

# OVERCOMING CHALLENGES



Andrew Cohrs

In spite of funding, jurisdictional and design challenges, considerable cycling infrastructure has been built in Greater Golden Horseshoe outer ring municipalities, according to new research.

Released yesterday, the **Toronto Centre for Active Transportation's** new book—[Active Transportation Planning Beyond the Greenbelt: The Outer Ring of the Greater Golden Horseshoe Region](#)—profiles 13 municipal projects to improve or create cycling and walking opportunities with new infrastructure investments. Project descriptions include urban, suburban and rural examples, provide before and after images, and identify challenges.

Toronto Centre for Active Transportation director and the book's co-author **Nancy Smith Lea** told *NRU* that before this study was initiated relatively little was known about cycling infrastructure on the periphery of the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

"We weren't entirely sure what was happening or how much we would find [in the outer ring of the Golden Horseshoe]... We were really just trying to find out what was

happening with planning and how people were addressing challenges."

Working with **Ryerson University** assistant professor Dr. **Raktim Mitra** and **University of Toronto** associate professor Dr. **Paul**

**Hess**, Smith Lea surveyed 19 municipalities outside of the Greenbelt to find out the types of active transportation projects that have been implemented in the last five years. Analyzing the results, the team identified a suite of

challenges—lack of funding, design issues, physical environmental limitations, negative public perceptions, potential legal liabilities and jurisdictional authority to approve projects.

Smith Lea said that securing funding to pay for both staff time and the construction of cycling infrastructure is the most widely reported challenge. She noted that the Ontario Municipal Cycling Infrastructure Program has had a major impact by funding at least six of the projects profiled.

While all of the municipalities featured in the book faced many similar barriers, the researchers found that particular challenges affect rural, suburban and urban areas. For example, in rural areas, jurisdiction over roadways is a significant issue.

"The rural areas typically

CONTINUED PAGE 4 ■



Separated bike lanes in a rural area on Waterloo Regional Road 42, near Cambridge

SOURCE: TORONTO CENTRE FOR ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Dedicated bike lanes on Hurst Drive in suburban Barrie

SOURCE: TORONTO CENTRE FOR ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Dedicated bike lanes on George Street in downtown Peterborough

SOURCE: TORONTO CENTRE FOR ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

# IN BRIEF

## [Mapping greenfield areas](#)

A new report by **Malone Given Parsons**—[Getting the Growth Plan Right](#)—outlines issues with how the Growth Plan has been implemented and how proposed amendments will impact the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. Challenging the province data used to calculate the amount of land available for greenfield development. MGP estimates there is only 17,200 ha of

greenfield land remaining to accommodate new housing. Additionally, the authors suggest that the province's proposed amendments to the Growth Plan would result in the tripling of density in existing neighbourhoods outside of the built boundary.

## [Assessing accountability in Canadian municipalities](#)

March 29 the **Institute on Municipal Finance and**

**Governance** released a new [paper](#) on accountability officers and integrity in Canadian municipal government. Authored by **University of Western Ontario** professor emeritus **Andrew Sancton**, the paper evaluates the impact and effectiveness of independent accountability officer positions in cities across the country.

The paper fills a research gap on the topic and draws on case studies from high-

profile integrity commissioner investigations in the cities of Vaughan, London, Toronto and Sarnia. Sancton concludes that although accountability officers typically have limited authority beyond the ability to issue declarations and non-binding recommendations, they can have a significant impact on public opinion. 🌸

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■ CONTINUED PAGE 3

have a provincial highway running right through the middle of town and that is challenging both in terms of the amount and speed of motor vehicle traffic and the impacts that has on the people who are walking and cycling. But it is also difficult in terms of just jurisdictionally planning for that. So, it's the province who decides what that highway looks like and what kind of uses are allowed on it and so that's definitely a major challenge for smaller municipalities," explained Smith Lea.

In suburban areas, existing

networks of roadways, overpasses, on-street parking and speed limits present design challenges for incorporating walking and cycling into car-dominated streets.

In urban areas, removal of on-street parking presents both design and public support challenges. However, Smith Lea said that most municipalities are able to contend with public opposition by improving consultation, as well as using data to show the benefits of the proposed infrastructure.

For municipalities

struggling to move forward with active transportation projects in their communities, Smith Lea points to the importance of putting policies in place. In the outer ring 12 of 19 surveyed municipalities have adopted active transportation plans. She says this is the best first step to take. Additionally, sharing existing resources, such as

the centre's new book, with municipal councillors and staff can help start conversations about what is possible.

Lea Smith will be presenting the study results at the Ontario Bike Summit on April 12 in Toronto. 🌸

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