

Perth County Cycle Tourism Strategy



October 2022

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1. INTRODUCTION



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Cycle tourism is a growing tourism sector in Ontario and across the world. Perth County is an appealing place to cycle with many farms, rural countryside, rolling hills and communities well-spaced apart in distances easily travelled by a moderate to experienced cyclist. With scenic roads, both paved and gravel, the G2G Rail Trail running through the northern part of the county, Wildwood Conservation Area offering mountain biking, and other trails, the county can appeal to a variety of cycle tourism markets. The area's cafés, restaurants and bakeries, range of attractions and experiential tourism offerings strengthen its appeal to the cycle tourism market.

Recognizing that cycle tourism presents a significant opportunity to increase tourism receipts and overnight stays, Perth County commissioned this Cycle Tourism Strategy. Perth County wants to ensure that its efforts are aligned, and short to medium term recommendations easily actioned, such that over the next five years the goals of increasing cycle tourism and enhancing the overall cycling and cycle tourism experience can be achieved. While the recommendations focus on cycle tourism, they will also benefit local cyclists and residents of Perth County.

Developing the Perth County Cycle Tourism Strategy included:

- Environmental scan of market research, cycling tourism strategies and plans, cycle tourism research in Canada and internationally, provincial and federal cycle tourism strategies, and local and provincial tourism initiatives that have a potential impact on cycle tourism in Perth County
- Inventory of cycle tourism assets including routes and trails, cycling-related infrastructure, bicycle friendly businesses and events and attractions with potential appeal to cyclists
- Survey of residents and visitors who have cycled in Perth County
- Stakeholder and community engagement designed to obtain input from persons with in-depth knowledge of Perth County, particularly its cycling experiences, and the challenges and opportunities with respect to cycle tourism. The community engagement process included:
 - Interviews with over 20 key stakeholders
 - Two virtual community engagement meetings at which initial findings from the background report were presented and further input and ideas sought
- Consultants' assessment of the cycle tourism product

2. WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW



Photo provided by Perth County

2.1 The Cycle Tourism Market

CYCLE TOURISTS

A cycle tourist is someone travelling more than 40km from their place of residence, on a day or overnight trip where cycling is incorporated in the trip. Cycle tourism can involve road, trail or mountain biking (or some combination thereof) and typically falls into four categories.

FOUR CATEGORIES OF CYCLE TOURISM

Destination Riding	Touring	Events & Tours	Day Rides & Urban Cycling
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused around a specific destination • Stay in one location, do a variety of cycling trips • Could be trail riding, road riding or mountain biking • E.g. Stay in Stratford for several nights and do day trips around Perth County 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-day trips from one destination to another - self guided, & self-supported or a guided experience • E.g. Start in Guelph and do a multi-day tour on the G2G Rail Trail to Goderich 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cycling event or tour is the motivation to visit an area • One day or multi-day cycling • E.g. Dusty Nostril Gravel Race which starts and ends in Milverton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day trip that focuses around a specific destination • E.g. London cycling club doing a day trip into Perth County

THE CYCLE TOURISM MARKET IN ONTARIO

1.6 million trips in Ontario in 2019 involved cycling. 75% of these trips were made by Ontarians (travelling more than 40 km from home) with 9% by overseas visitors, 8% by visitors from other parts of Canada and 8% by visitors from the United States.¹ 68% of all cycling visits in Ontario were overnight visits and almost 60% occurred between July and September.

The highest number of trips occurred in the Greater Toronto Area (Region 5), Ottawa (Region 10), the Muskoka's (Region 12) and Hamilton, Halton and Brant (Region 3). Only 4% of all cycling visits in Ontario occurred in Huron, Perth, Waterloo and Wellington (Region 4), although this region received 8% of all tourist visits in Ontario, suggesting that this region is not capturing its share of the cycle tourism market.

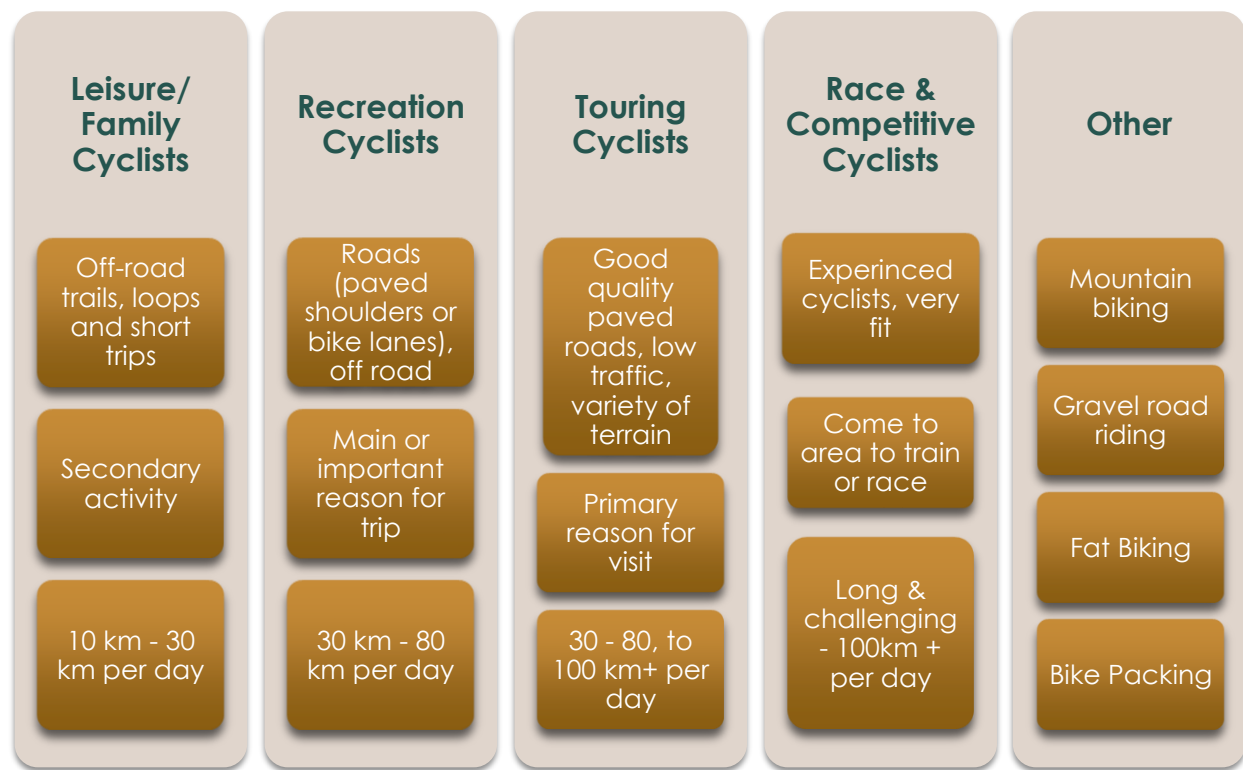
CYCLE TOURIST MARKET SEGMENTS

Ontario By Bike has identified five cycle tourist market segments. These market segments are not exclusive to each other - cyclists may participate in several different types of cycling at different times (or even on the same trip) depending on factors such

¹ Source: Statistics Canada's Travel Survey of the Residents of Canada and International Travel Survey 2019 - MTCS Tourism Research Unit

as who they are cycling with, how much time they have, and/or what cycling opportunities are available. The five segments and their key cycling characteristics are:

FIVE CYCLE TOURIST MARKET SEGMENTS



The 'Other' segment includes mountain biking, gravel road riding, fat biking, and bike packing, all once specialty cycling activities that are becoming increasingly popular. Mountain biking enthusiasts range from casual to highly technically-skilled looking for single-track or multi-track trails in designated mountain bike areas. Fat bikes are specialty types of bikes that can be used in summer on sand, and are increasingly used in winter on snow or ice and on trails groomed for this purpose. Bike packing describes cyclists who embark on a multi-day experience, sometimes on rougher trails, and generally carry all their gear often including camping equipment.

E-bike cyclists are a sub-segment of the leisure/family, recreation and touring markets. Their popularity is increasing with 17% of Ontario cyclist households owning at least one and 19% considering purchasing one.² In Quebec, E-bike sales represented 26% of all adult bike sales in 2020 and account for 8% of all adult bicycles on the road. E-bikes allow cyclists to travel further and on more varied terrain, and permit members of a party who may not be able to ride as

² Source: Ontario By Bike 2021 Survey and https://www.transportationoptions.org/uploads/8/7/2/0/8720033/cycle_tourism___cycling_activit_y_report_2021_2022.pdf

far for reasons that may include health and fitness, to participate in the full cycling experience.

CYCLE TOURIST CHARACTERISTICS

Cycle tourists are more likely to be in the 45 – 65 and over age range, although there are significant proportions in the 25 -44-year age group. They also tend to be male although the proportion of female riders has been increasing. Cycle tourists also tend to be well-educated, in higher income brackets, and increasingly are retired.

Road cycling, followed closely by riding off-road trails (paved and unpaved) are preferred types of cycling, followed by gravel cycling, then mountain biking and fat biking. There has been considerable growth in cycling as an activity during the COVID-19 pandemic over the past 2 years.

CYCLE TOURISM ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Cycle tourism can generate significant economic impacts for the destination region, since cyclists tend to stay overnight and have higher than average spending levels.

In Ontario³, cycle tourism generated \$644 million in spending in 2019 with average spending per trip by cyclists staying overnight of \$404, compared to \$223 for overnight trips that did not involve cycling. Cyclists on same day trips spent an average of \$175 per trip, compared to \$94 for non-cyclists. And in Quebec⁴, tourism spending by cyclists was estimated at \$700 million in 2015, involving 1.6 million overnight stays and with spending per family of \$242, 6% higher than average visitors.

In Simcoe County⁵ it was estimated cyclists spent more than 1,500 nights and generated \$850,000 for the regional economy in 2021. On Ontario By Bike Rides, the economic impact on a two-day, one overnight trip was \$248 per person for the Oxford Rural Road Ride (2019) and \$258 per person for the Waterloo Guelph Explorer route

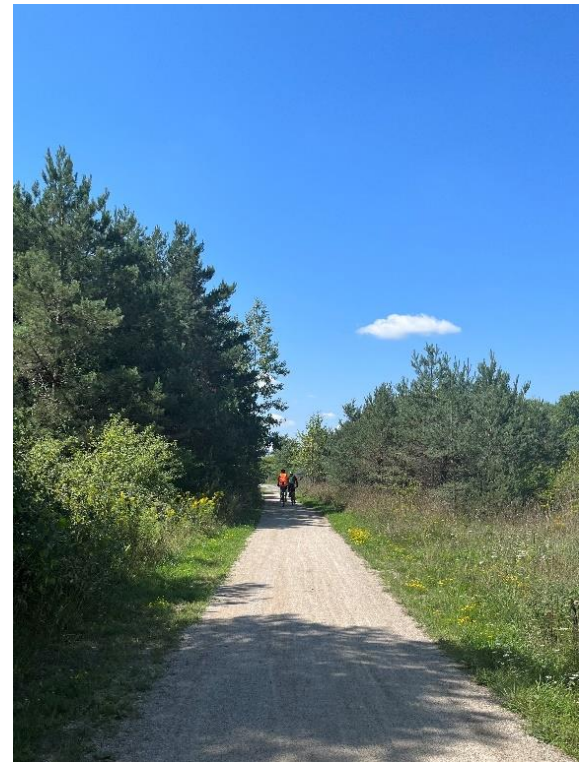


Photo provided by Perth County

³ Source: Statistics Canada's Travel Survey of the Residents of Canada and International Travel Survey 2019 - MTCS Tourism Research Unit

⁴ www.veloquebec.info/files/file/expertise/VQ_EDV2015_Retombees-economiques.pdf

⁵ www.simcoe.com/news-story/10661835--i-m-expecting-to-see-massive-growth-cycle-tourism-continues-to-be-significant-driver-of-midland-economy/

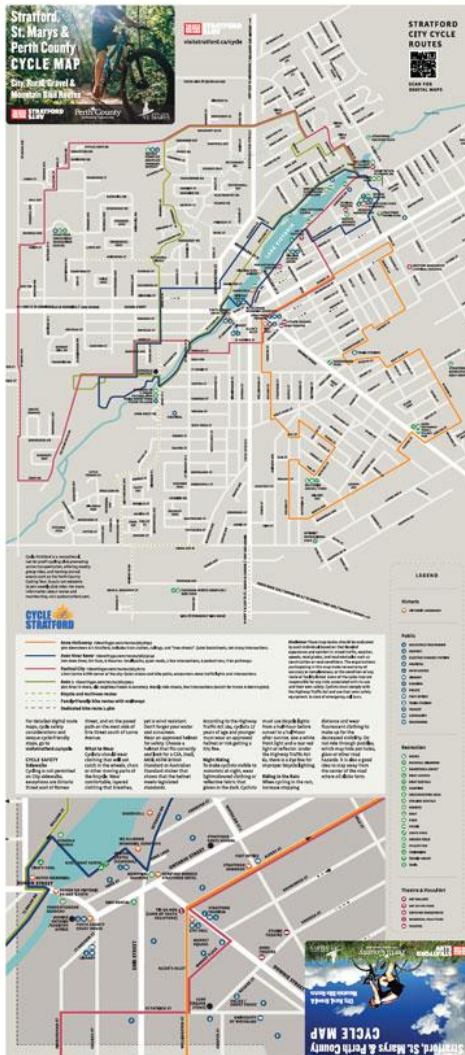
(2020). The amounts spent per person can be compared to what a cycle tourist visiting for the weekend or similar time frame spends in an area like Perth County.⁶

2.2 Cycling in Perth County

CYCLING ROUTES AND TRAILS

Perth County offers cyclists a variety of road routes and off-road trails. The Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County Cycle Map (2021) identifies 10 paved routes (a few have some gravel or trail sections) ranging from 13.5 km to 60 km in length. Some start and end in Perth County communities and others in Stratford or St. Marys. The map also shows 4 looped gravel routes starting and ending in Stratford. The routes shown on this map are recommended routes from local cyclists. Other sources identify some different routes and some overlapping routes. There are several shorter, looped routes within Stratford and St. Marys.

The Guelph to Goderich (G2G) multi-use linear Rail Trail using the former CPR railway line passes through the northern part of Perth County between Millbank and Monkton, with trail heads in Millbank, Milverton and Monkton. Perth County is also home to several trails that can be used for cycling including the West Perth Nature Trail, the West Perth Wetlands Nature



⁶ https://www.transportationoptions.org/uploads/8/7/2/0/8720033/ontario_by_bike_rides_-_impact_of_cycle_tours_2016-2020_.pdf

Trail, the North Perth Trail System. Other trails include the Loop Trail (Stratford), and the Grand Trunk Trail (St. Marys).

Wildwood Conservation Area has 4 trails (1 – 25 km in length) some of which are suitable for mountain biking. There are also bike amenities at this site. T.J. Dolan Natural Area near Stratford has a network of 17 shorter trails that are suitable for mountain biking.

SERVICES, AMENITIES, BUSINESSES AND ATTRACTIONS

Perth County cyclists can access two full-service bike stores in Stratford as well as some services in some smaller communities. Bike amenities, such as repair stations, are available in Stratford and St. Marys, and some communities have bike racks within their downtown areas. There are 18 Ontario By Bike certified bicycle friendly businesses in Stratford and St. Marys with none in Perth County (as of October 2022). These businesses offer special services and amenities that cater to cyclists, such as having a secure bicycle lockup location, healthy food, cycling information, a bicycle repair kit, and a rest area for cyclists.

Perth County is home to a wide range of attractions and experiences with appeal to the cycle tourism market as well as a variety of cafés, restaurants and bakeries of experiential tourism offerings. Of particular interest are 'Discover More Adventures in Perth County,' a series of signature experiences, the 'Discover More Flavour/Farm Gate Experiences' and Stratford's 'Bacon and Ale Tour' all of which have the potential to be promoted to cycle tourists.

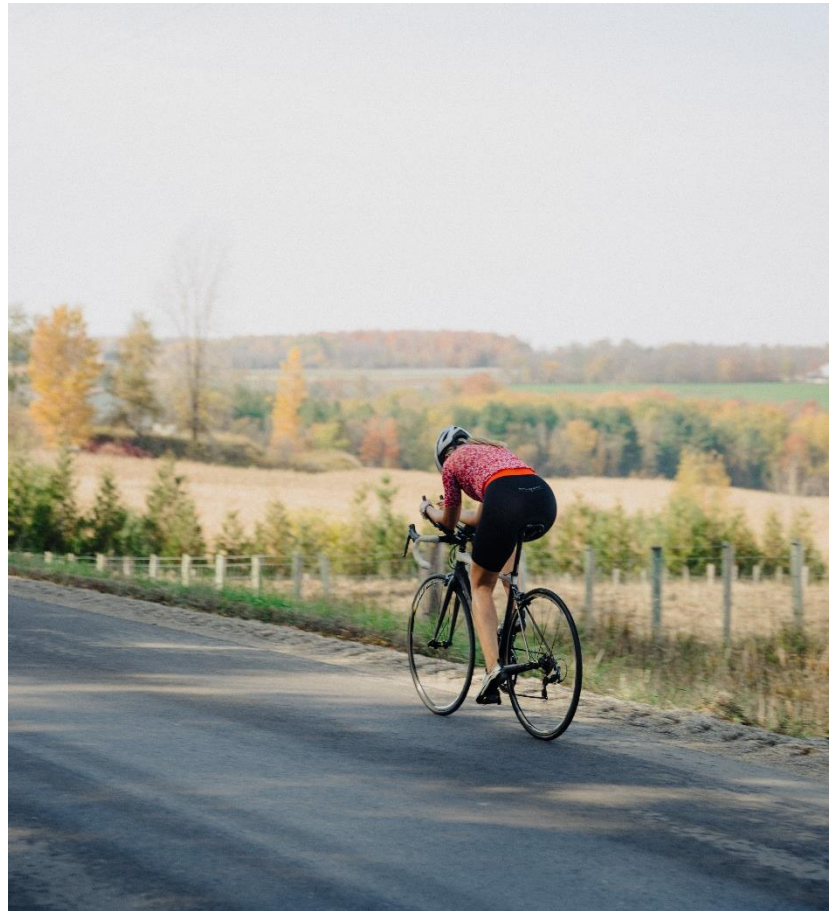


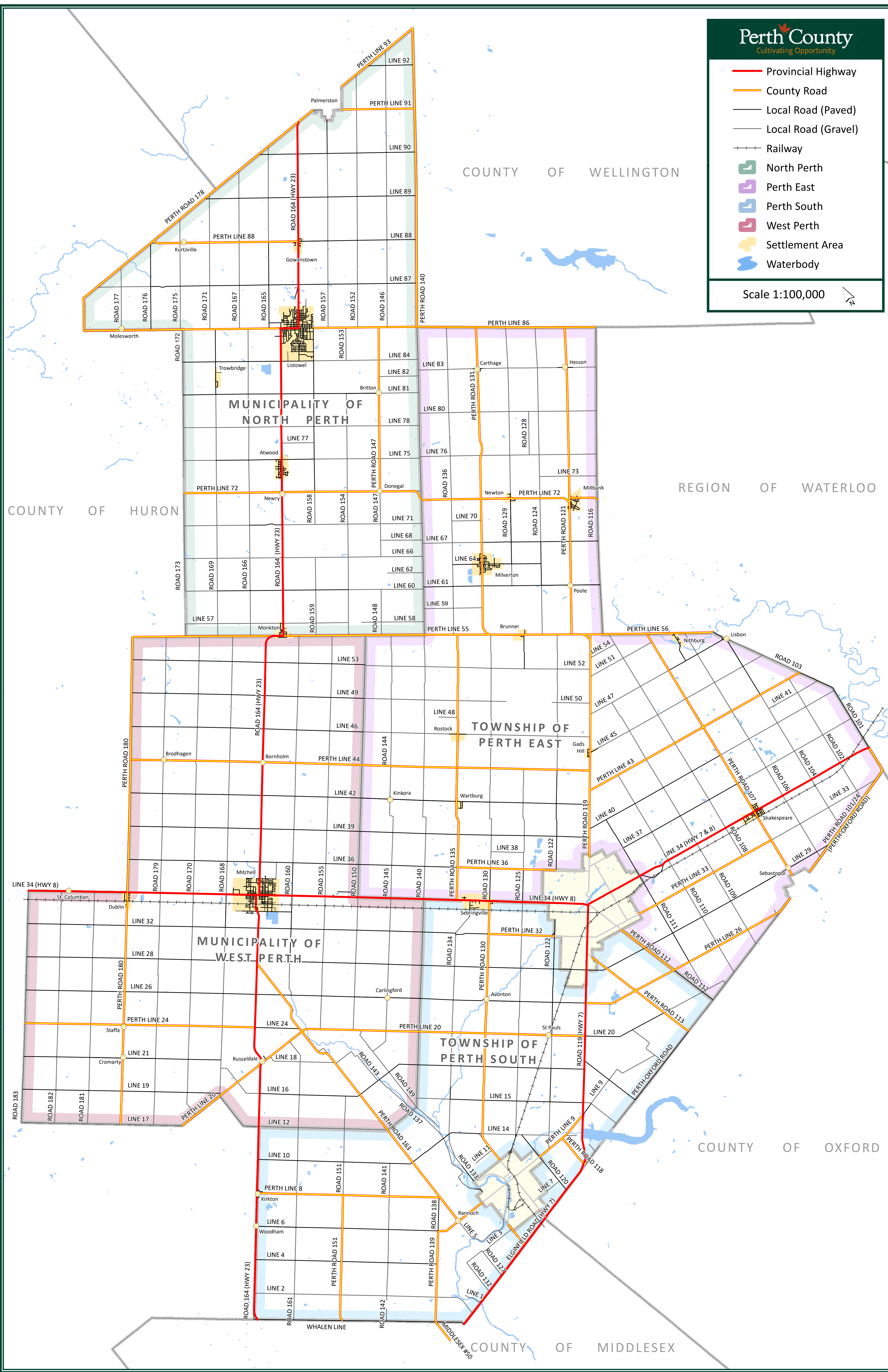
Photo provided by Perth County

variety
and

Perth County and its main roads are illustrated on the map on the following page.

- Provincial Highway
- County Road
- Local Road (Paved)
- Local Road (Gravel)
- Railway
- North Perth
- Perth East
- Perth South
- West Perth
- + Settlement Area
- ~ Waterbody

Scale 1:100,000



WHAT CYCLISTS THINK

Cyclists who have cycled in Perth County⁷ reported being knowledgeable (77% very/some knowledge) about the cycling routes and trails and were regular cyclists – 42% cycled weekly or more often and 23% cycled 10 or more times a year in the area. Riding paved roads was the most popular cycling experience, followed by the G2G Rail Trail and gravel/unpaved roads. The most popular activities while on cycling trips were visiting local cafés and restaurants, visiting communities and shopping.

Most Enjoyable Features of Cycling in Perth County

Rural Scenery
Quiet Roads
G2G Rail Trail

76% of cyclists surveyed were very likely to cycle in Perth County again

Cyclists reported that these changes would enhance their cycling experience (multiple responses permitted):

- On-road cycling infrastructure improvements (77%)
- Increased signage for cyclists (53%)
- Improved cycling maps and information (48%)
- Improved amenities for cyclists – bike racks, bike repair stations (46%)

The most important trip planning tools for planning a cycling outing in Perth County were:

- Previous knowledge of the area from cycling here before (42%)
- Digital cycling route maps on apps (35%)
- Word of mouth (34%)

Better planning and participation in cycling in Perth County would be helped by:

- Increased digital resources and mapping
- Route signage
- Improved print resources and cycling maps
- Suggested day trip itineraries

CYCLE TOURISM PRODUCT ASSESSMENT

This assessment is based on the consulting teams' expertise, past experience and a clear understanding of what is necessary to develop a cycle tourism product that is market-ready for promotion to attract cycle tourists and will provide an experience where the product matches and exceeds expectations. It is also of value in identifying the market segments that have the most opportunity for Perth County.

The identified cycle routes are well thought out, with a lot of effort and local knowledge input by local cyclists. However, the road network in Perth County presents some challenges; although there are numerous east-west paved roads, there are far fewer paved north-south roads. To avoid routing on the less safe routes, and to create looped

⁷ Survey conducted by Ontario By Bike as part of the Perth County Tourism Strategy project; 142 respondents, Summer 2022. The survey included visitors to the area and residents.

routes (more desirable to cycle tourists), most routes incorporate stretches of gravel roads. Stretches of some of the roads identified as cycle tourist routes are suitable for only the most experienced cyclists, having safety issues due to high traffic volumes including farm utility vehicles and transport trucks, traffic speed and lack of paved shoulders.

Our research indicates that there are no current plans to upgrade from gravel roads to paved roads on any of the identified cycling routes, nor are there plans to add cycling infrastructure or paved shoulders on any of the paved road routes.

The G2G Rail Trail is in excellent condition and well maintained by local trails committees, with existing signage. There are opportunities to increase the benefits to local communities by adding more cycling amenities, and encouraging trail-focused service businesses including accommodations and camping. Trails at Wildwood Conservation Area are well maintained, with excellent amenities; these mountain bike trails are suited to those looking for a more rugged experience.

The North Perth Trail has potential to attract cycle tourists, as an out and back experience or with a loop using quiet country roads back to Listowel.

Several communities have some bike parking on their main streets but generally this appears to be insufficient. Some communities offer a full range of services whereas in other, smaller hamlets, services are limited.

Wayfinding signage specific to cycling is very limited within Perth County, other than signs along the G2G Rail Trail and the North Perth Trail.

Overall Perth County is an appealing and attractive place to cycle through quiet and pretty countryside, with many farms, greenery, some rolling hills and communities well-spaced apart in distances easily reached by a moderate to experienced cyclist. There are many tourism offerings throughout the countryside, and more being added or enhanced each year. Perth County is a culinary destination with restaurants, food shops, farm stores, cafes, bakeries, and more.



Photo provided by Perth County

2.3 Cycle Tourism Elsewhere in Ontario

Many tourism regions and municipalities across Ontario have identified cycle tourism as a priority and are undertaking activities such as:

- Cycle tourism strategies and plans, sometimes as part of cycling or active transportation master plans
- Improvements to infrastructure as identified in the cycling or active transportation master plans including:
 - Paved shoulders
 - Bike lanes
 - Pavement markings on designated routes
 - Share The Road Signage
 - Development of off-road trails, frequently on abandoned rail lines
- Addition of specific cycle-tourism related services, such as:
 - Wayfinding signage
 - Bike repair stations
 - Bike racks
- Encouraging businesses and communities to become bicycle-friendly through participation in Ontario By Bike Programs
- Development of cycle tourism promotional collateral including websites, print and digital resources and cycling maps
- Identifying and promoting cycle tourism routes and itineraries, in print and digital formats
- Marketing efforts targeting cycle tourists including branding efforts, print and digital advertising, social media activities
- Creating and support cycling events, both community events and those from outside the community
- Working with partners such as bike shops, cycle clubs, tour operators and cycle event organizers

ONTARIO CYCLE TOURISM DESTINATIONS RESEARCHED

Simcoe County
Oxford County
RTO8: Kawarthas Northumberland
Durham Region
Middlesex County & London
Huron County
Grey County
Waterloo Region
Wellington County & Guelph

Lessons learned for cycle tourism in Perth County are described on the next page.



Key Lessons Learned for Perth County from Other Jurisdictions

- Dedicated and stand-alone information resources and promotion of cycling and cycle tourism in both print and digital formats are important promotional tools and widely used.
- Self-guided itineraries, routes and experience-oriented maps and information resources are well used.
- Jurisdictions across Ontario that are actively involved in cycle tourism can engage businesses in cycle tourism through programming and working with Ontario By Bike to improve the cycle tourism experience.
- A strategic plan and vision along with implementable action items can further the development of cycle tourism.
- It takes multiple years to develop a strong cycle tourism product and grow cycle tourism markets.
- There is considerable competition for cycle tourists in Ontario generally and in western/southwestern Ontario.
- Cycling, Active Transportation and Trails Master Plans are important guiding documents to improving cycling infrastructure, and together can help set the foundation for becoming a cycle tourism destination.
- Partnerships, and in some cases stakeholder groups, that incorporate multiple levels of government, various departments and include relevant organizations, benefit the further development of cycle tourism.

3. WHERE ARE WE GOING – A STRATEGY FOR CYCLE TOURISM IN PERTH COUNTY



Photo provided by Perth County

3.1 Vision and Goal

Vision

Perth County actively supports the growth of a diverse cycling product that appeals to a range of cycling markets, featuring the rural countryside and small community charm that attracts cyclists, while supporting the local economy.

Goal

To enhance the cycle tourism experience in Perth County and grow this market to benefit local communities and maximize associated economic opportunities.

3.2 Target Markets and Positioning

TARGET MARKETS

There are four priority target markets for Perth County cycle tourism in the short to medium term:



These priority market segments have been identified based on:

- The characteristics of Perth County's cycling product as it currently exists:
 - Extensive network of road touring routes, many with gravel sections
 - Several routes and route segments and connections that are suitable only for experienced cyclists due to high traffic volumes, safety concerns and infrastructure conditions
 - The G2G Rail Trail and the North Perth Trail
 - Wildwood Conservation Area trails
- The tourism appeal and attraction of the area for different types of cyclists
- The market-readiness of the various cycling products
- A product and cycling experience that matches and exceeds expectations
- Market interests and trends

Market trends and Perth County's cycle product suggest that other target markets with potential over the longer term will include:

- E-bikers – A subset of the leisure/family and recreational cycling markets with interest in similar routes to these segments
- Bike packing – Featuring established routes that pass through Perth County, and services and amenities these riders can access.
- Winter fat biking – With appropriate winter trail maintenance
- Cycling events – Re-establishing past event or new events that attract various markets depending on event distances and terrain

POSITIONING

Perth County's appeal as a cycling destination is embedded in its scenic rural character and charming smaller country communities that each have a unique mix and variety of services and attractions. With many country road options between towns and hamlets, and manageable ride distances, it is easy to connect from and to these communities on both quieter gravel and paved roads by bike. Perth County is also in a strong position to capitalize on visitors to attractions in Stratford and St. Marys by offering a complementary country-side cycling experience. The county's culinary and agri-tourism offerings, heritage and culture, and developing adventure, flavour and farm gate experiences are all attractive to the cycle tourism market, provide themes on which to build cycling itineraries, and should be featured in marketing activities.

The G2G Rail Trail running through the northern part of Perth County gives the area a strong product to also position itself for the leisure/family as well as the recreational adventure touring market. Perth County's section of the G2G Rail Trail is the mid point for cyclists riding the full trail end to end, and with three communities each having numerous services and amenities, there is a good opportunity to capture this market. These communities also provide anchor points for cyclists riding shorter trail distances, to start/end their ride from and make use of the services and amenities in each, visiting local businesses and attractions.

Perth County should also be positioned to attract skilled mountain bikers to the trails in Wildwood Conservation Area, as well as experienced road cyclists for whom the county's network of paved roads creates longer routes that appeal to them.

3.3 KEY DIRECTIONS AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The key directions and strategic recommendations detailed below have been developed based on the feedback received from interviews with key stakeholders, responses received from the cyclists' survey, market assessment, field work and the consulting team's assessment and expertise.

They outline what needs to be put in place to achieve the overall vision to establish a diverse cycle tourism product that features Perth County's tourism assets, supporting and benefitting the local economy.

While many of these strategic directions are intended to support Perth County's cycle tourism sector, the enhancements to the physical infrastructure, partnerships and strengthening of the cycling culture will also benefit local residents and the business community.

Seven key directions have been identified. Each has a number of strategic recommendations. Table 1 in Chapter 4 provides information on implementing each strategic recommendation, along with timing and priorities.

KEY DIRECTIONS FOR CYCLE TOURISM IN PERTH COUNTY

Key Direction 1

- **PRODUCT:** Identify Perth County's cycle tourism routes.

Key Direction 2

- **INFRASTRUCTURE:** Enhance the physical infrastructure identified as part of Perth County's cycle tourism product.

Key Direction 3

- **AMENITIES, SERVICES AND SIGNAGE:** Make improvements and add to amenities, services and signage for cyclists.

Key Direction 4

- **MARKETING** - Increase the promotion of cycle tourism in Perth County.

Key Direction 5

- **EVENTS, TOURS AND PACKAGES** - Support the long term growth of cycle tourism through the development and support of events, tours and packages.

Key Direction 6

- **PARTNERSHIPS** - Build on existing, and create new, partnerships to grow the cycle tourism product.

Key Direction 7

- **CYCLING CULTURE** - Strengthen the cycling culture across Perth County.

Key Direction 1:

PRODUCT: Identify Perth County's Cycle Tourism Routes



Photo: Provided by Perth County

Using existing trails, roads and infrastructure, create a signature product mix that will appeal to the diverse target segments and is market ready for promotion. With the creation of a more streamlined signature product that highlights the assets of the area, cycle tourists will be able to experience the best of cycling in Perth County. Building on previous routes, the product will support more immediate sector growth.

1. Identify a smaller number of top ride experiences to be promoted as signature routes suitable for the following priority target market segments.
 - a. Recreational Adventure Market/Touring Cyclists – Refine routes on the 2021 map that go through Perth County to identify and build out a smaller selection of signature routes that have the strongest tourism appeal. Incorporate the most scenic and safe road routes using lower traffic roads and some gravel segments. Consider developing additional routes that make the most of the infrastructure that is more market ready and are specifically suited to the gravel market segment.

- b. Experienced Touring/Competitive Market — Refine routes on the 2021 map to identify and build out a smaller selection of signature routes that have the strongest appeal to cycle tourists. Incorporate the most scenic and safe road routes using lower traffic roads. When incorporating roads that are less desirable for cyclists, ensure that plans are made to include caution notes on maps.
2. Include market-ready trail products as part of the signature Perth County cycling product targeting additional priority target market segments, specifically:
 - a. Leisure/family Cyclists – G2G Rail Trail, North Perth Trail
 - b. Mountain bikers – Wildwood Conservation Area
3. For signature routes, develop day trip itineraries that incorporate themed stops in local communities and highlight some of the following themes identified as top draws for cyclist visiting Perth County: Rural roads and countryside; local food and beverage which may include cafes/bakeries, chocolate, general stores and farmgate outlets; local history and heritage; rivers and waterways; community to community rides and small towns visits; Mennonites and Amish cultures.
4. Decide on and finalize all route names either incorporating place names or named to reflect the ride experience, updating names of some routes currently featured on the 2021 map.
5. Identify additional product in the longer term suitable for growing the touring cyclist, and experienced touring and competitive, market segments.

Key Direction 2:

INFRASTRUCTURE: Enhance the physical infrastructure identified as part of Perth County's Cycle Tourism Product



Photo provided by Perth County

As identified in the stakeholder interviews and cyclists' survey, there are some gaps in infrastructure and improvements that could be made to the physical infrastructure, on roads and trails, that cycle tourists and cyclists use in Perth County. These improvements would increase safety, connectivity and elevate the cycling experience across the county to make it more attractive to visitors.

1. Identify cycling route connections into communities from signature trails, and support appropriate entities in closing any gaps and in efforts to resolve infrastructure issues.
2. Identify cycling route connections and routes into Perth County from adjacent counties, working to create a consistent and connected product between each, identifying gaps and supporting efforts to resolve infrastructure issues with appropriate entities.

3. Develop an annual tracking plan and reporting template, working with partners to collect data on cycling activity. This would include:
 - Installing trail counters and collecting data on trail users
 - Strava Metro data
 - Anecdotal and other survey/interview methods
 - And other methods, as appropriate
 - Tie into the tracking plan collecting data on marketing campaigns and activities
4. Provide input where possible on road improvements that would improve cycling conditions and safety on signature routes, including such things as paved shoulder policies and/or the installation of physical bike lanes or bike pavement markings.
5. Promote networking among municipal partners to enhance communications between staff involved in road and trail conditions, public works and recreation facilities.
6. Raise awareness of the benefits of infrastructure improvements for cycle tourism users.
7. Support any efforts to develop Active Transportation Plans or Cycling Master Plans across the county. Such plans would identify the need, and priorities for infrastructure improvements for active transportation users.
8. Support efforts to create a multi-use trail connecting Milverton and the G2G Rail Trail to Stratford, from the new trail currently ending in Brunner and south through Ellie Swamp, making use of the former rail bed.

Best Practices – Infrastructure

Lanark County, Grey County and Lennox & Addington County have all been making road infrastructure improvements, including paved shoulders, positively impacting the cycling experience, enhancing safety and extending road life. In some cases, this includes paved shoulder policies, whereby, any road reconstruction on priority cycling routes includes paved shoulders. In Grey County the estimated cost in 2020 was \$26,000 per km.

Best Practices – Cycling Master Plans

A number of these cycling plans include recommendations that will enhance cycle tourism

- Grey County Cycling and Trails Master Plan, 2020
- Oxford County Cycling Master Plan, 2021
- City of Peterborough Cycling Master Plan, 2021
- Prince Edward County Cycling Master Plan, 2021
- Huron County Cycling Master Plan (under development)

9. Support volunteer efforts to maintain and upgrade the G2G Rail Trail. Additionally, investigate options to groom trails in winter for fat biking and other non-motorized winter sports.

10. Ensure cycle tourism is considered in future budget discussions with funds allocated to assist with enhancements such as the physical infrastructure and master plans, as identified above. Apply for any periodic funding grants made available from provincial and federal governments that can assist with the above. (Examples of previous funding sources include: Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund, Canada Active Transportation Fund, Tourism Relief Funds, Trans Canada Trail grants).

Key Direction 3:

AMENITIES, SERVICES AND SIGNAGE: Make improvements and add to amenities, services and signage for cyclists.



Photo: Ontario By Bike

There are several opportunities to enhance and elevate the cycling tourism experience in Perth County by ensuring that cyclists can easily access and make use of the amenities and services that they need. This can be achieved through the installation of a variety of different types of signage and the inclusion of location information on other resources used by cyclists.

Amenities

1. Complete an audit and add map locations to the Perth County Hike & Bike GIS map to locate the following existing amenities that cyclists can make use of. Use the audit and map to assist with identifying where there may be a need for additional amenities.
 - o Bike parking facilities and bike racks
 - o Bike repair stations

- Public washrooms
 - Drinking/potable water
 - E-Bike charging points and/or stations
 - Staging/vehicle parking areas
2. Promote and support improvements to, and development of extended stay and overnight parking zones for cyclists on signature routes and trails. Identify and support amendments to parking by-laws which may be inadvertently discouraging cycle tourism. Prioritize parking facilities adjacent to the G2G Rail Trail.

Signage

3. Complete an audit of existing signage used by cyclists. Use the audit to assist with identifying where there is a need for additional signage. Include in the audit the quality of the signs, evaluating the information provided and placement locations. Sign types include:
 - Wayfinding and directional
 - Trailhead
 - Location of amenities
 - Community services and business areas
 - Share the Road safety signs
4. Install signage identified as needed in the audit. Prior to installation the following needs to be complete: sign design, printing, utility locates, approval from identified land owners or jurisdictions, work crews and budget. Further considerations include maintenance and future replacement needs depending on estimated lifespan of signs installed.
5. Create a Cycle Perth County cycling route sign design, or adopt the provincially recognized Bike Route sign, to be installed on signature road routes.

Services

6. Through further communications and outreach, encourage tourism businesses across the county, in communities and on signature routes and trails to become certified as bicycle friendly locations, increasing the number participating in the Ontario By Bike Network.

Best Practices – Bike Services

Cycle Simcoe has an active program to add cycle repair stations along key routes, branded as Cycle Simcoe. Many other destinations are actively adding similar amenities on popular cycling routes.



7. Identify the types of businesses frequented by cyclists that may be missing in communities, and provide support for planning applications, business cases and entrepreneurs looking to fill gaps.
8. Support work being undertaken to identify suitable locations for designated camping areas close to the G2G Rail Trail.

Best Practices – Ontario By Bike (OBB) Participation

Cycle tourism destinations encourage and provide incentives for businesses to participate in OBB certification in various ways:

- Location and icons included on printed maps of only OBB locations (Waterloo Region, Ottawa Valley/Renfrew, Durham Region, Windsor/Essex)
- Giving bicycle repair kits to businesses registering with OBB (Ajax and Lanark County)
- Using summer students to visit targeted businesses and provide assistance with registration (Brantford)

Key Direction 4:

MARKETING: Increase the promotion of cycle tourism in Perth County



Photo provided by Perth County

Building on, and adding to, existing marketing collateral and promotional activities will position Perth County as an appealing cycle tourism destination. With more assets and activities, the County will be able to better reach and attract this growing tourism sector, generating benefits to local communities and maximizing economic opportunities. An important part of any marketing campaign is to measure and track the impact from year to year.

Information Resources – Print and Digital

1. Building on the well-regarded Stratford, St. Marys, Perth County Cycle Map (2021), undertake an update and reprint that features:
 - o Additional information on the signature county routes for priority target market segments

- Newly established route names that are either all incorporating place names or are named to reflect the ride experience and capitalize on marketing appeal
 - Detailed information on each route including length, difficulty/experience level, surface type, elevation, services and amenities, recommended stops, text describing the route and any notes on areas that require caution
 - Paved and unpaved roads
 - Trails
 - Roads and trails that are frequently used by cyclists connecting to/from adjacent jurisdictions
 - Community inset maps
 - Clearly identifies any roads included in signature routes that have challenging infrastructure and require caution
 - Any disclaimers required and as approved by Perth County legal representative
 - Other visitor and safety information
 - Links to the Perth County cycling webpage
2. Build out information on cycle tourism on the Perth County website ensuring that it continues to be easy to navigate to, and features:
- Digital version of the updated cycling map
 - Webpages created for each signature route that include all details like the map updates (as listed above)
 - Links on route webpages to digital mapping on popular apps used by cyclists (Strava and RidewithGPS)
 - Option to download or print PDFs featuring each signature route
 - Attractive photography that depicts each route
 - Any disclaimers required and as approved by Perth County legal representative
 - Other visitor and safety information
3. Develop a series of new and consistent maps featuring each community that a signature cycling route or trail passes through, depicting where routes/trails intersect with communities, and the location of amenities and services including businesses of interest to cyclists. These maps should be available as downloadable printable PDFs on Perth County's website, can be included on the revised print map, made available for trailhead signage and given to the lower tier municipalities to use.

Best Practices – Cycle Tourism Web Pages

Ride Oxford --www.rideoxford.ca

Cycle Simcoe – www.cyclesimcoe.ca

Northumberland Tourism -
www.northumberlandtourism.com/cycling

Manitoulin Island -
www.manitoulinclvclina.com

Promotional Activities

Implement a mix of promotional activities over time that includes:

4. Inserting the promotion of cycling into social media content calendars and campaigns.
5. Launching a cycle tourism specific social media marketing campaign that will reach priority target market segments from nearby urban locations and feature highlighted themes.
6. Attending shows/events that reach large numbers of cycle tourists, including those in any priority urban markets i.e., Kitchener Waterloo, Guelph, London, Greater Toronto Hamilton Area.
7. Engaging in marketing partnership with Ontario By Bike for digital promotions and/or the print magazine.
8. Creating a welcome and information package for cyclists. Use the package to reach out to regional cycling clubs and provide to any other clubs making visitor inquiries.
9. Ensuring that cycling is included and featured in other tourism marketing activities.
10. Promoting cycling events and cycling packages as established.

Given the importance of nearby urban markets such as London, Kitchener-Waterloo and Guelph, particular attention should be paid to attracting cyclists from these areas by:

- Reaching out to cycling clubs
- Distributing maps and posters to cycling shops
- Attending outdoor shows
- Targeted social media ads and posts
- Hosting races and events

Other

11. Position all cycling and cycle tourism information, both print and digital, with the tag line 'Cycle Perth County' as a call to action.
 - Include in cycling focussed marketing campaigns and promotional materials
 - Include on any sign designs where possible
 - Consider, over the longer term, developing a Cycle Perth County brand
12. Capture high quality photo image assets and video to use for marketing purposes and in campaigns.

Metrics & Measurement

13. Develop an annual tracking plan and reporting template, working with partners to collect data from marketing campaigns and activities including:
 - Print map distribution numbers
 - Web traffic to cycling pages and additional demographic analytic info
 - Other related activities
 - Tie into the tracking plan collecting data on cycling activity

Key Direction 5:

EVENTS, TOURS AND PACKAGES: Support the long-term growth of cycle tourism through the development and support of events, tours and packages



Photo provided by Perth County

Cycling events and tours are an excellent way to attract large numbers of new cycle tourists to an area. Ensuring the participants have a positive experience will increase the exposure of the cycle tourism product in Perth County, generate return visitors and word of mouth referrals. With the large number of active cyclists and touring clubs across Ontario and in regions nearby, having product and resources ready to welcome this market will bode well in the further growth of this sector.

1. Identify support and resources that can be provided to events and assist event organizers.

2. Create partnership offer to attract new event organizers.
3. Support efforts to develop cycle tourism events, including the Perth County Cycle Tour.
4. Identify areas of collaboration with Destination Stratford on its sports tourism strategy to ensure that cycling events are included within strategy, recognizing that these types of events will also draw event participants to, and benefit, Perth County.
5. Using the signature cycling routes that highlight themes and assets of Perth County, develop self-guided cycling packages.
6. Encourage the private sector to create and offer tours/packages, providing assistance with marketing including featuring them on the Perth County Tourism website.

Best Practices – Cycle Events

- Tourism Sarnia Lambton partners with, supports and promotes the Bluewater Gran Fondo
- Grey and Simcoe Counties have partnered with Blue Mountain Village and Resorts on major events such as Grey County Road Race, Centurion, Sea Otter
- Lennox & Addington County created its own signature event to promote cycle tourism – The Discover L&A Ride, a 58km event that is so successful registration had to be capped at 425 this year



Key Direction 6:

PARTNERSHIPS: Build on existing and create new partnerships to grow the cycle tourism product



Photo provided by Perth County

Partnerships are essential in growing the cycling product and cycle tourism in Perth County. With a large number of stakeholders, many already highly engaged, further outreach and a facilitated, coordinated effort involving partners can be very beneficial in developing cycle tourism.

1. Work actively in partnership with Destination Stratford and the Town of St. Marys in promoting cycle tourism and attracting cycling events.
2. Work actively in partnership with the City of Stratford, Town of St. Marys and lower tier municipalities to encourage improvements to the physical infrastructure, on roads and trails, for cyclists, and that safety, connectivity is prioritized.
3. Support the existing volunteer efforts to fix the infrastructure gaps, make any necessary upgrades and continue maintenance of the G2G Rail Trail.

4. Maintain and foster strong relationships with cycle tourism stakeholders to provide input on projects that will help to improve and increase cycling and cycle tourism in Perth County, engaging some combination of: Cycle Stratford, G2G Rail Trail. Organization, Perth Harvest Pathway Committee, lower tier municipalities (Perth East, Perth South, West Perth and North Perth), Destination Stratford, City of Stratford, Town of St. Marys, Wildwood Conservation Area and others as identified.
5. Provide assistance to identified and qualified partner organizations and entities with plans to improve amenities and services for cyclists within communities or on signature routes and trails.
6. Engage with adjacent counties and regions to be aware of road and trail conditions on connecting routes used frequently by cyclists and use this information to maximize opportunities to create consistent cycling infrastructure between jurisdictions (in particular, Waterloo Region, Middlesex, Oxford and Huron Counties).

Key Direction 7:

CYCLING CULTURE: Strengthen the cycling culture across Perth County



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Building a strong local cycling culture with area residents and cyclists, local businesses, drivers and partners will assist in improving safety for both residents and visitors and ensure there is a welcoming and inclusive experience for all cyclist tourists and cyclists.

1. Strengthen the cycling culture at the County level by continuing to inform all levels of County staff and elected officials about the benefits of cycling and cycle tourism, for visitors and residents.
2. Help to build the cycling culture in the broader community by informing lower tier municipalities, staff and elected officials, about the benefits of cycling and cycle tourism for visitors and residents.

3. Make use of Ontario By Bike's bicycle friendly certification program to assist with outreach to tourism businesses to further the development of cycle tourism in Perth County and expand the Ontario By Bike Network in Perth County.
4. Explore within the county opportunities for safe cycling messaging and look at options for implementation with messages intended to reach residents, cyclists and drivers
 - Develop communication pieces that outline safe driving practises
 - Develop communication pieces that outline safe cycling practises, including trail etiquette information for cyclists
 - Install Share the Road signage on select County roads used frequently by cyclists
 - Outreach through local communities, schools, municipal and County-owned properties
 - Promote the safe cycling messaging using any other methods available
 - Establish or support community run cycling events and bike rides for residents, promoting health, safety and active living