THE DEMAND FOR CYCLE TOURISM IN ONTARIO'S GREENBELT REGION

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this research is to determine the demand and growth potential of cycle tourism in the Greenbelt area of Ontario. In order to gain some background knowledge on the cycle tourism industry, research and information was gathered based on a national and international scope. The literature review defines cycle tourism, identifies the growth of the industry, and states some benefits (i.e. increased business and employment opportunities, health benefits, and environmental benefits) and challenges (i.e. limited funding, increase of property prices, safety issues, weather constraints, lack of systematic integration, and unsustainable forms of transportation to trails) of cycle tourism, and discusses the current state of cycle tourism in the Ontario Greenbelt region.

Through the implementation of a questionnaire, the resulting significant findings show that respondents were predominantly male, between the ages of 21 to 40 years old, have single family status, and have a household income over $75,000. The majority of respondents cycle two to three times a week, primarily for health and fitness or leisure purposes, and are most frequently accompanied by friends. Furthermore, cyclists feel that experiencing the natural environment and new destinations are most important when on a cycling trip. Respondents indicated that their most preferred cycle route is a bikelane on a shared roadway. Lastly, the most important mode of communication selected overall was "Websites", however among respondents under 30 years old "Social Networks" were most preferred.

As a result of the findings, four main themes were extracted: (1) A predominant group of respondents were those who cycle often (2 to 3 times and week) and those who have a high income bracket of $75,000 and over; (2) Cyclists do not consider cycling trips in the Greenbelt region to be a cycle holiday destination; (3) Preferred modes of communication were websites

2

among all respondents and social networks among respondents under 30 years old; and (4) Cyclists who are motivated by health and fitness prefer bikelanes on shared roadways as a cycling route.

The most significant statistical changes between this study and the 2009 study conducted by Bike Train were the following: an increase in the percentage of male cyclists, different motivations for cycling, different accommodation preference, and a decreased percentage of people who have cycled within the Greenbelt region.

As a result of the discussion the following five recommendations were made: (1) Utilize websites as the primary mode of communication to deliver cycle tourism promotions, information, and events; (2) Promote the development of bike lanes on a shared roadway within the Greenbelt region; (3) Use social networks to target younger cyclists; (4) Promote the Greenbelt region as an international holiday destination for cyclists by partnering with international associations and by hosting international cycling competitions; and (5) Develop and implement dedicated cycling maps with a specific rating system for each trail indicating the different levels of difficulty, ranging from leisurely to high endurance trails.

Consequently, this study identifies a high demand and gathers primary data that forecasts the positive growth potential of cycle tourism in the Ontario Greenbelt region.