

# Green Party of Ontario - Nepean 2018

## Policy Paper: Active Transportation

Besides the fact that walking and cycling are very pleasant activities that can easily be integrated in daily life, the Green Party of Ontario believes that Active Transportation (AT) addresses several societal concerns such as traffic gridlock, health issues and environmental issues.



Numerous studies show that walking and cycling create livable communities, promote healthy lifestyles and save more of our nature. It also increases human interaction in our communities. While walking or cycling in our neighbourhood, we can make contact much easier from the seat of bicycle or from the sidewalk in front of the lawn than from the closed environment of a car.

Fortunately cycling is growing in Ontario, but more residents can be convinced to integrate AT in daily life by making cycling and walking more convenient. Too often, AT is still often an exercise in challenges and overcoming barriers. Ottawa studies show that a considerable number of residents in suburban areas would love to cycle more, but are nervous about the safety on our roads.

### *Decades of neglect*

Unlike other jurisdictions, mostly in Europe, Ontario has neglected the many benefits of Active Transportation for decades. This has resulted in heavy carbon based transportation, in destruction of nature and in unacceptable levels of obesity. While progress has been made, we believe that the province should take a much more active role in the promotion of active transportation in our communities.

When talking to citizens and local politicians, we learned that speeding is a concern that is shared by many. Our current road infrastructure invites speeding, often even unintentionally. Speeding keeps our citizens away from cycling and walking on our roads. For this reasons, In practical terms, we believe that education and proper infrastructure design are the best instruments to encourage active transportation.

This approach was adopted 40 years ago in the Netherlands and it has resulted in stellar results: the bike modal share in our Ontario municipalities is 2% at best; municipalities in the Netherlands reach 30%-60%.

Fixing the infrastructure for cycling and walking is not difficult and not expensive. Therefore, The Green Party of Ontario proposes the following fixes:

## **On Planning & Design**

- **New neighbourhoods: change in planning & zoning laws**
- **Reconfigure existing neighbourhoods: 2% of transportation budgets to go to Active Transportation**
- **Better access to transportation hubs**
- **Improvements to convenience of movements**
- **Standardised provincial wayfinding systems**

## **On Taxation**

- **Remove the PST in the HST for bicycles and parts**
- **Consider incentives for e-bikes**

## **On traffic safety education**

- **All children should receive traffic safety education in schools**

# Planning & Design

Our children should not be forced to cycle on heavy truck roads, because we can't offer alternatives now. Safe routes to school will allow older children to walk and bike independently, allowing less motorized vehicles to drive in school zones. AT routes need to be 100% safe and comfortable; 90% won't do even for many experienced cyclists: a network is only as good as its weakest link.

*The Nepean Trail is such an example. The partly finished trail winds through the suburbs of Nepean. When the Nepean Trail is finished, it will be the backbone of a suburban network that connects to other networks.*

An AT network can not always go through green spaces only. This means we need more separate bike infrastructure in high speed zones, where traffic goes over 50 km/hr at arterials, bike lanes in lower speed areas, safe Dutch style intersections at large intersections and



shortcuts following desire lines where possible to avoid unnecessary detours. Other examples are more tunnels underneath barriers such as railway tracks and more bridges over creeks, canals and rivers as well as more safe routes through industrial areas and connections to the Greenbelt.

*Dutch style intersection - Image: Mark Wagenbuur*

## *Start with planning in new neighbourhoods*

Besides retrofitting older areas such as town and city centres and fifty years of mostly car oriented suburbia, it is imperative for AT that developing healthy communities starts by designing communities differently.

***The design of new communities starts with planning a direct, safe and attractive AT network to local schools, libraries, shopping and service areas and health & sports facilities in order to make AT a more logical choice of transport. We believe planning and zoning laws need to reflect this desire.***

## *Reconfigure existing neighbourhoods*

Design of networks in existing communities needs strong support from the provincial level. Residents cycle for different reasons, but what they have in common is that most trips are less

than 8 kilometers, which is the equivalent of about a 30 minute bicycle ride. Many rides are shorter, in the 2-3 km range. The majority of cycling and walking happens in neighbourhoods.

While developing long routes throughout the province catering to elite long distance cycling tourism is worth the effort, only a very small minority of Ontarians will use those routes. This is why the Green Party believes money should be spent where the return on investment is highest: we need to fix unsafe connection issues in residential neighbourhoods and downtown areas where the majority of us move around on a daily basis.

***The Green Party of Ontario believes that 2 % of the provincial transportation budget should be spent on AT. These funds should be spent mostly on education and neighbourhood cycling and walking design improvements.***

### *Better access to transportation hubs*

We believe in transportation options, and AT is part of that mix of options. In other jurisdictions, such as the Netherlands, hundreds of thousands of people cycle to Public Transportation (PT) hubs most of the year.



Cycling and walking infrastructure design should be optimized so that residents arrive at transportations hubs such as Bus Rapid and Light Rail systems in a safe and convenient way. Because parts of Ontario deal with serious snow and ice in winter, walking networks, bus shelters and bike routes need priority clearance in winter.

***Tight active transportation integration with public transportation are key in freeing up space on the roads. We want to encourage residents to use active transportation to transportation hubs. Therefore the Green Party of Ontario will fund improvements to existing road infrastructure to adapt direct routes for AT in areas around stations and hubs.***

### *Improvements to convenience of movements*

Secure and clean bike parking needs to be provided at major transit hubs such as LRT stations, along major bus routes and at train stations. Pavement should be carefully monitored and maintained. Sweeping, fixing potholes and paths uprooted by tree roots appear minor

conveniences for drivers, but can be serious impediments for cycling.



*Image: bike parking at a transportation hub, clearly under capacity*

As cyclists and pedestrians generate their own energy, it is important that this energy doesn't go to waste. Therefore, the routes to transit hubs should be direct and free from as many stop signs as possible. For example, stop signs and 'walk your bike' signs are hindrances in AT and in fact encourage unsafe cycling habits. Traffic signals should be adjusted to active transportation in routes to public transportation hubs. Mini roundabouts, like the ones in Vancouver, can create safer traffic flow, while allowing active transportation to continue without waiting.



*Image: Mini roundabout in Vancouver*

***The Highway Traffic Act and design manuals organize our traffic rules. It needs to reflect changes in society faster. The Green Party of Ontario will actively work on changes in the HTA that promote active transportation.***

## **Wayfinding**

Wayfinding for walking and cycling is virtually nonexistent. To promote cycling, a standardized, province wide wayfinding system is an important tool for people to get around. Not only does it provide residents with directional information, it also promotes bicycle tourism within cities and municipalities. An example is the National Capital Region, where the City of Ottawa, the city of Gatineau, the NCC and even Landsdowne Park each provide their own wayfinding systems. This is



confusing and counterproductive and reinforces the images of bureaucratic governments that think in silos. Standardised wayfinding systems make sense and will cost less for municipalities due to economies of scale.

**The Green Party of Ontario is in favour of a standardized provincial wayfinding system based on best practices in cycling friendly countries, which includes the use of innovative information technologies in combination with on the ground indicators.**

## Taxation

The Ontario government has been handing out subsidies for autonomous vehicle development and the purchase of electric cars. In order to support cycling as a means of clean transportation, we would like to see the government to remove the provincial sales tax from cycling and cycling accessories.

**The Green Part of Ontario is in favour of removing the provincial sales tax from the HST for bicycles and bicycle related accessories.**

## Incentives

Several European countries offer tax incentive or rebates to people who decide to buy an e-bike. As electric vehicles are heavily subsidised, why are e-bikes not? This would be a good and very cheap instrument to get people to consider cleaner modes of traffic.

## Education

Safe cycling and walking needs to be taught at a very young age in order to normalize AT again. It will teach respect for all types of traffic because education is not only knowing when to signal but also understanding other road users' rationale for making certain moves and anticipating to it. Therefore, we support traffic education and cycling lessons for every child in our school system.

***Traffic education as well as access to cycling lessons for every child should be mandatory in the school system. School boards will need to play an active role in teaching traffic safety to our most vulnerable citizens.***

