

Transportation Pilot Project Summary: Community Active Transportation Hubs Research Project

Who is hosting this project?

ClimateActionWR, a collaboration between local organizations and community members focused on climate change mitigation in Waterloo Region, which is co-led by Sustainable Waterloo Region and Reep Green Solutions. We coordinate the activities of our community's Climate Action Plans, measure and monitor progress on emissions reductions, and engage the community in climate action initiatives. Currently, we are working with the Region of Waterloo and the seven local area municipalities (City of Cambridge, City of Kitchener, City of Waterloo, Township of North Dumfries, Township of Wellesley, Township of Wilmot, Township of Woolwich) in the development of a 30-year community Climate Action Strategy to achieve an 80% greenhouse gas reduction by 2050.

Who is funding this project?

The project is being funded by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities directly to ClimateActionWR. ClimateActionWR is part of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Transition 2050 grant program. The funding was awarded to develop Waterloo Region's community long-term (30-year) Climate Action Strategy and short-term (10-year) Climate Action Plan. This grant funding comes to an end in February 2021.

This is one of two independent pilots being completed for the community within limited timelines as part of the FCM grant funding. The funding was specifically for non-profits partnered with municipalities, and these pilots demonstrate the benefits of municipalities working with non-profits, who may have a nimbleness to pivot and act quickly to implement projects with potentially large scale, community impact.

Project Objective:

This short term, small scope pilot project will provide valuable research and recommendations which, if implemented, could aid our community in reducing greenhouse gas emissions across our highest emitting sector: transportation (which accounted for 49% of our community's greenhouse gas emissions in the most recent inventory conducted in 2015).

Project Goal:

To conduct research that will test the barriers to, and efficacy of, customized support in micro-geographies through the use of community active transportation hubs, to increase the use of low-carbon and no-carbon transportation by community members.

Project Summary:

In Waterloo region, short distance trips of less than five kilometers make up nearly 50% of all travel by residents. Increasingly, residents are choosing to make trips under 2km by transit, cycling or walking. However, slightly longer trips between 2 and 5 kilometers in lengths still present more of a barrier to mode-shifting (Region of Waterloo TMP, 2018). We are proposing

to conduct a research project to holistically understand the challenges, barriers, and gaps in existing active transportation infrastructure, and identify how community active transportation hubs can result in the use of active transportation over vehicle use for short trips.

The research will focus on using existing data and information (e.g. infrastructure compilations, school locations, Regional transportation plans, trails and active transportation lanes etc.) to recommend locations across Waterloo region for the development of community bike hubs.

We will use the framework provided through the study [Building Bike Culture Beyond Downtown](#), to complete Steps 1 and 2 towards incubating a culture of cycling in Waterloo region. Working with community and municipal partners to identify the physical, knowledge based, and societal barriers to active transportation, and understand how the hubs can increase awareness and interest in alternatives to driving based on the needs of that particular micro-geography. This includes understanding and providing recommendations around low-income, immigrants-newcomers, ethnic-minority, and/or religious-minority populations.

The goal of the research project will be to develop a set of recommendations for creating community hub spaces in Waterloo region, supporting community and municipal parties to understand what needs to be implemented to achieve our goal, and how they can foster support and participation.

This proposed project will bring on a researcher to design the study based on the first two of four step model for incubating cycling: finding the neighbourhood(s) and identify the local barriers ([Building Bike Culture Beyond Downtown](#)) within these micro-geographies, engaging with local community and municipal partners as well as conducting independent research to gather insight and information;

The research will include:

1. Identify the location(s) for the community hubs based on available data, partner feedback and community interest, as well as geographical connection to active transportation lanes and/or trails. Map the local characteristics of each hub neighbourhood.
2. Develop recommendations on educational and engagement tools, as well as propose infrastructure and capital upgrades to make the community hubs a success;
3. Develop a strategy to use the hubs to continue support for active transportation modes, evaluate infrastructure requests, and coordinate ongoing evaluations (e.g., travel behaviour surveys, site assessments, etc.).

How will we measure success?

We will present the final research and recommendations to both community and municipal partners. We will determine success based on:

- Stakeholder/participant engagement in research process (based on feedback received);
- Feasibility of the business case for hub implementation;

- Appetite for a partner organization to take the research and use it for project implementation.

Timeline

The Transition 2050 Grant that is funding this project comes to an end in February 2021, at which point we will need to submit all documentation related to the pilot project. Given that timeline, we intend to launch this project mid-October 2020. The project will come to an end in mid-January.

Aug - Sept 2020:

- Identify community programming partners (Region of Waterloo, Student Transportation Services of Waterloo Region, CycleWR, Cycling into the Future, Greenspoke, Recycle Cycles, other bike shops).
- As a collaborative team, the partners will work together to determine the detailed project plan, program deliverables, and desired outcomes for the research project.

October 2020:

- Bring on research consultant
- Develop research parameters/methodologies, relevant data sets, timeline
- Introduce/launch the community hub research project.

October 2020 to January 2021:

The dedicated researcher will:

- Identify local barriers in the three main categories of physical, skills and knowledge, and social norms;
- Conduct asset mapping of community hub neighbourhoods (partners, trails, active transportation lanes, etc.);
- Determine and review relevant Regional and localized data sets and past findings;
- Determine capital infrastructure needs at hub sites;
- Determine educational and campaign programming, and skill-building initiatives to be hosted at community hub(s) for targeted and general audiences;
- Develop strategy for on-site events and promotions (e.g., Transit Showcase, winter cycling education);
- Identify and plan for capital upgrades at hub locations to better support sustainable transportation.

Winter 2021

As the pilot comes to an end, we will begin assessments:

- Qualitative and quantitative assessment by community and municipal partners, on the impact and feasibility of the research deliverables;
- As part of our reporting back to our funders, we will write a formal case study on the pilot project experience and its impact, which we will share with our partner organizations after completion.