



## Share the Road Cycling Coalition Announces Bicycle Friendly Community Awards at AMO Conference

Over 30% of Ontarians now live in a Bicycle Friendly Community

**Ottawa, Ontario – August 22, 2012** – The Share the Road Cycling Coalition, (Share the Road) an Ontario-based non-profit organization that promotes bicycling as a mode of transportation, recreation and fitness through provincial advocacy, announced today the latest Bicycle Friendly Communities (BFC) awards for Ontario.

CEO Eleanor McMahon and Bicycle Trade Association of Canada Executive Director Janet O'Connell made the announcement at the annual Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) Conference in Ottawa. The annual AMO conference is a gathering of Ontario's municipal leaders and staff from 444 member municipalities. Over 1600 delegates attend.

"We are thrilled to make this announcement at the AMO conference. Our work with our municipal partners is critical to moving the Ontario bicycling agenda forward. We are pleased that the BFC Program has continued to grow – a trend that mirrors the burgeoning desire in the municipal sector to accommodate bicyclists and leverage the benefits of bicycling," said McMahon.

"This program has facilitated our advocacy work as well – it highlights gaps and captures what municipalities and their citizens want: Ontarians want to live in safe, healthy, vibrant, connected communities that offer a range of transportation and recreation choices. This program gives municipalities the incentives, encouragement and tools they need to do more for their citizens," McMahon added.

"Even in challenging economic times, municipalities are choosing to invest in bicycling as a way to build places where people want to live, work and visit," McMahon noted. "The fact that 30% of the population now lives in bicycle friendly communities is indicative of a growing trend that mirrors our polling numbers: 28% of Ontarians ride at least once a month, with 16% of that total number riding daily or weekly. These municipalities are responding to the growing desire of their citizens to choose the bicycle as a mode of transportation or recreation."

The following communities were awarded Bicycle Friendly status: **Burlington (Bronze), Kingston (Bronze), and Markham (Bronze)**. Honorable Mentions were given to Aurora and Halton Hills.

"Share the Road is proud to announce these three award-winning communities, and we congratulate them on their achievement. We look forward to sitting down with them, and to helping them craft a strategy that will incorporate the strategies and advice which our experts have recommended," said McMahon. "They join 15 previous award winners: Silver designated Ottawa, Hamilton, Toronto and Waterloo and Bronze designated Ajax, Blue Mountains, Guelph, London, Mississauga, Oakville, Oshawa, Peterborough, Richmond Hill, Welland and Windsor," she noted.



McMahon also noted that as a result of the awards process, some clear themes are beginning to emerge: “Many municipalities are struggling to retrofit their infrastructure and accommodate cyclists in cities and towns that particularly in the last half a century, were built primarily for moving motorized vehicles – not people. Consequently they not only have infrastructure challenges – they have attitudinal ones as well. This has contributed to the car vs. bike dynamic which is actually a false paradigm – 89% of Ontarians are motorists and cyclists and this needs to be acknowledged,” she noted.

The results are also confirming another important gap highlighted in Share the Road’s polling and research – the need for formal cycling education programs at the local level: “A number of communities are struggling with the “Education” requirements – for adults as well as children. Further, in Ontario, unlike other jurisdictions (Quebec, the U.S., England) children are not encouraged to ride their bicycle to school, and numerous barriers exist. Finally, neither children nor adults have access to formal bicycling education programs like the model that exists for swimming lessons.”

“The number one reason Ontarians don’t ride (60%) is because they feel unsafe. We need to empower them to feel safer and part of the solution to get people riding is through enhanced education initiatives – as was noted in the recent Coroner’s report on cycling deaths in Ontario. In jurisdictions where cycling is a way of life, bicycling education begins at an early age. This builds healthy habits for life, grows the cycling population, and by the time they can drive, makes these cyclists better and safer motorists,” McMahon said.

“An equally important emerging dynamic that is leading the trend to embrace cycling is the growing interest in bicycle tourism as a mechanism for increased economic development. Ontario’s municipalities want to leverage their natural assets to attract bicycle tourists to their area, as Quebec and many U.S. states where bicycle travel adds \$136 M and \$49 B to the economy in those jurisdictions. In short, they want to encourage bicycling and it is our hope that this program will provide them with the advice they need to leverage the numerous economic benefits bicycling provides,” McMahon noted.

### **About the Bicycle Friendly Community Awards**

The Bicycle Friendly Communities (BFC) Program, an initiative of the Washington-based League of American Bicyclists, was launched in Canada in August 2010 by Share the Road. The program provides incentives, hands-on assistance, and award recognition for communities that actively support bicycling. Municipalities are judged in five categories often referred to as the Five “Es’ Engineering, Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, and Evaluation & Planning. A community must demonstrate achievements in each of the five categories in order to be considered for an award. Communities with more significant achievements in these areas receive superior awards. The Award categories are: Honorable Mention, Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum.

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