovery Routes' account for Instagram, while continuing to leverage the existing 'Discovery Routes' Facebook account for the VVCR. Consider:

- Developing a social media plan and content calendar.
- Dedicating the necessary human resources for implementation and continuity.
- Creating and sharing content that will engage target markets.
- Making frequent and consistent posts to social media accounts, with more frequency in late spring to fall, (once a social media platform and account is created there needs to be long term commitment and activity).
- Setting goals for targeted number of followers, growth, activity and reach over time.
- Ensuring that the social media presence is consistent with the overall identity and messaging of the VVCR.
- Where supported, use a recognizable and relevant #hashtag on all postings (e.g. #RideVoyageur or #RideVCR).
- Collaborate with key local partners to help identify opportunities for content development and cross promotion of cycling initiatives in the region.
- Engagement is important. Allocate time and effort to engage with target market's content.
- Creating an active following in each platform (it may take time to build).
- Should budgets allow, use paid promotions to increase awareness.

Tracking and Measurement: Social Media	
Metrics	Completed social media plan and content calendar, # of account 'likes' or 'followers', post frequency, post engagement, platform reach, conversions on relevant posts (with Call-to-Actions), content type.
Tracking Analysis	Create spreadsheet tracking social media platforms, with columns for all pre-defined metrics to be tracked. Evaluate major fluctuations in engagement, reach and community growth against content type, frequency and posts.
Frequency	Quarterly content and metric review. Quarterly report on platform activity with necessary action items and updates to content, time of broadcasts, and relevant tagging. Annual review of social media activities against plan and objectives.

**Content Development**

This tactic is recommended to help establish interest and awareness of the VVCR in target markets and will support the growth of a 'digital asset library'. To complement the maps/itineraries developed, cyclists also seek additional information that is credible and authentic in terms of details and the assessment of cycling experiences. This content can be shared through web pages, social media platforms and through other promotional platforms as available and with partners.

- Create a content development outline/proposal and prioritize outreach to obtain user generated content, photos and stories of experiences that speaks to target markets and is both relevant and useful to each specific target market.
- Content needs to be authentic and contain real images. It can come in the form of testimonials, anecdotal comments and personal blogs, sourced and used or re-published with permission.
- To simplify the development and collection of content, outreach to the following sources is recommended: event coordinators, and select participants; local cycling clubs, visiting cycling clubs; engaged bike shops; VVCR volunteers.

Tracking and Measurement: Content Development	
Metrics	Content outline developed, # of engaged partners submitting content, diversity of content sourced.
Tracking Analysis	Ensuring content that is planned, developed or sourced (through partners or new) has a balance of target markets, demographics and reflects geographically across region.
Frequency	Quarterly and annually.

**Partner Activities**

- Create cycling specific webpages, or add to existing cycling webpages, with information on and links back to relevant VVCR regional pages and all digital assets.
- Include promotion of and content on VVCR in social media calendars.
- Assist with content development.

### Longer Term Tactics – Digital Marketing

- *Stand-Alone Website* – Dependent on longer term coordination, resources and implementation model, a stand-alone website may be a consideration. The same inclusions as outlined above are recommended.
- *Influencer Relations* – Moving beyond user generated content, outreach to and hire known cycling and tourism influencers to create and share content on their platforms featuring the VVCR. Consider their audience and alignment with selected target markets of VVCR.
- *Trip Planner* – Incorporate the VVCR route and itineraries on developing trip planner resource for [www.northernontario.travel](http://www.northernontario.travel)

### 7.4.3 EVENTS, SHOWS, TOURS & PACKAGES

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#### Immediate Short Term Tactics

##### CONSUMER SHOWS & EVENTS

Where possible, work with existing tourism and other partners to ensure inclusion of VVCR print collateral occurs at consumer shows such as the Toronto International Bicycle Show, Toronto Outdoor Adventure Show, Montreal Bike Show, Ottawa or Gatineau bike or outdoor shows. While these shows may be out of immediate and primary geographically targeted areas, they draw attendees from a larger area.

##### SUPPORTING EXISTING AND NEW CYCLING EVENTS

There are several existing cycling events that use sections of the VVCR, and new cycling events may be developed in the short term. Supporting the operations, growth and marketing of these events through in-kind or other financial resources should be evaluated depending on the resources of the implementation organization. Current annual cycling events include: West Nipissing Charity Ride, Tour de Whitewater plus several others in the Ottawa and Lanark areas, and several other smaller community focussed rides.

Tracking and Measurement: Events & Shows	
Metrics	Distribution #'s of collateral, attendance at shows and events, growth in size of events, marketing reach of any promotions of shows and events
Tracking Analysis	Consideration of interactions and cost to participate. Evaluation of promotions undertaken to support shows and events. # of collateral distributed vs cost of distribution
Frequency	Bi-annually and annually.

#### Partner Activities

- Take, and feature, VVCR marketing collateral to consumer shows and events.
- Provide support, financial or in-kind, and promotional assistance to existing cycling events.
- Identify other events where a cycling component could be added in the future.

### Longer Term Tactics– Events, Tours & Packages

- **Consumer Shows & Events** – As resources allow, attend consumer shows exclusively promoting VVCR. Shows may include Toronto International Bicycle Show, Toronto Outdoor Adventure Show, Montreal Bike Show, Ottawa or Gatineau bike or outdoor shows.
- **Events and Tours** – Develop a receptive, welcome and promotional package to entice cycling event organizers and tour operators to use VVCR, making it easy for them to navigate administrative and logistical considerations. This should include key contacts at municipalities, emergency services and cycling/tourism related organizations. Outreach to and establish contacts at Velo Quebec for VVCR to be considered as a future tour or event route, once more fully developed.
- **Packages** – Develop self-guided cycling packages that are uploaded to implementation organization's website and Destination Ontario's packages, as well as any relevant booking engines. Consider integrating cycling itineraries with a variety of accommodation options, as well as other product that can be experienced along the VVCR and is relevant to target markets.
- **Signature Cycling Event** – Create and coordinate a signature cycling event that features market-ready sections of the VVCR. There may be an option for an end-to-end event prior to the completion of the cycling infrastructure with the assistance of vehicle shuttles to get cyclists through these areas. Another option may be an annual event that celebrates different market-ready sections of the route.
- **Supported Tours** – The implementation organization or a contracted tour company creates, coordinates and provides support for smaller group tours featuring market-ready sections of the VVCR, or, as above, assists with the necessary logistics for an end-to-end tour.
- **Partner with Other Events** – There are a number of non-cycling and existing events across all regions that may be receptive to and benefit from incorporating a cycling component to their larger event program. Develop a list of all events and outreach to the event coordinators to explore these opportunities.

#### 7.4.4 OTHER IMMEDIATE SHORT TERM TACTICS

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- **Digital Asset Library** – Continue to develop a library of visual assets specific for use by VVCR partners and also housed within Destination Ontario's image bank. Assets should feature cyclists on the VVCR, enjoying added experiences, visiting the communities and stopping at businesses. Consider key and sub theme of VVCR during production. Photo usage should be determined and managed by implementation organization. Consistent usage and source referencing can be ensured through signed photo release forms.
- **Community Outreach Plan** – Engaging the local communities that the VVCR traverses is important to help build local buy-in and foster a cycling culture, generate awareness of the VVCR and increase the number of riders using the VVCR. Local cyclists can be important ambassadors for the VVCR and help spread the word about the cycling experiences and the route itself to visiting friends and family and other community members, including local businesses.

- **Wayfinding Signage** – Both directional and trailhead signs have already been installed on a number of sections of the VVCR. Further signage installation should continue as resources are available and sections of the route become market-ready. Co-branding should be considered and negotiated where the VVCR route uses other established cycling routes and/or trails. Installing Share the Road signs on sections that use roads is valuable for safety and awareness purposes and should also be pursued as resources become available.
- **Cycling Clubs Relations** – Be receptive and proactive in outreaching to cycling clubs in primary geographic target areas to provide trip planning assistance.

#### Partner Activities

- Contribute to visual assets library (and have access to visual assets when they are promoting the VVCR).
- Collaborate with efforts to outreach to communities, businesses and municipalities and to build a cycling culture.
- Where appropriate, co-brand local/regional cycle route signage with VVCR logo.
- Participate in efforts to outreach to cycling clubs.

#### 7.4.5 OTHER LONGER TERM TACTICS

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- **Print Advertising** – To be undertaken when the end-to-end route is completed or when showcasing a strong call-to-action for a product (e.g. event, tours, packages, etc.). Identify opportunities to place print advertisements in select targeted print magazines/guides. These may include: Cycling in Ontario/Le velo en Ontario; Pedal Magazine; Canadian Cycling Magazine; Vélo Mag; Adventure Cycling.
- **Digital Advertising** – To be undertaken when the end-to-end route is complete or when showcasing a strong call-to-action for a product (e.g. event, tours, packages, etc.). Consider banner advertisements on targeted sites offering exposure to relevant target markets and demographics. Also, as an effective channel to showcase the natural, scenic aspect of the VVCR experiences, consider developing advertising creative for Facebook and Instagram platforms.
- **Travel Media / FAM Tours** – A Familiarization (FAM) Tour involves hosting tour operators, travel agents or travel media in an effort to create awareness of the experiences that are available along the Voyageur Cycling Route. The purpose of hosting a travel agent or tour operator FAM tour is to either increase product knowledge and/or destination knowledge. FAM tours can only be successful with the participation and cooperation of local tourism operators. When the travel media FAM tour participants experience the Voyageur Cycling Route first hand, they are able to better relay information to their readers and clients. Since their jobs involve dispersing information to large numbers of people, this is a valuable tool.

#### 7.4.6 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED PROMOTIONAL TACTICS

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Below in Table 2 is a summary of recommended promotional tactics to support the marketing plan for the VVCR. For details on each action reference the tactics described above.

With some timelines for infrastructure development and hence market-readiness of end to end VVCR route, there may be a shift in priority and timing. A number of the recommended short term marketing actions are ongoing and dependent on the same factors plus budget.

Chapter 8 provides a summary of the current cycle tourism marketing efforts of partners as well as their strategic priorities (Table 3). It also includes a summary table (Table 4) of the potential participation by different types of partners in the recommended promotional tactics.



**Table 2**

**Summary of Promotional Tactics: Responsibilities, Partners, Priority and Budget**

<b>Tactic/Marketing Action</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility of Implementation Organization</b>	<b>Partner Participation Required*</b>	<b>Priority (H-High, M-Medium, L-Low)</b>	<b>Budget (H-High, M-Medium, L-Low)</b>
<b>SHORT TERM MARKETING ACTIONS</b>				
<b>Print Marketing</b>				
VVCR Rack Cards	✓		H	L
Itinerary Sheets	✓	✓	M	L
Route Map Pages for Market-Ready Sections	✓		H	M
<b>Digital Marketing</b>				
Website Development (housed within existing website)	✓		H	M
Social Media	✓	✓	L	L
Content Development	✓	✓	L	L
<b>Events, Tours &amp; Packages</b>				
Consumer Shows & Events (with partners)		✓	L M	M
Support Existing and New Cycling Events	✓	✓	M	L-M
<b>Other</b>				
Digital Asset Library	✓	✓	M	H
Community Outreach Plan	✓	✓	M	L
Wayfinding Signage	✓	✓	H	H
Cycling Clubs Relations	✓		L	L
Industry Awareness and Support	✓	✓	H	L-M
Marketing Partnerships	✓	✓	H	L
<b>LONG TERM MARKETING ACTIONS</b>				
<b>Print Marketing</b>				
Fold-out Map or Brochure	✓		M	H
Map Book	✓		L	H
<b>Digital Marketing</b>				
Stand-alone Website	✓		M	H
Influencer Relations	✓	✓	H	M
Trip Planner		✓	H	L
<b>Events, Tours &amp; Packages</b>				
Consumer Shows & Events (as lead)	✓	✓	M	H

**Table 2**

**Summary of Promotional Tactics: Responsibilities, Partners, Priority and Budget**

<b>Tactic/Marketing Action</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility of Implementation Organization</b>	<b>Partner Participation Required*</b>	<b>Priority (H-High, M-Medium, L-Low)</b>	<b>Budget (H-High, M-Medium, L-Low)</b>
Welcome & promotional package for events and tours	✓	✓	L	L
Packages (self-guided)	✓	✓	L	L
Signature Cycling Event	✓		M	H
Supported Tours	✓	✓	L	L
Partner with Other Events	✓	✓	L	L
<b>Other</b>				
Print Advertising	✓	✓	M	M
Digital Advertising	✓	✓	H	M
Travel Media/FAM Tours	✓	✓	L	H

\*Partners refers to a broad spectrum and can include RTO's, DMO's, Municipalities/Counties, other organizations. See Table 4 for more details.

# Chapter 8: Implementation Model

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## 8.1 MOVING FORWARD: BRINGING THE VVCR TO MARKET

To date, Discovery Routes Trails Organization (DRTO) has been the recognized lead in the development of the VVCR, working with a variety of partners across the geographic area the route traverses. Moving forward, work will need to be carried out on three fronts:

4. Further infrastructure development of the VVCR sections that are not yet market-ready.
5. Enhancing the market readiness of communities along the VVCR including services, amenities and bicycle friendly businesses.
6. Market development and promotional activities.

Discovery Routes Trails Organization has indicated its intent to continue working on the development of the VVCR. What is not clear is which organization(s) will take a leadership role in enhancing market readiness and in promotional activities. This issue is made more complex by the large geographic area the VVCR covers, involving multiple municipal and regional governments, tourism organizations and destination marketing organizations and economic development organizations as well as other trail organizations.

A number of alternatives were identified as to how the VVCR is best served moving forward into the market readiness and market development and promotional phases. We also reviewed the Discovery Routes Trails Organization Strategic Plan (2017-2021) which speaks to an ongoing role for the organization in marketing and promotion, and the 2015 feasibility study and implementation plan.

The implementation alternatives, starting with our preferred recommendation, are described below including a description of the pros and cons of each alternative.

### 8.1.1 PREFERRED RECOMMENDATION FOR MOVING FORWARD

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Discovery Routes Trails Organization continues as the lead for the VVCR with its role expanding from development into market readiness, market development and promotion.

#### **PROS**

- DRTO has a high level of knowledge about the route.
- DRTO has established contacts with all partners.
- Some of these activities are already being undertaken by DRTO (e.g. signage installation, brand development, outreach to partners, etc.).
- DRTO is based in northern Ontario, where much of the route is situated. This provides the potential to access resources solely available to northern Ontario organizations and projects.

- DRTO’s main responsibilities currently include creating, maintaining and promoting multi-seasonal trails in northeastern Ontario.
- One organization with responsibility for all aspects of the VVCR would maximize efficiencies, the impact of promotions and the brand identity.
- The existing Marketing Strategy working group includes stakeholders with extensive marketing knowledge and might be able to transition to a marketing sub-committee.

#### **CONS**

- The current mandate of DRTO is to support local area trail development.
- The current mandate of DRTO does not include the full geographic area that the VVCR transverses.
- As it currently exists, DRTO has capacity and resource constraints to taking on this role.

#### **REQUIREMENTS TO PROCEED**

- Modify DRTO’s mandate to include market readiness, market development and promotion throughout the geographic area of the VVCR.
- Develop new partnerships with organizations throughout the geographic area of the VVCR or formalize existing ones drawing on the expertise on the existing Marketing Strategy committee.
- Seek out additional resources (and revenue generating streams as suggested in the DRTO Strategic Plan, 2015 Feasibility Study and Implementation Plan or this marketing strategy) to increase the organization’s capacity to proceed with these additional tasks supporting the development and promotion of the VVCR, and to provide the financial resources for implementation.

#### **SUB-OPTIONS**

We have identified two sub-options within this preferred approach. Sub-option 1, described below, is, we suggest, worthy of pursuing as a strong option.

1. Discovery Routes takes the lead on market readiness, market development and promotion for that part of the VVCR within its geographical jurisdiction (West Nipissing, North Bay to Mattawa.) Other organization(s) are identified as the leads for the more south-eastern sections of the VVCR (Renfrew, Lanark, and Ottawa) and DRTO works closely with these organizations to ensure common approaches, standards and consistent branding and promotional messages.

2. Discovery Routes takes the lead (either alone or with sub-option 1) on the market readiness of the route itself, on market development, and on the promotion of the VVCR. Economic development agencies take on prime responsibility for the other elements of market readiness – encouraging and supporting the development of businesses that provide services, amenities, attractions, etc. that are sought after by cycle tourists. These economic development agencies are better suited to this task, have the necessary tools and access to resources needed by businesses.

## 8.1.2 OTHER ALTERNATIVES FOR MOVING FORWARD

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Our assessment of other alternatives for moving forward has not identified any others that we see as viable. While there are a number of alternatives, explored below, all present some fundamental challenges or issues that could be difficult to overcome. It should be noted that this conclusion is in the context of the current climate with respect to the development and promotion of cycle tourism in Ontario (and along the VVCR route), and tourism marketing more generally. Future events, such as the completion and promotion of the province wide cycling network, may open up new alternatives for the marketing and promotion of the VVCR.

The other alternatives investigated and some key pros and cons of each are described below.

### **ALTERNATIVE 1**

This is another hybrid alternative. DRTO would maintain responsibility for the development of the VVCR and the market readiness of the route. They would also take on responsibility for preparing the initial collateral for the VVCR, such as the website, route maps, content and digital asset library etc.

This collateral, together with detailed guidelines for its use, would be provided to partners along the end-to-end route of the trail, such as the regional tourism organizations, destination marketing organizations, etc. and these groups would be tasked with implementing the promotional tactics.

#### *Pros*

- These organizations are already promoting a variety of tourism activities (including in some cases cycle tourism) and could add the VVCR to their mix of product on offer.
- May not require much in the way of additional capacity or resources.

#### *Cons*

- Promotional efforts would be inconsistent from one geographic area to the other.
- Most likely the VVCR would only be promoted in sections, not as an entire route. (This may be appropriate in the short term when some sections are not market-ready, but not in the long term).
- The identity and brand of the VVCR is likely to be diminished.

### **ALTERNATIVE 2**

Identify an alternative lead organization (this might be one of the three Regional Tourism Organizations in the area, a Destination Marketing Organization, another cycling organization such as the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, Ontario By Bike or some other organization) to coordinate further market readiness, market development and promotional efforts and partnerships. Our assessment has not identified a specific organization.

### *Pros*

- Depending on the organization, they may have relevant expertise such as in developing cycling destinations, promoting cycling tourism and/or tourism more generally.
- The organization may have expertise in coordinating marketing partnerships and cycling and/or tourism marketing collateral.
- The organization may have existing promotional tools (e.g. websites, social media accounts) that can be adapted to include the VVCR.
- The organization may have some capacity and resources available.

### *Cons*

- The organization is unlikely to cover the same geographic area as the VVCR necessitating extensive work with partners.
- VVCR will likely be one of many initiatives and products being developed and promoted, and as such may not get the necessary attention.
- Overall VVCR vision may get lost in the local, regional or other focus of the organization.
- The organization may not have sufficient capacity and resources to dedicate to VVCR.
- The organization may not have the expertise required to market the cycling product and VVCR.
- The organization may not be northern Ontario-based and therefore not eligible for some funding sources.

### **ALTERNATIVE 3**

Create a new organization formed for the sole purpose of moving forward with the market readiness, market development and promotion of the VVCR. Over the longer term, this organization might expand to take on the promotion of cycle tourism across Northern Ontario and along the full route of the VVCR, from Sault Ste. Marie to Ottawa, including Manitoulin Island and the Lake/Huron Georgian Bay routes.

### *Pros*

- A dedicated focus on VVCR and cycle tourism
- A new organization could be created to cover the full geographic area of the VVCR

### *Cons*

- A significant investment in start-up costs would be required.
- The organization would need to seek out funds for operations, potentially competing with existing organizations like DRTO.
- In the short term at least, pending full completion of the VVCR, there may not be sufficient work to be done to justify a separate organization.
- There could well be overlap between such an organization and others throughout the area, such as economic development agencies, tourism marketing organizations.

## **8.1.3 IMPLEMENTATION ACTION STEPS**

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Below, we have outlined the next steps that should be pursued in moving ahead with finalizing the implementation model to be followed, and in initiating the work to be undertaken. These steps have

been outlined under the assumption that the preferred option identified above is followed, with consideration to sub-option 1.

Step 1: Explore which partners might have the best potential to lead the VVCR marketing and promotional efforts along the eastern part of its route (east of Mattawa). From the consultations undertaken as part of this project, it would appear that RTO 10 (Ottawa Tourism) and the Ottawa Valley Tourism Association are the most engaged in cycle tourism. Discussions with potential partners in the east should explore:

- a) Whether they might be prepared to consider such a role
- b) Under what conditions
- c) What tasks they might be prepared to take on
- d) What resources might be needed and what is available

The outcomes of these initial discussions might modify the approach presented under Step 2.

Step 2: Meet with the DRTTO board to get their buy in (in principle initially, under certain conditions) to the preferred model, including a discussion of potential partners for the eastern sections and their expectations.

Step 3: Approach potential funding sources (through discussions) to explore opportunities to access the funding support (two years at a minimum) needed to increase DRTTO's capacity, to develop the necessary collateral, initiate implementation and explore opportunities to support the efforts of implementation partners in the eastern section.

Step 4: Simultaneously with Step 3, work with partners to build industry and community awareness and support, as outlined in 8.4 below.

Step 5: Depending on the outcomes of Step 3, prepare funding applications to appropriate agencies, involving eastern partners as necessary.

Step 6: Once implementation funding has been sourced, commence work on short term marketing plan tactics.

## 8.2 FUNDING

Moving forward with the implementation of the marketing strategy and activating short and longer term tactics from the recommendations included within the promotional plan will require further funding. The following funding sources have been identified as having potential to support further market development and promotional activities as recommended in this marketing strategy, they may also support as part of a larger work plan, work includes infrastructure development and market readiness activities.

### 8.2.1 GOVERNMENT GRANTS

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**NORTHERN ONTARIO HERITAGE FUND CORPORATION (NOHFC)** – There are a number of funding streams available. The following may be applicable for further implementation of the VVCR: Strategic Economic Infrastructure Program, the Northern Community Capacity Building Program, the Northern Business Opportunity Program, the Northern Event Partnership Program and the Northern Ontario Internship Program. Funding from NOHFC is exclusively available to northern Ontario based organizations and enterprises and is affiliated with the Government of Ontario, Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines.

**FEDNOR** – Financial support is provided to northern Ontario businesses and community partners (municipalities, First Nations, and other organizations and institutions) to support further growth, innovation and competitiveness in northern Ontario. FedNor is the Government of Canada's economic development organization for northern Ontario. Under FedNor are a number of more local area Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDC's) including: Nickel Basin Federal Development Corporation; Economic Partners Sudbury E/W Nipissing Inc.; and NECO CFDC.

**FEDDEV ONTARIO** – Similar to FedNor, but with a southern Ontario catchment area, FedDev Ontario offers rural Ontario businesses support, financing and assistance with strategic planning with funding administered by local CFDC's, each of which has priority funding areas. In eastern Ontario the relevant CFDC's include: Renfrew County CFDC; and Valley Heartland CFDC.

**RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (RED) PROGRAM** – Program funds are available to support projects that stimulate economic growth in Ontario's rural and Indigenous communities, including planning and implementation projects with eligibility for marketing and branding activities. RED is administered by the Government of Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA).

**ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION (OTF)** – Funding is available for projects that fall within Trillium's six strategic action areas and help reach priority outcomes. There are local community grants and a province wide funding streams, for initial 'seed' project funding and project 'grow' investments. OTF is an agency of the Government of Ontario.

### 8.2.2 PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS

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**MUNICIPAL** – Municipalities have a varied capacity to provide assistance, funding or in-kind support for projects that positively impact economic activity and community residents. Many of the larger urban areas have economic development departments and/or small business support centres. Additionally, many provide event support. With the initiation of the Municipal Accommodation Tax, some municipalities will administer and collect a tax from accommodations which in large part is intended to support tourism activities, development and promotion.



**BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES** – Many communities instead of or in addition to economic development offices, have smaller Business Improvement Areas and/or Chambers of Commerce which are usually membership-based and serve a localized area. The larger city of Ottawa has a Board of Trade.

### 8.2.3 TOURISM FUNDING PROGRAMS

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**DESTINATION ONTARIO** – The tourism marketing agency for the Government of Ontario has several partnership programs. The Tourism Industry Partner Program (TIPP) assists by contributing funds towards out of province marketing campaigns.

**DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATIONS (DMO's)** – The tourism organizations for each county or city have a more localized focus and have a variety of relationships with the municipality or region. Most have limited annual budgets and resources but are innovative in their ways of providing support for tourism driving projects and events.

**REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATIONS (RTO's)** – Each of the 3 RTO's in the VVCR area have funding and/or programming available to partner organizations.

- Ottawa Tourism / RTO10 has a Destination Development Fund which among other areas supports the development of new/innovative tourism product, with one of the priority areas being cycling. Additionally there is a major event fund.
- Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization / RTO11 has the Tourism Development Partnership Fund with supporting strategic objectives of: stakeholder engagement & investment attraction; workforce development, product development, marketing.
- Destination Northern Ontario /RTO13 – Cycling is one of the region's product teams at RTO13, with a supporting cycle tourism strategy, advisory group and other support offered through a variety of product development and marketing partnerships. Tourism Excellence North (TEN) is a business and industry support program RTO13 delivers programming through.

### 8.2.4 VOLUNTEERS & LOCAL AMBASSADORS

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A volunteer marketing advisory committee with experienced industry partners is recommended and considered essential to move the implementation of this project forward, regardless of the implementation option chosen. There has already been considerable volunteer hours contributed from informal VVCR committees and DRTO Board. Additionally, volunteers will be of assistance should any cycling events be hosted featuring the VVCR.

Empowering the local community as ambassadors for the VVCR to generate word-of-mouth and to encouraging visiting friends and relatives to use the route are important marketing activities that require little to no funding, only a coordinated approach or campaign.

### 8.2.5 DONATIONS

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These can be sought to help support further market readiness, market development and promotional activities, in-kind or as discounted services, or cash dependant on identified source and need. Private foundations or contributions may also be a source of funding should the implementation organization be a registered charity (DRTO has charitable status).

### 8.2.6 OTHER

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**TRANS CANADA TRAIL** – Some project funding is available and has already been received to assist with signage for portions of the route that are also designated part of the Trans Canada Trail. Other funding for promotional activities may be available.

**GOVERNMENT OF ONTARIO** – Cycling infrastructure funding has been made available from Government of Ontario, Ministry of Transportation in past years through the Ontario Municipal Commuter Fund. With the new provincial government in 2018 it is unclear what level of funding will be made available for cycling. In 2018 a province wide cycling network was identified, as part of the next steps for implementing the network, of which VVCR shares much of the same routing, promotional activities will need to be considered. The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, Tourism Development Fund does not include marketing activities as an eligible expense. Celebrate Ontario funds local and larger established events.

While the above outlines some potential options for accessing resources to further support market development and promotional activities, the 2015 Feasibility Study and Implementation Plan provides a larger overview of other partnerships that may be suited for development of the route, market readiness and market development.

## 8.3 PROGRAMS AND TOOLS FOR COMMUNITIES AND ENTREPRENEURS

Our market readiness assessment (Chapter 5) indicated that many of the communities across the VVCR do not have the full services and amenities that are required by cycle tourists, whether it be bike stores or fix stations, parking/staging areas, accommodations, appropriate food services or more. Chapter 5 provides details on the gaps and opportunities that were identified during our route assessment.

An educational process will be needed to inform communities, including the business community, about these gaps and the opportunities that exist. And businesses will need some support and encouragement to help them fill these gaps. Care must be taken, however, to be realistic in expectations as to the level of business that can be generated by cycle tourism, particularly in the short to medium term before the route is complete end-to-end and before market awareness has been fully developed. In many cases, the opportunities can likely be filled by expanding or modifying

the offers at existing businesses rather than establishing new businesses to cater to a relatively small, seasonal market.

The following actions are recommended to help communities and businesses become market-ready for cycle tourism:

- Develop a tool kit for communities and businesses on cycle tourists, their needs and expectations and gaps and opportunities. The tool kit might include:
  - Information on the VVCR and other local and regional cycling product
  - Who are cycle tourists and why welcome cycle tourists
  - Services and amenities catering to cycle tourist and/or Ontario By Bike bicycle friendly certification criteria for tourism businesses or business areas
- Use the tool kit as the basis for product development workshops or webinars across the VVCR regions. Feature the results from this project (particularly the market-readiness assessment and the market intelligence) to educate communities and businesses about gaps and opportunities in their area.
- Ensure that local economic development agencies are informed about the gaps and opportunities, and encouraged to provide this information to existing business owners and entrepreneurs with whom they are working.
- Source and direct funding to assist with supporting community based market readiness support and infrastructure (bike racks, bike fix stations, bike signage in and around community etc.).
- Outreach to businesses (accommodations, campgrounds, food & beverage, etc.) to encourage more of them to become certified as bicycle friendly with Ontario By Bike.
- Keep communities and businesses informed of progress being made on the VVCR, and of marketing opportunities for them to participate in, through an ongoing communications plan.
- Encourage membership-based DMO's to inform their members about cycle tourism, its potential for their area and the service and amenity needs of cyclists.
- Where appropriate, industry training and development programs (such as Destination Northern Ontario's TEN program) should include information on cycle tourism and the VVCR, particularly the needs of cycle tourists.

## 8.4 INDUSTRY AWARENESS AND SUPPORT

Building local and regional awareness for the VVCR within the tourism industry generally, as well as within communities and at municipal and regional governments, will be an important outcome of the VVCR Marketing Strategy. Awareness of the route and its ultimate vision will help build support for continued infrastructure development, and for marketing and partnership efforts. Short term and ongoing longer term examples are provided below:

- Work with RTOs and DMOs to increase the VVCR's profile in their print collateral and digital assets.

- Work with municipalities and regions to build and support efforts to grow the cycling culture in communities along the VVCR.
- Work with partners to encourage them to buy into the VVCR brand and use it in association with their own brands when promoting sections of the VVCR in their region.
- Create partner/industry web pages to house the 2015 Feasibility Study and Implementation Plan and this Marketing Strategy, plus the communications package, digital assets and other relevant industry information.
- Develop a communications package, which will include content for partners to use in promotions on social platforms and websites or in print collateral. Information on brand guidelines can be presented here.
- Inform tourism businesses of needs of cycle tourist market and how to cater to them. Encourage their participation in Ontario By Bike's free bicycle friendly business certification program.
- Attend RTO AGMs and Northern Ontario Tourism Summit.
- Provide promotional materials and product training to visitor information centres in the area and nearby, expanding reach as the VVCR product becomes more market ready.
- Work with Indigenous Tourism Ontario to help incorporate developing indigenous tourism products as a part of the VVCR experience.
- Create ongoing relationships with Quebec stakeholders, including Velo Quebec and Quebec regional tourism partners.
- Ensure ongoing awareness of VVCR opportunities and issues through participation in provincial committees and advisory groups.

## 8.5 MARKETING PARTNERSHIPS

Working with partners across the VVCR region is fundamental to the successful implementation of the marketing plan. During our consultations and research, we identified an inventory of current cycle tourism marketing initiatives and related supporting activities in across the VVCR. These are identified in Table 3 along with information on the strategic priority areas and marketing themes of these potential partners. (Note: The information in Table 3 draws from the stakeholder consultations and additional research by the consultants. There may be additional information of relevance not included; as well strategic priority areas often shift so these priorities may change over time).

As illustrated in Table 3, many of the organizations undertaking tourism marketing across the VVCR are involved with cycle tourism marketing, some extensively and others minimally. To maximize the efficiencies and impacts of the marketing efforts, it will be important for the implementation organization to partner with, and collaborate with, these organizations as much as possible. This marketing plan should be shared with these potential partners and the implementation organization should consult with all of them to agree on the opportunities to work together.

Table 4 summarizes the promotional tactics which will require the participation of partners and identifies which types of partners would logically participate in each tactic.

**Table 3**  
**Current Cycle Tourism Marketing and Priorities of Potential Partner Organizations**

<b>Partner Organization</b>	<b>Current Cycle Tourism Marketing Initiatives &amp; Activities</b>	<b>Strategic Priority Areas and Marketing Themes (as discussed in stakeholder consultations)</b>
<b>RTO13 / Destination Northern Ontario</b>	Cycling content on northern portal northernontario.travel Cycling In Ontario guide partner Supporting cycling event/s Support for Lake Huron North Channel Cycling Route Cycle Tourism Strategic Plan and product development committee Cycling itinerary development Supporting Ontario By Bike Network partner	Nature & outdoors Auto/RV touring Gateways & urban communities  Development underway for: Francophone, culinary, Group of Seven, Indigenous tourism
<b>RTO11/Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization</b>	Cycling content within outdoor & adventure activities on comewander.ca Cycling In Ontario guide partner Cycling itinerary development Supporting Ontario By Bike Network partner	Come Wander brand Best fit personas: Freedom Finder & Serenity Seeker Content marketing
<b>RTO10/Ottawa Tourism</b>	Cycling content online Print city cycling map Print tear-away cycling map Cycling In Ontario guide partner Cycling itinerary development NCC maps, online content & Sunday Bikedays Supporting Ontario By Bike Network partner	Rural tourism, agri-tourism, Prescott Russell Recreation Trail
<b>Sudbury Tourism</b>	Trail maps and promotion by Rainbow Routes Association with print trails map and online trail content	Culinary, Group of Seven, UNESCO Geopark
<b>Tourism North Bay</b>	Trail maps and promotion by Discovery Routes Trails Organization with online trail content	Culinary strategy, festival development, waterfront regeneration study True North Experiences

**Table 3**  
**Current Cycle Tourism Marketing and Priorities of Potential Partner Organizations**

<b>Partner Organization</b>	<b>Current Cycle Tourism Marketing Initiatives &amp; Activities</b>	<b>Strategic Priority Areas and Marketing Themes (as discussed in stakeholder consultations)</b>
<b>Northeastern Ontario Tourism</b>	Cycling content online	Nature & outdoors
<b>Mattawa-Bonfield Economic Development Corporation</b>	Cycling content online	Mattawa Voyageur Country
<b>Ottawa Valley Tourism Association</b>	Cycling content online Print cycling map Cycling In Ontario guide partner County supporting OVRT trail development and cycling activity in towns Supporting Ontario By Bike Network partner	Heritage rivers Whitewater Capital Ontario's Adventure Playground
<b>Lanark County Tourism Association</b>	Print cycling map	Culinary, rural
<b>Lanark County Tourism</b>	Cycling content online Print cycling map Cycling In Ontario guide partner County supporting OVRT trail development and cycling activity in towns Supporting Ontario By Bike Network partner	Maple syrup capital Rideau Canal
<b>Mississippi Mills</b>	Print Cycling Map Cycling content online Hosts annual Bicycle Month	Active transportation
<b>Discovery Routes Trail Organization</b>	Cycling content online Trailhead signs Current lead in developing VVCR	Trail development in North Bay and northeastern Ontario
<b>Destination Ontario</b>	Cycling content online Cycling digital marketing campaign Supporting cycling promotion at Ontario and Quebec shows	Indigenous, Cycling, Multicultural, Francophone, Accessibility, LGBTQ

**Table 4**  
**Partner Involvement in Short Term Marketing Tactics**

Promotional Tactic	Partner Involvement	Partners		
		RTOs	DMOs (incl. municipal tourism)	Destination Ontario &/or Destination Northern Ontario
<b>Print Marketing</b>	Assist with distribution of rack cards		✓	✓
	Assist with development of itineraries	✓	✓	
	Promote itineraries	✓	✓	✓
	Place and promote route maps online	✓	✓	
	Include VVCR info on cycling maps		✓	
	Include VVCR info in general print collateral	✓	✓	
<b>Digital Marketing</b>	Cycling specific webpages that include information on VVCR, and link to VVCR website	✓	✓	✓
	Include content on VVCR in social media calendars	✓	✓	✓
	Assist with content development	✓	✓	
<b>Events, Shows, Tours &amp; Packages</b>	Take, and feature, VVCR marketing collateral to consumer shows	✓	✓	✓
	Provide support and promotional assistance to existing cycling events	✓	✓	
	Identify events where cycling component could be added		✓	
<b>Other Immediate Short Term Tactics</b>	Contribute to visual assets library	✓	✓	✓

**Table 4**

**Partner Involvement in Short Term Marketing Tactics**

Promotional Tactic	Partner Involvement	Partners		
		RTOs	DMOs (incl. municipal tourism)	Destination Ontario &/or Destination Northern Ontario
	Support VVCR efforts to outreach to communities, businesses, etc.	✓	✓	✓
	Co-brand local/regional cycle route signage with VVCR logo		✓	
	Partner in efforts to outreach to cycle clubs		✓	



# Appendices

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# Appendix 1: Consultations & Outreach

During the course of completing this report, outreach was made to over 200 contacts. Consultations and input was received from 52 representatives and/or organizations. The consulting team would like to thank all those that were able to assist with shared knowledge and insight.

Consultation Contacts	Bike Tour Operators & Cycling Event Coordinators	Other Contacts Completing Survey
City of Greater Sudbury, Tourism & Culture	Escape Bicycle Tours and Rentals	AIRBNB Hosts/Leaping Frog Trailer Rental
City of Ottawa	Humdinger Bicycle Tours	Bushtukah Outdoor Gear, Ottawa
City of Ottawa - Cycling Programs & Economic Development	Pedal Pushers Cycle & Spa Clinics/Tours	Canadian War Museum
Cycling Advocates of Nipissing	OK Cycle Tours	City of Greater Sudbury
Destination Ontario		Conservation Sudbury
Discovery Routes Trails Organization		Councillor, Lanark County
Indigenous Tourism Ontario	Crank the Shield	Councillor, Mississippi Mills
Lanark County Municipal Trails Corporation	Great Waterfront Trail	County of Renfrew
Lanark County Tourism	Adventure	Heritage Bikes
Lanark County Tourism Association	Le Tour de Norfolk	Lavigne Tavern
Mattawa Bonfield Economic Development	Manitoulin Passage	Motel Owner
Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines	West Nipissing Cycle for Charity	National Gallery of Canada
Mississippi Mills Active Transportation		Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario (NOTO)
Municipality of East Ferris - Economic Development Committee		North Bay & District
Municipality of West Nipissing		Chamber of Commerce
Northeastern Ontario Tourism		Perth Manor Boutique Hotel, owner
Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization/RTO11		Quitters Coffee, Stittsville
Ottawa Tourism		Rainbow Routes Association
Ottawa Valley Cycling and Active Transportation Alliance		The Valley Food and Drink Co. restaurant
Ottawa Valley Tourist Association/County of Renfrew		Township of Bonnechere Valley
Tourism North Bay		
Destination Northern Ontario/RTO13		
Velo Quebec		
Waterfront Regeneration Trust		

# Appendix 2: Complete Results: Online Survey of Cyclists (September 15-27, 2018)



**Ontario By Bike / Transportation Options is currently work with partners on the development of the Voyageur Cycling Route. This route, when complete, will be 630km stretching from Sudbury to North Bay to Mattawa to Petawawa to Carleton Place to Ottawa.**

**We are looking for input from cyclists to assist us with assessing the appeal of the route and to better understand the needs of cyclists while riding the route or portions of it, once complete.**

**We appreciate your assistance and thank you in advance for completing this brief survey.**

**If you would like to know more about the route visit: [www.discoveryroutes.ca/vcr](http://www.discoveryroutes.ca/vcr)**

**Q1: Which of the following definitions best describes you as a cyclist?**

- |                                      |        |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| • Leisure & family cyclist           | 8.15%  |
| • Recreational cyclist               | 38.04% |
| • Experienced touring / road cyclist | 49.46% |
| • Mountain biking/other              | 4.35%  |

**Q2: In the past two years approximately how many multi-day cycling trips have you taken?**

- |               |        |
|---------------|--------|
| • Zero        | 23.91% |
| • 1 to 2      | 32.07% |
| • 3 to 5      | 30.43% |
| • More than 5 | 13.59% |

**Q3: In the past two years approximately how many-single day cycling trips have you taken where the ride has started or has taken you to a destination more than 40km from home?**

- Zero 4.89%
- 1 to 2 11.96%
- 3 to 5 13.59%
- 5 to 10 14.67%
- More than 10 54.89%

**Q4: When on a cycling trip how important are the following amenities and services to you? (Provide a rating between 1 and 5, where 5 is very important)**

1. On road cycling (e.g. paved shoulders) 4.07
2. Communities with services every 80-100km 3.98
3. Washrooms every 80-100km 3.80
4. Communities with services every 40-50km 3.62
5. Looped routes 3.55
6. Washrooms every 40-50km 3.50
7. Off road cycling (e.g. trails / paths) 3.50
8. Roofed accommodation 3.34
9. Campgrounds 3.27
10. Bike shop 3.23
11. Start or return transportation (e.g. train, bus, shuttle, etc) 3.20
12. Luggage transfer 2.50

Note: Nearly 75% indicated *On road cycling (e.g. paved shoulders)* was important or very important

**Q5: When on a cycling trip, which would you have a preference for?**

- Self-guided, self-contained rides 55.98%
- Supported guided tour or event 5.43%
- Comfortable with either 36.96%
- Not applicable 1.63%

**Q6: What about this route would appeal to you as a cyclist?**

(Provide a rating between 1 and 5, where 5 most important to you)

1. Scenery 4.54
2. Access to nature 4.28
3. Small towns and communities 3.97
4. Riding route end to end 3.95
5. Heritage and cultural experiences 3.58
6. Local culinary experiences 3.54
7. Unique attractions 3.47
8. Remoteness 3.27
9. Smaller loops off main route 3.13

**Q7: What information and resources are important to you on cycling trips?**

(Provide a rating between 1 and 5, where 5 is very important)

1. Wayfinding signage on routes	4.18
2. Full info website	3.99
3. Print maps of route	3.52
4. Downloadable PDFs	3.49
5. Interactive mapping	3.44
6. GPS files	3.28
7. App	3.03

**Q8: Are there any factors that would make this route less appealing to you to ride?** Frequency of responses with same comments indicated in brackets.)

- Traffic (44)
- Lack of proper cycling infrastructure (23)
- Safety (23)
- Road/Trail Conditions (9)
- No/Nothing (9)
- Weather & Wildlife (e.g. Bears and Black flies) (7)
- Transportation to start/end of route, including luggage transfer service/shuttle (6)
- Too remote/Distance from Home (5)
- Lack of services (4)
- Shared facilities with ATVs/Dirtbikes (3)
- Terrain and directness of route (4)
- Lack of staging areas, water and washrooms (3)
- Lack of interesting sites/route attractiveness (2)

**Example of responses to Q8 (open-ended answers):**

- *Right now those areas involve a lot of tight shoulders with transports zipping by. The less of that, the better. Also, the more remote it is between stops, the less appealing. I like to take in the towns often and stop. 630km, 6 stops even!*
- *Having to ride alongside car traffic on rural highways would make this route unacceptable. Paved shoulders are not enough to make this a cycling route otherwise every highway in the country would already count as a cycling route. A separated bike path is necessary.*
- *I don't at all trust the available riding space or driving ability of people on the major highways. Having driven the Trans-Canada Highway a few times, I would NEVER want to ride on that. I would only ever try this route if it was mostly trails or at least separated well paved shoulders. Being a safe distance away from transport trucks and cars is essential.*
- *Access to water is most important thing. And road safety. Since it is a remote linear route some kind of transportation option back to the beginning would be good.*

- Highway 17 has high traffic volume including lots of trucks and distracted drivers and little to no shoulder in some places. I'm excited about the Voyageur Cycling Route because I am hopeful that it will improve cycling safety throughout this corridor.
- Long stretches on shared roads. Even with a bike lane, sharing the road with heavy truck smoke or vehicles travelling in excess of 60kmph is not only intimidating and detracting from the point of the thing, it's dangerous and deadly. If roads must be shared, sections between communities should be on roads with speed limits no more than 60kmph with ample signage and marking some for sharing the road (e.g. the cyclist ought to be in the centre of the lane with the option to yield when safe to do so; rising the shoulders invites close passing from ignorant drivers).
- Cycling on no shoulder roads. More than 30km between amenities. (Water, washrooms, food, accommodations).
- Motels without safe bike storage.
- Traffic and narrow shoulders are my biggest concern, especially with the current tendency for drivers to be distracted.

**Note:** Unedited and full responses of Q8 are available upon request.

**Q9: Please indicate the age bracket you belong to:**

- 15-24                    1.63%
- 25-34                    20.65%
- 35-44                    17.93%
- 45-54                    22.83%
- 55-64                    22.83%
- 65-74                    11.41%
- 75-84                    2.72%

**Q10: Please indicate your gender:**

- Female                    36.41%
- Male                        63.59%