



KEY INFORMATION REPORT

Transportation Services

October 21, 2024

SUBJECT: Biking Along County Roads

BACKGROUND:

Cyclist activity along County Roads has been a topic of discussion between SDG and several local municipalities over the past months; even more so since the tragic accident that occurred on SDG 2 in South Stormont.

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on some of the items being discussed between SDG and its local municipalities and provide the opportunity for Council to comment on these initiatives and approach.

Legal Requirements – Bicycle Lanes

As Council is aware, Ontario Regulation 239/02 (*Minimum Maintenance Standards*), provides municipalities with guidance on the minimum standards on how to monitor and maintain roads, bicycle lanes and sidewalks.

The *Minimum Maintenance Standards* (MMS) define bicycle lanes as: “a portion of a roadway that has been designated by pavement markings or signage for the preferential or exclusive use of cyclists, or a portion of a roadway that has been designated for the exclusive use of cyclists by signage and a physical or marked buffer”.

Before the MMS contemplated bicycle lanes, SDG Counties has been paving the road shoulders to improve motorist safety. It has been long recognized that this paved shoulder is an area that is being used by cyclists to increase distance (buffer) between themselves and passing traffic. In the MMS, designated cycling lanes must be patrolled and have snow and ice removal done in accordance with the standards. Although not part of the MMS it can also be expected that the users will wish to see that the road is regularly swept and that the surface discontinuities get repaired in a more timely manner than what would be noticeable for a automobile.

To date, SDG Counties’ paved shoulders have not been given “preferential” or “exclusive” use to cyclists, although it should be noted that along SDG 2 (South Glengarry) there have been historical bike markings on the paved shoulder. Portions of SDG 2 through both South Dundas and South Glengarry are part of the Waterfront Trail, the cycle route



that crosses Ontario. SDG Counties Tourism additionally promotes cycling routes across all of SDG – these cycling routes are often on County Roads with paved shoulders.

Within the *Highway Traffic Act (HTA)* bicycles are defined as a “slow-moving vehicle”. As a slow-moving vehicle, bicycles are expected to travel on the right side of the lane; however, they can utilize the traveled lane, and they must follow the rules of the road.

Even though ‘recreation’ is a non-exclusive sphere of jurisdiction within the *Municipal Act*, sidewalks are identified in the *Municipal Act* as a responsibility of local municipalities. Multi-purpose trails, recreational trails and bicycle paths have been historically initiated, managed and maintained in the same capacity as sidewalks (e.g. local municipality takes the lead). Since the inclusion of cycling infrastructure within the MMS, the County has considered cyclist markings and signage etc... to fall within the recreational ‘sphere’ of jurisdiction and would anticipate that if these features were desired, the municipality would take the lead with respect to installation, monitoring and maintenance. That stated, the counter argument could be that because ‘bicycles’ are considered a vehicle on the roadway (per the HTA), the County could be playing a more proactive role in funding the infrastructure necessary to accommodate these road users than it historically has been. Further discussion would be required if Council would like SDG Counties to become involved in the costs and management of cycling infrastructure on County Roads.

COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS:

Cycling Advocacy in South Dundas

The Municipality of South Dundas has a group of cycling enthusiasts that are very interested in further enhancing cycling conditions on the Waterfront Trail where it travels within this municipality along SDG 2. Some of the short-term initiatives that are being promoted by this group include signage improvements along SDG 2, painting the road shoulders a different colour and installing cycling paint markings on the shoulder. Long-term, this group would like to see safety improvements (road widening) along SDG 2 west of Iroquois, where the road platform is narrower than desired due to the proximity of the guiderail / river embankment.

County staff have no objections to the proposed short-term improvements and look forward to continuing to work with South Dundas on potentially implementing them. If these initiatives are to be installed, it is staff’s view that the cycling markings and enhanced signage would ‘upgrade’ this infrastructure from a ‘paved shoulder’ to a ‘bicycle lane’. Accordingly, there is likely a requirement for passage of by-laws recognizing the same, as well as a ‘seasonal closure’ by-law to eliminate liability by reducing the administrative burden that comes with patrolling and the operational challenges that come with winter maintenance.



Depending on Council's feedback, there may a desire/ need to enter into a formal agreement with South Dundas which clearly spells out the responsibilities and costs associated with this designated bicycle lane.

The long-term widening of SDG 2 west of Iroquois has been noted by staff, and, likely only feasible when the road and/or existing guiderail has reached the end of its useful life. Unfortunately, the road and guiderail through this portion of SDG 2 are currently in fair-to-excellent condition.

Cycling Safety in South Stormont

Following the recent cyclist tragedy in South Stormont, County staff have been working with local municipal staff to identify ways to enhance and improve cyclist safety. In collaboration with South Stormont, SDG Counties have been undertaking some speed studies, traffic counting and cyclist counting in areas between Ingleside and Long Sault to better understand the traffic hazards and cyclist volumes. A particular focus of our discussion has also been focused on improving the safety where cyclists cross Hoople Creek along SDG 2.

There have been a variety of cyclist safety suggestions that are being brought forward by the community. Staff from South Stormont and the County are recommending that the next step in our quest to improve safety is to engage the services of a qualified cycling safety consultant to provide some recommendations based on industry standards and best practices with respect to short- and long-term solutions on how to safely accommodate cyclists that are travelling between the two communities. The scope of work would include providing recommendations for signage / markings, road crossing treatments and short term versus long-term improvements along SDG 2 at the Hoople Bridge/ causeway. The work would be led by the Township; however, staff would strongly recommend that the County continue to assist in these efforts. If this approach is supported by the Township, given that there is an element of traffic safety and potential road / bridge impacts associated with the work, County staff would also suggest that Transportation budget some funds in 2025 to assist in offsetting these costs.