

Community Bicycle Hub -- Environmental Scan

Submitted by:

DU B FIT Consulting
Nancy Dubois
dubfit@rogers.com / 519.446.3636



Submitted to:

Niagara Region Public Health
Lisa Gallant, Health Promoter
lisa.gallant@niagararegion.ca
(905) 688.8248 or 1.800.505 6074 x7321



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1. Introduction

This report summarizes a review of community bicycle hubs located primarily in Canada and the United States. The Consultant was engaged to review a variety of models with an eye to how these might be applied in Niagara. The term “community bicycle hub” is used in this report to reflect the generic term for models investigated in this project.

This project builds on considerable work already undertaken in Niagara to support Active Transportation through many mechanisms, including, but not limited to, cycling. There is a commitment from Niagara Region Public Health to address the social determinants of health and this scan searched for aspects related to this.

Lastly, there was interest in learning about what difference these community bicycle hubs have made in their communities. Although process findings were available (e.g., how many bicycles were recycled or how many hours of bench time were provided), outcome results were less commonly found.

This report outlines findings based on the interest areas identified by Niagara Regional Public Health, includes some suggested resources and summarizes lessons learned from organizations with history in this type of work.

2. Methodology

Three methods of investigation were used:

- A literature scan
- A review of relevant websites
- A series of interviews

The literature scan was conducted through Niagara Region Public Health. The results helped identify communities to investigate further through the second two methods. The literature scan did point out the lack of outcome evaluation available for this type of work.

2.1 Website Review

Websites of organizations that were in operation for some time indicated some positive results, seemed to operate using a unique model, or appeared promising through the literature scan, were examined more closely. A spreadsheet was created to capture the details, which can be found in Appendix A. The headings for the spreadsheet analysis were originally derived from a framework known as “Towards Evidence-Informed Practice”. Several additional headings were identified by the public health leads for this project and most were focused on the outcomes of the community bike hubs, particularly in the areas of social determinants of health, neighbourhood level changes, and other outcomes. Websites from Canadian communities were reviewed first and in greater detail. When reviewing U.S. examples, details that were unique from the Canadian programs were noted. No additional sites were reviewed once no new information was gained.

The review of each Canadian website required about three hours. The aspects on a website that typically held relevant information were:

- About Us
- Strategic Plan
- Annual Report
- Human Resource Opportunities
- Events

2.2 Interviews

The project called for up to 10 interviews with lead contacts or key informants at selected community bicycle hubs to explore the workings their organization. These interviews were hard to schedule because some contacts had full time jobs and, depending on the time of year, were busy or not working during the “off season”. The list of potential key informants was confirmed by public health leads prior to contact and can be found in Appendix B.

Each key informant was invited to participate twice by email and then through telephone contact, which most often resulted in a voice mail message, to request and schedule an interview. A few were terminated at this point due to lack of response at which time the process began with a new contact. Given that these contacts were all “cold calls” such that the contact would not have recognized the Consultant’s name, it is not unusual that some went unanswered.

Each phone interview required between 30 and 60 minutes. Notes were taken on computer during the interviews and compiled by question to generate findings.

Once all data was collected, the Consultant compiled findings using the same headings as the website review. Questions asked during the interviews can be found in Appendix C. Considerable adaptation of these questions was done to probe specific things that came up during the discussion or based on the website review done before the interview.

3. Results

The results presented below were integrated across the interviews and websites reviewed. Bigger picture aspects (e.g., purpose, philosophy and overall model) are presented first followed by operational aspects related to human resources, activities undertaken and partners. The summary concludes with lessons learned, recommendations and findings for consideration.

3.1 General

A spirit of sharing exists between the community bicycle hubs, based on the willingness with which interviewees provided details. Spring and summer are busier times for these organizations; it may be easier to reach them in the “off season”.

3.2 Names of Community Bicycle Hubs

There are a wide variety of names used for the community bicycle hubs reviewed. In some cases, they were catchy (e.g., The Kickstand) but more often, the names reflected the purpose of the organization (e.g., WRENCH – Winnipeg Repair Education and Cycling Hub, “Recycle a Bike” in New York State). One group recommended that the name of the organization should reflect the function and geography. There is some sensitivity from rural or surrounding areas sometimes when the name only reflects an urban-centric focus.

3.3 Operating Models

There were generally five different models in place across the organizations reviewed. Because an exhaustive scan of all agencies was not undertaken it is not possible to say which type is most common.

a) Skill-building

Skill building was a core business of all organizations reviewed because this was a primary area of interest for Niagara Region Public Health. In the majority of sites, the refurbished bikes were sold as a revenue source for the organization (often as a social enterprise) and given to volunteers or those in the community who are not in a position to purchase a bike. Several activities were commonly undertaken within this model:

- Bicycle repair workshops offered by the agency, most often on-site but also at community outreach locations such as community centres and sometimes through a mobile operation
- Earn-a-bike opportunities where people, often youth or those who are not able to afford to purchase a new bike, provide volunteer supports to the organization in exchange for a bike (and usually a helmet)
- Training in bicycle repair in schools. In some cases, this was an established component of the curriculum (sometimes in grade five but more often in secondary school). In other cases, these workshops for students were more sporadic and treated like special events.

In addition to the hard skills of bicycle mechanics, the development of soft skills such as communication, decision-making and leadership were addressed. These were more common in organizations as described in d) below regarding engaging particular populations.

b) Advocacy for cycling supports

About a third of the approaches reviewed had a component of their work that focused on changing the cycling environment through advocacy efforts. Most often this was about infrastructure (e.g., cycling lanes on roads) or policies related to such things as the cycling information covered in Driver's Education and Driver's License Test standards.

Many of those involved in the skill-building aspects, described in a) above, intentionally avoided advocacy work, usually for one or more of four reasons:

- The group was too busy with their "core" work to take on more work in this area
- There was another group in the community who provided leadership on the advocacy front. Often the community bicycle hub was an important organizational partner in advocacy efforts and members of one were typically supportive of the other.
- The community bicycle hubs often had relationships with the municipal government that they felt would be jeopardized if they were to be a strong advocate for municipal changes. The existing relationships with the municipality were commonly based on the use of space, such as outreach activities in community-owned space or the arrangement with the municipality, through Police Services or Sanitation Services to access bicycles that have been recovered as unclaimed stolen property or "dumped" as waste.
- Their not-for-profit, charitable status, which was key for accessing funding, restricted advocacy work.

c) Combination of a) and b)

Particularly in smaller communities, it was not unusual for an organization to take on skill building and advocacy.

EXAMPLE

IN SALT LAKE CITY, THE GROUP IS PART OF THE BIKE COLLECTIVES OF UTAH. THEY AVOID ADVOCACY AS IT CAN "TURN PEOPLE OFF" & "BIKE UTAH" DOES THAT WORK. "WE ARE ABOUT PUTTING KIDS & REFUGEES ON BIKES. WE ARE NOT A SOCIAL WORK ORGANIZATION AS WE FOCUS ON BIKE MECHANICS – WE DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO ASSESS NEED OR BE CASE MANAGERS. INSTEAD, WE PARTNER WITH AGENCIES WHO IDENTIFY THE NEED."

d) Community engagement – usually in combination with a).

In a few cases the primary purpose of the organization was not cycling but the engagement of specific people using cycling as the tool with which to do this. For instance, some were focused on new immigrants to the community who were looking to build skills (as a potential source for employment), reduce isolation, learn to speak English or gain a means of transportation through “Earn-a-Bike” programs. At-risk youth were another frequently targeted population, usually as a means to engage them in productive activity and to build relationships with role models, mentors and caring adults. With this model, social service agencies and faith communities were often the lead or founding partner.

e) Biking on campus

A few initiatives were intended as a means to facilitate getting students on bikes as a means of transportation. Other campus-based programs named goals associated with orienting new Canadians to the concept of cycling, and assisting with learning how to ride and care for a bicycle or as a more environmentally-friendly alternative to cars or public transportation. Many of these became broader community-wide initiatives over time. It was identified that trying to operate both a campus and community initiative was challenging due to dual reporting processes, different governance structures and By-laws.

Across many of the models described above, one of the underlying philosophies was a commitment to improving the environment.

EXAMPLE

IN VANCOUVER, AN ASSOCIATION COMPRISED OF APPROXIMATELY 2000 MEMBERS IS FOCUSED ON “GETTING MORE PEOPLE RIDING, MORE OFTEN.” THE ORGANIZATION SEES THE HEALTH BENEFITS, AND BELIEVES THAT CYCLING CREATES HEALTHIER, HAPPIER AND MORE CONNECTED COMMUNITIES. FUNDING THROUGH THAT AVENUE HAS NOT BEEN SIGNIFICANT. ACTION WORK IS PRIMARILY CARRIED OUT BY VOLUNTEERS, WITH THE OVERALL ORGANIZATION BEING FUNDED THROUGH PROGRAM WORK. THE ORGANIZATION’S CONTACT LIST IS NOW AT OVER 32,000 INDIVIDUALS. THE ORGANIZATION HAS VALUES THAT INCLUDE RESPECTING ALL TRANSPORTATION STAKEHOLDERS, AND SO TAKES A NON-CONFRONTATIONAL APPROACH IN CONVINCING DECISION MAKERS TO IMPROVE INFRASTRUCTURE WHICH THEN ENCOURAGES MORE PEOPLE TO RIDE.

EXAMPLE

THE CAMPUS BICYCLE SOCIETY OF CALGARY BECAME A NOT-FOR-PROFIT IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO ENTER INTO CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENTS. PRIOR TO THIS, THEY WERE A STUDENT UNION SANCTIONED CLUB WHICH MEANT THEY HAD ACCESS TO CAMPUS SPACE, FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES & INSURANCE. WHAT BEGAN ON A LOADING DOCK IS NOW KNOWN AS THE “BIKE ROOT” WITH OVER 600 MEMBERS. THE COMMUNITY AND CAMPUS ASPECTS MERGED IN 2011.

There were a few unique models that are described below.

In Peel Region the work is done through local government and is grounded in the Active Transportation Master Plan which included an element of programming in addition to the more typical component of infrastructure. This program element became a behavior change campaign, which the Region wanted to be innovative and affect changes to attitudes and behaviours. They partnered with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), or social profits, and a consulting firm (in the first year) to deliver the other aspect of a community bicycle hub. They identified the need to have clearly delineated roles between the Region, the operational partner (the Non-governmental organizations) and the volunteers and other partners involved. It was important to create a “table of equals”. In the second year, the consulting firm’s roles were discontinued as the project was considered “owned” by the local non-profit that housed it in year one and the Region’s dollars went directly towards implementation.

In Waterloo, the initiative began as a competitive cycling club with the motto “Ride, Race, Lead”. They focus on recruiting and supporting new cyclists. Their strong reputation has resulted in, among other things, being allocated the stewardship role with the local Hydrocut Trail.

A few programs cited a theoretical basis for their project. Often the Search Institute’s Developmental Assets Framework was named. As well, Dr. Glasser’s five basic needs of survival, love and belonging and connection, power (which includes significance, competence and autonomy), freedom and fun or learning was identified. Other theories used were Narrative Therapy and the Life Skills model. Identifying these theoretical underpinnings was most common in the model d) above focusing on engagement, particularly youth.

Regardless of the model used, in most cases, the jurisdiction for the organization was usually at a neighbourhood or municipal level so the services and supports were close to the clients. In a few cases where advocacy efforts were stronger, efforts were directed at a state or provincial level.

There was also a typical community bicycle hub approach taken in many communities, regardless of the model selected. It began with a community survey (in a variety of formats) followed by the implementation of the programs, then a repeat survey to identify the impact and changes needed. Typically, incentives were provided to complete the survey.

EXAMPLES

1. THE TORONTO “BIKE HOST” PROGRAM, PROVIDED BY CULTURELINK, IS DESIGNED FOR NEWCOMERS TO MEET ONE ANOTHER.
2. IN HAMILTON, THE BIKE GROUP BEGAN WITH A CHURCH (WESLEY URBAN MINISTRIES) WHO ALREADY HAD NOT FOR PROFIT STATUS, AS A MEANS TO POSITIVELY ENGAGE AT-RISK YOUTH.
3. IN BIDDLEFORD MAINE, A YEAR-ROUND COMMUNITY -BASED PROGRAM PROVIDES A HOME BASE FOR HUNDREDS OF KIDS USING BICYCLE-RELATED ACTIVITIES AS THE TOOL FOR HELPING YOUTH, ESPECIALLY THOSE STRUGGLING IN SEVERAL AREAS OF LIFE. THEY USE ASSET-BUILDING ACTIVITIES, MENTORSHIP & LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT.

3.4 Typical Activities

Many activities were described across the reviewed programs. Examples are clustered below based on the purpose of the activity. This is not an exhaustive list of all programs offered through community bicycle hubs but represents those found in the programs reviewed. Some initiatives cross over more than one purpose but have been only cited once.

To raise awareness	To increase knowledge	To build skills & capacity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rely on word-of-mouth based on positive experiences • Social service worker referrals • Conduct outreach events where gaps and opportunities are identified • Focus on an audience (e.g., university students, newcomers, grade 5 students) • Place cycling books in libraries • Conduct group rides • Hold community signature events e.g., Open Streets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bicycle Education programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In schools ○ In workplaces ○ For newcomers ○ Recycle a Bike programs in all New York State schools as part of state-wide accreditation for a full school credit ○ CanBike program • A Wiki space provided for each local community cycling project to store information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bike repair workshops (DIY) • Bike-to-school/work events • Leadership development for youth as Ride Captains • Give advice to consumers on how to fix their bike • Send bikes overseas • Provide bikes to those who can't afford them • Provide facilitation and media training for lead volunteers
To change environments		To make money from bikes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bike valet at community events • Bike Friendly Business Program to make businesses more accessible to cyclists and attract employees and customers • Recycling Extravaganza with several municipalities to recover as many bikes as possible for refurbishing • Bike Borrowing (in cities and campuses) – sometimes through libraries (like borrowing a book) • Install bike rack on city buses • Conduct Bikeability Assessments • Advocate for improved cycling infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Make this an election issue ○ Change Drivers' License requirements ○ Complete streets ○ Bike-specific road signals, roundabouts, bike boxes etc. • Change school curriculum 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sell bikes (average \$187/bike) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Completed overhauled ○ "As is" (safety checked) ○ Best bikes used for higher profit • Fix bikes for a fee (average person spends \$40/visit) • Sell bike parts • Rent repair bench space or tools to DIY'ers (rates range from \$0-\$5/hr if no help required or \$0-\$10 if assisted) • Bike Fix-it Stations with 24-hour access to tools and pumps • Sell bike racks to businesses and apartment complexes • Membership fees

Bicycle repair work was fundamental to many of the organizations. Some insights were gained about lessons learned from those experienced in this area:

- Drop-in approaches work well but it is important to schedule them at consistent times
- Hold a community event where many bikes can be repaired in a few hours
- Offer a mobile repair depot to vary the location
- Conduct sessions in youth detention centres

3.5 Social Determinants of Health

No program reviewed used this term to describe any aspect of their work. However, in examining their activities, several did have a focus on this. During the interviews, respondents were asked specifically if their approach included this type of work and some examples emerged.

The most common Social Determinant of Health activity was the building of skills in at-risk youth as a means of civic engagement, potential employment, learning soft skills, building Developmental Assets and lifeskills.

Many had parts of their work that got “goodwill” bikes into the hands of those who could not otherwise afford one.

Those who did not address the Social Determinants of Health said that it was hard enough to fund their direct cycling initiatives without taking on this type of no or low revenue work. Others reported that, although they weren’t directly involved, they partnered with social service partners who were. For example, the local agency supporting new immigrants to the community would purchase bicycles for their clients or a youth-serving agency would recommend youth as potential volunteers to the community bicycle hub.

The other population commonly addressed through these initiatives were newcomers who often didn’t know how to drive or have a vehicle. Bicycle safety education was often necessary to learn the rules of the road.

3.6 Funding

Just as there were many different models of operation for community bicycle hubs, there were also a wide variety in the scale of budgets and how programs were funded. Generally, space and staff were the largest expense. A sampling is provided below as an idea of the budget scope.

- Maine - \$250,000 after 11 years of operation
- Winnipeg - \$235,000/year (selling used bikes accounted for \$20,000/year)
- Peel Region –options range from \$40,000/year for a new mentorship program with new bicycle to \$150,000/year for a program that incorporates bicycle mentoring, bicycle mechanics, high school programming, and a paid co-ordinator. For details visit <http://walkandrollpeel.ca/projects/community-active-transportation.htm>
- Vancouver – revenue \$675,000/year (Supports 9 staff, focused on programs, events, education. Action work carried out by volunteer committees)

Many different sources of funding were identified. Without exception, each project had multiple funding sources, and, in most cases, were hard-pressed each year to make ends meet; one hub had seven different funders initially. Some major sources of

EXAMPLES

1. IN OTTAWA, “RE-CYCLES” IS CO-LOCATED WITH “CYCLE SALVATION”. THEY SELL EACH OTHER BIKES – THE FORMER IS A VOLUNTEER-RUN NFP COMMUNITY BIKE SHOP AND THE LATTER IS A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE WITH A TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE – PROFIT, PEOPLE, PLANET. THEY PROVIDE TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT IN THE FIELD OF BIKE MECHANIC FOR THOSE WHO ARE ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED.
2. IN PETERBOROUGH, THE “YOUTH EARN-A-BIKE” PROGRAM OPERATES OVER 8 WEEKS & RESULTS IN SOMEONE FROM A LOW INCOME FAMILY OR AN AT-RISK YOUTH GETTING A BICYCLE AND HELMUT.
3. IN SANTE FE, NEW MEXICO, THE SLIDING SCALE ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEE TO THE COMMUNITY BICYCLE HUB IS EQUIVALENT TO WHAT THE PERSON EARNS FOR 2 HOURS WORK.

funding through Boards of Education, Municipalities and Transportation Authorities took years to cultivate. A strong history of success and accountability was typically necessary before these types of allocations were made.

The sources already cited in the table above under “To make money from bikes...” have not been repeated here.

- The University of Toronto provides \$1 of student fees to their bike initiative on campus
- Trent University provides, in perpetuity, a grant from the Student Body to the City for this project
- Membership fees, ranging from a set fee for students, adults and families to a sliding scale based on ability to pay
- Social Service agencies pay for bikes for their clients (although this sector has very limited funds for such things)
- Signature events:
 - Bicycle Prom (Salt Lake City) – gala event with 1500 people that ride six miles in prom attire and end at a party (\$15,000)
- Government Funding:
 - School boards and Corrections facilities pay for bicycle education programs
 - Recoup the environmental surcharge related to recovering the bikes landfill sites
 - Regional Transportation Authority in Vancouver provides \$100-150,000/year for specific programs such as Bike to School
 - Funding from provincial or federal programs that have a connection to the health, environmental, transportation, educational or social goals of the initiative
 - Eco Action grants from Environment Canada
- Foundations and university grants:
 - Ontario Trillium Foundation
 - Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) grant
- Corporate sector:
 - A capitol campaign
 - Mountain Equipment Coop has provided grants of \$10,000

There were some suggestions provided about the financial management of a community bicycle hub:

- Sell refurbished bikes for less than a one-month bus pass cost
- Don't give bikes away for free as people are more likely to take care of things they have paid something for
- Raise sufficient capital early on so less money is wasted on rent
- Individual donors should make up at least 70% of the budget. A key to selling the community bicycle hub concept to donors is the social benefits.
- Signature events can raise a lot of money for a few years but are a lot of work and run their course in terms of participant interest
- Be cautious about grants that take the group away from its mission or require too much reporting relative to the grant amount

3.7 Human Resources

Investigation into the community bicycle hubs included a look at volunteer and staff complements. Volunteers were generally much more prolific in the models. Particularly in the early days of a project, it is not unusual to have only volunteers involved. With respect to staffing, the following points were shared across the programs reviewed:

- At the beginning, a small staff complement, sometimes of just one person, will need to be a generalist. As the program grows, more specialists can be brought on board. These tended to be in the areas of volunteer management, fundraising, bicycle mechanic and community programmer.
- It is often difficult to maintain staff year round in winter climates when cycling falls off. Therefore, there tends to be a fair degree of staff turnover from year to year. This brings with it extra recruitment and orientation costs and time.
- Hire at least one certified mechanic. CanBike certification is key.
- One of the larger programs contacted has 11 staff. These include an Executive Director, Office Manager, Director of Programs, Director of Marketing and Communication, Bike-to-Work Manager, Bike Education Manager, Bike Friendly Business Manager, Membership Coordinator and a Bookkeeper.
- Most operations had one or more keyholders to the facility. This was usually the manager and mechanic.
- It is not unusual that some staff positions are part time and the individuals have another job. This is more likely to be the case when the shop operates primarily during evenings and weekends.
- With not for profit status comes the need for a Board of Directors. These were most often volunteers and one Executive staff member. In one case the board was comprised of staff.
- It was suggested that staff and volunteers be rewarded with relevant things like a bike stipend since wages and benefits are not usually high.
- Be mindful of bringing on new staff that may displace volunteers. This generally results in a loss of the sense of community.
- Work towards having at least one paid staff coordinator.

Volunteers are a key ingredient for the success of the community bicycle hubs. Numbers ranged from a few people to over 100. In many cases, the volunteers were engaged as part of an “Earn-a-Bike” or “Sweat Equity” program. Rates at which volunteer work was compensated ranged from \$5 per hour to minimum wage. There was a wide variety of roles identified, with the most common ones being:

- Instructors who teach members or clients about bicycle repairs or teaching bicycle education
- Repair/refurbish bicycles for re-distribution (preferably certified) or check parts and bicycles
- Group ride leaders
- Outreach activities such as school presentations or community events
- Inventory management of parts
- Governance – as leadership volunteers on the Board of Directors or equivalent

It was noted that it is hard to rely solely on volunteers for an organization. A Volunteer Coordinator was identified as essential and, generally, it was relatively easy to recruit volunteers. Several have Volunteer Training Manuals.

3.8 Partners

The list of partners involved in the initiatives reviewed is provided below. Many partners were linked to the funding sources described in this report. The most prevalent explanation of who was involved as a partner was the focus of the work e.g., if the cycling hub was looking for funders, advocates, meeting space, food for meetings, staff expertise in things such as graphic design, or an organization with a strong community voice.

- Health sector – public health, community health centres

- Social Service and faith-based agencies – dealing with immigrants, at-risk youth, families living in low income situations. Of particular importance were organizations that referred clients to community bicycle hubs or purchased refurbished bikes for their clients.
- Municipality
 - Through Police Services or landfill services to reclaim bikes. This would be less likely if the group asking for the bikes was also involved in activism with the municipality.
 - Planners and Engineers – for work related to community design and infrastructure
 - Using / leasing space (e.g., one municipality provides space for \$1/year)
- Arts & Culture community – co-sponsor joint initiatives, particularly aimed at youth.
- Education sector – bicycle education programs or curriculum links in elementary and secondary schools; bicycle borrowing programs on college or university campuses; researchers (especially on post-secondary campuses) (e.g., Cycling & Cities program at the University of British Columbia in the School of Public Health).
- Corporate sector
 - Grants from Mountain Equipment Coop
 - Banks in Utah
 - Sponsors for events
 - Provide space (e.g., Steam Whistle Brewery in Peterborough provides space for a “Fix-It Station”)
 - Business Improvement Associations (BIA’s) on special events
- Service clubs, particularly for initiatives geared towards youth. These groups have provided helmets and locks.
- Environmental Sector on special events.

3.9 Supporting Materials

Potentially useful tools noted in the review were:

- The Toronto Centre for Active Transportation (<http://www.tcat.ca/>) created an algorithm used by Peel Region to assess which communities would be particularly suited to an active transportation project. Assessment items included such things as the number of trips made under five kilometres, existing walking and cycling mode shares, population density (population per square km), and cycle trip density (cycling trips per square km).
- The wiki provided by the Bike Collective Network (www.bikecollectives.org) and the Alliance for Biking and Walking can be used as a knowledge transfer community for any not-for-profit group around the world
- The Bike Conference (www.bikebike.org) is held annually in a different city
- The Winnipeg Repair Education and Cycling Hub program provides a “How to Start a Bike Repair Shop and Program in your School or Community” manual and they also recommend the teacher training manual available from “Bikes Not Bombs” (<https://bikesnotbombs.org/>) in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts which is described as “using the bicycle as a vehicle for social change”
- The Brooklyn New York program offers a “Start-up Guide for Youth recycling & Bicycling Programs”

4. Outcomes

There was limited information from the programs reviewed about changes that resulted from the programs offered. The ones for which details were available are summarized here.

The Maine program undertook a survey to measure outcomes in their youth who had attended at least twenty sessions. The tool was developed with the local university and was based on the Search Institute’s 40 Developmental Assets as well as the 15 essential life skills defined by Susan Kovalik and Associates. Highlights include:

- 80% reported that since attending Community Bike Centre programming they felt comfortable talking to an adult they could trust, and 83% were comfortable asking for help.
- 89% of youth reported that they are more curious to learn new things, having fun without hurting others, and enjoy trying new things since they began attending the Community Bike Centre.
- Seventy-nine (79%) percent of participants reported that they try to teach the skills they have to others, do not give up easily when a task gets too hard, do the right thing when no one is looking, feel a sense of pride, and are better able to make and keep friends.
- Fifty-seven percent (57%) of youth reported that they are more fit since attending the Community Bike Centre. Youth self-reported feeling better about themselves, having healthier eating habits, having stronger muscles, being able to think more clearly, and losing weight.
- Youth also reported that the skills they have learned at the Community Bike Centre have been transferable to other areas of their lives including school. Youth attributed the Community Bike Centre to helping them ask for help when needed, feeling more independent and confident when working alone, and solving problems.
- Each youth was also asked about their SPARK. A SPARK is something that gives meaning and purpose to someone's life. SPARKS included: family and friends, drawing, dancing, and singing, bikes, being creative, electrical work, designing things, teaching, and helping other kids. Many youth reported that the Community Bike Centre was their SPARK.

The Region of Peel project conducted a pre/post survey for their program. It started with one fundamental idea, bike mentorship, and grew based on community needs, capacity and interest. Results are available from the program directly on the bike maintenance, behavior change, partnership, events and mentoring aspects of the program -- <http://walkandrollpeel.ca/projects/community-active-transportation.htm>

Interesting data is being gathered as part of the program in Brompton, UK where they have a calculator to identify the amount of greenhouse gases that are being saved by using a bike.

It was more common that outputs were measured using tracking forms. One group tracked media mentions.

Without evaluation results, it is difficult to know the degree and reliability of changes cited across programs. It was common to hear that youth were given a chance to grow in these programs when they did not typically participate in mainstream after-school programs. Youth in these programs were seen to have improved problem-solving skills, better anger management and more civic engagement. Positive changes were found in the amount of cycling, confidence of cyclists, participation in bike-to-work or school events, fewer bikes in landfills, more employment opportunities for those trained at the centres and better cycling infrastructure.

4.1 Lessons Learned

The majority of the following comments were generated through the interviews. These were typically generated in response to the questions "If you were to start your project over, what would you do differently?" and "What advice do you have for the Niagara Region as they consider undertaking a project like this?"

- Don't include a lot of structure, get youth connected, no requirement for number of hours
- Each community needs to identify what will work for them. Consider the biking culture in the community. Is it contentious? Perhaps a battle with cars?
- It is important that the neighbourhood catchment area feels like the cycling hub is theirs

- Don't grow just for the sake of growing. Make sure that the model is sustainable first. Start small with something replicable. Build community capacity as you go. Start with each participant building two bicycles.
- Have a long-term strategic plan and revisit it regularly. Be clear from the outset what the long term goal is.
- A learn to ride program is a need to do. Particularly for immigrants.
- Assess grant opportunities against the amount of reporting needed
- Liability was not reported to be an issue as bicycle purchasers sign a waiver and know they are getting a refurbished bike
- Trying to do this through government brings bureaucracy and unnecessary costs
- Find a sustainable space as soon as possible
- Lay out the physical space. Make sure you are able to handle the influx of old bikes that will come in early. You need storage space and shop functionality.
- Choose the location carefully to ensure a match with the purpose of the organization. Fix-it shops and destination ride spots require different surroundings. The University of Toronto project provides a formula for site location that considers things such as GIS elements, the cycling mode share, car ownership and destinations within five kilometers.
- Look for a location that your target population frequents
- Proximity to public transit, if available, is important
- Include a social aspect to the organization. Schedule bike rides, have fun with participants and volunteers. Go out together after the shop closes.
- Visit other bike clubs before you get started
- Seek out feedback from staff, volunteers and clients. Address what's not working.
- There is a generation coming that is not getting driver's licenses and are not well educated about biking rules and regulations. Try to reach them while still in school.
- Do whatever you can to become the hub and go-to place for cycling
- If advocating, find a respectful high ground message
- Get to a point where city planners are coming to you for input
- Celebrate every success. For example, when a new bike lane opens.
- Use a go pro camera to film riding on routes to illustrate good and bad aspects of a route
- Continue to actively solicit used bikes and bike parts
- One cycling hub project identifies five key ingredients for success: space ideally at ground level, tools and supplies \$1000, mechanical skills, volunteers, and bicycles and parts.
- When bringing children and youth in for instruction, provide a snack break, break up instruction in small chunks, have a group ride at the end, create a well-organized space
- Try to get bikes with all the parts intact as replacement parts can be hard to get

5. Conclusion

There are many examples across North America of community bicycle hubs. This report has summarized the findings of a review of several. The model that appeared most often was one that separated a community bicycle hub with such things as DIY repair facilities, on-site mechanics, bicycle education programs and community outreach events from advocacy efforts focused on supports for cycling infrastructure and related policies.

Most successful community bicycling hubs that have been in existence for several years have a diverse funding base, operating as a not-for-profit organization with at least one full time staff. Many employ multiple staff members with key positions including a certified bike mechanic and a volunteer coordinator.

Volunteers are a component of all models and typically fulfill governance roles on a Board of Directors, do community outreach, instruct bicycle education sessions and provide leadership to group rides.

A variety of partners support the work of the community bicycle hubs. Many are often related to revenue generation in some way while others are involved more at an operational level. The latter could be involved in referring their clients (e.g., youth or newcomers) to the community bicycle hub, or putting together a community event such as a Bike-to-Work challenge.

Few programs had results from outcome evaluations. Moving forward, a Developmental Evaluation approach could be used to ensure a strong outcome evaluation is undertaken to understand what works and what doesn't.

If the types of services offered through a community bicycle hub are not available throughout the Niagara region, there is an opportunity to develop something based on these models.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Dubois, DU B FIT Consulting
June, 2016

6. Appendices

A: Spreadsheet Summarizing Website Review



Community Cycling
Hubs Summary Table

B: List of Key Informants

Key informants interviewed

TITLE	LOCATION	CONTACT PERSON	CONTACT INFORMATION
Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre AccessPoint on Danforth	Scarborough	Marvin Macaraig	mmacaraig@tcat.ca 416 392 0260; 647-606-7524
Peel Community Active Transportation Project	Brampton	Erica Duque	Erica.duque@peelregion.ca 905-791-7800 ext. 4226
Community Bike Centre	Maine	Bronwyn Barnett	director@communitybike.net 207-282-9700
Durham Bicycle Co-op	Durham	Leslie Peteya	contact@durhambikecoop.org lesliepeteya@gmail.com (919) 675-2453
Evergreen Bike Works	Toronto	Alex Legum	alegum@evergreen.ca ; alegum@evergreen.ca 1-888-426-3138; 416-596-1495 x341
Salt Lake City Bicycle Collective	Salt Lake City	Clint Watson	clint@bicyclecollective.org 801-328-2453
HUB Cycling	Vancouver	Jeff Leigh	vancouver@bikehub.ca
The Winnipeg Repair Education and Cycling Hub	Winnipeg	Geoff Heath	programs@thewrench.ca 204 296 3389

Additional community bicycle hubs

Bicycle Transportation Alliance, Oregon
Edmonton Bicycle Commuters Society
Edmonton Bikeology
Iowa Bike Library
New Hope Church, Hamilton
San Diego County Bicycle Coalition
Waterloo Cycling Club
Wisconsin Bike Federation

Following this scan, staff at Niagara Region Public Health learned about a local community bicycling hub run through Port Colborne High School, The Broken Spoke -- <http://porthigh.dsbm.org/clubs/broken-spoke-bike-program>. This mission of this excellent program is to engage students in the understanding and benefits of refurbishing bicycles to provide enjoyment and transportation for themselves and those less fortunate.

C: Key Informant Discussion Guide



Key Informant
Guide for Niagara C.