

Safety and Education Report – 2011/2012

Submitted by: Dave Elmore, Director of Safety and Education

Seems like my report is rather repetitive each year, some progress on the safety and education, but still a long way from having an effective and sustainable program in Winnipeg. This year we were able to expand our available resources (additional instructors) through some funding provided by MPI and Cycling Canada. That said we now have lots of resources but nothing to offer. The one other project that we were involved with, the educational video being done through MCA has not made a lot of progress and in fact it is not clear what our role in the future of this video is. .

What is needed is a sustainable program of cycling safety and skills and this won't happen without funding. The safety of cyclists is a subject of constant discussion; however the solutions are almost always related to infrastructure. We need to continue to support the development of more and better infrastructure, but we need to push harder for better education. It is always second or third in line and as long as we continue to talk about it in this way, potential funders will continue to treat it as a low priority. Cyclists will for many, many years to come need to use the roads for transportation and education is the key to keeping them safe when they share these spaces with motor vehicles.

We need to lobby the province, Manitoba Public Insurance (MPI), and the City of Winnipeg to take cycling education seriously. We need to have financial support to have a program that will be effective and sustainable. I do not believe that Bike to the Future can take this on and hope to make it a revenue stream nor do I believe that it can continue to evolve mostly based on the good will and volunteer effort of those of us that want to see a program developed.

Background

Bike to the Future (BttF) remains committed to the Can-Bike safety and skills program. With the courses offered this past year there is currently:

- 10 certified Can-Bike 2 instructors
- 5 Can-Bike 1 instructor (Completed Can-Bike 2 course)
- 1 Can-Bike Master Instructor (Dave)
- 1 Can-Bike National Examiner (Howard Skrpnyk)

Can-Bike is fairly extensive and time consuming and so several years ago the Safety and Education committee developed a 3 module course which parallels the Can-Bike theory and practice. The modules are designed to allow cyclists to select a level/course that is appropriate to their skill level and knowledge. The 3 modules include:

- Module 1 - Basic safe cycling & road positioning
- Module 2 - Road positioning and multi-lane, arterial riding
- Module 3 - Understanding and maintaining your bike

These modules have also been piloted and also used as the basis for offering cycling safety and skills courses through the Leisure Guide for the past 3 years. These 4 hour

modules have been offered to both beginners and intermediate cyclists with some success. Registration has been hampered in my mind due to placement of the course in the Leisure Guide and a lack of knowledge on the part of Winnipeggers that there is even such a course available.

Bike to the Future in varying partnerships with Green Action Centre and Manitoba Cycling Association (MCA) has submitted several proposals over the last 3 years to MPI in an effort to obtain funding to start an education program with little success. In 2010 Dave Elmore was hired under contract to assist MPI in developing their cycling safety website content. In 2012 we finally had some success in obtaining funding from MPI to run a Can-Bike 2 course and to develop a “Cycling Champion” course for MPI’s use. This represented the first step in the expansion of Can-Bike resources however to MPI this was for the development of resources for their “Cycling Champion” Courses. Since that time funding was obtained from Cycling Canada to run a Can-Bike Instructors Workshop which was completed in October and resulted in an additional 7 Can-Bike instructors being developed.

The Past Year at a Glance

Leisure Guide Courses

In the spring of 2012 BttF provided another cycling skills course through the Leisure Guide. As in the past we offered both a beginners course and intermediate rider’s course. Registration for the beginner’s course was not sufficient and so that course was cancelled however the intermediate rider course had 12 rider participants. As indicated, registration is problematic. While the Leisure Guide receives wide distribution, the placement of the program in the guide remains poor. Feedback from those that attended the course was very positive, however many of them indicated that they simply stumbled onto the course while looking at other programs.

MPI Funding and the “Cycling Champions Course

In the spring we also were successful in obtaining funding from MPI to run a Can-Bike 2 course. The basis for the course was that MPI was hoping to develop program of “Cycling Champions” in a variety of workplaces and communities. After some discussion we were able to convince them that we did not have the resources required to teach the Cycling Champions that they had in mind and that at a minimum those providing this instruction should be Can-Bike 2 graduates. The funding also included the development of course content for an 8 hour Cycling Champions course. The contract for over \$ 11,000.00 included all development costs and was inclusive of a 15% overhead/fee for Bike to the Future.

The course was advertised through both BttF and MCA and received 28 applications from interested individuals. Unfortunately we were only able to accept 12 applicants. The 12 successful applicants completed their training in May/June and some of the graduates did receive opportunities to teach the Cycling Champion course. The uptake on the

Cycling Champion course has to date been very limited but I suspect that MPI is assuming this is due to the late start (trained instructors were not available till mid June) and so they will be looking to next spring to both run further courses and evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

Bike to the Future has no contractual obligations or involvement in the delivery of the Cycling Champions course as this is being managed by MPI directly. As reported in 2011, MPI has developed a cycling safety training presentation and trainer information package based on their website information. These were developed without consultation with BttF or any Can-Bike instructors. This package will form the basis of what will be provided to the new Cycling Champions for them to use in providing cycling instruction on their workplaces or community. Based only on my cursory review of the material the content, while more or less accurate, is lacking in some key areas.

Development of Can-Bike Instructors

Can-Bike, which is a Cycling Canada program, has been somewhat dormant for years, however in the past couple of years there has been an effort made to resurrect it. With some funding obtained from Public Health Agency of Canada, Cycling Canada has staffed a position to coordinate the redevelopment of the program and to undertake the development of more instructors. At this time the future direction of the program is not clear as the available funding from PHAC is for the current fiscal year only.

Through this funding Dave Elmore was offered a contract to run a Can-Bike Instructors Workshop. This was not a contract through Bike to the Future and no overhead/fee was offered. The instructor's workshop was offered to all 12 Can-Bike 2 graduates and although 9 responded, in the end only 7 completed the course.

Can-Bike Safety Video

Provincial government funding was provided back in 2009 for Manitoba Cycling Association (MCA) to develop a Winnipeg specific cycling safety video based on Can-Bike principles. This video has been slow in developing and has had its share of problems related to production. At this point MCA has hired a firm to complete the development however to date this has only included the completion of a bike helmet video that has not yet been released. The hold up on its release is that the province (who funded it) wants to hold off until spring when they launch a program related to the new bike helmet legislation.

The future of the remainder of the video is somewhat of a mystery. MCA is still required to complete the video however funding is an issue as much of it was used in the original draft video production that was later determined to be unacceptable. There has been little discussion on when production will resume on the remaining video segments although it has been rumoured that it will be completed this winter. How this will take place in winter is not clear. Any further BttF involvement will be a volunteer effort and no funding for our input is expected.

Going Forward

Need for Education

Winnipeg saw significant improvement in its active transportation infrastructure through the funding provided in 2010/2011. While we would love to see this continue realistically we are not going to see this kind of growth again anytime soon. As we continue to see growing numbers of cyclists on City of Winnipeg streets, we need to lobby for education. It is simply a reasonably inexpensive (when compared to infrastructure development) solution to making cycling safer.

The importance of education continues to be overshadowed by infrastructure. This holds true at all levels including I believe Bike to the Future. The need for education seems understood and supported, but it continues to be distant second to the focus on infrastructure development. Recently the focus in the news seems to be the need to develop separated infrastructure so that cyclists do not co-exist on the roads with motor vehicles. The world and Winnipeg would be a better place with this kind of infrastructure, but once again it will be many, many years before we reach this state. Education does not have the appeal or newsworthiness of new infrastructure; however it is none the less very important. If BttF is committed to making “cycling in Winnipeg a safe, enjoyable, accessible and convenient transportation choice year-round” I believe that we need to bring the focus of education forward.

While we have had a productive year in developing qualified instructors to teach cycling safety, we have no program to offer or for that matter no support for such a program. While BttF could take on cycling education, without some funding to establish it and to some degree support it, the required registration fees even to break even would far exceed that which most people or organizations would be willing, and in some cases, able to pay. We can't forget either about the other side of this education equation, the drivers. While MPI has a mandate to provide education to drivers, the fact is that their passive approach to this has limited effectiveness.

Interested Funders?

All levels of government should be interested in this but we need to sell it. MPI will not be interested in funding a program as long as they have their own Cycling Champion course that they are offering. Their hope is that this kind of pyramid approach will have the kind of reach that we have not been able to necessarily offer. At this point the effectiveness of the program is suspect and even if it does establish the reach, experience has shown that to effect behaviour change you need to get people on their bikes. The MPI program is really not aimed at doing this. Presentations and similar passive information works well to make people aware of what they don't know, but has minimal effect on behaviour change. I have had some discussions with the province and there does seem to be interest in education, however they seem to be moving forward with a passive approach.

The Leisure Guide Courses

Our future involvement in safety and skills courses through the City of Winnipeg Leisure Guide is questionable. While it was a good opportunity to reach some cyclists and establish the value of our course, the fact is that the fees paid by the city do not agree favourably with the time and effort required to teach the courses. We had originally thought that expansion of the program to offer courses at more locations throughout Winnipeg could be a new direction to go, however as indicated the fees available don't really make it sustainable. No successful program can continually draw on goodwill and volunteer effort.

Can-Bike

The Can-Bike program does seem to have some momentum at Cycling Canada but it is clearly not their primary focus. The program is being review by a select group of national examiners with input from other examiners and master instructors. I certainly will be submitting some input from my perspective. The biggest problem with making this program mainstream is the time commitment. A Can-Bike 2 course is approximately 16 to 20 hours depending on the skill and experience of the participants. This is why the Safety and Education Committee developed a module approach that could be used to provide skill training based on the skill and experience of the participants. While I believe this to be a good approach I suspect that those who have been around this program for years will not be that open to this kind of change. A single module would not of course be a Can-Bike course but if someone was to take all the modules they could in fact receive official Can-Bike status.

The fact that Can-Bike is getting more attention at the national level also changes things for our education program materials. Up until now we have been using many of the graphics that were originally included in a shared Can-Bike 2 course presentation. Our presentations of course have been branded BttF but that is going to have to change. The Can-Bike program is the property of Cycling Canada and we will have to discuss the use of these graphics (and some new ones that I received that are even better) with the national coordinator. My hope is that co-branding will be acceptable, but I am concerned that with the move to resurrect and to some extent reinvent the program that they may not be interested in sharing their materials. If that is the case I will have to change the branding and deliver these materials as a Can-Bike instructor and not as BttF. I have not yet approached the national coordinator as I am waiting to see what direction the program goes. One option that might be on the table would be for MCA (as the delivery agent for Cycling Canada) to contract Can-Bike instruction out. BttF would of course be a logical choice as the current instructors are all BttF members. We have a bit of time as nothing is likely happening in terms of training before the spring.