

# More bike lanes could calm traffic, says councillor

Councillors, candidates say additional lanes benefit to town

By Tim Foran  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Though not a bridge to nowhere, it's an orphaned lane.

Almost three years after council approved an update to its Trails Master Plan with a timeline to eventually paint on-road bike lanes on most of the town's major roads — including within five years on collector roads in new residential areas — staff have only dropped down white paint on a stretch of Bronte Street, south of Main Street.

"And that wasn't even in the plan (budget)," said Ward 4 Councillor Wendy Schau, who sits on the Town's trails advisory committee along with rural colleague Jan Mowbray and Mayor Gord Krantz.

Schau pointed out works staff only painted the lanes at the behest of urban local/regional councillor Colin Best.

As the installation of bike lanes wasn't going to result in the elimination of parking spots or traffic lanes, the only cost would be paint, Best said. Council subsequently approved Best's suggestion, with the lanes to

eventually reach Derry Road, at a cost of \$3,000.

Bronte, which now also includes a centre left-turn lane, appears narrower though the width of the roadway never changed. Schau believes this creates a psychological barrier that slows down drivers — a form of traffic calming on a major road.

"I think when people (drivers) see a wide open road, they're tempted to speed," she said. "When they see a road with bike lanes and trees along the side and indications of people, they slow down."

A similar argument was made to council last month by Zeeshan Hamid, who's vying to become the local councillor for the new Ward 8 in west Milton, south of Derry Road.

"In general, Milton needs to narrow collector roads and require traffic calming devices at least near elementary schools and parks," stated Hamid in a submission given as part of a public meeting on the Town's

update to its official plan. "Halton police recently caught 127 speeders on Scott Boulevard, travelling on average 50 per cent faster than the speed limit. Recently, a seven-year-old boy was hit near P.L. Robertson school while he rode his bike."

Both Mowbray and Ward 7 council candidate Marshall Horner have also argued there's a need for traffic calming on collector roads at council.

The Town's policy is that traffic-calming devices aren't warranted on collector roads, according to a 2009 report on residents' requests for them to be installed along Woodward

Avenue in old Milton.

But while speed bumps might not meet the Town's criteria, many of the collector roads in new subdivisions are wide enough to include dedicated bike lanes with no road reconstruction necessary, according to the municipality.

That's why they were identified as being within the Trails Master Plan's first phase (zero to five years) to receive bike lanes. However, the Town's director of engineering services, Paul Cripps, said bike lanes shouldn't be used as a traffic-calming measure, though he acknowledged narrowing roads by painting them might achieve that effect.

"If bike lanes are painted, the primary purpose would be to accommodate the cycling and active transportation groups, not to act as traffic calming," he stated. "The comments from the public may be correct, as drivers tend to travel at a speed that they feel comfortable at, (therefore) introduction of the cycling lanes may have a psychological effect on the drivers and slow them down as the available pavement may seem narrower. However, I have not seen any studies on this issue."

While money wasn't included in the past three budgets to put in bike lanes identified in the master plan, there might be some in 2011, said Cripps.

"There are no specific timelines for individual bike lane projects, but given the recent increase in demand for active transportation alternatives, I fully expect this issue to receive greater attention in the future," he stated. "(The departments of) engineering services and community services will be working together during our budget preparations to implement the Trails Master Plan."

Schau, who's retiring as a councillor at the end of this term, remains hopeful.

"It's just basically a matter of painting the roads," she said. "There isn't the impetus that I would like to make the town more pedestrian and bicycle friendly."

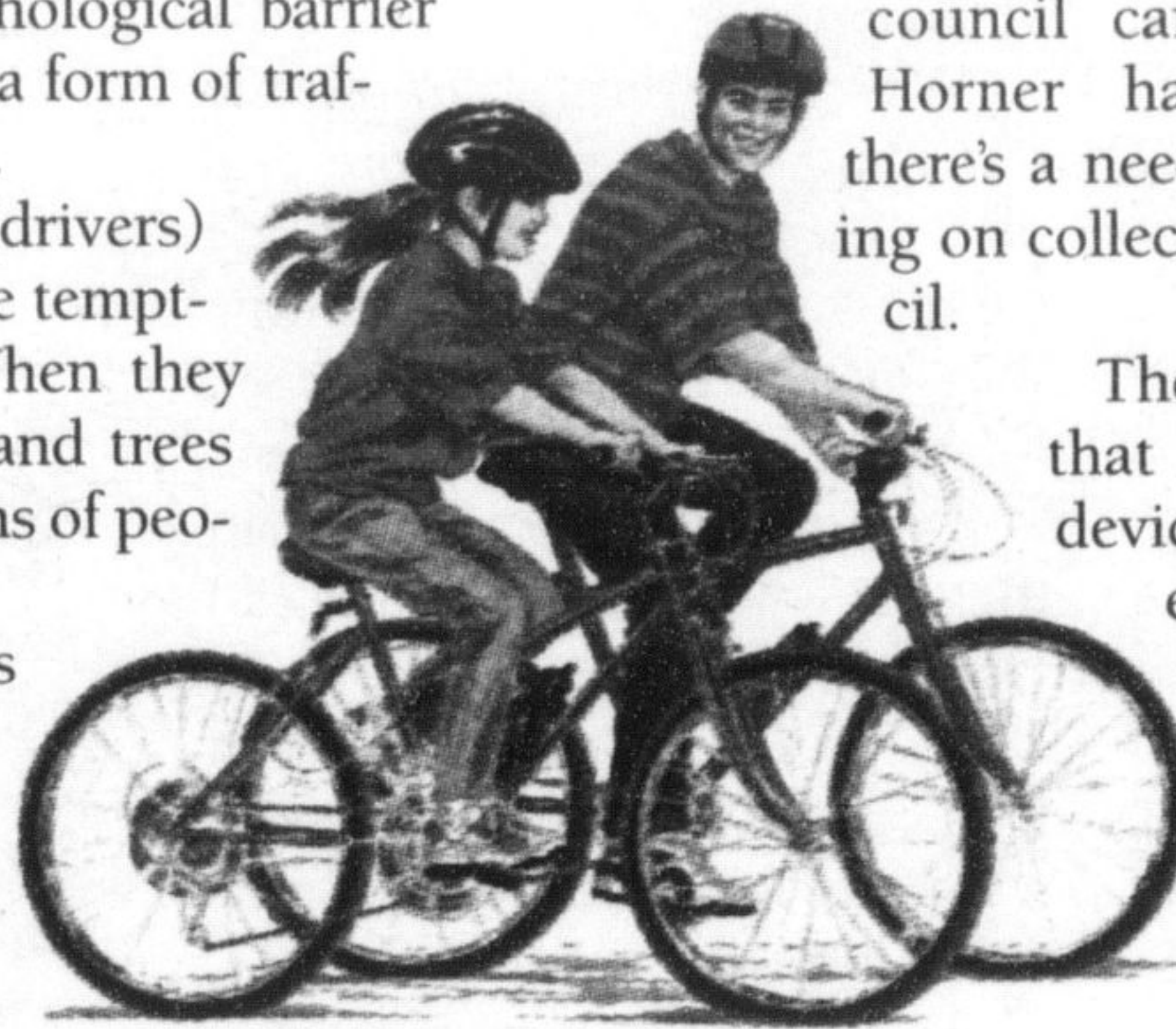
Ironically, while the master plan identified already wide, single lane collector roads as spots for early implementation of bike lanes, some major roads about to be reconstructed might have them in place first.

Halton Region plans to install them on Derry between Bronte and Tremaine Road and on Tremaine between Derry and Main when it widens the roads this year.

The Town is also considering including them on Main Street west of Bronte when it realigns and widens the road over the next few years. On the other side of downtown, where Main is going to be rebuilt to cross under the CP railway tracks east of Ontario Street, Town staff stated in an email last fall there are no firm plans to create an off-road multi-use trail along the north side of the railway tracks between the Winners store and the GO Station.

"The Central Business District Secondary Plan identified a possible pedestrian connection in this area several years ago, but it would be if land became available and a full east-west connection could be made. Nothing immediate," stated a Town spokesperson.

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