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RE: Development of the Ontario Municipal Cycling Infrastructure Program (EBR 012-2428)

The Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM) is pleased that the government is investing in cycling infrastructure through the Ontario Municipal Cycling Infrastructure Program. In this submission, FONOM will provide the requested feedback to the questions posted on the Environmental Registry.

The types of cycling infrastructure that the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) plans to make eligible for funding under the program is both practical and comprehensive. However, FONOM would like to focus on particular types of infrastructure that would be most beneficial in northern Ontario for the Ministry to consider. The majority of municipalities in northern Ontario are small communities and likely do not have the population to support the development and maintenance of dedicated cycling infrastructure. Therefore, cyclists will utilize municipal roads and provincial highways predominantly. The importance of paved shoulders on provincial highways not only creates a path for cyclists and connects them from one community to another but most importantly, it increases the level of safety for both cyclists and drivers.

The proposal that projects must be listed in a municipal planning document, such as an official plan, asset management plan, cycling plan, and/or active transportation plan in order to be eligible for funding should not be implemented. For municipalities that have developed municipal planning documents but do not include cycling initiatives, implementing changes would impose an administrative burden onto municipal staff. Significant human resources would be required to either develop or alter a municipal plan to include a cycling project, and it would also be timely impractical. The province has indicated the program launch will be targeted for late 2014 and therefore would not allow for adequate time to ensure a municipality is able to make the appropriate adjustments before submitting an application for funding.



Evaluation is essential in determining whether a program is successful and whether there is merit to continue the program or develop similar programs. Therefore, FONOM agrees with the considerations provided by the MTO in evaluating a program. The most important considerations would be to improve rider safety and security, improve connectivity of cycling networks, and to enable and demonstrate partnerships. A consideration that should be included when evaluating a program would be the social benefits that were generated, such as an increase in quality of life.

While FONOM appreciates that the program is designed to disburse funding to municipalities to assist with investments into cycling infrastructure, it is important that the funding remain available to community groups as well. Many municipalities depend on community groups to assist with the development of programs that benefit the quality of life for residents. Smaller municipalities often do not have the resources to focus on cycling infrastructure and therefore community groups often undertake initiatives such as this. It is also important that the disbursement of funding remain flexible in terms of timing. For example, a municipality or a community group should be able to access funds at various stages, whether it is the infrastructure design stage, development stage, or further along the lifeline of the project such as the maintenance stage.

The investments of \$15 million towards provincial cycling infrastructure and \$10 million towards municipal cycling infrastructure will greatly benefit northern residents in a number of ways, including cyclist and driver safety and benefits to the quality of life through enhanced cycling infrastructure. FONOM looks forward to the launch of the Ontario Municipal Cycling Infrastructure Program.

Sincerely,

Alan Spacek
President