



Cycling club geared up for growth

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Brant News | Sep 08, 2014

The newly formed Brant Cycling Club wants to create opportunities for cyclists both within the City of Brantford and the County of Brant.

Started by a group of six cycling enthusiasts who formed a steering committee this spring, the only club of its kind in the area has big plans for creating a vibrant cycling culture.

“It's amazing that for a city of this size that we don't already have (a cycling club), if you look at all of our neighbouring communities,” said steering committee member Katie MacDonald, pointing to Woodstock, Turkey Point and Port Dover. “We really think it's prime opportunity to start something that will get adopted by the community hopefully quickly and easily.”

So far, the group has been hosting weekly road and trail rides since the spring that have brought out close to 30 riders with all different levels of experience.

Both rides leave from the Sobeys parking lot in West Brant, with the trail rides at 10 a.m. on Sundays and the road rides at 9 a.m. on Saturdays. The rides last between an hour to two-and-a-half hours, MacDonald said.

“Normally, I ride by myself, but it's so great to have someone to ride with,” is what MacDonald keeps hearing from those who come out to the rides, she said.

Next on the group's radar is advocating for infrastructure, including bike lanes, paved shoulders for roads and mountain bike specific trails within the city, MacDonald said.

“It's, in a sense, the perfect time because nothing currently exists and there's such a demand for it,” she said. “We have an ideal location in Brantford with trails that already exist and country roads so it will just be tweaking those to fit needs.”

Duncan Ross, another steering committee member, said the Brant Cycling Club would like to get permission to build trails and maintain them, both to ride themselves and to attract tourism.

While Brantford has a well-used trail network already, singletrack mountain biking trails could feature berms, rocks and roots to make for a good ride.

One of the locations the club has their eye on is Waterworks Park, but they're open to whatever land they can use, Ross said.

Steering committee member Loren Butler said the group wants to work together with hiking groups and other groups that use the trails.

“We're very sensitive to the trail needs,” said Butler, noting the cyclists make sure not to ride when it's raining or ride through puddles afterward.

The steering group – also made up of Scott Roswell, Jeff Kehler and Rick Weaver – maintains a strong focus on developing a youth mountain biking program called Sprockids, which will teach kids mountain biking skills and safety, said Ross.

As the Brant Cycling Club moves forward to becoming a fully incorporated club by the spring, MacDonald said future plans include developing an executive committee along with seeking sponsorship from corporations, grant money and city support in order to offer a wider variety of ride schedules and host riding events, races and fundraisers.

But so far, they've been pleased with the result, including more than 170 likes on Facebook under Brant Cycling Club and people emailing questions to brantcyclingclub@gmail.com wanting to get involved.

For MacDonald, who's been riding for more than five years, cycling offers a way to enjoy the outdoors whether riding on trails or roads, she said.



Brant Cycling Club steering members Scott Roswell, Duncan Ross, Jeff Kehler, Rick Weaver, Loren Butler and Katie MacDonald are ready for a Saturday ride.

“I think it's the best way to get to know the community because you see things differently from your bike than you would see in your car,” she said.