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Guest speakers talked about a variety of cycling topics, such as bike encouragement, design, safety, education, community engagement and tourism as part of the region's inaugural Bike Summit last week.

Region wants you out of your car and on a bike

BY LAURA FINNEY
lfinney@yrmg.com

The snow may be falling, but local experts gathered at Vaughan City Hall to talk bicycles last week.

Guest speakers discussed a variety of cycling topics, such as bike encouragement, design, safety, education, community engagement and tourism as part of the region's inaugural Bike Summit.

"We wanted to hold a bike summit to exchange ideas learned from each other and create and build partnerships," said Stephen Collins, director of infrastructure management and project management office.

While November may seem like an odd time to hold a bike summit, Collins said a lot of the plans and ideas are part of a long-term and ongoing process to promote and advocate cycling as a legitimate mode of travel in the region and promote cycling culture.

Several people were in attendance, including representatives from the cycling industry, transit groups and local municipalities.

"Cycling really hits on two main aspects of what York Region is in the business of providing and the services we provide," said Collins.

The first is transportation.

The region is trying to advocate for the switch from the vehicle travel to a more active form of transportation, he said.

By encouraging travel that does not require single occupational vehicles and advocating cycling, the region can help reduce congestion, he said.

Cycling is also a healthier alternative.

"Having forms of transportation built into our lifestyles that are different and more active and use our body to move as opposed to using a vehicle, means people are living a more active and a more healthy lifestyle," he said.

"It is something we take very seriously. We are constantly changing our approaches to accommodating cycling within our corridors and our boulevards."

Cycling safety remains a big concern, explained Collins.

"It is something we take very seriously. We are constantly changing our approaches to accommodating cycling within our corridors and our boulevards," he said. "And we have a variety of cycle facility products that are under design and will be built over the course of the next two to three years."

They range from street bike lanes to completely off-street boulevard cycling tracks.

There are also a number of resources and education opportunities available on the York Region website for people interested in learning proper and safe cycling.

Visit york.ca and click the transportation section.