

Share the Road ---It's the Law

The Town of Wasaga Beach, the Township of Clearview and the Town of Collingwood are working collaborating with several area organizations and local cycling groups to help promote the responsible and harmonious use of local roads and highways by cyclists and motorists alike in addition to raising awareness amongst residents and visitors to the area about the benefits of cycling through a project called Share the Road. Share the Road is gaining momentum across the province as a means of helping users realize not only the health benefits, but also the environmental and economic benefits, of cycling.

From an environmental perspective, switching from motorized vehicles to bicycles is an incredibly effective way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Cycling produces virtually no significant pollution.

Economically speaking, encouraging residents and visitors to cycle also makes good sense. For example, a 2009 study of Bloor St. in Toronto showed that encouraging cycling is good for business: people who had biked and walked to the area reported that they spent more money in the area per month than those who drove there. In a 2010 study, the Victoria Transport Policy Institute estimated that replacing a car trip with a bike trip saves individuals and society \$2.73 per mile.

But! – before you head out to pedal your way around Simcoe County, you should be aware that there are some important “rules of the road” that you should follow which may save you not only money – nobody likes to get a ticket – but also your life. Remember that a bicycle is a vehicle under the Highway Traffic Act. This means that, as a cyclist, you have the same rights and responsibilities to obey all the applicable traffic laws as other road users. There are several sections in the Act which clearly set out the rights and responsibilities of you as a cyclist. These cover such topics as complying with traffic signals, lights, and stop signs; equipment you should have on your bike – lights, bells, brakes – procedures for making turns and what to do if you are walking your bike.

Despite what some may think, motorists aren't always the bad guys. There are plenty of examples of thoughtless behaviors on both sides - thoughtless drivers who overtake recreational cyclists in the country with just a hand's width of clearance or arrogant cyclists who fill country roads with their lengthy training exercises.

So, you might ask, what must I do, when I'm out for a pleasant bicycle ride, to share the road with other users? If it's safe to do so, you and any cyclists who are with you may occupy any part of the lane in which you are riding but remember that's only if it's safe to do so. The Highway Traffic Act is very clear about what you must do when safety becomes a concern. Section 147 of the Act requires any vehicle that is moving slower than the normal traffic speed to drive in the right hand lane or as close as practicable to the right edge of the road except when preparing to turn left or when passing another vehicle. As a cyclist you must ride far enough out from the curb to maintain a straight line, clear of sewer grates, potholes, debris and parked car doors. It makes sense to travel

in single file when you are on a busy road. Your safety and the safety of other road users may depend upon it.

Remember: Same Roads - Same Rules - Same Rights