Chain Mail

by Citizens for Safe Cycling: the Voice of Ottawa's Cyclists

Volume 30, Issue 1, Summer 2014

Part of the current Citizens for Safe Cycling Board with Councillor Egli and Mayor Watson. Photo: City of Ottawa

Citizens for Safe Cycling Receives Mayor's City Builder Award

By Schuyler Playford

On May 14, 2014 Citizens for Safe Cycling (CfSC) received the Mayor's City Builder Award for 30 years of cycling advocacy in Ottawa at the Ottawa City Council meeting. The Award is a civic honour created by Mayor Watson to recognize an individual, group or organization that has, through outstanding volunteerism or exemplary action, demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to making Ottawa a better place today and for the future. Mayor Jim Watson and Councillor Keith Egli recognized CfSC's role in building the city's cycling culture as they presented the Award.

"The Award signifies our contribution towards creating a better Ottawa. It also signifies the importance of the growing presence of cyclists in the city. We thank you for recognising our achievements and promise to keep raising the bar for future improvements to our city, because we must stay vigilant" – Hans Moor, President.

Members are pleased with CfSC according to Membership Survey

By Simone Rivers

This past April the Board of CFSC invited members to participate in a survey to provide feedback on its work and developments within the organization to help guide our work moving forward. Nearly 40% of members responded to the survey, the majority of which were pleased with CfSC's work and the direction the organization is taking.

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"I am very proud to be a member of this organization. I admire the hard work and great expertise contained on our board. Thanks and congratulations on the hard work you have done and continue to do!"

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CfSC would like to thank all of our members who took the time to fill out the Membership Survey. The results and suggestions received about areas on which to focus and ways to improve will be considered in our future advocacy efforts. Of course, the positive comments were also greatly appreciated as a reminder of the importance or our presence within the Ottawa community.

A more detailed report with full responses to all the questions will be sent to the members upon completion.

Tulips on Two Wheels Recap

By Risa Sargent

CfSC's third annual spring cycling celebration event Tulips on Two Wheels was held on Saturday, May 10th. Tulips on Two Wheels encourages cyclists to get their bikes out of storage and to get cycling! The event coincides with Envirocentre's Bike to Work month and in previous years, with Jane's Walk. CfSC partners with Cycle Salvation to offer free, light bike tune-ups, which draws attention from passersby on the Canal pathways.

We were once again lucky to have beautiful weather. Plenty of folks stopped by to ask for cycling advice, to purchase new memberships, and to take advantage of free tune-ups offered by the handy mechanics. By mid-morning the lines for a tune-up wrapped around the booth!

Long time member volunteer Don McIntosh ran tours of the NCC's colourful tulip displays. Volunteers, Ruth Swyers and Felicity Borgal, helped sell memberships and gave out information. Our President, Hans Moor, was in attendance with Board members Jess Wells, Risa Sargent, Simone Rivers and Isabel Jenish. Thank you to everyone who helped make Tulips on Two Wheels a success!

Ottawa loves biking to work

By Kathleen Wilker

The results are in for the 2014 edition of Bike to Work Month, a partnership program between the City of Ottawa and EnviroCentre. 1568 residents pledged online to bike to work. This represents an 11% increase from the 2013 edition. 81 workplaces participated as teams. Up 51% from last year, this number is significant and encouraging.

There are numerous incentives to encourage workplaces to build teams and for cyclists of all levels to join. Experienced cyclists who are able to mentor colleagues interested in biking to work but who have questions or need some support usually lead a workplace team. Friendly competition with a "rival" workplace and staff team can entice folks to ride to work. For example, this year two Ottawa high schools competed against each other. For others, knowing that personal kilometres are contributing to a group total is encouraging enough. The promise of prizes motivates others to cycle to work. Many area bike retailers sponsored bike pumps for winning workplace teams

and other retailers sponsored dinners out and a trip for 30 to Camp Fortune's Aerial Park.

Whatever the motivation, once people start biking to work, they often are surprised at how fast, convenient and pleasant bike commuting is and continue choosing to ride to work whenever they can. In the words of one participant, "*Bike to Work Month motivated me to take my bike out of the garage and start riding in May. Now I'm hooked*".

Bikes bring business

By Kathleen Wilker

This summer, Ottawa's streets received their first three bike corrals. In each case, an on-street parking space becomes host to a bike rack, providing parking space for 10 bikes at each location. Popular in many cities world-wide, including Montreal, Peterborough and Portland, bike corrals allow more customers to shop at local businesses by dramatically increasing parking possibilities.

Keep an eye out for bike corrals in the WWBIA (*in front of Bridgehead and Hintonburg Public House, photo Bikelanes.ca*) and the Glebe BIA (near Joe Mama).

East end residents ask for better bike infrastructure

By Hans Moor

This summer, St Patrick Street will be repaved. As part of this project, the City of Ottawa will include bike lanes along the stretch between Cobourg Street and the bridge to form part of the East-West Bike Way. The residents in the area, from Vanier to Lowertown, and from Beechwood Village to New Edinburgh, are disappointed that the bike lane will not continue for the entire length of St. Patrick Street.

The City argues that the new standard for bike lanes is 1,50 meters (which is great) and that they can't sign off on a narrower lane. The residents however argue that there are precedents in other areas and believe that if all lanes were narrowed, cyclists, pedestrians and motorists could all fit.

There has been a letter writing effort to the Mayor and councillors to convince the City to do better than offer a handful of too quick to fade sharrows. The community organisations are asking the City not to wait another nine years when a complete overhaul is planned to build a complete street for St. Patrick Street.

The mayor agreed and worked with councillors Fleury and Clark to find extra money to put an extra bike path in. The letters are available on our website: www.bikeottawa.ca

Bluesfest Bike Parking

By Hans Moor

Once again, CfSC is offering valet bike parking at Bluesfest. Keep an eye on our website, our Twitter Account and Facebook page for the details. The valet parking is our biggest fund raiser and generated about $2500 for Blues in the Schools and the same amount for CfSC.

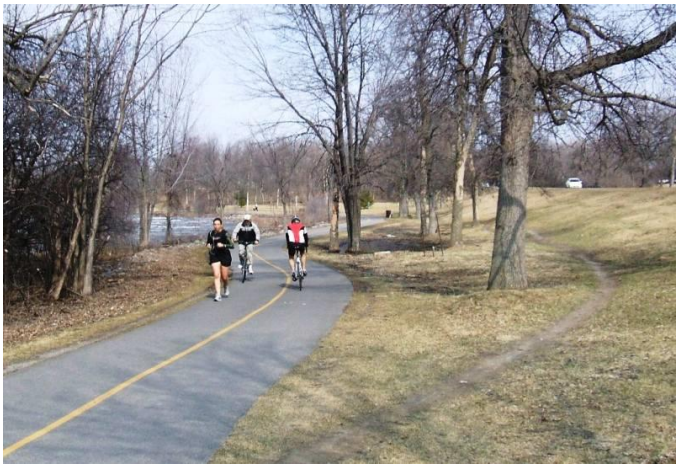
Donate generously, it is a great service and not one bike got lost in all those years (we parked over 40,000 bikes until now)

A river runs through it

By Paul Clarke

Although late to arrive, the annual post-winter rise of the Ottawa River levels flooded NCC's Ottawa River Pathway. As in most years, cyclists trying to enjoy a springtime ride along the Pathway were blocked by Mother Nature.

By mid May, the pathway between New Orchard and the War Museum was covered by floodwaters in several sections (See April and May comparative photos). Some paths, such as the Sentier des Voyageurs near Aylmer, can become completely blocked when the river rises.



Most path users typically resort to taking the ad hoc detours slightly further inland, which causes erosion to the grassy banks bordering the Sir John A Macdonald Parkway. These tracks, now well worn from seasons of use, become a muddy inconvenience for cyclists during rainfalls and pose a difficult passage for in-line skaters no matter the weather.

Putting up barriers during times of flooding is not an adequate solution and we have advocated to the NCC for better. In a meeting held this past February, we asked them to consider taking more permanent measures, such as building a boardwalk or dikes for the sectors that have chronic problems. The Gatineau side of the river already has an extensive boardwalk near Parc Jacques Cartier. The NCC could at least make a more official detour that doesn't degrade the landscape.

Support cycling! How? info@bikeottawa.ca

We also suggested that better advance signage about flooding should be posted, preferably at junctions where it would be logical for users to switch to an alternate route. Additionally, an on-line means of checking the condition of various sectors of the pathway network, similar to what is now provided for the Rideau Canal Skateway, would be a major benefit to those trying to plan a passable route.

After getting your cycle all shined and tuned up for the new season, who wants to submerge it halfway to the wheel hubs while filling your shoes with frigid water!

(photos Paul Clarke)

CfSC writes to the City about Albert and Booth Street

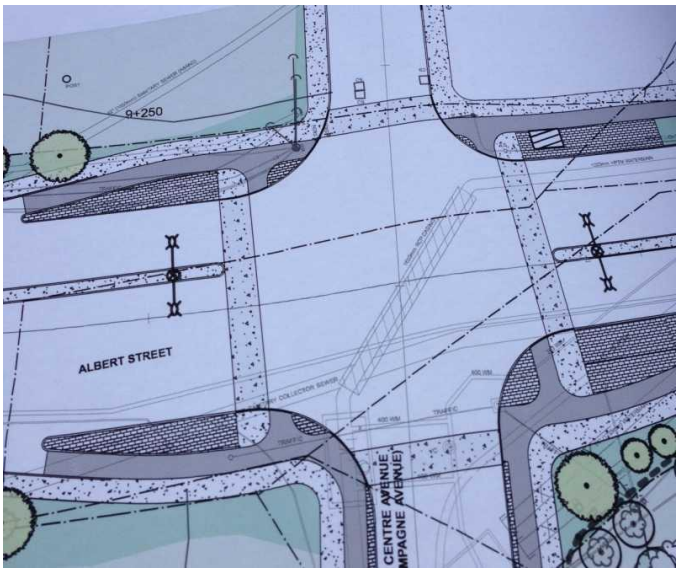
By Hans Moor

Citizens for Safe Cycling has sent two letters to a number of City of Ottawa staff, NCC and some councillors about the changes that are proposed on Albert Street (between City Centre and Bronson Avenue) and about Booth Street (between Albert Street north bound to the NCC Parkway near the War Museum).

In the opinion of our Advocacy Working Group, Albert Street is well thought out with bike tracks and Dutch style left turns. However, Booth Street is another story.

Booth Street will run north and will eventually be elevated to the same level as Albert Street in order to go over the LRT tracks. After the LRT, the road will slope downward to connect to the intersection with the NCC Parkway. However, there is no space planned for cyclists.

Comparatively, Albert Street will offer great bike infrastructure. It appears that OC Transpo doesn't want cycle tracks behind the bus stops (even though cycling infrastructure in other countries has proven this to be a successful concept).



We believe there should be a safe north - south route to connect with the future developments of Chaudière Island which will be designed for walking and cycling. It would also create a safe route to Quebec, which is sorely missing in this area.

In this context, we have sent an additional letter to the City of Ottawa and Gatineau about repurposing the Prince of Wales Bridge across the Ottawa River earlier than originally planned.

Report released on cycling in Ottawa

By Hans Moor

It has been a few months ago already, but for those who missed it, our Annual Report is available and includes updates about improvements to cycling infrastructure, community bike events and activities. It offers maps and once again CfSC has rated select improvements to infrastructure. Of course, we have released the new Top 10 issues for this year. Check out the report here:

http://bikeottawa.ca/index.php/2-uncategorised/33-ottawa-bicycle-reports

AGM set on September 30th

By Hans Moor

The date for CfSC's AGM is set for September 30th. We will keep you informed about the speaker, the food and the birthday cake!

Board member Jess Wells has stepped down from the Board as she is going to work for the City of Ottawa in the Neighbourhood Connections Office. CfSC wishes her the best of luck with this opportunity. Without a doubt we will soon get a sense of the opportunities that could arise by working with the Neighbourhood Connection Office.

NCC Linear Park

By Isabel Jenish

The National Capital Commission hosted a workshop on Tuesday May 27 to gather ideas on how to turn the riverfront along the Sir John A. Macdonald Pkwy. into a "linear park" that could be inspired by examples from Chicago to Quebec City.

CfSC was invited to NCC offices along with a number of other community associations and stakeholders for a "blue-sky" session on possible improvements to the nine kilometres of parkland between Preston Street and Carling Avenue.

The purpose of the workshop was to explore various ways to transform sections of the Ottawa River shoreline corridor into a park. The aim is to make this corridor a space that people visit more often and that is more accessible to the public for a variety of uses, while also ensuring unimpeded access to the river for the neighbouring communities.

The discussion focused on creating better access to the waterfront, adding activities or amenities that would attract people or entice the large volumes of cyclists who use the pathways to stick around. Resurfacing of pathway, increasing signage, creating more bike lines along north-south corridors to improve access to the pathways for neighbouring communities were repeated themes throughout the discussion. Although I was there

to represent CfSC, it seemed as though the majority of the crowd were advocating on our behalf!

The initiative is part of the development of the Capital Urban Lands Master Plan and Parkways Policy, and follows on public consultations that were held in March.

New website: BikeOttawa.ca

Last winter we redesigned our website. Here are a few reasons:

Responsive design

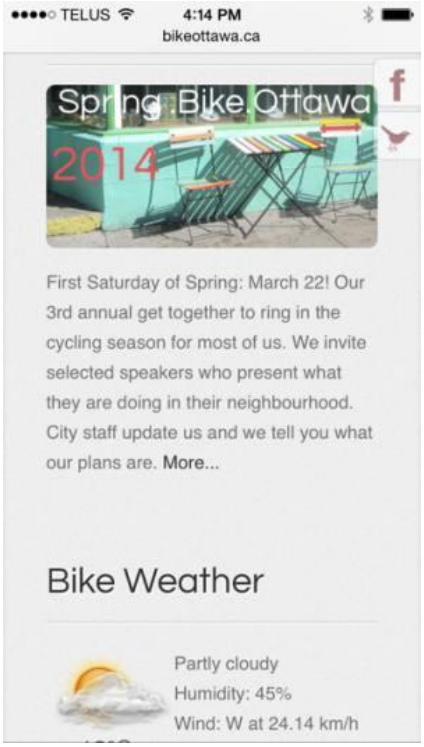
Our website is now what they call 'responsive'. It automatically adjusts to mobile devices and other small screens, so you won't see a web site designed for a 15" screen compressed to a 3" screen. Our web site automatically reorganises our content for your tablets and smart phones, which is great if you read a lot on your mobile devices. Designing one site for both large and small screens definitely has its own challenges, but we won't bore you with that.

A new URL

Safecycling.ca is here to stay, but unfortunately it doesn't say anything about where we are from. That is not good for our branding. It could be Ottawa or any other Canadian place that promotes safe cycling. We gave it some thought and decided that Bikeottawa.ca is a URL that reflects better that we are from Ottawa. Our name remains Citizens for Safe Cycling, of course. Since we can be proud of what CfSC has accomplished in the last 30 years, we should wave our Ottawa banner a bit more. The more people who recognise Ottawa as a cycling city, the better.

Better design for small screens

More and more people use mobile devices and expect to read short and to-the-point information.



Large pieces of text are harder to read on mobile devices anyway. So we tried to put our message in a few lines and allow people to click through to the remainder of the text with the 'Read More...' buttons.

'Most read content' easier to find

We shuffled the content around somewhat, so that everything you were most interested in the last five years is easier to find. When our volunteers built the first site about five years ago, we didn't know what you would like to read, but based on aggregated stats in Piwik, we have a better idea of what you find most interesting. We concentrated the menu on the top around what you searched for most, articles of interest and current topics in the body, accompanied with images and organisational material at the bottom.

Joomla Upgrade

We moved from content management system Joomla 1.5 to Joomla 3.x, a more stable and a more user friendly version in the back end. Upgrading from Joomla 1.5 to 3.2 is a major exercise, so we decided to build our website from scratch instead (other than the content), to avoid any legacy issues for the next years.

Chain Mail is published by Citizens for Safe Cycling ("CfSC"), the not for profit association that promotes cycling as a viable means of transportation in Ottawa, ON, Canada. Opinions in Chain Mail area those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of CfSC, its board, or its members. Reproduction is permitted, provided that both the author and source are given. All images by CfSC, unless mentioned otherwise.

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