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The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

To: Committee of the Whole
From: Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development, Commissioner of Finance and Commissioner of Works
Report: #2024-COW-45
Date: November 13, 2024

Subject:

Durham Region Cycling Wayfinding and Signage Strategy

Recommendation:

That the Committee of the Whole recommends to Regional Council:

- A) That the Cycling Wayfinding and Signage Strategy, provided as Attachment 1 to this report, be endorsed; and
 - i) Aligned with current practice and the existing Council approved funding formula for cycling infrastructure, the Region will be responsible for funding, implementation, and maintenance of cycling wayfinding signage along on-road cycling facilities on Regional Roads, with area municipalities or other agencies to hold responsibility for funding, implementation, and maintenance of cycling wayfinding signage along all other corridors of the Primary Cycling Network, depending on route jurisdiction; and

 - B) That the Cycling Wayfinding and Signage Strategy actions be considered along with all other priorities through future annual Regional Business Plans and Budget processes.
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Report:**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Committee that a Cycling Wayfinding and Signage Strategy (Attachment 1) has been prepared through review and engagement with area municipalities and other stakeholders. The Durham Region Cycling Wayfinding and Signage Strategy (“the Strategy”) was initiated in May 2023 to:
- a. Establish a cohesive, consistent, and well-designed region-wide cycling wayfinding system.
 - b. Promote cycling use and recognition of the Primary Cycling Network (PCN).
 - c. Improve the overall experience and safety of cyclists.

2. Background

- 2.1 The development of a Cycling Wayfinding and Signage Strategy was first identified through the [Regional Cycling Plan](#) (RCP), which was updated and approved by Council in 2021, to support a greater shift towards a more cycling-friendly culture.
- 2.2 To help advance the development of the Strategy, the Region received funding through the Federal Active Transportation Fund (ATF). This funding enabled the Region to retain a consultant, Alta Planning and Design, to assist in the completion of the Strategy.

3. Consultation

- 3.1 The project was completed through a multi-stage engagement and outreach process. Stakeholder engagement was structured into four key stages, each with a distinct focus in the development and refinement of the Cycling Wayfinding and Signage Strategy:
- a. **Project Initiation** – Introducing the Strategy and establishing community engagement.
 - b. **Shaping the Vision** – Establish goals and objectives, review of existing conditions, identify visual preferences for signage and undertake destination mapping. Public Information Centre #1 was held virtually during this stage.
 - c. **Brand Development** – Branding and sign family concepts, and establishing a destination hierarchy.

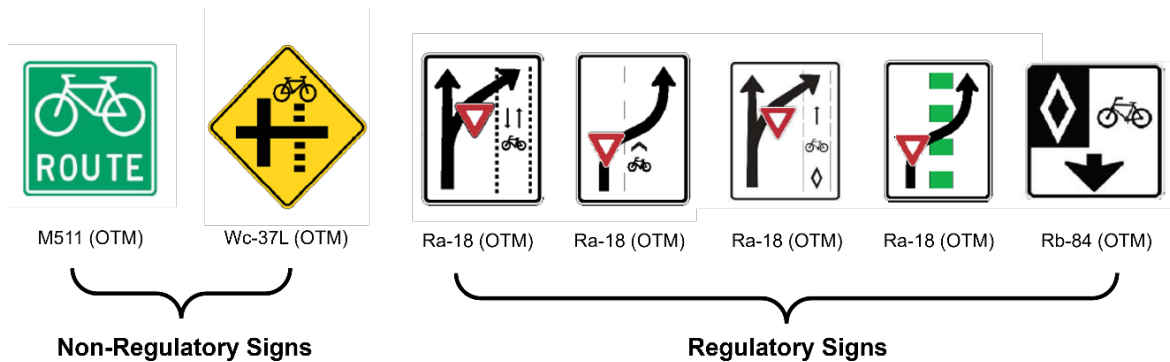
- d. **Final Strategy** – Public Information Centre #2 was held in-person during this stage, followed by preparation of the draft and final Strategy.
- 3.2 A comprehensive approach to engagement was applied throughout all stages of the Strategy. A variety of digital and in-person activities were utilized to foster inclusive and collaborative participation among all residents and stakeholders, raising awareness across diverse audiences that might not be reached through conventional engagement methods. The engagement and audience groups included:
- a. **The Project Review Team (PRT)** – The PRT was developed to facilitate early and ongoing participation of key review agencies to provide specialized input and review project documentation at various stages of the project. The composition of the PRT is extensive, including Regional staff from various departments, area municipal staff, federal and provincial government representatives, conservation authority staff and trail partners, Durham Active Transportation Committee (DATC) and Durham Region Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) members.
 - b. **Equity Steering Committee (ESC)** – Equity-deserving individuals and groups who are not traditionally engaged in consultation processes were invited to sit on the ESC and provided an honorarium for their contributions. This approach aimed to develop the Strategy to reflect the diverse perspectives of Durham residents.
 - c. **The Public** – Includes all members of the community who will benefit from the Strategy. Their input and feedback were valuable in shaping the project's implementation and its alignment with the community's interests and preferences.

4. Current Context

- 4.1 The Region does not have its own branded cycling wayfinding signs. A review of existing cycling wayfinding signage across Durham Region was completed and revealed inconsistencies in the types of cycling wayfinding signage provided by various partners. This demonstrates the need for consistency in sign types and a standardized approach to cycling wayfinding signage across the Primary Cycling Network (PCN).

4.2 Ontario Traffic Manual (OTM) Book 18: Cycling Facilities, served as a critical resource to inform the development of the Cycling Wayfinding and Signage Strategy. OTM Book 18 provides guidance on both regulatory and non-regulatory signage for cycling infrastructure. Figure 1 illustrates examples of common regulatory and non-regulatory signs included in OTM Book 18.

Figure 1: Examples of Regulatory and Non-Regulatory Cycling Signs from OTM Book 18



4.3 Regulatory signs notify road users of traffic laws or regulations that must be followed and are legally enforceable. Non-regulatory signs provide information on guidance to road users but are not legally enforceable; they typically include signs to help cyclists safely navigate cycling routes. Although certain regulatory and non-regulatory signs have a cycling route or facility marking component, they do not contain a wayfinding component to nearby cycling facilities or destinations.

5. Overview of the Cycling Wayfinding and Signage Strategy

5.1 The Cycling Wayfinding and Signage Strategy (Attachment 1) and appendices (Attachment 2) provides guidance on wayfinding elements and navigational features, including sign types, design and fabrication, sign planning and placement, as well as costing, installation, and maintenance considerations for signage along the PCN. The Strategy provides a range of details along with recommended actions to assist the Region and its partners, comprising of area municipalities and conservation authorities, the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, Parks Canada and the Trans Canada Trail to implement signage and wayfinding elements for cyclists on the PCN that are:

- Intuitive to navigate and interpret.
- Cohesive and consistent in application.
- Well-designed and easily recognizable.

5.2 The following sections provide a high-level overview of the key elements provided in each of the chapters of the Strategy. These include:

- a. **Sign Family and Components** – A suite of signs and wayfinding elements has been established for the Strategy. The design of the signs, as shown in Attachment 3, focuses on maximum legibility to quickly orient users of the PCN. For each element of the sign family, various components including branding, destinations, distance to destinations, time directional arrows, etc. have been proposed for inclusion on the signs. Each sign is slightly different in its design depending on its purpose. The kiosk and co-branding medallions have been designed to include opportunities for co-branding with other route partners and existing wayfinding signage systems.
- b. **Design Guidelines** – Branding guidelines and design intent drawings have been created to serve as a reference for the overall look and feel of the signage and to maintain consistency in visual communications. The branding guidelines provide information on the colour palette, typography and unique icon created specifically for the Region’s cycling wayfinding system (refer to icon examples in Figure 2 below).
- c. **Destination Hierarchy** – The Strategy categorizes destinations into key categories based on their importance and how they can be used to orient cyclists. The destination categories include:
 - **Primary Destinations:** major landmarks and essential geographic references signed from distances up to 10 kilometres away, serving to orient visitors from afar, as they are more significant reference points such as municipalities and communities (neighbourhoods, hamlets, villages).
 - **Secondary Destinations:** Important points of interest that are accessible via bike routes or trail systems, marked on signs within a three-kilometre radius, that are more localized in their function such as trail access points, major community centres, transportation hubs, post-secondary campuses and healthcare facilities.
 - **Tertiary Destinations:** Includes local attractions, institutions, and services accessed by active travel modes, signed from distances as close as one kilometre away such as local parks, libraries, conservation areas and museums.

Figure 2: Primary and Alternative Icons for the Primary Cycling Network**Primary Icons****Alternative Icons**

- d. **Sign Placement and Programming** – A sign placement plan was developed as a framework to strategically place signs to direct cyclists and highlight key locations. As part of the sign placement plan, a planning database using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology is proposed which includes:
- Sign type and ID (unique code for sign).
 - Corridor name/location.
 - Sign orientation (direction that sign is facing).
 - Mounting method (i.e., on new or existing post or pole).
 - Sign information order (first/second/third destination and accompanying information).
 - Notes on sign placement considerations (i.e., opportunity for co-placement on existing pole or with other proposed signage). Each type of sign communicates specific information, necessitating careful planning and consideration.
- e. **Implementation and Maintenance** – The Strategy specifies fabrication and recommended material options for the proposed sign types to help support accuracy, legibility, durability, compliance with existing standards, and regulations and consistency in application. It also provides guidance on estimated activities and frequencies required for maintenance of the wayfinding infrastructure.

- It is envisioned that priority for implementation will be given to segments of the PCN with existing infrastructure and no signage in place, followed by routes with signage that is at the end of its lifecycle or in need of replacement, followed by new planned routes identified in the short-term capital and infill planning horizon. It also recommends that a set of route prioritization criteria be developed, building off the example criteria contained in the Strategy.
 - The Strategy also identifies general roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders involved with implementing the Strategy. To support maintenance and implementation responsibilities, the Strategy recommends the establishment of a Working Group to help to assist with implementing, monitoring, and maintaining cycling wayfinding signage and to identify priority route segments.
 - The Working Group would be comprised of Regional staff; area municipal staff; the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario; one to two representatives from the DATC; and external agencies such as conservation authorities, the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, and/or Parks Canada. Upon endorsement of this Strategy, Regional staff will work with partners to establish a Cycling Wayfinding and Signage Working Group to advance the Strategy.
- f. **High-level Cost Estimates and Financial Considerations** – High-level cost estimates for the elements introduced as part of the sign family in this Strategy have been identified based on per unit cost quotes provided by local fabricators (refer to Table 14 on page 101 in the Strategy for more information). The approach to funding the implementation of the proposed cycling wayfinding signage system aims to leverage existing approaches and mechanisms which have already demonstrated success and to propose new tools, where necessary to create an effective model.
- The Strategy recommends that the Region continue to manage the funding and implementation of cycling wayfinding signage, including maintenance, of on-road cycling facilities on Regional Roads. Funding for all other cycling wayfinding signs on the PCN including maintenance would be the responsibility of the area municipalities or other agencies, depending on cycling route jurisdiction. This approach is consistent with current practice and Regional Council's approved funding formula for cycling infrastructure and helps streamline coordination and sign implementation processes. To help support implementation of cycling

wayfinding signage along the PCN for the Region, area municipalities, conservation authorities and other PCN route partners, additional tools and tactics have been identified as part of the Strategy. These include:

- (i) Investigating a joint procurement process for Cycling Wayfinding Signage to help achieve economies of scale to support purchasing signs in bulk and ensure consistency in the quality, design and fabrication.
- (ii) Identifying and pursuing additional funding opportunities through senior government grants and partnerships to further support signage on both regional and local PCN routes. This would help generate potential cost savings for the Region, area municipalities and other PCN partner agencies to help accelerate the implementation of cycling wayfinding signage on PCN routes.
- (iii) Establishing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Region and area municipalities to clarify roles and responsibilities and establish commitment to support cycling wayfinding signage as a joint initiative for installing cycling wayfinding signage on PCN routes.

6. What We Heard

6.1 Key topics raised throughout the engagement process for the Strategy included:

a. Consistency in application and branding across the region

- Extensive guidance is provided throughout the Strategy to ensure consistency in application of signage and branding throughout the PCN. It provides clear direction on how to effectively integrate the icon and other branding components successfully across various contexts. Additionally, the Strategy outlines the types of destinations to sign, offers placement recommendations, includes design intent drawings and proposes sign treatments. It also establishes maintenance standards to strengthen uniformity in the application of signs along the PCN.

b. Signage maintenance and effectiveness

- The Strategy responds to a desire from area municipalities and Regional staff to reduce sign clutter and complement existing maintenance practices by recommending that sign installation complement existing signage by applying the new proposed signs to fill in gaps where signage does not exist on PCN routes to reduce unnecessary signage.

- The sign placement plan and programming framework help ensure signs are placed in locations that are visible, intuitive and at critical points along the PCN. This not only improves the user experience by making navigation easier but also helps reduce sign clutter, and maintenance costs and resources by avoiding redundant or misplaced signs.
- Furthermore, the Strategy focuses on specific and clear maintenance actions and timelines to ensure signage upkeep and less so on operational concerns (e.g. budgets, staffing, etc.) that fluctuate over time, which could make the document outdated or inaccurate more quickly.

c. Accessibility in design, interpretation and placement of signage

- The Strategy identifies a sign family and branding that is clear, high contrast, and incorporates universally recognizable symbols and icons that are easy to read quickly by people of all ages and abilities while in motion. The sign family was developed through extensive consultation with the public, PRT and the ESC, to ensure it reflects diverse perspectives and users of the network.

d. User focus

- The Strategy is designed with the user perspective at its core, ensuring that cyclists can easily navigate and orient themselves, no matter where they are in the PCN. It provides clear guidance on where to place signage at key decision points and along continuous routes to provide clear, intuitive directions. Consistent use of symbols, wayfinding elements and distance to destination information is also recommended through the Strategy to allow cyclists to confidently plan their journey.

e. Distinct identity that is easily recognized and builds on familiarity of existing branding used throughout the region

- The Strategy included extensive consultation and engagement with various audience groups to ensure the sign family incorporates a look and feel that resonates with users of all ages and abilities. It incorporates familiar colour schemes that draw inspiration from the RCP to align with existing Regional branding. The icon, featuring a cropped bicycle illustration within the letter "D" for Durham, enhances this connection by building on the already recognizable Durham brand. This approach creates a distinct identity for

the PCN that is easily recognized by both cyclists and the broader community.

7. Relationship to Strategic Plan

7.1 This report aligns with and addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:

a. Environmental Sustainability

- 1.5 – Expands sustainable and active transportation options by increasing accessibility and availability of cycling wayfinding signage and promoting cycling as a healthy mode of transportation that can reduce help reduce CO₂ emissions and carbon footprint through education and encouragement initiatives.

b. Economic Prosperity

- 3.3 – Enhances and promotes key destinations and attractions for commuting, errands and tourism purposes included on signage as well as the benefits that cycling has on the local economy.

c. Service Excellence

- 5.1 – Optimizes resources and partnerships to deliver exceptional quality services and value by working more closely with all key stakeholders to deliver cycling wayfinding signage and programs that benefit all residents and visitors.

8. Conclusion and Next Steps

8.1 The Cycling Wayfinding and Signage Strategy provides a clear framework and foundation for the Region and partners of the Primary Cycling Network (PCN) to build upon to help improve cycling wayfinding and navigation of the PCN by bike. However, it is not intended to be a blueprint for implementation. To help initiate implementation steps, the strategy recommends that a sign inventory be conducted, prioritization criteria be established and a preliminary list of segments for signage roll-out be identified.

8.2 Endorsement of the Strategy and its ongoing implementation, as recommended, will help to achieve the Region's strategic goals of expanding and strengthening its cycling network, respond to the need to provide for more local non-auto trips, and

address community needs for improving safety, coordination, and commitment to cycling wayfinding.

- 8.3 The Strategy recommends several strategies and actions to guide the Region for its implementation. It is recommended that funding to implement the recommended actions be considered through the long-term financial planning process and included, as appropriate, in the relevant departmental annual business plans and budgets.

9. Attachments

Attachment #1: Link to [Durham Region Cycling Wayfinding and Signage Strategy – Main Report](#)

Attachment #2: Link to [Durham Region Cycling Wayfinding and Signage Strategy – Main Report – Appendices](#)

Attachment #3: Sign Family and Wayfinding Elements

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachment 3: Sign Family and Wayfinding Elements

