

Triathlon group asks for safer roads on routes

By Alison Brownlee

The roads used for triathlons are some of the only moneymakers in the region and they deserve a little extra care, says Don McCormick.

McCormick, a representative of the not-for-profit organization TriMusKoka, asked the District Municipality of Muskoka engineering and public works committee in December for more paved shoulders and a higher standard of patching on district roads.

"The roads are really a part of the sport and event infrastructure for the community and as such they generate revenue," said McCormick. "I don't think the same can be said for most of your other roads."

He thanked district staff and councillors for the work they have already done to increase cyclist and pedestrian safety by making paved shoulders a district policy, but he said more needs to be done.

McCormick said using a higher standard of maintenance on triathlon routes would not only improve safety for cyclists but also increase event tourism.

The provincial government, he said, has announced it will actively pursue sporting events as a matter of economic stimulus, which means Muskoka now has more competition when it comes to

attracting those events.

Triathlons are athletic races that include swimming, cycling and running components. Muskoka's are typically held in Huntsville. McCormick said the region has hosted at least one triathlon every year since 1980. One of the newest races is the region's Ironman 70.3, which is an internationally renowned competition that attracts world champions and Olympic athletes.

He said the Huntsville Lake of Bays Chamber of Commerce commissioned an economic impact study of the Ironman 70.3 race in 2010.

That year was the lowest attendance for the race due to logistical challenges caused by the G8 Summit, but the race brought \$700,000 into the community that year, said McCormick.

The two triathlons hosted in Muskoka annually infuse about \$1.5 million to \$2 million into the community, he said.

Though many athletes appreciate the region's races, McCormick said there have been complaints about the condition of the roads.

While he said he understands the challenges the district faces with maintaining roads and financing repairs, he noted bumpy roads could wreak havoc on a cyclist.

"On flats you will get up to speeds of 30 to 40 kilometers an hour and on a downhill between 70



ROAD WARRIOR: Don McCormick makes a plea to District of Muskoka councillors on behalf of TriMusKoka to improve some of the region's roads for triathlon use.

PHOTO BY ALISON BROWNLEE

to 80 kilometers an hour," he said. "At that speed, if you happen to hit a little bump, a pothole, raised culvert, loose gravel or asphalt, or you hit a little area where there have been a lot of patches, then the possibility of losing control of the bicycle is very high."

McCormick said triathletes wear very thin clothing to reduce

wind resistance, which means they have very little protective padding. "If you go down, it's disaster."

He said the race routes follow roads on which cars and trucks drive and if cyclists were to lose control of their bikes and crash, they could end up in front of a motor vehicle.

Driving over a pothole patched with asphalt may be fine for a car or truck, he said, but it is a safety hazard for cyclists.

He said a race could easily attract 1,800 participants.

"But the word about our roads has gotten around and people take a miss on the event because of what they have heard about the roads," he said. "We could easily attract a lot more athletes into the community if we had higher quality roads."

McCormick commented on the positive relationship his organization has with the district. He said district staff has the expertise required to do these repairs but his organization needs the committee's support.

Bracebridge Coun. Scott Young asked McCormick if his organization had specific sections of road the district could maintain for cyclists as a pilot project.

McCormick said they did have specific sections and would forward a list to district staff if it were interested.

"The newest race we have is an

Ironman 5150, which is an Olympic distance," he said. "It would be very easy to identify a course. We've even gone out, gone over the road, and logged all the places there are potholes, broken pavement and everything else that needs to be repaired."

He noted his organization would also approach the Town of Huntsville regarding town roads.

After McCormick's presentation, councillors discussed the best way to proceed with the request.

Tony White, commissioner of engineering and public works, said staff does not favour one road over another without a rationale or direction from council.

White suggested he would like to identify the route and have staff look into the feasibility of the request first.

Young said he would like committee to have that information and come to a decision.

"If the events are repeat events, which they are, and they are attracting thousands of participants and their supporters to do something that has the right profile for Muskoka – healthy outdoor activity – then it's a good fit," said Young. "Having a decision point where we say, 'We need to do what we can to facilitate this event staying here and continuing into the future,' I would like to see that information come to committee." Staff continues to investigate.

Library announces new initiative

By Deborah Duce

HUNTSVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

In order to rise to the challenges of 2012, Huntsville Public Library has teamed up with Amazon.ca to test a new initiative for the Library entitled Amazon Associates.

How does Amazon Associates work? When you search the library catalogue (<http://catalogue.huntsvillelibrary.net>) you will find a link entitled 'purchase from Amazon.ca' under the dropdown menu for 'more searches'.

If you decide you would like to purchase an item simply click on the link and you'll be taken to Amazon.ca. Your shopping experience at Amazon.ca will be exactly the same but you will be given the power to help your library.

How? A small commission on the items you purchase will be

sent to Huntsville Public Library. Your shopping experience remains the same and Amazon.ca does not share your name, address, or payment information with the Library. All information is confidential.

Are we suggesting that you purchase an item rather than check it out from the library? Certainly not.

The role of Huntsville Public Library is to provide you with the materials (magazine, DVD, books, CDs, eBooks, and more) you desire free of charge. If we do not have what you're looking for you can login to your borrower account and submit a purchase suggestion. We will order the items you suggest and have them for you to enjoy as soon as possible. The Amazon Associates initiative is simply another option.

For more information visit the library website. If you have a ques-

tion just ask. Library staff will be happy to connect with you.

It's not too late to register for storytime programs for preschool children. Visit the library website (www.huntsvillelibrary.net) or give Youth Services Librarian Amber a call.

Also on the website are the dates and times for our teen advisory group meetings, eReader and gadget hour, memoir club, and much much more.

I'm pleased to announce that Julie Manczak has joined the Huntsville Public Library team as our new adult and senior services librarian. Julie is planning programs for adults and seniors and is looking forward to connecting with the community to determine what you want and need. Please stop by the library and connect with Julie. She's looking forward to meeting you.

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