

Out with cycling lanes and in with Badlands sidewalk

At Peel Regional council June 9, a motion was approved transferring \$700,000 to build the Badlands parking lot, with \$300,000 already spent on the design phase.

In the motion was the construction of a sidewalk on the Region's road allowance to provide access from the parking lot to the Badlands feature. During public consultation, residents understood that a connecting walkway would be on Ontario Heritage Trusts land behind the fence.

This new sidewalk proposal requires widening the road, which removes the cycling lanes/paved shoulder and allows for building retaining walls and sidewalk. Narrowing of the road will put bikes and cars in the same lane. Tourists will be encouraged to walk along the road side. When I contacted key people in the cycling community, they showed immediate concern. They indicated that Olde Base Line Road was a well-used cycling corridor and really the only way to travel east/west from Highway 10 to Winston Churchill Boulevard. With the increased popularity of cycling in Ward 1, there was hope for the development of more bike lanes on our roads, not less.

Through Badland Committee minutes, I learned that this sidewalk corridor had been part of the plan since August 2015. Also, that a Caledon Town councillor was assigned to meet with the cycling community to discuss impacts to the roadway, but these meetings never happened. It is no wonder that residents become disillusioned when public meetings are held asking for participation when the outcome is already predetermined.

Only Councillor Annette Groves and myself voted against the money being released to build the parking lot ahead of the required master plan. I also floored a motion to refer the issue back to staff to review the impact of the road modifications on cycle safety, but it did not pass. I do not understand the great rush to get this parking lot underway without all the pieces of the puzzle in place, like site operation and preservation, how to handle the inevitable increased traffic and a financial sustainability plan.

For my residents, cyclists, equestrians and curious visitors, I will do everything in my power to hold Ontario Heritage Trust to the commitment Sean Fraser of OHT made at the recent public meeting that the Badlands would not be open until it was "safe".

From the start, the reasoning for the parking lot was safety; a place for cars to park and to keep people off the road. As your councillor, I will advocate for an internal sidewalk on OHT lands; away from the roadway, to keep our tourists safe and cycling lanes intact.

The next Badlands Community Meeting is June 22, Inglewood Community Centre from 7 to 9 p.m. Please come and voice your concerns.

Barb Shaughnessy,
Regional Councillor,
Ward 1, Town of Caledon