

On May 2, 2023 I attended the Cycle Tourism Conference hosted by Ontario by Bike. This one day conference in Markham saw over 200 delegates and speakers, some coming from as far away as Sault Ste Marie, Pennsylvania, Quebec and Nova Scotia. Delegates included bike shop owners, EcDev and Tourism officers and Cycle advocacy groups to name a few. Topics ranged from Developing Gravel Bikepacking routes (think Greenway), Cross Border cycle tourism (think Gordie Howe Bridge), Understanding and Attracting the Growing E-Bike Market (think seniors and accessibility) and how businesses and municipalities can attract more cycle tourism, a sector that spent \$644 million in Ontario in 2019. Data shows that cycling visitors generally spend more on average per trip than other visitors, \$404/trip for cycling tourists compared to \$223/trip for all other visitors. Cycling tourists in Ontario also stay longer, 3.7 nights' vs 1.4 nights for other visitors.

Kingsville can position itself as a cycling tourism hub, given our flat topography, complimentary hospitality industries, our ever-growing list of events and of course our climate. We, as a municipality, need to attract some of those dollars into our local economy. How are we marketing Kingsville as cycle friendly community? What are we doing to ensure that even a slice of the half a billion dollar pie, finds its way to Kingsville?

Some highlights pulled from discussions included being mindful of a cycle tourists needs:

Public washrooms, water refilling station, access to maps, secure bike storage while they shop/eat, charging station for E-bikes and phones/tablets, free Wi-F, the ability to ship items home so they don't have to carry on their bike, overnight accommodations that have secure bike storage. A new term "Bed and Bike" shows how businesses are adapting to this growing market.

When it comes to E-bikes, they are helping make cycling more accessible and helping more people cycle further, more often, and for longer in life. There is nothing that says that cycling must be physically strenuous for it to be worthy of investment. E-bikes can make cycling easier for so many people. E-bike ridership has nearly doubled or more each year in the US since 2015. The E-bike market is expected to reach \$52 billion USD by 2030.

– Jamie Stuckless, Stuckless Consulting Inc.

Cycle tourists are wanting an experience that brings them closer to nature, has a health benefit and want to visit educational points of interest that are comfortable to ride to regardless of experience. Making cycling a comfortable and viable option is key to having a thriving cycle tourism industry. We need to ask ourselves, do I feel comfortable riding a bike to the grocery store? Wineries or breweries? A local festival? If not, why not? These are most likely the same barriers other potential cycle tourists face. In a time of rising gas prices, heavy traffic congestion and an increased awareness of our carbon footprint, the climate crisis is on the minds of most people. Cycling is an eco-friendly transportation option with physical and mental health benefits that provides more freedom to explore, learn and spend! Kingsville has all the pieces to make us a Bike Friendly destination, we just need to put them all together.

