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Heather Edwardson, Team Lead

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EBR Registry Number 012-2432
Supporting Cycling Skills Training

Dear Ms. Edwardson:

On behalf of the Built Environment Workgroup of the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA), I want to convey OPHA's support in principle for the proposed funding framework for cycling training in Ontario. OPHA is a member-based not-for-profit that has been advancing public health within Ontario for 62 years. We are committed to the prevention of injury and chronic disease and were pleased to have played a role in the changes to the Official MTO's Driver's Handbook. As well, we have provided your Ministry with research into beginner driver education practices as they pertain to sharing the road with cyclists along with resources to support beginner driver education instructors. This latest EBR posting builds on the work that the Ministry has done through the #CycleON strategy and the efforts to which OPHA continues to contribute.

Many of our OPHA members recognize the importance of active transportation for health. Cycling training is one component needed to encourage people to cycle more often to support a healthy lifestyle. Some of our members are cycling instructors and have contributed to the comments provided here in. While we recognize that this is currently a time-limited funding source we would encourage you to consider a more long-term provincial strategy to support and enhance sustainable cycling training for people of all ages so as to truly reap the many benefits that cycling contributes to our Province. Additionally we hope that you will consider the use of the \$400,000 for evidence-based cycling education by certified instructors, that includes on-road education, rather than merely advertising and bike rodeos.

Question 1: Are there additional factors that contribute to successful training in Ontario that MTO should consider?

In the EBR you have listed numerous factors that contribute to successful cycling training in Ontario, with which we agree. We would also like to offer these additional suggestions:

Training of New Instructors

The EBR identifies the use of current service providers to train new instructors. We feel the province needs to create a strategy for the development of a supportive structure that will ensure a sustainable model for cycling education. Currently, the Ontario Cycling Association (OCA) administers cycling education in Ontario. Cycling education is not the mandate of the OCA and they are not funded to provide instructor training, providing little incentive for them to grow the program. If the Ministry is to use current providers (i.e. OCA) there must be assurance that they will continue to support the training of instructors beyond the current time-limited funding to ensure these funds are not being used for short-term one-off activities. The province's vision for what a sustainable cycling education model should look like would provide better guidance for the continuous training of new instructors. In addition, ongoing funding would help grow the pool of instructors.

- There should be a standard for cycling instructors, mandatory certification and recertification; e.g. CAN-BIKE program. Certification maintains the integrity of the program and ensures quality instructors.
- There is currently a pool of certified instructors in communities across Ontario who deliver quality cycling training. It is important to maintain and expand on this pool.
- There needs to be a trainer development system in place to ensure that there is an ongoing pool of instructors. A good trainer development model is swimming programs. People progress through a series of swimming levels. Once the levels are complete people can then take the lifeguard training which can offer them employment opportunities to teach swimming lessons. This structure places value on the lessons and provides an incentive for people to take the series of lessons to become proficient at swimming and possibly to find employment.

Liability Insurance

- Municipalities are increasingly requiring instructors to provide proof of liability insurance. The cost and availability of liability insurance to protect instructors, volunteers and participants has been identified by many organizations as a barrier to offering cycling courses. A provincial insurance policy for qualified instructors would assist in overcoming this barrier.

Financing Cycling Courses

- Many of the cycling instructors in Ontario are unable to earn a living from teaching cycling courses. Financial support to compensate for instructors' expenses is needed.
- Courses require resources; e.g. teaching props, traffic cones, laptops and projectors. A small portion of this funding could go toward supporting instructors to cover these needs.

Making Training Accessible

Cycling is an important transportation option for people who do not driver for health, economic and other reasons. Cycling skills training needs to be made accessible and affordable for all people, especially marginalized populations. Any provincial training program must address needs of these groups.

Course Content

- Learning to become a competent cyclist requires a lot of learning and experience. At best, many education programs give children a one-hour bike rodeo, however more time and training is needed. Well intentioned one-off events have been shown to be ineffective.
- Cycling education needs to include classroom theory, parking lot skill development and on-road riding in real traffic situations.
- Cycling education needs to be incremental. Courses need to be divided into shorter modules over a graduated series.

Promotion of cycling courses

- We need to promote cycling education across Ontario and create a cultural value for this education

Partnerships

- Look to other models that work, such as swimming programs, where municipalities or not-for-profit organizations such as the YMCA, work in partnership with Red Cross and the Royal Lifesaving Society. The municipalities provide insurance, promotion and venue and the Red Cross and Royal Lifesaving Society provide teaching resources and ensure the integrity of the training. A graduated accredited program will raise public awareness and begin to create a cultural norm about the importance of bicycle skills training.

“How can cycling education/training be made more convenient and responsive to the diverse needs of Ontario’s communities?”

There are numerous venues that offer an opportunity to attract many people. The following are a few examples:

- The MTO could partner with the Ministry of Education to offer cycling training in schools by certified instructors. Schools offer the opportunity to capture a larger number of people who use active transportation. A love for cycling and the skills taught at an early age can be used throughout a lifetime.
- Service clubs, such as Scouts Canada, Girl Guides and others that support youth could be an avenue to support cycling training, by certified instructors, and capture a larger number of youth.
- Housing projects are another venue to attract both adults and children. Also, people with lower incomes also rely more heavily on active transportation to go to work, school and shop.
- Workplaces are another possible venue to recruit participants. Cycling training offered at the worksite can fit into a business’ overall strategy to get their employees more physically active and to encourage active travel to work.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the proposed cycling skills training EBR. We strongly encourage you to build a sustainable cycling education model in Ontario. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further. Please feel free to contact the undersigned if you have any questions or require clarification on our suggestions.

Sincerely,



Pegeen Walsh
Executive Director

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