

Grey may add shoulders for bikes

DENIS LANGLOIS
SUN TIMES STAFF

Grey County's plan to create only 25-centimetre-wide shoulders as part of two paving projects this summer has elicited public backlash from cyclists and businesses in The Blue Mountains area.

The county has received more than two dozen letters, including from Blue Mountain Resort and the Blue Mountain Village Association, that call for wider paved shoulders on Grey Road 31 from the Simcoe County line to Grey Road 2 and Grey Road

119 from Ravenna to Banks.

"These are heavily used roads for cyclists. There are lots of hills and they really should have bicycle lanes," Cary Eagleson, a member of the newly created Southern Georgian Bay Cycling Coalition, said in an interview.

"It's a safety issue not only for cyclists but for motorists as well."

As a result of the public pressure, the county's transportation and public safety committee is asking Grey County council to reconsider the width of the shoulders at its Feb. 2 meeting.

"We were under the assumption

that alternate routes (for cycling) may work instead of these two routes. And after a meeting with the cycling groups by staff, we decided we better have another look at this," Coun. John Bell, the committee's chairman, said Tuesday.

He said the groups want to include Grey Road 31 and 119 on their cycling routes.

The committee, he said, recognizes the popularity of road cycling in that part of the county and the importance of the sport to the local economy.

See BIKES | A3

Many called for wider shoulders for cyclists

Bikes, from page 1

"It's better that we backup now and have another look at this instead of just charging ahead," he said.

Two-thirds of county council must support reconsidering the width of the shoulders before council can debate the issue since it has already approved the project with 0.25-metre shoulders.

If it does, the committee is recommending council ask staff to present some options and cost estimates for including wider shoulders.

Transportation services director Michael Kelly said the cost will depend on how wide council wants the shoulders to be, but it could be significant.

The county is planning to pulverize and pave a 5.5-kilometre stretch of Grey Road 119 south of Craigeith this year. It is a continuation of last year's project that saw the road paved from Grey Road 19 to Banks. That stretch of road received paved shoulders that can accommodate cyclists.

The county also plans to pulverize and pave an 11-km section of Grey Road 31 northeast of Feversham in Grey Highlands.

The cost for both projects is pegged at about \$2.8 million.

County staff initially recommended the work proceed without any paved shoulders due to "technical challenges" that would significantly increase the project's cost and because of the proximity of alternate cycling routes.

Council instead voted in November to add 0.25-m shoulders.

County officials met in January with cycling advocates who asked them to adhere to the province's Ontario Traffic Manual, which recommends bicycle lanes of at least 1.2 metres wide. The county was also told that nearby cycling routes are not

adequate substitutes for Grey Road 119 and 31.

The county's own paved shoulder policy says when reconstructing rural arterial roads, shoulders shall be paved with a width of 1.2 to two metres but can be as narrow as 0.5 m "if there are design constraints."

The county also received more than two dozen letters in support of wider shoulders.

Last week, the transportation and public safety committee approved a staff recommendation to ask county council to have another look at the project plans.

Eagleson said the Southern Georgian Bay Cycling Coalition, which represents about 600 cyclists, formed because of the bicycle lanes issue on Grey Road 119 and 31.

"We felt we had to go back to Grey County and push back a little bit and recommend that these two roads should have wider shoulders on them for the cyclists," he said.

Mark Andersen, a partner in Squire John's ski and cycle shop near Craigeith, also wrote to the county with plea for wider shoulders.

"Road biking in the Georgian Triangle area is just exploding," he said

in an interview.

He pointed to the Centurion Cycling race, which takes place in the Blue Mountains each summer and attracts some 4,000 riders, as an example of how popular road cycling has become.

The race route includes parts of

Grey Road 119 and 31.

Cyclists also use the roads as practice routes for the race.

"I'm no paving or highway expert but if you're out paving the roads why not put on an extra two or three feet for the cyclists because it is a big economic factor in this area," he said.

Owen Sound

Sun Times

Wed 1/27/16

Thanks

feod