INTRODUCTION
CHAPTER 1

Bike Buffalo Niagara, the Regional Bicycle Master Plan for Erie and Niagara Counties will serve as a guide for GBNRTC, state agencies, counties, municipalities, advocacy groups and private businesses and foundations to work together to provide a transportation system that safely integrates bicyclists in a coordinated and holistic manner. The Plan builds upon recent efforts and identifies deficiencies and opportunities moving forward. It also builds upon new research and advances in bicycle facility design best practices in order to develop a plan that will serve the Buffalo Niagara Region in the coming years. The goals and strategies in the following chapter aim to make bicycling a more viable form of transportation, benefiting residents and visitors alike.

1.1 INTRODUCTION page 2

1.2 BENEFITS OF BICYCLING page 3

1.3 BIKE BUFFALO NIAGARA VISION page 4

1.4 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT page 6
1.1 INTRODUCTION

The network of bicycle infrastructure continues to grow in the Buffalo Niagara Region as the total miles of bike lanes, routes and greenway trails nearly tripled since 2001. In recent years, the region has seen the development of the City of Buffalo’s and City of Niagara Fall’s Bicycle Master Plans, upgrades and gap closures to the Shoreline Trail, construction of the Tonawanda Rails to Trails project and the Empire State Trail. In addition to this, a number of municipalities throughout the region have adopted complete streets policies in support of active transportation. Though more plans and projects are underway, there are still missing links and unconnected communities that present a critical need to take a collective, holistic approach to bicycle and trail planning in the region.

Expanding bicycling opportunities for residents and visitors has increasingly become a regional priority. Moving Forward 2050, the region’s metropolitan transportation plan, aims to accelerate recent progress by modernizing and expanding bikeways and greenway trails throughout the two county region and to neighboring trail networks in Ontario, the Genesee Finger Lakes region and Cattaraugus and Chautauqua counties. Bike Buffalo Niagara emphasizes and reinforces the direction established in Moving Forward 2050 and other relevant planning documents to provide a safe

The purpose of Bike Buffalo Niagara is to guide the development of a comprehensive network of on-street and off-street pathways, bike lanes, greenway trails and other facilities that safely connects neighborhoods to key destinations.

and comfortable environment for bicycle travel and promote bicycle use as a sustainable and healthy mode of transportation.

The purpose of Bike Buffalo Niagara (Plan), is to guide the development of a comprehensive network of on-street and off-street pathways, bike lanes, greenway trails and other facilities that safely connects neighborhoods to key destinations. The Plan identifies current and future desired conditions for bicycling in the region. It will serve as a guide for GBNRTC, state agencies, counties, municipalities, advocacy groups and private businesses and foundations to work together to provide a transportation system that safely accommodates bicyclists in a coordinated and holistic manner. It is an action oriented document designed to help bridge the gap between current conditions and what residents and visitors envision for safe, equitable, comfortable and connected bicycling facilities, both on-road and off.

Photo by GObike Buffalo
1.2 BENEFITS OF BICYCLING

TRANSPORTATION
Because a significant percentage of trips made by automobile are under two miles, improved bicycle facilities can replace short motor vehicle trips and promote mobility options for those who do not have access to a car due to age, economic status, disability, temporary impairment and for those who simply prefer not to drive.

ECONOMICS
Developing a more contiguous greenway network in Western New York was the Wilson Foundation’s likely motivation to grant tens of millions of dollars for investment in trail construction and maintenance. Combined with state funding for the Empire State Trail, the expansion of the greenway network comprised of the Niagara River Greenway, the Erie Canalway Trail, the Shoreline Trail and potential new corridors being looked at south of Buffalo has the potential to draw thousands more visitors and bicycle tourists to the region. This will promote economic revitalization in the cities and towns along the existing trail routes, with potential for a new development in communities where new greenways are planned.

SAFETY
While the region’s existing greenway trails provide a comfortable environment for novice bicyclists and children (not to mention walkers, runners and skaters), for many, access to many regional destinations involves driving to avoid cycling along local roads. A greenway network would not be complete without safe bicycling connections to it from adjacent neighborhoods, business districts and other municipalities. To replicate a greenway trail’s sense of separation from traffic, developing on-street bikeways for all users, no matter their age or cycling ability, is an important goal and critical challenge.

HEALTH
Bicycling provides an opportunity for people to integrate into their daily lives the recommended 150 minutes of weekly aerobic activity, recommended in 2015 by the Centers for Disease Control for improved health.

Improving bicycling conditions in the GBNRTC region will bring transportation, safety, economic and health benefits to residents, employees and visitors to Western New York.
The Buffalo Niagara Region strives for a modern, well-supported, all-season greenway trail and on-street bicycle network that provides residents and visitors of all ages and abilities direct, safe and intuitive connections to and from the places residents and visitors want to go. The plan is built upon four key goals:

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Buffalo Niagara Region will plan, design, build and sustain high quality bicycle infrastructure that increases safety, appeals to a wide range of people and accommodates a wide variety of trip purposes.

- Improve connections to key regional destinations using high quality – ideally separated – bicycle facilities and greenway trails.
- Strive for a Vision Zero region by reengineering key roadway corridors to slow traffic, prevent dangerous collisions and encourage multimodal use.
- Maintain and expand the bike share system to increase access to bicycles and the number of trips taken by bikes.
- Include bicycle-related amenities such as bike racks, benches, rest stations, bicycle maintenance stands and end-of-trip facilities with the implementation of greenway trails and critical on-street connections.

**CONNECTIONS**

The Buffalo Niagara Region will build a bicycling network that connects people to where they want to go whether it be for work, school, daily errands, recreation, or fitness.

- Create safe and seamless connections between regional, interregional and binational destinations and existing and future greenway trails, improving mobility locally and enhancing tourism opportunities.
- Connect bicycling with transit services to improve transit accessibility by providing a solution for the first and last mile.
- Connect to public parks, open spaces and waterways to promote healthy, active lifestyles and improve environmental quality.
- Connect to key employments centers and educational institutions to ensure workforce access and increase viable commuting options in the region.
INNOVATION

The Buffalo Niagara Region will incorporate new and evolving technology to improve safety and navigation, increase access to bicycles, improve data collection/quality and attract new riders to the network.

- Integrate evolving e-bike technology, pedal-assist equipment and e-bike share to promote bicycling as a transportation option for a greater range of people.
- Promote the use of route-finding apps and “smart” info kiosks to improve bicycle wayfinding throughout the region.
- Incorporate automated bicycle count technologies to track the number of bicyclists at locations throughout the region (and potentially Canada).
- Integrate bicycle infrastructure with planned high-tech mobility hubs to encourage multi-modal transportation connectivity and access to real-time travel information and mobility amenities.

CULTURE

The Buffalo Niagara Region will support a regional culture that respects and embraces bicycling as a legitimate form of travel and an integral part of daily life.

- Establish policies and dedicated funding for development and maintenance of the greenway trail network and on-road bicycle facilities.
- Partner with local advocacy groups and organizations (i.e. GObike, healthcare industry, etc.) to encourage more bicycling using public education campaigns, with a focus on geographic and cultural equity including within Tribal Nations.
- Promote local and county land use policies that encourage bicycling (i.e. regulations related to complete streets, street connectivity, on-street bike facilities, curbside management and bike parking).
- Establish improved coordination between NYSDOT, GBNRTC and municipalities early in the roadway planning/design process to ensure consistency with regional bicycle planning efforts.
Meaningful community engagement and input is critical to the development of a successful, publicly-supported and implementable plan. To facilitate a community engagement process that captured the needs of a large and diverse region, outreach efforts included a mix of subcommittee meetings and stakeholder interviews, community workshops, a project website, an online survey and photo contest, an active social media strategy and a virtual presentation of the draft plan.

**BIKE SUBCOMMITTEE MEETINGS**

The Bike Buffalo Niagara Bicycle subcommittee provided oversight and critical input to the project team throughout the planning process (see acknowledgements for members).

**STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS**

The core project team conducted interviews with various stakeholders from a variety of agencies and organizations to gather input and insight into existing conditions and proposed facility ideas. This included representatives from cities and towns in both Niagara and Erie Counties, NYS institutions and agencies, along with bicycle, trail and environmental advocates.

**ONLINE INPUT MAP**

An interactive online public input map was developed to gather public input on proposed facilities in Erie and Niagara Counties. Map users were asked to place lines or points on the map to identify:

- Problem corridors (e.g., high traffic speed/volume, no shoulder, etc.)
- Desired bike routes
- Problem spots (e.g., difficult crossings, potholes, etc.)
- Desired bike parking locations
COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS
At the events, community members were able to review mapping and analyses developed to date. This typically included large scale maps for marking up with local knowledge as well as interactive exercises. Input from all four meetings, as well as the online input and stakeholder meetings were critical to helping the project team develop the recommended bicycle network and treatments.

PHOTO CONTEST
A photo contest was held requesting residents and visitors to submit their best bicycle related photo. The winning entry is featured on the cover of the Plan.

ONLINE SURVEY
An online survey was used to gauge residents and visitors preferences for bicycling and bicycle infrastructure.