

# WINDSOR'S CYCLING HISTORY

Windsor has been  
and is a **cycling city**.



## Windsor's Cycling History

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Founded in 2019, the Centre for Cities provides avenues for researchers, students, municipal governments, community organizations and other policy-makers and advocates to learn, exchange ideas and work together toward a common goal of sustainable and inclusive local governance.

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Windsor Law, c. 1980

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## Introduction

# This is a brief history of cycling in Windsor over almost a century and a half.

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There are several themes which recur in this account. The first is that Windsor has had a lengthy and ongoing cycling presence. Repeatedly there have been efforts to marginalize cycling -and indeed write cycling out of the transportation history of Canada's "motor city"- but Windsor's engagement with cycling has been significant and unbroken.<sup>1</sup> Engagement with cycling racing has come close to falling off at times but cycling for utilitarian and recreational reasons never has. Another (near) constant in Windsor's cycling history is unique to the City's co-location with Detroit; Windsor's cycling history has often been a cross-border cycling history. Excitingly, with the provision for active transportation on the new Gordie Howe Bridge which will link the two cities, cross-border cycling is on the verge of a renaissance. As the environmental, health, equity and city-building benefits of cycling come into sharp focus in the twenty-first century, it is an opportune time to highlight Windsor's cycling past and present. In short, Windsor has been and is a cycling city, even if we have never fully realised the potential of our flat topography, mild winters, the good bones of our urban core, and proximity to rich natural and built heritage.

# Timeline: Bicycle City



**1892** \_\_\_\_\_

The Windsor Wheelmen club is formed. Clubs across Essex County follow suit during the 'bicycle craze' of the 1890s.

**1897** \_\_\_\_\_

Evans & Dodge employ 100 workers in their bicycle factory near the ferry dock in downtown Windsor.

**1905** \_\_\_\_\_

The "bicycle craze" is over but cycling is commonplace for everyday transportation. Over the next decades bikes gradually lose ground to cars for space on the road.

**1939** \_\_\_\_\_

The Second World War brings high demand for bicycles and rationed "Victory Bikes" appear in the City.

**1976** \_\_\_\_\_

Windsor's Bikeway Report proposes a modest network of bike paths focused on recreation.

**1973** \_\_\_\_\_

The "bicycle boom" hits Windsor and cyclists start to organize for the first time since the "golden age" of cycling in the 1890s.

**1958** \_\_\_\_\_

Erie Street Bicycle Race starts, marking a rebirth of cycle racing in Windsor, largely dormant since the turn of the century.

**1949** \_\_\_\_\_

There are 10,000 bikes in the City, but increasingly bikes are portrayed as children's toys.

**1991** \_\_\_\_\_

Riding the "mini boom" of the mid-late 1980s, the Windsor Bicycling Committee is formed and the Bicycle Use Development Study (BUDS) is adopted.

**2001** \_\_\_\_\_

The City's Bicycle Use Master Plan (BUMP) sets out an ambitious 20-year plan to promote cycling in Windsor. Implementation is uneven through the first two decades of the century.

**2010** \_\_\_\_\_

Bike Friendly Windsor —now Bike Windsor Essex— is formed to advocate for safer streets.

**2019** \_\_\_\_\_

The Walk Wheel Windsor Plan is adopted following public consultation and integrates the promotion of cycling with walking and transit. Implementation stalls during the pandemic as other cities accelerate bike-friendly policies.

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# B

## Border City Bicycle Craze

Although the date of the first bicycle to be ridden in Windsor is unknown, the first “velocipede” in Detroit was ridden in 1868<sup>2</sup> and in 1875 these early versions of the modern bicycle were in “common use” in that city.<sup>3</sup> It is likely that, given its proximity to Detroit, cycling started more or less contemporaneously in Windsor.<sup>4</sup> This conjecture is supported by the recorded use of the velocipede in other parts of southwest Ontario as early as 1869. What is certain is that over the next 30 years bicycle use gradually grew in popularity in the Windsor region and North America’s “bicycle craze” of the 1890s hit the city hard. In July 1891, the Amherstburg Echo reported: “Go almost anywhere and you will see an aspiring ‘cyclist’ trying to learn the tricks of the wheel.”<sup>5</sup> During this “golden age” of cycling, bicycle clubs sprung up in Windsor. These clubs were a central social focus for members and organised excursions and races, often with a great deal of pageantry. In 1892 the Windsor Wheelmen were the first club established in the region. Clubs in Walkerville (a separate town until amalgamation with Windsor in 1935), Essex, Kingsville and Leamington quickly followed suit.<sup>6</sup> A second Windsor club, the Windsor Bicycle Club, was established in 1895 following an ad in the newspaper on a Saturday in April 1895 stating: “Every wheelman in the city is earnestly invited to attend the meeting next Monday evening at the Y.M.C.A. for forming a club.”<sup>7</sup> Local races, such as from Kingsville to Ruthven and an annual race in Walkerville, were common, but Windsor-area clubs were also integrated into a national cycling scene under the auspices of the Canadian Wheelman’s Association. Indeed, Windsor cyclists participated in races throughout central Canada, and Windsor –along with southwest Ontario generally- was known as having a strong cycling scene. Windsor’s cycling news made it to the pages of newspapers as far away as Quebec City.<sup>8</sup>

What was unique about Windsor’s cycling activity in this period was its twin integration into both the Canadian and Detroit cycling scenes. Windsorites and Detroiters were members of each other’s clubs and participated in each other’s races and excursions.<sup>9</sup> They also attended cycling events as fans in each other’s cities. On at least one occasion, in 1896, the Detroit Wheelmen hosted a race at a Windsor horse-race track when a suitable venue could not be obtained across the river.<sup>10</sup> Class and race mattered during the “bicycle craze” – cycling “was the preserve mainly of the Anglo elite” in Canada before the price of bikes fell dramatically by the end of the decade – but there is no question that bicycle racing also had mass appeal on both sides of the border in this region.<sup>11</sup> For example, 1,000 spectators were reported at the second annual road race of the Windsor Wheelmen, 3,500 for the “Detroit in Windsor” event, and as many

as 20,000 spectators viewed a race on Detroit’s Belle Isle at events during the decade. Prizes in area races were often items donated by merchants, ranging from watches to a ton of ice or coal. While racing was dominated by men, women’s participation in recreational cycling in the region – as in other areas in North America – was strong and the emancipatory aspects of this movement have been well documented.<sup>12</sup>

Cross-border cycling in the region extended beyond racing. For starters, cross-border cycling tourism grew in popularity from the early 1880s. Here is an account of an American expedition to Canada from July 1884, for example, written in *The Canadian Wheelman*:<sup>13</sup>

A start was made from Windsor, Ont., opposite Detroit at 8:30 a.m., with Goderich Ont. as the objective point. The day was all that could be desired, with the favoring wind. After a journey over excellent roads, through Maidstone Cross, Essex Centre, and other villages, the party arrived on the outskirts of Leamington to find their first obstacle in the shape of sand for a mile or more, but by riding side-paths and walking, the town was reached and dinner obtained after a rest of one and one-half hours. The start was again made, passing through an elegant country with smiling fields on one side, and the beautiful waters of Lake Erie on the other.

**“Every wheelman in the city is earnestly invited to attend the meeting next Monday evening at the Y.M.C.A. for forming a club.”**

**ROUTE 8.**

**Detroit to Leamington, Ont.**

Via Kingsville.

38 MILES.

Miles	Stations.	Material.	Condition.	
	Detroit. ....	Pavement....	Good....	† *
1	Windsor ...	Ferry.....	“ .....	
13	Maidstone Cr’ss	Gravel .....	“ .....	
4	Essex Centre ..	“ .....	“ .....	
5	Cottam.....	“ .....	“ .....	
7	Kingsville.....	“ .....	“ .....	
4	Ruthven .....	“ .....	“ .....	
4	Leamington ...	“ .....	“ .....	

1897 League of American Wheelmen-Michigan Division



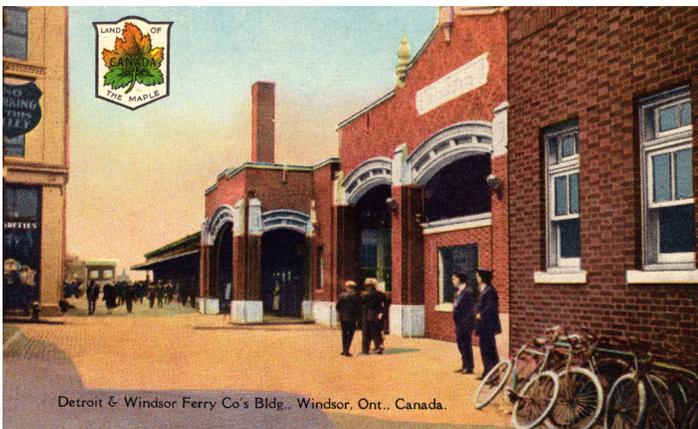
Evans & Dodge Bicycle Advertisement, Windsor Evening Record, 1896

Throughout the following years of the decade, Detroit wheelmen’s guides regularly featured rides through Essex County and beyond, starting from the Detroit-Windsor Ferry Terminal on Woodward Avenue (a smaller number of tours would start at the ferry to Walkerville). The 1897 Road Book of the Michigan Division of the League of American Wheelmen featured rides crossing the Detroit River and going to Amherstburg, Leamington, Chatham, and even Buffalo (via St. Thomas and Niagara Falls).<sup>14</sup> For cyclists coming in the opposite direction across the ferry, Detroit inns advertised in regional newspapers. For example, the Franklin House, which billed itself as “the best hotel in Detroit” offered not only “comfortable beds and good meals” for all travellers but stressed “excellent accommodations for wheelmen” through a series of ads in the Comber Herald.<sup>15</sup>

Bicycles were also used during this period by Windsorites for utilitarian reasons. This included daily commuting by bicycle to jobs in Windsor and, via ferry, Detroit.<sup>16</sup> Famously in the region, an Amherstburg physician and long-time mayor, Dr. Fred Park, did his house calls on bicycle.<sup>17</sup> Riding during this period sometimes involved friction with other modes of transportation. As in other regions, “scorching” (excessively fast or “furious” cycling) and sidewalk riding was decried in local newspapers.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, Windsor was one of the first cities in the country to ban cycling on sidewalks.<sup>19</sup> Bylaw No. 279, passed in 1876, explicitly excluded “velocipedes” from sidewalks, along with many other vehicles capable of being propelled by people, such as hand wagons, wheelbarrows, handcarts and sleds. The bylaws were rigorously enforced in Windsor. For example, on June 2, 1897 cross-border cyclist J. H. Kave of Toledo was charged with riding

a bicycle on a sidewalk and released with a caution. Later that same week, Walter Stover, John Foster, John McDutosh, and S.S. Simonds, all of Windsor, were charged with sidewalk riding. With fines of 85 cents each, they did not get off so easily as the visitor from Toledo. Apparently, citizens sometimes took action into their own hands. In a dig at Leamington residents, the Kingsville Reporter suggested that Leamingtonians sprinkled broken glass on the sidewalks to puncture the tires of offending wheelmen. At the same time, it was a period where in Windsor and elsewhere in the country, the right of bicyclists to the road -or in the arcane legal language of the time, to pass and repass on public highways- was firmly established.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, Windsorites not only rode bikes, they built bikes during this period. Bicycle manufacturing predates car manufacturing and, in many ways, the car was born on the frame of processes and parts originally designed for bicycles.<sup>21</sup> Herb Colling & Carl Morgan in *Pioneering the Auto Age* wrote, “There is little question that Windsor put Canada on wheels.”<sup>22</sup> That is true, but the statement would more accurately refer first to bicycles. While early bikes in Canada were imported or homemade, bicycle manufacturing in the Dominion took off in the late nineteenth century as high import duties led American bicycle manufacturers to open branches in Canada. This included Gendron (1892) and H.A. Lozier & Company (1895) in Toronto, and ABC in Hamilton in (1898).<sup>23</sup> Windsor also became an important bicycle manufacturing site under the leadership of Windsorite Fred Evans, and Michigan’s Dodge brothers. John and Horace Dodge were machinist brothers who entered the Windsor scene in 1892. They began working for Evans at the Canadian Typograph



Detroit & Windsor Ferry Co's Bldg., Windsor, 1930.  
Source: Southwestern Ontario Digital Archive

## Windsorites not only rode bikes, they built bikes during the 1890s

Company (industrial typography was also a cutting-edge industry requiring precision machining), commuting daily from Detroit, and eventually partnered with him to create Evans & Dodge Bicycle. By the end of 1897, Evans & Dodge employed 100 people making bicycles near the ferry dock in downtown Windsor. The brothers sold their bicycle manufacturing interests to what ultimately became Canadian Cycle and Motor, or CCM, following the commercially and legally messy cartelization of bicycle manufacturers across North America. The brothers, who were also strong bicycle racers, then turned squarely to auto manufacture, at first in connection with Henry Ford. The Dodge name is now associated worldwide with a car brand and the brothers' story has been frequently told.<sup>24</sup> Less well known is that Evans & Dodge was not alone in Windsor in manufacturing bicycles. They were, in fact, contemporary with others, including Windsor Cycle Works, which was founded in 1895.<sup>25</sup> Bike components were also manufactured in Windsor during this period. For example, the 1899 city directory shows the presence of 5 bicycle "manufacturers or dealers", one of which was a bicycle saddle maker.<sup>26</sup> Leaving aside the manufacturing platform for cars, cycling also literally paved the way for cars through advocacy for better roads and signage, including in the countryside. The "good roads movement" had many local advocates who were joined with others across the province and indeed across the Dominion to push the authorities towards firmer roads and advocating for the right to the road of non-traditional users.<sup>27</sup>

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# C



## Cycling in Canada's Motor City

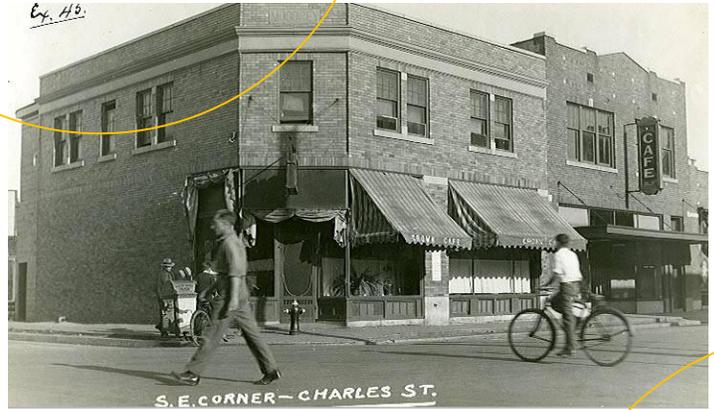
At the end of the "golden age" of cycling -which either with the 1890s or, more generously, extended until roughly 1905- cycling began to lose its cachet. Originally associated with modern times and progress, that label shifted to the automobile. However, while wheelmen's clubs became seen as passé, utilitarian cycling more than held its own in the first decades of the twentieth century. Cycling to work -including large numbers cycling to work at local car factories- or school was simply normal. Many more people rode bikes than drove. Gradually, however, car ownership in the area increased, starting from 1900 when the first cars were seen in Essex County (although car sightings did not become normal until 1906 and Windsor's first taxi service was not launched until 1909).<sup>28</sup> Cycling went into a slow decline, beginning with recreational cyclists and women. In August 1906 the Amherstburg Echo asked: "Say, what has become of the lady bicycle rider... The bike seems to have become a machine used merely for business purposes."<sup>29</sup>

As a result of increased car use, street parking became common and cities were gradually remade to accommodate the automobile and attendant sprawl.<sup>30</sup> From the 1920s, on-street cycling began to be cast as a danger and an obstacle to a definition of 'traffic' which excluded the bicycle as well as other sorts of road users, including pedestrians. This was the era when the notion of "jaywalking" was invented, implying that only country rubes or "jays" would walk on the streets (the term "jaycycling" also existed but was never popularised).<sup>31</sup> As a sympathetic columnist wrote in a Chatham newspaper in 1934, the writing was on the wall for cycling: "Many persons on bicycles still brave the dangers of motor traffic. So we may say that bicycle riding is not yet a lost art. In years to come it will probably pass away unless we set aside special roads or pathways for cycling."<sup>32</sup> While cycle paths did develop in parts of the world during this period,<sup>33</sup> the Windsor area would not see the development of bike paths until over four decades later.

## The bicycle represented freedom for many children in the postwar period

From the 1920s until at least the 1970s, efforts were made, sometimes deliberately, and sometimes under well-intentioned regulatory or safety initiatives, to gradually squeeze bicycles off the roads. In the absence of well-organized cyclist groups, city officials, the police, courts, newspaper columnists and motorist associations were at liberty to blame cyclist death and injury on unsafe cycling with little regard to unsafe infrastructure or unsafe driving. Culturally, cycling began to be associated with children, especially boys, and the bicycle was increasingly marketed across North American media as a toy.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, children were being discouraged from riding on roads. In 1945, for example, Windsor parents were asked to not allow young children to ride to school because it was unsafe and caused "congestion" around schools.<sup>35</sup> In 1966, a representative of the Ontario Motor League for the region advised that "Parents should give serious thought before buying a bicycle for very young children," in light of "how many cyclists are killed or injured annually and that, with the tremendous number of motor vehicles on our streets and highways, very little space is left for bicycles."<sup>36</sup> He went on to suggest that children on bikes should see themselves as "bicycle drivers" rather than bicycle riders. As Glen Norcliffe puts it: "by the 1950s there were hardly any advocates lobbying for bicyclists' interests...the bicycle's role as a boy's stepping stone to an automobile was rarely in question."<sup>37</sup>

Licensing regimes were one way of disciplining cyclists during this era. While the nature of the licensing scheme varied over time, in many years the schemes were directly tied to motoring. In 1949, for example, a particularly onerous system required a cyclist to obtain a licence form from city hall and then go to a car mechanic to have the bike safety checked. The mechanic would stamp the form and the rider would then take it back to city hall to have it issued. The motivation for this scheme was not malevolent (it came as part of a safety drive in response to 3 cyclist deaths) but no thought appears to have been given to infrastructural issues.<sup>38</sup> Aside from safety, various bike licensing schemes in the city were also aimed at deterring theft<sup>39</sup> and, as suggested above, preparing child cyclists to be better drivers when they grew up.<sup>40</sup> Over-policing was also on full display in some years. In 1941, for example, more than 1000 adults in Windsor were fined for cycling offences and hundreds of youth appeared in juvenile court; the latter was "keeping them [court officials] so busy lecturing cyclists that they haven't the full time they used to have to attend to juvenile crime."<sup>41</sup> By the mid-1960s, the bicycle licensing system -which bizarrely was run for the City by the Essex County Automobile Association during this period- slowly began to unravel, as did strict enforcement of cyclist



[Clockwise from top left] Ouellette St. at Pitt St., 1914. Source: Southwestern Ontario Digital Archive | Drouillard Road and Charles St., c. 1931. Source: Windsor Public Library | Southwest Corner Ouellette Ave. and Wyandotte St., 1938. Source: Windsor Public Library | Riverside Library, 1969. Source: Windsor Public Library

behaviour generally.<sup>42</sup> While in some ways a positive in the sense of removing barriers to cycling (especially given that the licencing schemes had no discernable impact on actual cycling behaviour), the lack of regulatory attention reflected the infantilization and marginalization of cycling in the post-war era.

While the bicycle had in some ways become unwelcome on city streets during this area, it would be wrong to suggest that gradual marginalisation of cycling in the twentieth century was linear or anywhere near complete. Although by the Second World War cars in Windsor outnumbered bikes by three to one, the number of bikes remained sizeable. In 1941 there were 9,091 licenced bikes (plus an estimated four hundred unlicensed "strays") in the city.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, during the Second World War, bicycles were in high demand in Windsor - as was the case throughout North America - as saving gas made riding a bike a patriotic duty.<sup>44</sup> Bikes themselves were difficult to come by during this period. The need to conserve rubber and other materials resulted in new bicycles being rationed to essential workers who relied on them for transportation in aid of the war effort.<sup>45</sup> Even after the war, the use of bicycles for delivery of groceries and newspapers by children remained commonplace well into the post-war era.<sup>46</sup> In 1949 for example, it was reported that of the 10,000 bicycles in the city, 400 of them were ridden by Windsor Star carriers.<sup>47</sup>

Beyond work, the bicycle represented freedom for many children in the postwar period. As one respondent to a study on

constructions of boyhood and masculinity in Windsor put it: "We would get on our bikes and we would be all over this city.... nobody knows a town like a boy on a bike. I would be all over this city. A kid on a bike has all afternoon. Don't come home until suppertime or when the street lights come on."<sup>48</sup> This sense of freedom was circumscribed by gender, race and class, but certainly, as evidenced by a review of classified ads, the number of private sales for bikes, especially boys and girls' bikes, remained strong from the 30s through to the 70s. The bicycle retail and rental scene was also strong. For example, while in 1929, the city directory shows only 4 bicycle shops, that number rose to 13 in 1939 and 14 in 1949. The number of dedicated bike shops fell in 1956 to 8 and there were 9 in 1969, but this was the era where consumers were purchasing their bikes at department stores. Bike riding was also celebrated in the city through bike rodeos and decorating contests during the 1960s.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that cycling racing made a comeback in the city in 1958, after it was largely forgotten in the region for much of the first half of the twentieth century. The Tour di via Italia, or the Erie Street Bicycle Race (among other names it has had - sometimes changing with sponsors) was launched by Windsor's Italian community and the race, which is traditionally held on the Sunday of the Labour Day weekend, has become a fixture of Windsor's Little Italy since that time (with a hiatus during the pandemic).<sup>49</sup>

# B

## Bikeways and Beyond

Between 1970 and 1974, North America experienced a “bike boom”. As cycling historian Carlton Reed puts it:<sup>50</sup>

Cycling had been building in popularity throughout the 1960s thanks to health concerns, and when baby-boomer ecological concerns merged with a fitness kick the American market for bicycles doubled within a couple of years. Everybody, it seemed in the early seventies, rushed out to buy ten-speed drop-handlebar bicycles, and the number of urban cyclists became so great that the United States, and to a much lesser extent the United Kingdom, almost started to do what the Netherlands was doing at the same time, and that’s build networks of cycleways.

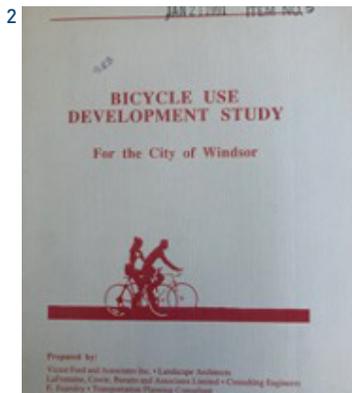
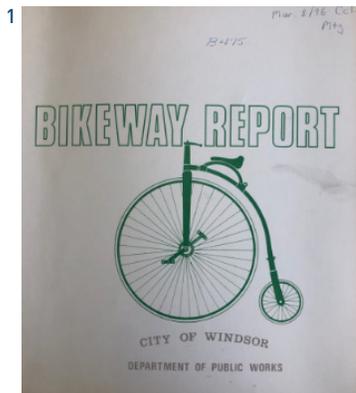
The bike boom in Windsor was slower to take hold of the public imagination than in some other parts of North America. For example, while in the early 70s the virtues of cycling appear in newspaper columns in the region, the articles were mostly written by syndicated American columnists. Nonetheless, bicycle sales and use were on the rise in the first part of the decade. In 1973 sales in Windsor were estimated to be 30% higher than the year prior.<sup>51</sup> That same year, there were increased calls for Windsor to better accommodate cycling. The Windsor Chapter of the Ontario Biking Coalition produced a far reaching “Master Bikeway Plan” and presented it to the City. It gathered dust for two years until 1975, when City Council revisited the report and agreed to commission a “bikeway development concept.”<sup>52</sup> The City’s “Bikeway Report” of January 1976 provided the first coherent plan to accommodate the City’s estimated 60,000 cyclists (out of a total population of roughly 200,000).<sup>53</sup> The plan was modest and focused largely on recreational cyclists but, in March 1976, the Windsor Star was able to report that: “Bicycle riding could become more attractive this year following a decision Monday by City Council to give the nod to a pilot project to build some bikeways in Windsor...”<sup>54</sup> That summer, 18.5 kilometers of bike paths were opened, linking park areas in the west side of the city and along the Detroit River. Construction of the paths stalled, however, and in 1979 the same paper reported that:

Windsor’s program of bicycle path construction, idle for nearly three years, may be reactivated this year. ...About three years ago, the city adopted a long-range program to extend a network of bike paths through the city and began construction of the first phase, a route on the west side. Future plans called for bike paths and routes on the city’s central and east sides but later construction was cancelled to keep taxes down.<sup>55</sup>

**The notion of Windsor as a cycling-friendly city was squarely again on the civic agenda in the 1970s**

As modest and fumbled -and in some ways foreshadowing- as this launch of Windsor’s dedicated bicycle infrastructure was, it had at least started by the late 1970s.

The rise in popularity of cycling in the 1970s was followed by a “mini-boom” in the mid-1980s, this time centred on mountain bikes. As the President of the Windsor Bicycle Club put it in July 1987, “There very definitely is an explosion in the popularity of cycling...Whether recreational or racing, cycling in Windsor and across North America is just now coming into its own.”<sup>56</sup> The 1980s would see the rejuvenation of area bicycling clubs and racing, including through the celebrated win in 1984 of a member of the Windsor Bicycle Club, Kelly-Ann Way, in the eighth stage of the Tour de France féminin (the first North American cyclist to win an individual stage at the Tour de France or Tour de France féminin).<sup>57</sup> Bike safety drives and, beginning in 1988, police officers on bikes, were another feature of the decade. Attention also turned again in the 1980s to a coherent plan for cycling infrastructure in the city. Although first proposed a decade before, in 1976, an advisory committee to city council was established in 1987 as the Bikeways Ad Hoc Steering Committee. The main role of the committee, which would become the Windsor Bicycling Committee in 1991, “was to advise City council on matters pertaining to the establishment of a network of recreational and commuter routes for cyclists in the City of Windsor.”<sup>58</sup> The group worked with consultants and the city’s administration, and the resulting Bicycle Use Development Study (BUDS), which was adopted in principle in 1991, proposed a network of bicycle paths for the city. Although, in 1992, the year of Windsor’s centennial, it could be claimed that “auto culture remains dominant in Windsor, Canada’s auto capital,”<sup>59</sup> the notion of Windsor as a cycling-friendly city was squarely again on the civic agenda.



- [1] Bikeway Report, 1976
- [2] Bicycle Use Development Study (BUDS), 1990
- [3] The Bicycle Use Master Plan (BUMP), 2001
- [4] The Active Transportation Master Plan (ATMP), 2019



BUDS was a partial success and roughly 40 km of off-road trails were created over the 1990s. There was a general recognition, however, that a more ambitious and comprehensive approach to cycling was needed. The City's Bicycle Use Master Plan (BUMP) of 2001 was widely lauded by Windsor's cycling community.<sup>60</sup> It set out a 20-year guide to development of a connected bicycle network in the city which would accommodate the needs of commuter as well as recreational cyclists. It also looked beyond bike paths by addressing end of use facilities, the bike-transit link and even changing cycling culture in the city through education and awareness. While the plan was a strong one and progress was made under it, the City never fully committed itself to active implementation. The resources -human and financial- called for under the BUMP were rarely found and a lack of political and administrative enthusiasm, as well as regular turnover on the Windsor Cycling Committee by members disenchanted with the slow rate of progress, was often on display. The plan itself became dated in terms of recommended infrastructure. As cycling scholar and former Windsorite, Nicholas Scott, puts it: "bike lanes for BUMP do not entail physically separated cycle tracks on streets- the only infrastructure that resolves the issue of safety without which many people say they will not cycle. Rather they are striped and marked as symbolic. BUMP... faced significant difficulties in winning government support or changing existing road-building practices."<sup>61</sup>



The Active Transportation Master Plan (ATMP) replaced BUMP in 2019. The ATMP is a strong plan which integrates walking and transit with cycling. It was created following extensive and meaningful community consultation. Unfortunately, the ATMP faces the danger of a similar fate as the BUMP: unambitious implementation.<sup>62</sup> While every year cycling facilities are added to Windsor's cycling network, a lack of connectivity between routes



(bike lanes abruptly start and stop), the failure to actively engage the cycling community in project prioritization, the failure to build physically separated lanes on major commuting routes, the failure to promote a culture shift through encouragement and education, and the failure to implement 'quick wins' identified by the ATMP, continue to be in evidence. One of the neglected key 'quick wins' suggested in the ATMP is to "Develop a minimum grid downtown for all ages and abilities bicycle network as a pilot project."<sup>63</sup> The lack of bicycle infrastructure in the core has become even more important with the addition of e-scooters and other forms of micromobility. The failure to add 'pop up' bicycle lanes during the pandemic, when many Windsorites took to their bicycles in search of safe recreation and transportation, was also a disappointment in light of their proven effectiveness and low cost.<sup>64</sup> While there has been an increase in ridership and the diversity of that ridership during the pandemic, cycling in Windsor continues to lean heavily male, white and middle aged. It is well-established that many women and other cyclists who feel vulnerable on the streets prefer the safety of dedicated cycle paths.<sup>65</sup> The failure to provide those is a missed opportunity for transportation equity in our city.

Despite the lack of a vigorous commitment to complete streets, a "vision zero" for cyclist and pedestrian death and injury (as I was completing this paper, in August 2021, a Windsor cyclist was killed in a hit and run), or the vigorous promotion of active transportation to help combat the climate emergency declared by the City,<sup>66</sup> the situation in Windsor remains encouraging. Many more cyclists are on the road than a decade ago, the cycling network has grown even if at a slower pace than any of the plans

have anticipated, the danger of a particularly treacherous stretch of road (the "Dougall death trap") has been rectified by the City, the City's recently-adopted economic development strategy, "Windsor Works", calls for Windsor to "continue plans to support active transportation and make cycling and walking more attractive",<sup>67</sup> and Windsor has a vibrant cycling culture. This cycling culture is evidenced by participation in mass rides (from Tweed rides to Bike to Work rides), participation in Open Streets events, informal and formal (including with the East Side Riders) club rides, and the hum of activity in the Bike Kitchen in Walkerville, a social enterprise where cyclists can borrow tools and rent bikes. Sometimes it is the relatively small things, such as the Windsor Public Library's new e-cargo bike "Betty", the installation of a do-it-yourself bicycle "fixit" station on a bike route, or the development of active routes to school, which continue to encourage the City's cycling community. Furthermore, cycling is booming in Essex County,<sup>68</sup> as well as across the Detroit River, where bikes are being manufactured again and where cycling infrastructure and culture has taken off with that city's resurgence. Before the pandemic, many Windsorites were participating in Detroit cycling events (aided by Transit Windsor's ability since 2017 to carry bicycles on its tunnel buses) and one can fully expect that they will again do so. Furthermore, the decision to include toll-free, multi-use paths on the Gordie Howe International Bridge, thanks to the advocacy efforts of cyclists on both sides of the Detroit River—led by Bike Windsor Essex—promises a real boon to cross-border cycling, which as detailed above, has a historic place in the Border Cities.

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## Conclusion

**We have a significant and unbroken cycling history, from the late nineteenth century to the present, and the best is hopefully still to come.**

As a city, Windsor has been selective about what parts of our mobility, manufacturing, and cultural history we have embraced. Active transportation has often been written out of this history. This brief account is an attempt to provide another lens on the rich history of the Border Cities region.



Linking the past and present of cycling, Tweed Ride, 2014.  
Source: *Bike Windsor Essex*

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## Endnotes

1. As an example of my claim that the bicycle has been written out of Windsor history, see the otherwise excellent Trevor Price & Larry Kulisek, *Windsor 1892-1992: A Centennial Celebration* (Windsor: Chamber Publications, 1992). In this centennial history, the following modes of transportation are covered in Chapter 4 on transportation: ferries, stage coaches, railways, busses, streetcars and cars. Cycling is not though one sees bicycles in the background of the book's photos. There are some notable exceptions with respect to cycling in the region during the Golden Era of the 1890s. See Patrick Brode's description in *The River and the Land* (Windsor: Biblioasis, 2014) at 134 and Kingsville-Gosfield Heritage Society, *Kingsville 1790-2000: A Stroll Through Time* (Kingsville: Kingsville-Gosfield Heritage Society, 2003).
2. "December 18<sup>th</sup>, 1868: Detroit's First Bicyclist", *M-Bike.org* online: <<https://m-bike.org/2011/12/18/december-18th-1868-detroits-first-bicyclist>>.
3. Silas Framer, *History of Detroit and Michigan* (Detroit: Silas Farmer & Company, 1884) at 352.
4. G.B. Norcliffe, *Ride to Modernity: The Bicycle in Canada, 1869-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001) at 5.
5. Kingsville-Gosfield Heritage Society, *supra* note 1 at 548.
6. W. Edward Laurendeau, "Sport and Canadian culture in the Border Cities, 1867 to 1929" (1971) University of Windsor MA Thesis at 21. For a wonderful account of a bike race under the auspices of the Walkerville Bicycle Club, see Elaine Weeks, "The Big Race: Walkerville 1896", *Windsor Then Windsor Now* (27 April 2011), online: <<https://windsorthenwindsornow.wordpress.com/2011/04/27/the-big-race-walkerville-1896>>.
7. The [Windsor] Evening Record (20 April 1895).
8. See for example, C. Stan Allens, "Cycling Letter" (8 June 1896), *Quebec Morning Chronicle* at 4.
9. Laurendeau, *supra* note 6 at 23.
10. "Great Day's Sport at the Driving Park" The Evening Record (July 18, 1896) at 4.
11. Norcliffe, *supra* note 4 at 187. More research is needed into cycling in the Black community in Windsor during this era, but interestingly the activities of Marshall "Major" Taylor -an African-American champion cyclist- were covered closely and fairly sympathetically by Windsor's press. See for example, "Major Taylor Quits" The Evening Record (October 15, 1898) at 4.
12. Including with respect to clothing and fashion. See for example, Adrienne LaFrance, "How the Bicycle Paved the Way for Women's Rights" *The Atlantic* (26 June 2014) online: <<https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/06/the-technology-craze-of-the-1890s-that-forever-changed-womens-rights/373535>>. Practical cycling clothing for women was regularly advertised in Windsor newspapers including "Rigby Rainproof Bicycle Suits", *The Evening Record* (16 May 1896).
13. "A 350 Mile Tour through Canada", *The Canadian Wheelman* 1:11 (July 1884) 101.
14. League of American Wheelmen Michigan Division, "Road Book of the Michigan Division, League of American Wheelmen" (Michigan: E.N. Hines, 1897) online: <<https://books.google.ca/books?id=5gXiAAAAMAAJ>>.
15. See for example, The Comber Herald (19 October 1899).
16. From the Milford Times (Oakland County, Michigan): (4 September 1897) at 1. "A ruling, which went into effect this week under the new tariff law, requires that all bicycles of foreign make shall pay duty when brought into this country. The enforcement of the Jaw is causing a big kick from Windsor wheelmen, many of whom have practiced bringing their wheels over and riding to their work in Detroit."
17. David Botsford, "At the End of the Trail" (1985) at 125, online (pdf): <<https://www.marshcollection.org/wp-content/uploads/At-The-End-Of-The-Trail.pdf>>.
18. See "A Reckless Wheelman: Knocked Down and Hurt a Woman on Sandwich St." The Evening Record (31 May 1899).
19. See Christopher Waters, "Opinion: Let's make sidewalk cycling a thing of the past" *Windsor Star* (October 2017), online: <<https://windsorstar.com/opinion/columnists/opinion-lets-make-sidewalk-cycling-a-thing-of-the-past>>.
20. See Christopher Waters, "The Rebirth of Bicycling Law?" (2013) 91 *Can Bar Rev* 395 online: <<https://cbr.cba.org/index.php/cbr/article/view/4298>>.
21. "The bicycle industry in the United States donated many essential elements to the budding automobile industry in addition to metalworking technology. Organizational structure, distribution networks, and such components needed in volume production as ball bearings, steel tube, and screw fasteners were other important items." Robert E. Ankli & Fred Frederiksen "The Influence of American Manufacturers on the Canadian Automobile Industry" (Papers delivered at the 27th annual meeting of the Business History Conference, 16 May 1981).
22. Tecumseh: TravelLife Publishing, 1993 at 7.
23. Norcliffe, *supra* note 4 at 113.
24. See Hyde, Charles K. "The Dodge Brothers: the men, the motor cars and the legacy" (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005) and see "Dodge: It started in Windsor" *Windsor Star* (25 June 2020) online: <<https://windsorstar.com/opinion/columnists/dodge-it-started-in-windsor>>.
25. "Windsor Cycle works nearly four years old" *The Windsor Review* (28 July 1899).
26. See also Herbert Ellis's patent for the "Combined Bicycle Stand and Pump", Can Patent No. 70430, (1901).
27. Waters, *supra* note 20
28. Neil F. Morrison, *Garden Gateway to Canada: One Hundred Years of Windsor and Essex*, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, January 1954) at 182.
29. *Ibid* at 184.
30. On the remaking of the city to accommodate cars in another southwestern Ontario city, see Gerald T. Bloomfield, "No Parking Here to Corner: London Reshaped by the Automobile, 1911-61" (1989) 18:2 *Urban History Review* at 139-58.
31. See Peter Norton, *Fighting Traffic: Dawn of the Motor Age in the American City* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2011).
32. "Uncle Ray's Corner" *Chatham Daily News* (10 October 1934).
33. See generally, Carlton Reed, *Bike Boom: The Unexpected Resurgence of Bicycling* (Island Press, 2017) at 30.
34. *Ibid* at 26.
35. Gary Myers, "Has Rules for Cyclists" *Windsor Daily Star* (1 November 1945) at 29.
36. "Knowledge of road rules vital for youngsters" *Windsor Star* (22 April 1966) at 27.
37. Glen Norcliffe, *Critical Geographies of Cycling: History, Political Economy and Culture* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2016) at 238.
38. "Safety Drive", *The Windsor Daily Star* (24 February 1949) at 8.
39. "New licencing expected to curb bike thieves", *The Windsor Daily Star* (31 October 1951) at 5.
40. "Bike Plan Pays", *Windsor Star* (6 July 1963) at 6.
41. "Cooperation of Parents is Needed to Save Cyclists", *The Windsor Daily Star* (1 November 1941). Although by contrast, see "Red Light Jumper" Must Repair Bicycle of Youthful Messenger" In this case, a Detroit driver was ordered to pay a \$10 dollar fine as well as \$15 dollars to repair a messenger boy's bike which he struck. "In passing sentence, the magistrate pointed out that courts in Canada and the United States are constantly placing more responsibility on the motorist to exercise care in avoiding accidents." *The Windsor Daily Star* (19 January 1950) at 5.
42. A review of the archives of the City's Department Head meetings shows an Auto Club which had become unresponsive in its correspondence with the city; see for example City of Windsor, *Bicycle Licence Issuers*, (Windsor: City of Windsor, 1965) at 3. Before the licencing scheme was formally ended, bicycle registration was estimated to be at less than half of the number of bicycles in the city.
43. See "Cooperation of Parents is Needed to Save Cyclists," *supra* note 41.
44. "Ride a bicycle: conserve gas for the war effort", *The Windsor Daily Star* (14 July 1941) at 6.
45. See for example, a CCM ad "Do you rate a ration of this essential transportation", *The Windsor Daily Star* (24 April 1944) at 19.
46. See for example, an ad encouraging boys and their parents to purchase CCM bikes in order for them to work as delivery boys: "Yes, Mrs Smith, at once!", *The Windsor Daily Star* (15 June 1936) at 20.
47. *The Windsor Daily Star* (24 February 1949) at 8.

48. Christopher J. Greig, "Boys and Boyhood: Exploring the Lives of Boys in Windsor, Ontario, during the Postwar Era, 1945–65" in Robert Allen Rutherford & Peter Gossage, eds., *Making men, making history: Canadian masculinities across time and place* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018) at 285.
49. The race is billed as "Ontario's premier and longest standing criterium" and its story has been told well elsewhere. See <https://tourdivaitalia.org/history>. The Italian community would later also contribute to racing in the region through construction of a track at the Ciociaro Club. In addition to the Italian community, the Belgian community in Windsor was another diaspora community which kept a tradition of bike racing alive through its mainstream dormancy in the region's history; see Joan Magee, *The Belgians in Ontario: A History* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1987) at 120.
50. Reed, *supra* note 33 at 3.
51. Ontario Bikeway Coalition, "The Bikeway Idea: Bicycle Data, Greater Windsor", (19 July 1973).
52. City of Windsor, Resolution 418/75, (1 May 1975).
53. City of Windsor, Public Works Department, *Bikeways Report*, (Windsor: Public Works, 1976).
54. "Windsor gives nod to bike path", *Windsor Star* [9 March 1976] at 34.
55. "Good news for cyclists", *Windsor Star* [5 April 1979] at 5.
56. Tedd Whipp, "Welcome to Windsor's bicycle boom", *Windsor Star* [23 July 1987].
57. Tabitha Marshall, "Kelly-Ann Way", 11 July 2018, online: *The Canadian Encyclopedia* <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/kelly-ann-way>.
58. City of Windsor, *Windsor Bicycling Committee: Revised Mandate and Terms of Reference*, (Windsor: City of Windsor, 2020), online: City of Windsor <https://www.citywindsor.ca/cityhall/committeesofcouncil/Advisory-Committees/Windsor-Bicycling-Committee/Documents/JANUARY%202020%20WBC%20TERMS%20OF%20REFERENCE%20AND%20MANDATE.pdf>.
59. Price and Kulisek, *supra* note 1 at 55.
60. City of Windsor, *Bicycle Use Master Plan*, (Windsor: City of Windsor, 2001), online: City of Windsor <https://www.citywindsor.ca/residents/traffic-and-parking/transportation-planning/documents/bump%20-%20executive%20summary.pdf>.
61. Nicholas A Scott, *Assembling Moral Mobilities; Cycling, Cities and the Common Good* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2020) at 90.
62. City of Windsor, *Active Transportation Master Plan (ATMP)*, (Windsor: City of Windsor, 2019), online: City of Windsor <https://www.citywindsor.ca/residents/Construction/Environmental-Assessments-Master-Plans/Documents/Active%20Transportation%20Master%20Plan%20Final%20Report.pdf>.
63. ATMP, *ibid* at 135.
64. Katia Iassinovskaia, "How Pandemic Bike Lanes Made Some Canadian Cities More Accessible", *CBC News* (18 March 2021), online: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/science/pandemic-bike-lanes-canada-1.5951863>.
65. Rachel Aldred et al, "Cycling provision separated from motor traffic: a systematic review exploring whether stated preferences vary by gender and age" (2017) 37 *Transport Reviews*, online: *Taylor Francis Online* <https://doi.org/10.1080/01441647.2016.1200156> at 29-55.
66. City of Windsor, *City Council Decision*, (Windsor: City of Windsor, 2019), online: City of Windsor <https://www.citywindsor.ca/residents/environment/Documents/Climate%20Change%20Emergency%20Declaration.pdf>.
67. Windsor Works, *An Economic Development Strategy for the City's Future Growth* (February 2021) online: <https://www.citywindsor.ca/mayorandcouncil/Pages/Windsor-Works-Report.aspx>.
68. See Doug Schmidt, "Motorists advised to watch for riders as county cycling booms", *The Windsor Star* [1 June 2016]. Migrant farmworkers have been among the most active users of county roads (often with inadequate safety equipment); see Clinton Beckford "The Experiences of Caribbean Migrant Farmworkers in Ontario, Canada", (2016) 65 *Social and Economic Studies*. The ambitious County Wide Active Transportation Master Plan can be found here: <https://www.countyofessex.ca/en/discover-the-county/master-plan.aspx>.



Climate March, Windsor, 2021. Source: Dax Melmer, *Windsor Star*



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