The 2016 Cycle Tourism Conference was made possible by the generous support of the following partners and sponsors:

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Conference Coordinators

**Opening Remarks Provided By:**
- Louisa Mursell, Executive Director, Ontario By Bike / Transportation Options
- Helen Hewetson, Co-Chair, Board of Directors, Transportation Options

**Special Guests**
- Councillor Mary Fragedakis, City of Toronto
- The Honourable Michael Coteau, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, Government of Ontario
The Cycle Tourism Conference was held on March 4, 2016 in Toronto. Coordinated by Ontario By Bike and Transportation Options, this was the third conference of its type we have hosted (previously held in 2013 and 2009). With the continued growth of, and interest in, this sector in Ontario, across Canada and internationally, the timing worked well with 165 attendees joining us for the one day conference.

**Conference Theme: Growing The Cycle Tourism Sector – Making Investments Count**

Supporting the theme, 25 speakers plus moderators, shared their expertise and experience, informing and inspiring attendees to consider what further investments can be made. Destinations and jurisdictions have made investment decisions and strategically prioritized cycle tourism at different levels, hence there are many different stages of sector development. Investment is a broad term ranging from committing staff time and resources to supporting projects, all the way to the ‘big ticket’ item - building cycling infrastructure. Marketing and mapping, research, business outreach, entrepreneurial efforts, sponsoring and hosting cycling events are other examples of investment all of which are contributing to the development and growth of the cycle tourism sector.

A large amount of information was shared at the conference covering a range of topics in a variety of session formats. By sharing this report and summary, we hope that the information will be able to travel further and be of use beyond the conference day to all who attended and generally to a bigger audience who share our common interest.

Find out more at the conference resource page, visit: [www.ontariobybike.ca/ctc16](http://www.ontariobybike.ca/ctc16)

View and share a digital version of this report
See conference: Agenda - Presentation Slides – Speakers Biographies

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Thank you.

Louisa Mursell  
*Executive Director*

Michael McCreesh  
*Project Manager*

Pauline Craig  
*Board Co-Chair*

Helen Hewetson  
*Board Co-Chair*

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The information contained within this report was taken from presentation slides and recordings of conference sessions and kindly shared with permission from speakers.
Ontario By Bike Network and Transportation Options

Ontario By Bike is a program of not for profit organization, Transportation Options. Proud to coordinate the 2016 conference, the conference theme fits well with Ontario By Bike's mandate, to develop and promote cycle tourism in Ontario. With the Network extending to 34 regions and over 1,100 tourism businesses certified as bicycle friendly, Ontario By Bike works with a wide range of businesses and partners to make the connections to the target end market, the growing number of visitors choosing to bicycle. Whether it is making use of the web portal of information, picking up a copy of the annual Cycling in Ontario / Le vélo en Ontario guide, viewing regional cycling maps, receiving updates via newsletters or participating in events and tours, we are engaging more and more cyclists. Our work and programs would not be possible without dedicated staff and Board of Directors, volunteers, programs sponsors and funders, and partners like you.

www.ontariobybike.ca

www.transportationoptions.org
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Morning Keynote Speaker

**Destination Bike: Bike Tourism Means Business** - Nastassja Pace, Destination Development Specialist, Travel Oregon

In 2012, bicycle travelers in Oregon spent $400 million USD ($1.1 million/day), generating 4,600 jobs and $18 million in local and state tax receipts. Bicycle travelers in Oregon spend approximately 20% more on average per trip than the average traveler. While spending is higher closer to urban centers, some regions receive nearly 15% of total visitor spend from bicycle travel.

Travel Oregon’s Destination Development Team is a unique program within the state’s tourism board that focuses on working solely with rural communities. They work to develop tourism assets and create authentic experiences including bicycle tourism. In 2004, the team created ‘Rural Tourism Studios’, a robust program with significant on-the-ground work in communities and a focus on the development of tourism niches including: food and farms; adventure, outdoor recreation; operator, guides and outfitters; and bicycling tourism.

Rural Tourism Studio Goals
- Engage broad community stakeholders
- Raise awareness of the value of tourism
- Build and strengthen relationships
- Connect resources in communities
- Provide a safe place to spark creativity and enthusiasm

Communities must play an active part in the Rural Tourism Studios, completing a studio application, forming a local steering committee and helping design, plan and outreach for the Studio session. The Studio session takes a full or half day. From it stems an action plan that addresses a range of asset categories, projects and strategies for chosen niches.

**BTS STEPS**

1. Studio Application & Formation of Steering Committee
2. Design, Planning & Outreach:
   - Steering Committee & Travel Oregon
3. Bicycle Tourism Studio:
   - Full-Day Workshop(s) & Half-Day Planning Session(s)
4. Projects/Strategies Implementation

The program is designed to instill ownership and create a shared vision for the development of tourism. Both Bicycling Tourism Studios and Scenic Bikeways Program are not initiated through a top-down approach and are always initiated through the local community.

**OREGON SCENIC BIKEWAYS**

Key to the development of bicycle tourism in Oregon was the establishment of the Oregon Bicycle Tourism Partnership in 2004, a statewide committee. Initially starting with 8 organizations and agencies, it has grown to over 250 and meets several times each year. They have been responsible for a number of America’s first achievements in bicycle tourism development including:
Oregon Scenic Bikeways Program (2009)
- Program to develop premier cycling routes on existing infrastructure in Oregon, of which they are now 15 covering over 1,000 miles.
- Applications and action plans developed by local volunteer groups.
- Assessed by annual and 5-year route reviews.
- Program branding offered free by Travel Oregon, allows regions to promote their Bikeway more effectively, as part of a larger, state-wide program.

Findings revealed 79,000 cyclists on Scenic Bikeways, accounting for $12.4 million USD in economic spending in 2014.

7 Bikes for 7 Wonders Campaign (2015)
- A multi-million dollar, global marketing campaign that allowed Travel Oregon to celebrate the investment and work developing bicycle tourism.
- 7 local bicycle builders created 7 one-of-a-kind, hand-built bikes, each created to reflect one of the 7 state wonders.

Oregon Bicycle Tourism Partnership continues to grow and lead the sector including hosting the Oregon Bicycle Tourism Summit in 2016 focused at identifying new state-wide goals and strategies for bicycle tourism in Oregon.

For more information, visit www.traveloregon.com.

RideOregonRide.com (2009)
- Creation of a dedicated website that promotes all things bicycle tourism across the state with industry stakeholders able to add and promote their own routes and events on the website.

Economic Significance of Bicycle-Related Travel Study (2012)
- Established a state-wide baseline on the economic impacts of bicycle tourism.

Bike Friendly Business Program (2014)
- Free program funded and administered by Travel Oregon and supported by tutorials and other resources.
- 533 businesses registered within the first year.

Car-Free Days in National Park (2014)
- Pilot initiative that has become an annual event and generated interest from other National Park and state organizations.

Economic Significance of Oregon Scenic Bikeways (2014)
- Research study aimed at understanding value of previous initiatives.
Morning Session 1: Route and Trail Enhancement Innovations

The Blue Route: Nova Scotia’s Emerging Provincial Cycling Network
- Ben Buckwold, Director of Bikeways and Blue Route Implementation, Bicycle Nova Scotia

Bicycle Nova Scotia (BNS) has been working on the Blue Route Provincial Cycling Network for the past 8 years. As a non-profit organization, they are leading the development of bikeways and accessibility for cyclists of all types.

Recently a 56km portion of the network was opened, with a total of 3,000km as a planned goal for 2025.

Nova Scotia is well set up for cycle tourism, with many small towns and great coastal routes, but there has been limited investment to date. The Blue Route’s vision is to connect places and be a part of those places, with routes in and between communities.

Network Development Goals Include
- Improve safety
- Improve accessibility
- Offer a recreational asset to the residents of Nova Scotia
- Create a product to support the tourism sector
- Offer a product to support the tourism sector
- Create a product to support the tourism sector
- Strong project identity; engaging local communities; and developing evaluation strategies.

Provincial stakeholders include: Department of Health; Tourism Nova Scotia; Department of Energy; and Department of Transportation, with 85% of route being on roadways and infrastructure requirements going forward. In total there are 5 government departments working on the Blue Route, plus BNS. Vélo Quebec has shared expertise.

There will be different route types included in the Network such as roads with paved shoulders and also rural roads. Trails suitable to all, plus a rail trail corridor will comprise 15% of Network. In selecting routes, the focus was on: communities, economic activity and active transportation; placing the Network nearest to a high density of tourism services; and coordinating with like initiatives where possible.

For more information, visit www.blueroute.ca
Peterborough & the Kawarthas Classics: Road Cycling Routes - Fiona Dawson, Director of Tourism, Peterborough & the Kawarthas Tourism

Peterborough & the Kawarthas Tourism (PKT) the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for the City and County of Peterborough which also encompasses, 8 townships and 2 First Nations. Much of their tourism product is outdoor activity focused.

Any product development undertaken has to have achievable goals in increased visitor spending and enhanced visitor experience.

As with other projects, they wanted to bridge the gap between what locals and local businesses are passionate about. With many keen local cyclists, they were able to tap into a valuable resource in helping create a product that could be packaged and made ready for visitors.

Other practical guidelines were set to make sure the end product:

- Provided a marketable road cycling product
- Ensured experience had a local flavour
- Created a seamless experience despite many local borders and divisions
- Got cyclists to ride the most scenic and less busy roads of the area

Launched in 2015, there are now 300kms of routes that start and end in the City of Peterborough, (3 double loop routes). The routes were designed with an eye to the future and long-term vision. There are several phases planned with further development to be dictated by success of current project.

The tourism team did not develop the routes. Local expertise, using the local cycling business, was instrumental with route development. The routes are:

- Designed with a visitor focus in mind, the routes required 6 different council reviews/approvals
- Named for marketing purposes, so that cyclists get a better sense of the experience, but coordinated with numbered routes for signs
- Created as a series of loops of differing lengths to appeal to all visitors and designed with a variety of experiences and local businesses in mind
- Featured on a new print map (Summer 2016), digital format using Mapmyride and kiosk maps on routes at set intervals

Signage
A combination of directional signs, finger boards and confirmation signs were developed. To develop and fund signage project, a key partnership with Shimano Canada, who have a local office in the region, was established with the assistance of local bike store. Also involved in the partnership were different levels of municipal government. The challenges of installing signs are significant, extending to approvals and costs, timing and actual installation.

Promotions
Last year PKT hosted a Travel Media Association of Canada (TMAC) conference allowing them to create a buzz and offer media exposure for the cycling routes project. Building upon that, new marketing initiatives including a new video, along with cycling map, are being launched in 2016 for promotion of cycling in Peterborough and the Kawarthas.

For more information, visit www.thekawarthas.ca
**Trail Enhancement Innovations - The Pan Am Path - A Legacy Project for the City of Toronto** - Jen Hyland, Cycling Infrastructure & Programs, Project Manager, Cycling Infrastructure and Programs, City of Toronto

In 2012, as part of the Bikeways Trails Implementation Plan Project, the City looked at the trail system and identified 25 projects and 77km of trails that could be interconnected. In 2013 the “Friends of the Pan Am Path”, a group of community leaders and artists proposed the concept of a city-wide path as a legacy project for the Pan Am Games. The vision was to create a network in the city to connect game venues, local trails and neighborhoods but also to showcase local businesses and attractions, and to enrich the space through art and nature.

It took 2 years to develop the path network and build a few trail connections in key strategic locations where gaps existed including 5km of new trail, 3.5km of upgraded trail and 7km of on-street sharrow wayfinding. Challenges with timelines and contractors were overcome.

A showcase project, the 80km-long Pan Am Path was completed for the games in 2015, stretching from Brampton to Pickering primarily on multi-use trails. A wide range of partners were instrumental in making the trail happen.

**Branding and Wayfinding**
The City’s role was infrastructure, branding and wayfinding. The Friends of the Pan Am Path (the Friends) were the animators, engaging community stakeholders.

The Pan Am Path brand was developed and used on signs, trail markings, brochures and highlighted on annual City cycling map. A Pan Am Path App was created by the Friends and includes local businesses layered with routes.

Wayfinding signage fell under the new City wayfinding strategy, moving away from numbered system to pilot signs that identified destinations, distances and names of bike routes. By partnering with the Trans Canada Trail, who fabricated and installed the signs, trails were linked and connected.

The Pan Am Path Art Relay, coordinated by the Friends, was instrumental in promoting the trail with 14 weeks of events, leveraging local art networks and creating permanent and transient projects to promote the trail. Benches, murals and artwork were placed along the trail. The Relay generated an enormous promotion, media attention and community engagement, bringing the project to life.

This project brought together many partners, communities and political support for a legacy project. It also encouraged more people to get out on the trail.
For more information, visit [www.toronto.ca/cycling](http://www.toronto.ca/cycling)
The New Greenbelt Route: Partnerships to Promotions to Wayfinding
- Susan Murray, Vice President, Communications & Operations, Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation

The Greenbelt Foundation came to the Greenbelt Route project through a different lens, one of environmental and agricultural advocacy, wanting to protect the Greenbelt and connect people to it. The route builds on the land use plan to protect the water, air and food sources.

Launched in 2015, the 475km rural signed route took 3 years to develop. Lead partner the Waterfront Regeneration Trust had to build the necessary partnerships to obtain approvals from the 7 municipalities and regions route traverses.

There are now 1,100 directional, distance markers and junction signs plus large trailhead signs in place, providing a broader picture of the route. Installing signs was not without challenges, requiring partnerships and learning from others.

Research showed that print maps were popular, leading to the print and distribution of 250,000 maps with plans for a reprint of 30,000 in 2016. These maps helped feature the route along with the Greenbelt story and message. Smaller regional loops developed by Ontario By Bike were included on the back of the map and in accompanying downloadable PDF’s.

Greenbelt-curated points of interest are an important feature as are links to regional tourism and municipal partners. Considerable time was spent trying to determine the best mobile mapping and digital application to create a useable platform. Input from partners on what product to showcase and a working group for data collection is ongoing.

Future Priorities Include
- A commitment to building partnerships
- Continuing to tell the Greenbelt story with more print and interactive maps plus further promotions
- A partnership web portal and state of the route report
- Developing long term data collection strategies
- Having partners embed Greenbelt message and information on the Greenbelt Route in their own promotional materials

For more information, visit www.greenbelt.ca/route
Morning Session 2: Market Growth and Emerging Product Trends

_Urban Bike Tourism_ - Terrance Eta, Founder / Owner, Toronto Bicycle Tours

Operating since 2011, Toronto Bicycle Tours (TBT) is a full service tour operator offering guided half-and full-day tours. Peak season sees 3 tours/day, 7 days/week with sizes ranging from 2 to 50+. In addition to independent tours, they offer school, corporate and family tours, as well as standalone bicycle rentals.

Urban bicycle tours connect people and places and act as a channel through which a destination's story is told. The destination becomes a 'character' on the bicycle tours that tour operators should 'interact' with. When creating cycle tour products it's important to consider how they educate, entertain and connect people. It’s about creating memorable moments. When everything on a tour succeeds, the bikes disappear.

Who are urban bicycle tourists in Toronto?

- Diverse with significant numbers of Americans, British and Australians
- Strong interest from bicycle-centric nations throughout Europe
- Primarily aged 30-50 years old, but ages range from 1 to 80
- Highly educated, with varied interests
- Not all avid cyclists
- Looking to experience the most of a city in the shortest period of time

- Many have participated in bicycle tours in other cities
- Bike tour guests are primary bike rental market
- Many looking to be shown a destination by a local

Bicycle tours need to address guests' needs and accommodate the desire for a safe and controlled environment. To achieve this, tour operators must ensure proper safety equipment and safety protocol are in place as well as well-trained guides and a high guide-to-guest ratio. High guide-to-guest ratios also improve opportunities for guests to learn and join the dialogue.

"If they don't feel safe, they won't have fun."

Improvements in cycling infrastructure make urban bike tours more enjoyable for guests, but also easier for tour operators.

Families are a growth market with urban bike tours being popular with families for several reasons: short in duration; an active activity that captures children’s attention; are an opportunity for parents to enjoy, as guides help children. Bicycles can act as a catalyst to encourage more cycling when guests return home, growing the market further.

For more information, visit [www.torontobicycletours.com](http://www.torontobicycletours.com)

*_Thank you to TBT for hosting pre-conference bike tour*_

*Image: Toronto Bicycle Tours, Urban bike tourists in action.*
Cycling Club and Self-Supported Riders - Hal Cain, Past Tour Director, Kingston Velo Club

Cycle touring can be defined as travelling by bicycle from one location to another with the primary objective of experiencing the sights and culture found along the routes traversed.

Profile of a Self-Supported Cycle Tourist
- **Age** – Mid 50's between 40-60 years old
- **Gender** – Male (66-75%) and Women (25-33%)
- **Household Earnings** of $80,000-$200,000
- **Highly educated** (university/graduate)

Cycle tourists enjoy moderately challenging terrain and prefer travelling from destination to destination by bicycle. However, multi-modal travel is an attractive trip feature. Culinary experiences are important and there is an appreciation for a blend of natural environment and experiences to facilitate a sense of exploration and discovery. Grateful to be accommodated for as a visitor, cyclists are eager to spend money within communities.

How to Attract Cycling Clubs and Fully Independent Traveller (FIT) Cyclists?
- Demonstrate knowledge by training frontline staff about the needs of cycle tourists and cycling resources available to them
- Have images and graphics on marketing materials that reflect a specific cycle tourist market: tailor marketing imagery to the segment you’re trying to reach
- Promote the cycling experiences through general travel as well as cycling-specific channels, touring cyclists plan trips in similar ways to other travellers
- Promote the destination/experience as one would to the larger visitor market, but also consider how cyclists experience a destination, including from a “saddle perspective” and directions in/out by bike
- Include correct information on promotional materials about what routes suit what experience level
- Get involved and build relationships with cycling organizations, local cycling clubs, Ontario By Bike, Adventure Cycling, etc.
- Develop policies and install facilities that accommodate all types of cyclists
- Develop routes/itineraries that allow for 30-50km/day with many experiences or 80-100km with fewer, identify stops for breaks every 1-2 hours anticipating an average touring pace of 18 km/h

Cycle Tour Planning Process
Planning cycle tours very sequential in nature and destinations need to understand how their region is perceived within the lens of a cycle tourist who may ask:

Where do I want to go? What type of cycling experience do I want? What experiences are along the route? Is the route scenic? Are services available at logical distances on route?

Cycle tourists seek infrastructure and services that are conducive to a positive cycling experience. Cyclist are looking for routing and destinations with: sufficient, healthy, food services; accommodations with bike storage, flexibility with early breakfast times and no minimum night stay policies; an always-open policy at campsites; bike shops or stores with repair tools; rest areas with access to water and washrooms.

For more information, visit www.kvc.ca
Attracting Leisure and Recreational Cyclists - Maria Rasouli, Owner, Escape Bicycle Tours

Escape Bicycle Tours is an outdoor touring company specializing in leisure and recreational cycling adventures to rural and urban destinations in Ottawa. Piloted in 2014, the company began offering bicycle tours in 2015.

Market research indicates that potential participants on cycle tours are intimidated by the perceived notion that cycling requires high stamina and top physical fitness. This is a key challenge to overcome for tour operators. There remains a need to convey the message that bicycle tours are accessible for many and are simply ‘sightseeing on a bike’.

**Our Target Market + Concept**

Escape Bicycle Tours' target market includes leisure visitors or those visiting friends and relatives between the ages of 35 to 65+. They are often beginner cyclists who have limited time in Ottawa and are looking to learn more about the destination on a 2 hour tour. Families are their biggest market segment.

Tour guides are an important part of operations. Retired individuals, who are familiar with the destination, seeking part-time work, are sociable and avid cyclists, are well suited to job.

**Strategy for Success**

- Create an image that makes people comfortable when deciding to take a bicycle tour
- Create a worry-free experience through a guided, fully-supported tour with all tour requirements taken care of (e.g. guide, bicycle, helmet, water, snacks, maps, attraction admission tickets, etc)
- Identify and foster local partnerships with hotels, attractions, destination marketing organization
- Build credibility with partners through persistent and strategic efforts (e.g. social media and Trip Advisor)
- Develop a strategy to leverage positive online and brand presence (e.g. Google advertising, social media, Trip Advisor, etc)

Operating a bicycle tour company is not without its challenges, which include: seasonality of the business; time required for product development; and establishing credibility. As the business grows, opportunities that are being explored include: further packaging with local tourism partners; building partnerships with similar businesses in other cities; and tapping into the local market.

For more information, visit www.escapebicycletours.ca
Mountain Biking & Fat Biking - Sara Archer, Co-Founder/Operations Manager, Ride Guides - Ontario Cycling Adventures

Founded in 2013, Ride Guides offers a variety of cycling experiences including: mountain and fat bike skills camps; road racing clinics; guided rides and getaways; and private instruction. The company, based in Simcoe County, operates solely in Ontario with experiences offered across the province. The main market segment is the emerging cyclist. Ride Guides is a corporate member of IMBA and has 8 employees.

Ride Guides is seeing the market evolve with both an increase in female mountain bikers and number of families participating in mountain biking (driven through family resorts). More riders are evolving into multi-discipline cyclists, for example cycle cross' popularity is creating a bridge between mountain and road biking.

Ride Guides is exploring the following market opportunities: creating new experiences on new terrain and trail networks; fostering the cycling culture and enabling cycling through ride clinics and accessible cycling experiences; having products and events tailored to be inclusive of family experiences; a greater focus on youth and women-specific products; increasing in 'couples' specific product offering; and marketing to cross-segments.

"Fat Biking is a game-changer"

Fat Biking is proving to be a huge opportunity with the first year of operations seeing growth of 800%. It's a 365 days/year experience and great opportunity for shoulder season offering and winters. Opportunities exist for destinations or facilities with cross-country ski trail networks to develop and offer groomed trail systems.

Fat biking is highly accessible and caters to all rider levels and abilities, including families.

For more information, visit www.rideguides.ca
Lunch Panel Discussion: "What Are Canadian Cyclists Buying Elsewhere? How Do We Shift Their Gears Closer To Home?"

Jonathan Lansdell – Director of the Americas, Butterfield & Robinson

For 50 years, Butterfield & Robinson (B&R) has offered small-group trips and is considered an industry leader in active travel. While the bicycle tour marketplace has become saturated with a significant number of bicycle tour operators, the company continues to retain and strengthen its brand offering: extraordinary travel experiences for small groups; immersing guests in the local culture; and enabling guests to move at their own pace.

Key components of each B&R trip include offering: unparalleled routes, tried and tested; exceptional hotels; high quality guides; a focus on details and providing a seamless experience.

New and emerging destinations have been added and there are a growing number of electric-assist bike tours offered.

The B&R market is primarily from the US and Brazil. They are well-educated, well-travelled and prepared to shop around when planning trips. Ready to spend significantly on their trip, they are also conscious of a ‘value proposition’. Most seek 40-50km days riding on well paved, quiet interesting roads. They want to interact with the destination in a meaningful and genuine way.

How regions and tour operators can stand out:
- Never compromise on premium ‘essentials’ that include routes, hotels and guides
- Create ‘moments’ and ‘events’ on a trip to stitch together these ‘essentials’ and make a good trip a special one
- With product development based on the concept of a ‘theatre’, where guides are actors and the experiences are revealed in a seamless fashion for the guests
- Offering value-added experiences, rather than standard offerings
- Encouraging local communities to interact with guests, orchestrated or spontaneous
- Itineraries that tell a story and can be weaved through a destination.

Challenges and opportunities for Ontario or any destination include working with the media as they influence what the consumer perceives as an attractive destination. However, there is significant international competition for media between travel destinations. Ontario, or indeed any destination, needs to understand its ‘exoticness’ and how it can be perceived as such by the international market.

For more information, visit www.butterfield.com
Mike Brcic – Chief Happiness Officer, Sacred Rides Mountain Bike Adventures

Originally starting in Fernie, British Columbia in 1996, Sacred Rides offers guided mountain bike tours around the world, inspiring guests to live life to the fullest. Creating a ‘value proposition’ for Sacred Rides means reducing concerns and anxieties when guests book a trip. This is achieved by offering: guaranteed departures; 100% satisfaction guaranteed; lifetime deposits; 2 week risk-free booking window; travel concierge services; and local guides.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES
1. MAKE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE WORLD
2. DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY AND TAKE SMART RISKS
3. MAKE 100-YEAR DECISIONS
4. OUR TEAM MATTERS
5. HAVE FUN AND BE A LITTLE RIDICULOUS
6. WOW OUR CUSTOMERS, ALL THE TIME
7. BE 100% ACCOUNTABLE

New Products, Trends and Offerings
- Explorer Rides - Mountain bike trips for fit adventurists, but unskilled mountain bikers
- Women’s Rides - Significant growth in women-only trips
- Bring-Your-Partner Riders - Where guests’ partners are offered other adventure and cultural expeditions
- Paddle and Pedal Mountain Bike Trips
- Electric-Assist Mountain Bike Tours – Still limited, may offer opportunities
- Ontario – Women’s Weekends

Tips for North American Operators
- Know and talk with your customer to help define strategy, provide better service and guide organizational changes
- Know how your destination fulfills your guests’ life goals, by understanding your visitors’ dreams, fears and goals
- Accommodations are always an important component, so be sure to select very unique, local lodging with local character
- Elevate gastronomy by incorporating unique food experiences
- Local cultural integration is one of the most integral parts of a trip, create opportunities to meet with locals
- Create not only memorable experiences but safe ones too

Challenges and Opportunities for Ontario
- Story – Understand how to tell the story that will engage and compel consumers to pick Ontario as a cycling destination
- Toronto –Continue to evolve Toronto as a world-class tourist destination and present as valued entry/exit point for international and domestic cycle tourists
- Wilderness – It’s easy to forget that Ontario features natural elements that are not readily available for much of the rest of the world: accessible nature is a unique selling point for Ontario and should be showcased as such

For more information, visit www.sacredrides.com

Sacred Rides customers are primarily passionate mountain bikers with demographics ranging from: core market, male between the ages of 35-50, but also strong growth in 50-60 age bracket; female riders between ages of 25-35 young professionals as well as 50+; and couples between the ages of 45-60. The customer base is 50% American, 30% Canadian, 12% European, 8% other countries.
Afternoon Session #1: Tracking Key Indicators - Planning, Collecting and Evaluating Cycle Tourism Data

The Route Verte's Success Outside Québec: Lessons Learned from Tourists Coming To Cycle The Belle Province's Cycle Network
- Louis Carpentier, Director of Development, Vélo Québec

Vélo Quebec is an organization that has been in existence for approximately 50 years. Current operations extend to operating as a travel and tour agency, coordinating numerous cycling events, offering school programs, engaging municipalities and managing La Route Verte.

La Route Verte began as a vision over 20 years ago to connect regions, towns and cities through a bicycle network. The goal of the network was to boost local and regional economies and create world class cycling facilities similar to those researched in Europe.

Even with 95% of the 5,300km network plan complete, there is still work to do. The Route requires working with 16 regions, 81 regional municipalities, 382 municipalitiés and over 1,000 partners. The Route is connected to neighbouring states and provinces.

The cost to develop La Route Verte was approximately $275 million. Currently 40% is off-road and 60% on-roads. All routes are fully signed with standard signage and the on-road facilities have a standard 1.5 to 1.75 metres paved shoulders. While attracting cyclists, the network was also built for residents to use. 80% of cyclists on Le Petit Train du Nord route are locals. Every 5 years a study is completed. The 2010 study showed 4 million cycling trips, and in a 2015 study, 5.8 million cycling trips were tracked using the off-road network. Numbers were collected using automatic and manual counters, projections and surveys. On-road counts are not currently available but are planned for the future.

Other Indicators Include
- Bicycles sold annually: 600,000
- Tax revenue from bicycle and accessory sales: $30 million
- Number of dedicated bicycle shops: 400
- Number of Bienvenue Cyclistes certified businesses: 500

Estimate of annual regional economic spin-off's from routes:
- P'tite Train du Nord: $16 million
- Veloroute du Bleuets: $9.75 million
- Estriade: $3.4 million
- Parc lineaire des Bois-Francs: $2.4 million

Results from 2014 study, completed via surveys primarily in Quebec, also in Ontario and US:
- 2/3 of cyclists are between 46-65 years
- Cyclists from outside the province are older, 55+ in age and incomes are higher, with 52% earning more than $100k a year
- Cyclists stay on average 4 nights, take 4 trips/year and spend 6% more than regular tourists
- Cyclists from outside the province spend approximately $1,400, 3x more than cyclists from Quebec, an important market
- Spending locally: 44% on accommodations, 37% on restaurants and groceries
- 2/3 plan to ride La Route Verte again within 2 years and 54% from outside province plan to return

La Route Verte is bringing visitors to Quebec, and as a bicycle network is driving longer stays and increased spending. The network continues to grow and attract cyclists focussing on offering a diversity of experiences, signed and maintained routes plus quality travel information.

For more information, visit www.velo.qc.ca
Parks and Trails New York (PTNY) is a state wide non-profit organization that works with a number of state agencies to fulfill its mandate of getting more people out on trails and into parks.

The Erie Canal Trail is 360 miles/580km long, stretching across the entire state of New York. The original canal was completed in 1825. In the 1970's the conversion from transportation corridor to recreational trail began with tow-paths and adjacent rail corridors beginning to be converted to multi-use paths. The trail is now 80% off-road, on mixed surfaces. PTNY offers a variety of services and programs including: trail ambassadors, a trail recognition program, printed trail guide book, mobile optimized maps and annual bike tour.

To collect data to show decision makers and funders and help direct marketing efforts, PTNY commissioned an economic impact study which was released in 2014. A study model was created incorporating a mixed methodology with data collection using surveys, as well as physical and electronic trail counters.

Research Revealed

- 1.6 million annual trail visits, estimated via trail counts on variety of trail segments
- 92% of users are local, from adjacent communities, or 97.5% from nearby and within state
- Trail contributes $210 million USD per year in direct spending
- New money: breaking spending down by visitors point of origin shows those from outside immediate area and staying overnight, while smaller in number, spend considerably more than local users
- Local day trippers spend approximately $2/trip; local and NY residents with at least one overnight stay spend $531; out of state visitors staying 1+ nights (usually up to 3 nights) spend an average of $1,100 USD
- Overnight visitors account for 84% of total spending, 74% is on lodging and foods.
- When considering all trail users, $133/day is the average
- Trail users are: well educated with higher average incomes; 57% of local users are male, visiting users are 68% male; bicycle use is more prevalent among visitors, rather than walking/hiking

The 2014 study highlighted a number of marketing opportunities to attract more visitors and also locals. PTNY has since focussed on: trail branding; creating online trip planning tools to help visitors; and added social media sites, with trail ambassadors contributing to content. Overall messaging is influenced by user's interests in heritage, culture and visiting local communities. The fact that users are interested in trips and events and frequently travel in groups has influenced marketing decisions. With the Erie Canal Trail running close to the major rail corridor, PTNY would like to see rail travel in NY for cyclists, and bicycle transportation made easier, as this could positively impact future users.

For more information, visit www.ptny.org
Measuring Cycle Tourism: More Bang for Your Bucks! Tracking Key Indicators - Robert Wong, Principal, RMCG Inc.

Research into cycle tourism can be challenging and requires an investment commitment. Defining cycle tourism, a typology and looking at the areas where data collection and research results are achievable is a realistic first step. Research and measurement is important for tourism, economic development, transportation planning and tracking health and wellness.

Recent cycle tourism related studies completed by RMCG Inc provide insight into destination awareness, cycling events and share business perspective.

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Outreaching to businesses using a brief survey can reveal information on what types of businesses benefit from cycle tourism, portion of business that can be attributed to cyclists and if there a change or trend year over year. Studies in Grey and Simcoe Counties using Ontario By Bike certified businesses reveal a number of positive trends, knowledge of cycle tourism routes and willingness to participate in longitudinal studies.

Methodology to conduct a broader regional cycle tourism impact study is currently being developed for a 2016 study working in conjunction with Ontario By Bike/Transportation Options. The study will look at creating standardized measures, measuring volume of cyclists, business impact and impact of events.

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For more information, visit www.rmcg.ca
Afternoon Session 2: Bringing Product to Market - Successful Partnerships and Marketing Campaigns

Partnership & Marketing Success Factors for Building a Top-Tier GranFondo - Michael Merrall, President & CEO, High Performance Marketing, PwC Epic Tour Halton / Kelso MTB Fondo

Hosted out of Kelso Conservation Area, PwC Epic Tour was launched in 2013 and with close to 4,000 riders in 2015 it has grown to become Canada's largest GranFondo. Created as a 'life style' event, not a racing or pledge ride, this event combines a great on-bike experience with a great post-ride experience. The success factors to the event were identified as: successful partnerships; market knowledge; and targeted marketing.

Partnerships
Events can't operate in isolation and need engaged stakeholders including: corporations, who value alignment with growth markets and networking opportunities; suppliers, who provide high value and in-kind contributions; and charities, located in the municipalities the event is being hosted in.

Local municipalities themselves play critical role in the success of cycling events. Municipalities should appoint a 'champion' who can walk event organizers through the complex landscape of government. This can include roads and traffic departments, permits, police and other areas of government oversight. Reducing expenses of policing is directly proportional to the prospect of landing a major cycling event. Municipalities should make relevant departments aware of cycling event needs, areas of cooperation and explore opportunities to clarify permit processing. Event organizers must recognize there are long lead times in approval processes.

Understanding the Market
Market data is crucial and efforts should be made to gather data effectively. The profile of PwC Epic Tour riders was 75% male with an average age of 47. They are wealthy, high net worth individuals with average household income over $150,000. They are committed to cycling, ride expensive bikes and appreciate the highly social component of the sport.

Understanding the market means reducing the barriers to entry for new participants. Some find large cycling events intimidating to participate in. Fear is one of the more common barriers preventing those individuals from registering. It is important to develop complementary programming that specifically addresses this market and aims to break down barriers.

Marketing to Cyclists
While it can be very hard to find cyclists, the battle in marketing is won and lost in the digital world. Different social media platforms offer opportunities to connect with market, but LinkedIn has proved to be a strong channel for fostering a community for the GranFondo market. Digital advertising and Facebook ads continue to be effective and reliable due to ad targeting. Affiliate marketing strategies can be used to drive event registrations.

For more information, visit www.epictour.ca
Welcoming Cyclists to Ontario’s Southwest: Product Development and Marketing Partnerships - Joanne Wolnik, Manager of Tourism Development, Southwest Ontario Tourism Corporation (RTO1)

Ontario’s Southwest is one of 13 Regional Tourism Organizations (RTO’s) in Ontario. The region wanted to move forward with cycle tourism, but there was a core understanding that they couldn't simply promote the region to cyclists, they had to be ready. The region began the process of developing and promoting cycling by embracing partnerships.

Product Development Partnerships with DMO’s and Municipal Governments
Many relationships were needed to develop this sector. RTO1 worked closely with the Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO’s) who helped as key connectors to the local municipal governments. An inventory was taken of what was currently offered and where their efforts could align in the future on: routes; signage; facilities specific to cyclists; types of road surfaces.

Partnerships with Local Businesses & Cycling Organizations
It is important to connect with local businesses to get insight into the market and drive stakeholder buy-in. Local businesses are ultimately what make the attractions and experiences accessible for visitors. The RTO connected with existing businesses that cater to cyclists to better understand the challenges and successes with this market. They also took inventory of local and regional cycling events and tours.

Partnerships with Regional and Sector Specific Organizations
Understanding the importance, impact and potential of existing cycling programs/products throughout the region allowed the RTO to more effectively support, develop and promote them. The RTO leveraged existing products that encouraged visitors to access the region by/with bicycles (e.g. Bike Train and Waterfront Trail).

The Ontario By Bike Network was established across the region to offer business training through hosting cycle tourism workshops and to have all jurisdictions participating in the bicycle friendly business certification program. Ontario By Bike also helped with the development of cycling itineraries throughout region.

Marketing Partnerships
By understanding what exists on the ground, what can be improved and what the RTO’s role was, they began to look at the marketing of these products.

It is important to understand the experiences that cyclists are seeking and the ideal market match. Making these experiences accessible to cyclists is also essential. The RTO began the story telling of local and regional routes, promoted local and cross-regional cycling events and developed a website that made trip planning for cyclists easy, fun and allowed users to self-identify what type of experience they’re looking for (e.g. on-road, off-road). It was also recognized that there are products and experiences for both organized, as well as independent cyclists, from cycling events and guided tours to self-guided multi-day cycling itineraries.

For more information, visit www.ontariossouthwest.com
Dagmar and Durham Trails: Mountain Bike Product Development
- John Fisher, Durham Mountain Biking Club

Durham Mountain Bike Association (DMBA) is the 2nd largest mountain bike club in Canada with 750 members. Over 50% of the club's membership comes from Durham Region, 28% York Region, 9% Toronto and 14% other areas. It is estimated that over 4,000 regular mountain bikers ride the trails in town of Uxbridge, in Durham each year.

In 2015, DMBA led the development of the Dagmar North Trails, 13km of new multi-use single track over a 5 month period. With assistance from 205 volunteers amassing 5,700 volunteer hours, the project was completed over 54 organized builds. Key partnerships included conservation authorities and corporate sponsors. The costs to build 1km of trail was $10,000 with total project value of $130,000 including in-kind contributions. The aim was to improve connectivity to existing trails and reduce user conflict.

Effective Communication and Marketing
An accelerated timeline due to a funding grant received, created a need to implement a marketing campaign to generate interest and support. This included: a media event announcing project; attendance at Toronto International Bicycle Show in 2015 to educate and raise awareness; and creation of 3 videos documenting the build. Images from each build were shared through social media. Local newspapers were encouraged to provide project updates and DMBA incentivized volunteers with branded t-shirts and jerseys. It was important to celebrate ‘wins’, including a grand opening party for the Dagmar North Trails with 250 people attending.

Why did they come to Dagmar and what was the secret to its success?
With an existing trail network of over 100km at Dagmar, there was an established community of riders, but a need to create new and more technical experiences and to continue to develop the community. DMBA improved the product by signing trails with names, adding difficulty ratings and creating a trail network attractive to riders of all skill levels with by-pass options and fall zones for trail features. DMBA continues to attend the Toronto International Bicycle Show with an understanding that to make a trail network a tourism destination, raising awareness of the facilities is crucial.

For more information, visit www.durhammountainbiking.ca
Plenary Session: "Seeing the Bigger Picture: How Cross-Regional Trails and Routes Help Build The Market"

Afternoon Keynote Speaker

**Creating a World Class, Bicycle-Based Tourism Destination** - Linda McKenna Boxx, Director, Allegheny Trails Alliance / Great Allegheny Passage

The Great Allegheny Passage, connecting to C&O Canal Tow-Path, is a 335 mile / 548km trail from Pittsburgh to DC. The converted rail trail was completed in 2013, after 35 years in the making. At a cost of over $80 million USD the significant investment was made possible with public and private sector funding and countless volunteer hours.

Building the bike trail transformed the region, provided economic revitalization and returns on investment, while creating a recreational asset for visitors and residents, celebrating the areas industrial heritage.

Ensuring that local communities realized the economic benefits and benefited from trail tourism, the “Trail Towns” program was initiated. Providing a self-assessment tool it helped community leaders buy-in. It also provided business loans.

Branding and marketing the trail is important. The annual guide book is sold, with proceeds going back into trail development projects. 75,000 maps are printed annually. There’s a website, social media and hotline for calls.

Signage is also very important, with use of a variety of sign types and set of sign design guidelines. Transportation services are improving with businesses providing options and shuttles, and AMTRAK now providing bike transportation by rail.

Annual direct spending by cyclists has increased in a decade from $7.3M to $75M USD between 2002 and 2012. It is now estimated at over $100M. This data is collected using electronic and manual counts and business surveys.

Local people and businesses have taken ownership and are proud local ambassadors welcoming cyclists to their communities. Bicycle culture is now becoming embedded in towns with more infrastructure, facilities and amenities.

**Top tips for creating bicycle based tourism:**
- Define the route, make sure it’s safe and pleasant
- Make sure it’s for visitors and residents
- Connect the trail to the towns
- Embed the trails into community development
- Ensure there is funding for maintenance
- Market the experience
- Share the feedback and stories (social media is key for this)
- Promote welcoming attitudes
- Share successes
- Work together, system wide

For more information, visit [www.atatrail.org](http://www.atatrail.org)
Short Panel Presentations

Great Lakes Waterfront Trail - Marlaine Koehler, Executive Director, Waterfront Regeneration Trust, Ontario

- Panel Discussion Moderator

The Great Lakes Waterfront Trail is currently 1,600km long, following the shoreline of 3 Great Lakes and 3 significant river systems across Ontario. This fully signed route popular with cyclists goes through 76 communities, 500 natural areas and 90 beaches.

The Waterfront Regeneration Trust (WRT) started developing the route in 1995 and 20 years later, expansion continues, including plans for the trail to extend to Northern Ontario in 2017.

Not only does the trail connect the Great Lakes, it creates a sense of place to an important part of Canadian identity and helps build the market for cycle tourism. Trail users can physically connect to neighbouring municipalities and communities and be inspired to go beyond. In many places, the trail is also a commuter corridor and connects from regional rail transportation such as GO Transit. WRT is connecting to stations with a ‘track to trail’ signage initiative and also connecting to other trails nearby such as the Greenbelt Route.

The Great Waterfront Trail Adventure is an annual event now in its 9th year, created to share a touring and trail experience with cyclists and media, both helping further build the market. A diverse range of partners are important to help cultivate market.

For more information, visit www.waterfronttrail.org
La Route Verte - Louis Carpentier, Director of Development, Velo Québec

When visitors choose cycling destinations they want to meet people and have new experiences. This is the idea behind “Experience La Route Verte.” The vision for La Route Verte requires many partners, politicians and regional stakeholders, to succeed. To have such a network and experience, route planners need to have a clear vision that is easy to understand and easy to manage. Currently 95% of people in Quebec live in a city or community within 5km of the 5,300km Route Verte network.

The vision and route also costs money to build trails and also to maintain them. The cycling trails in communities can be linked to other regional facilities that require investment and maintenance (e.g. arenas or community centres) but provides access and an asset that will reach a larger group of people, locals and cycle tourists.

Ensuring a consistent experience on La Route Verte from region to region is important and can be achieved through consistent route maintenance and signage across the network. This can be done by involving local users and also government, the later activated by demonstrating that the cyclists will bring economic development to area.

For more information, see page 19.
Erie Canalway Trail - James Meerdink, Project Coordinator, Parks and Trails New York

Parks and Trails New York (PTNY) helps to promote the 360 mile / 580km Erie Canalway Trail. There are 3 things that help PTNY find an audience: the story; the aspiration; and the proximity to many communities.

The Erie Canal heritage story is of interest to both locals and visitors and is an internationally recognized destination. The concept of the canal trail is simple for users to understand. The trail also provides aspiration to cyclists, with the more local cyclists often being inspired to go out further when they learn more about the trail and see people do a larger part of the trail.

The trail is not a wilderness trail and is always close to communities or larger cities, making it somewhat unique and increasing the connectivity. Trail users are almost always within 5km of a town or city making access to services, trail information and riding the trail easy.

For more information, see page 20.
Greenbelt Route - Susan Murray, Vice President, Communications & Operations, Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation

The Greenbelt Route is a substantial new 475 KM cycle tourism product in Ontario

www.greenbelt.ca/route

Coming from a different background than many route and trail planners, it is important to the Foundation to tell not only the regional story but also that of the Greenbelt. Through signage, marketing, mapping, digital content, media and curated points of interest they are able to do so.

Working with and offering resources and support to the many partners, local municipalities and regions to promote their part of the route, and connecting the business community to the Greenbelt is important. The Greenbelt is a connector to the environment that is a differentiator and a draw to cyclists as well as other visitors to Greenbelt areas. Partners are encouraged to tell the story.

The Foundation is committed to measuring the impact of the route with a data-sharing approach and creating a model to be taken forward. Collaborations are key to success.

For more information, see page 12.
The Blue Route - Ben Buckwold, Director of Bikeways and Blue Route Implementation, Bicycle Nova Scotia

The Blue Route has 56km of trail open to date and over 3,000km for the planned Bikeway vision, designating roads and trails to be part of the network. Having a big vision is important to get things going and bring partners and residents together. Broad goals have been set and vary for the various partners involved.

It has been important to connect the vision of the trail to local identity and communities along planned routes and across the province as it has allowed people to feel as though they are part of this bigger vision.

The planning stage is easy to get stuck in; it has been 8 years since the conceptual idea of the Blue Route, based on Quebec's Route Verte, was initiated. Political support helped to open the first 56km and get the signs installed with many partners onboard for future route growth.

For more information, see page 9.
Panel Presentations
Key Discussion Points: Maintenance

Using existing infrastructure helps in cross regional trail development as roads are often included in regular road works maintenance plans.

Trail maintenance for the Great Allegheny Passage in smaller communities has been funded in part by the hotel tourism tax, diverting those dollars from marketing.

Government mandated emission limits and trading (Cap and Trade programs) could be potential funder of active transportation systems, but politicians need to hear this as a request. Alternatives exist beyond this program, as politicians can help in a number of ways if the information is packaged and pitched right.

With many partners involved there can be an inconsistency in maintenance, especially when regions are responsible for different pieces of a multi-regional network. Cyclists and trail users do not recognize the regional divisions but want a consistent experience. A maintenance app may help direct maintenance needs. Vélo Quebec is launching a new program to involve users, getting them to report on issues. Vélo Quebec estimates maintenance costs of $3,000 per year, per kilometer. In some jurisdictions, local cyclists are of great assistance with signage audits.
Cycle Tourism 2.0 – Next Steps

As part of the conference proceedings we wanted to make sure attendees got the opportunity to share back with us their thoughts on actionable items and next steps in growing cycle tourism, hence an interactive session titled: Cycle Tourism 2.0

Based on existing knowledge and individual background, whether from a business, organization or region, plus incorporating learning and tools shared by conference speakers, the focus of this session was to explore the next steps that can be taken individually or collectively to overcome challenges and pursue the many opportunities presented by this growing sector.

With different stages of engagement in cycle tourism, conference attendees represent a range of efforts and with many already making investments to support cycle tourism sector growth. There are also those that are just getting started and looking for direction and ideas to take away. Using this interactive format and initiating round table group discussions, requesting each group to provide 3 priority short term and 3 long term next steps, the following priority areas were shared.

**Top 3 Next Steps – Short Term (6 to 18 months)**

- Marketing – Tell the cycling story; mapping
- Supporting business network development – Ontario By Bike Network and other business support
- Building awareness – Growing cycling culture
- Wayfinding for cyclists - Installing signs
- Collection data – Measuring impact of cycle tourism
- Exploring multi-modal options – Combining cycling with other travel modes

**Top 3 Next Steps – Long Term (1.5 to 5 years)**

- Improving cycling infrastructure
  - Accessing funding or initiating projects
  - Standardization – Infrastructure related, signs and routes
  - Leadership – Provincial leadership for development of cycling network
  - Connectivity – Providing linkages and filling gaps between regional and municipal cycling infrastructure
- Strategy & Partnerships
  - Setting the foundation – Need for a provincial strategy and collective vision
  - Collaboration – For educational programs and partnerships to support business community
- Product Development
  - Regional and cross-regional – Bike routes and signature trails, elevated with marketing
  - Improving business readiness - Drive further development and attract tour operators

Throughout this post conference report there are a number of common themes, shared goals, bold visions and keys to success shared by speakers and here by attendees, coming from a variety of backgrounds and jurisdictions. While there is no set formula for running a successful business, organization, route, region or event, there is forward momentum, with much to celebrate in Ontario, Canada and internationally, and plans to keep the wheels rolling going forward.
Connect With Conference Coordinators

Phone: 416-827-2774 / 1-866-701-2774
Email: info@ontariobybike.ca

www.ontariobybike.ca - www.transportationoptions.org