SUBJECT: On-Street Cycling Program - (PW07078) - (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

(a) That an Alternative Transportation Coordinator be added to the staff complement to facilitate the implementation of the On-Street Cycling Program, pedestrian initiatives and the cycling component of capital projects, with the position to have an initial term of two years and with the position to be funded from the existing capital budget 4030617124;

(b) That staff provide a follow-up status report of the progress of the cycling and pedestrian programs in July 2009.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The intent of this report is to provide an update to the On-Street Cycling Program, and propose the creation of an Alternative Transportation Coordinator position to accelerate the accomplishment of cycling and pedestrian program initiatives and projects in accordance with Transportation Master Plan (TMP) recommendations.

BACKGROUND:

The information/recommendation contained within this report has City-wide implications.

The promotion of on-street cycling through the provision of signed cycling routes, dedicated lanes, paved shoulders, bike racks, mapping and promotion; and the
promotion of walking as an alternate mode of transportation, serve the city’s strategic goals in several ways. These are:

- To convert some automobile trips for work or utilitarian purposes to cycling or walking trips, thereby reducing the demands on the transportation system and improving air quality.
- To promote a healthier lifestyle through additional exercise provided by recreational and utilitarian cycling and walking, thereby creating a healthier population and one with fewer demands on the health care system.
- To create a City which is viewed as liveable, thereby attracting new residents and, businesses, with the attendant positive impact on the economy.

**Status of Cycling in the Transportation Master Plan**

The TMP defines on-street cycling as an integral component of a program to reduce dependency on the single motor vehicle and to reduce the need for roadway expansion in the near future. The idea is to encourage the use of cycling for short commuter and utilitarian trips, with the understanding the recreational riding on the roadway in many cases is an introduction to the use of the bicycle for commuting. The TMP suggests that a mature program to create a full bike lane and route system in Hamilton over the next fifteen years would require capital funding in the range of between $700,000 and $1,000,000 per year. These are preliminary estimates and the range is dependent on the amount of bike facility which can be created simply through roadway remarking versus that which will require construction for road widening.

The TMP also recommends the hiring of a full-time Alternative Transportation Coordinator to implement the cycling and pedestrian initiatives.

**History of the On-Street Cycling Program**

The on-street cycling implementation program has its roots in the mid-1990s. The program has received an annual allotment of approximately $300,000 in most years, with the exception of 2003 for which staff recommended a 1 year moratorium as the program funding was getting ahead of the ability of staff to implement programs.

The program has never been provided with formal staff support. Program implementation has primarily been by the previous project director of the Red Hill Valley Project, prior to amalgamation and by the Manager of Traffic Engineering & Operations subsequently, with whatever staff support could be freed up intermittently from other projects. Cycling programs tend to be detailed in their implementation and each project is unique and specific such that it is difficult to create a routine template. As such, even small, low budget projects can take a significant period of time to implement through the various approvals such as environmental assessment, land acquisition, traffic impact studies, etc.

The overall effect of the lack of staffing has been irregular implementation as staff attempt to find time for cycling projects amid competing priorities.

**Current Status of Outstanding On-street Cycling Projects**

The unspent funding available in the Capital Budget for cycling projects is approximately $772,000. However, much of this funding is formally or informally committed to approved projects. Following is a list of the current major projects already underway which will require significant staff support to complete. The expected expenditures from the available capital funding are also noted.
• York Boulevard Bicycle Lanes: This project went through environmental assessment in 2006 and was subsequently “bumped up” to the Minister’s office. The Minister deemed the “bump up” request to be unsubstantiated in March of 2007 and the project is ready to proceed. The following work remains: modification to one minor concrete island; revision or replacement of catch basins to make them cycling friendly; completion of negotiations with the Ministry of Transportation about the design of the ramp crossings, leading to an agreed upon design; completion of negotiations with the City of Burlington over the connection to Burlington’s roadway system and in particular, the islands at the Plains Road intersection. Remaining expenditure: $85,000.

• North Service Road: This project provides an important missing link in the Provincial waterfront trail. The total project will provide approximately 10 kilometres (in each direction) of cycling facility comprised of on-street routes, bicycle lanes and paved bike shoulders. In 2006 a significant portion of bike shoulder was paved at a cost of approximately $200,000 of the $500,000 budgeted for this project. In 2007, the remaining portions of bike shoulder, which are associated with development along North Service Road east of Jones Road, will be paved and the final signing and pavement markings can then be installed. The project should be under budget with the additional costs associated with additional shoulder paving, signing, and pavement markings estimated at approximately $250,000.

• Canadian Pacific Main Street West Rail Trail: This project has just received 2007 capital budget funding separate from the annual allocation for cycling facilities. Although it is to be a multi-use path, due to the difficulty of implementing a cycling facility on Main Street West, west of Cootes Drive, it is has always been considered a commuter/utilitarian facility as well. The project will require significant effort to initiate and implement. The project will be implemented in conjunction with Real Estate, Legal and Capital Planning & Implementation. The project requires a full environment investigation and assessment; the purchase of land from CPR; the negotiation of a lease over a separate portion of CP land; some innovative design; construction of a multi-use trail; coordination with Chedoke Golf Course and development of a maintenance program. Although separately funded, there is significant staff work required to coordinate all aspects of the project.

• West Hamilton Cycling System, Connecting the CP Rail Trail, McMaster Innovation Park and Longwood Road to King Street: The 2006 Environmental Assessment defined the pavement marking changes, road realignment, parking revisions and other physical changes required to connect the Chedoke Golf Course at the end of the CP Rail Trail through the McMaster Innovation Park past Westdale High School and up to the existing bi-directional path on King Street as well as through Westdale to McMaster University. This project has the necessary approvals but has not been started. Estimated cost: $50,000.

• Update of the Cycling Master Plan: The City’s Cycling Master Plan, titled “Shifting Gears” was produced in 1998-1999. As such, it does not completely reflect the current growth and road network of the City, the recent development of the Trails Master Plan for off-street cycling or the City’s TMP. It is proposed to update Shifting Gears to provide a blueprint for future cycling system expansion. This will allow the City to strategically plan its cycling network and coordinate the projects with road/sidewalk and sewer construction projects. The final product
would be a list of approximately $5,000,000 of projects which could be implemented as funding and opportunity permit. While this project is key to providing Council and the public with a clear short- and long-range plan for cycling facility implementation, it will also be quite time-consuming for staff to support the consultant work, to ensure the level of consultation and detail review required for this important document. The project will be undertaken as an Environmental Assessment Master Planning exercise, to allow for full public input and consultation. A consultant work plan has been developed, but the update project is presently on hold, as staff do not feel they have time to properly support this project. Budget allotted: $108,000.

- Bicycle Racks: There remains in the capital budget approximately $12,000 for the implementation of additional bicycle racks. There is on-going demand from the BIA's and some schools.

- Bicycle Promotion: Bi-annually the Department produces a large quantity of cycling maps for public distribution. These are done to promote the cycling routes as well as the multi-use trails and parks in the city. There is a necessity in 2007 to update and reproduce the bicycle maps as the available stock has been exhausted. As well, the format of the map base is no longer supported and the mapping is being revised to bring it up to current City GIS standards. The City's on-line mapping must be kept current. Usually, staff also attended the annual cycling show in Toronto and other events to promote Hamilton and Hamilton cycling. Total cost for cycling promotion: $50,000.

- Spot Repairs and Capital Improvements: In the near future, the City will have to consider rehabilitation of some of the oldest cycling lanes and shoulders, which are beginning to deteriorate. More immediately, there are a number of catchbasins, on bicycle routes and particularly in bicycle lanes, which need to be levelled. A budget of $50,000 has been allocated for this purpose.

Current Status of Pedestrian Initiatives

Pedestrian facilities are managed through several offices. Capital Planning and Improvement programs and implements new sidewalks and major sidewalk rehabilitation. Roads Operations and Maintenance manage smaller sidewalk rehabilitation programs, spot repairs and wheelchair ramp additions and changes. Open Space Development integrates sidewalk features into streetscaping projects. Traffic Engineering and Operations is responsible for pedestrian traffic control devices, pedestrian safety reviews and accessible (audible) pedestrian signals.

Council has directed the establishment of a Pedestrian Sub-Committee. While the terms of reference for the Committee are not set, the understanding is that the Sub-Committee will develop policies and plans to encourage walking as a means of transportation and to improve the "walkability" of Hamilton.

Duties of the “Alternative Transportation Coordinator” Position

The proposed duties of the Alternative Transportation Coordinator would be as follows:

- to act as the central focus for all issues related to on-street cycling, whether they relate to new development, off-road trails, cycling promotion, spot repairs and maintenance and cycling facility rehabilitation
- to support the rewrite of Shifting Gears by managing the consultant assignment and coordinating the Environmental Assessment process with Capital Planning
and Implementation, with the rewrite to be completed by the third quarter of 2008.

- to advise Council of programming and to work with CPI and other external agencies such as the Ministry of Transportation, Waterfront Regeneration Trust, Hamilton Conservation Authority, and City of Burlington to implement projects as per the Shifting Gears list and then, in the future, revise and adjust priorities as projects are implemented and as demands change
- to design, plan, implement, and coordinate all aspects of projects on the priority list as defined by the revised Shifting Gears
- to review incoming neighbourhood plans to ensure that bike facilities and pedestrian facility continuity are an integral part of neighbourhood design
- to consider the current cycling infrastructure and determine those locations requiring repairs or rehabilitation such as poor pavement and deficient catch basins
- to undertake and promote activities on behalf of cycling such as reviewing the current cycling maps, city webpage and other opportunities to promote the use of cycling as an alternative to automobile use
- to act as the central focus for all issues related to pedestrians, mobility and “walkability”
- to assist in coordinating pedestrian infrastructure planning and implementation as per the guidelines / criteria as identified in the Transportation Master Plan
- to act as staff support to the proposed Pedestrian Sub-Committee, both in a direct support role and in a coordination role where the City already has current capacity and expertise
- to provide general expertise in promoting walking as an alternative transportation form and

**ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:**

The basis for the recommendation is creating a healthier, greener and more enjoyable City in which to live, work and play. The addition of a cycling/pedestrian coordinator will:

- allow for planned implementation of the TMP recommendations,
- accelerate project delivery for earlier realization of benefits,
- deliver more on-street bike lanes, providing safer cycling,
- support the off-road trails system development, and
- allow for coordination and promotion of walking initiatives.

**ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:**

The “status quo” alternative would result in cycling projects being completed slowly, as staff priorities permit. It would certainly not provide the City the capacity to embark on an accelerated cycling capital program, as envisioned by the TMP.

The alternative of a full-time, permanent position would likely attract a higher quality candidate with more experience which would benefit the program.
FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

It is proposed to fund the Alternative Transportation Coordinator position from the City’s existing capital budget allotment. As noted above, most of the available funds are either formally committed to or are earmarked for projects that have been defined and have been initiated. However, there does exist sufficient funding, approximately $167,000, that is not allocated. This is sufficient to support a two year term of a full time employee. A two year term is suggested because this will give a reasonable period of time to catch up on outstanding projects and determine whether it is necessary to have a full time employee assigned to the role. While funded from the cycling capital budget, the alternative transportation coordinator will also perform the role of providing support in coordinating, encouraging and promoting the various pedestrian and walkability activities. The City is embarking on initiatives to encourage the use of walking as an alternative mode of transportation and the Alternative Transportation Coordinator will also act in this role.

A number of options for staffing the position, and potentially reducing the staffing costs, will be explored in the recruitment process, including the Career Edge program which supplies interns from outside Canada.

The Alternative Transportation Coordinator position will be part of the Traffic Engineering staff initially, as the design work is closely related to that of the section. The position would be complementary to the Project Manager, Transportation Demand Management and to the Transit Coordinator, and the three positions will work together, as required.

POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:

This initiative is consistent with the City’s Strategic Plan in several areas. It is also consistent with a core goal of the Public Works Strategic Plan. The initiative is consistent with both the direct recommendation of the TMP to create a cycling/pedestrian support position, and the plan of the TMP to create a broader range of cycling facilities in Hamilton. It directly supports the cycling planning started in Shifting Gears and is consistent with Vision 2020 theme areas of Changing Our Mode of Transportation, Personal Health and Well-being, Consuming Less Energy and Improving Air Quality.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION:

Councillor McHattie advised on the Pedestrian Committee and Councillors McHattie and Collins reviewed the proposed initiatives, as a follow-up to the budget discussions.

Transit (HSR) has Council approval for a program to install bike racks on all City buses. This initiative will promote cycling, particularly trips which cross the escarpment. It will also promote combined cycling and transit use for users located a short ride from the nearest transit route.

The City Cycling Committee, as recently as this March, has expressed its support for a full-time cycling position for the City, in an open letter to Council.

The authors of the TMP (IBI Group) and the Trails Master Plan (G. O’Connor Consultants) and well as support staff for those projects have been consulted.
Capital Planning and Implementation, Human Resources and Finance and Administration internal staff provided advice.

Staff from the Healthy Living Division of Hamilton Public Health Services support the creation of an Alternative Transportation Coordinator position. They note that creating pedestrian and cycling friendly environments contribute to health and well being and that walking and cycling regularly can help reduce the risk of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, some forms of cancer, osteoporosis, and can contribute to positive mental health.

Long Range Planning notes that the Alternative Transportation Coordinator makes sense from an air quality, climate change and travel demand management point of view. Encouraging alternative transportation means getting individuals out of their cars which will improve health in individuals, encourage exercise and will lower the amount of air pollutants and greenhouse gases emitted from the personal vehicle.

Tourism has found that there is significant demand for the cycling, trails and parks map, indicating that recreational initiatives, which on-street cycling supports by providing easier access, make Hamilton more attractive for visitors.

**CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:**

By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line”, (community, environment, economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

- **Community Well-Being is enhanced.** ☑ Yes ☐ No
  Cycling and walking initiatives promote healthier living and well as increased community pride.

- **Environmental Well-Being is enhanced.** ☑ Yes ☐ No
  Converting auto trips for business or errands to walking or bike trips reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

- **Economic Well-Being is enhanced.** ☑ Yes ☐ No
  A walkable and bicycle-friendly City creates an image that should attract businesses and residents.

**Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines?**

- ☑ Yes ☐ No

**Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants?**

- ☑ Yes ☐ No