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Cycling club onsite with bike skills park

Jul 13, 2015 | By Brian Shypula



Brant Cycling Club | Photo by Brian Shypula, Brant News

The Brant Cycling Club has a lot of wheels in motion.

In a little over one year since it was formed last April, the non-profit club has grown to about 50 members, expanded its weekly road and trail rides, started a kids mountain bike camp, got involved in holding a major fundraiser for mental health and taken on advocacy for the development of a skills bike park in Brantford.

City councillor Rick Weaver, the newly minted vice president of the Brant Cycling Club (BCC), is chairing the task force looking into building a skills bike park in one of three city parks: Earl

Haig, Waterworks and Rivergreen.

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“Other cities that have done these have found they’ve become a family attraction,” he said in a weekend interview.

Toronto’s bike skills park, visible from the Gardiner Expressway near Sunnyside Avenue, cost \$500,000 to build.

“That’s kind of the Cadillac of bike parks,” Weaver said.

“A scaled-down version is what we want,” he added.

The specially designed park would help develop cycling skills in kids.

Weaver said features he would like to see included would be “jump lines” (a series of jumps and a “pump track” (a hilly, banked track that allows riders to maintain momentum without pedalling).

The park would also be suitable for skateboards and scooters.

The city has yet to establish a budget for the project.

“My goal is to try to do this without taxpayer money through sponsorships and donations,” Weaver said.

The plan is to apply for an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant.

Weaver said there is interest from corporate sponsors, as well.

"They don't want me to say whom yet," he said. "We're looking at about \$50,000 from a couple of them."

Councillors John Sless and Brian Van Tilborg are the other elected members on the task force. A staff representative has yet to be named. BCC president Duncan Ross is the citizen appointee.

Ross recently gave a presentation when Brantford hosted Ontario By Bike, which promotes exploring Ontario by bike and bicycle-friendly places to eat, visit and sleep.

"The trails here are phenomenal. You can go all the way to Port Dover, Dundas or to Cambridge depending on which way you go," said Loren Butler, the club's director of fundraising.

The BCC held its first annual general meeting in April and elected a board.

The club holds weekly rides geared to novice, intermediate and advanced levels.

All rides are lead by a "ride leader" from the club.

Every rider must purchase Ontario Cycling Association insurance (\$39) and a Brant Cycle Club membership (\$30) to participate.

Butler said there is a free trial ride for people who want to check out the club before joining.

The club also offers a women-only ride every other Friday setting out from the Arlington Hotel in Paris and family rides on Sundays from the Sobeys plaza in West Brant.

Butler said the club hopes to introduce time trial rides next season.

She and Ross are instructors of a 10-week kids mountain bike camp held Tuesday evenings in Waterworks Park. Participants get 45 minutes of skills training followed by a 45-minute ride.

"We are looking for some land to build more mountain biking trails," Butler said.

Member John Harker was one of the volunteer organizers of the inaugural Ride Don't Hide fundraiser in support of the Canadian Mental Health Association on June 21.

"We had 105 riders, that was awesome," he said.

Club members helped plan and staffed the 100-km, 50-km and 20-km courses. The event raised more than \$27,000 for the CMHA in Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk counties.

"It's going to become an annual event," Harker said.

More information about the club is on Facebook at Brant Cycling Club or by email at brantcyclingclub@gmail.com.

A website is under construction.

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