

Below is an of the 19 replies received (some on behalf of teams) to the reflection questions about the September 24 2013 HCBD KTE Teleconference, with presentations of two initiatives:

1. Implementing Active Transportation (AT) Facilities in Small Communities. Dave McLaughlin, Jay Cranstone, Claire Basinski, MMM Group. <http://hcbdclasp.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/mmm-rural-at-planning-sept-23-2012.pdf>
2. Retrofitting Existing Streets & Neighbourhood to Support Active Living & Active Transportation. Dale Bracewell, Active Transportation Manager, City of Vancouver. <http://hcbdclasp.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/vancouver-retrofitting-streets-1-or-2.pdf>

There were so many interesting and articulate comments that this report presents rather more detail than usual!

- ♥ Positive feedback, learnings
- ↻ Constructive feedback for improvement
- ? Questions, issues, tensions for further discussion and reflection

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<p>WHAT DID YOU TAKE AWAY FROM THESE PRESENTATIONS? WHAT ELEMENTS DID YOU FIND INSPIRING? DAUNTING? SO WHAT IMPLICATIONS DO THE PRESENTERS’ EXPERIENCES HAVE FOR YOUR OWN WORK ?</p>	
	<p>Several themes emerged from the many thoughtful responses to these questions.</p>
	<p>THEME 1: PRACTICAL EXAMPLES AND EASY FIXES</p>
♥	<p>Many participants were pleased with the practical examples provided about both Vancouver and the rural Ontario contexts. Several participants reported having come away with a new realization that easy and affordable solutions do exist for many active transportation problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“What I liked and took away from the presentations was related mostly to the Vancouver speaker and the unique ways they’ve introduced biking lanes. This will provide good examples to draw upon in my work. “</i> • <i>“I found the first set of presentations very informative and they provided some great easy to understand methods. “</i> • <i>“The main points I took away from both these presentations is that there are relatively easy fixes that can be implemented to existing infrastructures that greatly increase the potential and the appeal of active transportation. I think that was the most surprising thing—this</i>

isn't particularly difficult, it's quite feasible even for communities with limited means such as those profiled in Southern Ontario/Erie county. I think that there is a common misconception that only places like Vancouver, with surging economies and bedrock public support, can afford to retrofit existing streets and byways."

- *"I liked Dale's message of it doesn't have to be an all or none mentality, starting small and moving in a direction that makes active commuting more comfortable is very realistic when dealing with funding and political will barriers. I really liked the idea/solution of how Vancouver worked with emergency services vehicles. Dale's presentation as a whole was very inspiring as it showed some really great ideas and solutions and great visuals. Very tangible ideas, it was great."*
- *"Both presentations were great, very general overviews of what is going on in big and little (rural) communities, this was particularly gratifying to see that at infrastructure programs are practical and successful"*
- *"It was valuable to know about the detailed experience in Vancouver in terms of their impressive infrastructure investments in AT. It was one of the most useful presentations to date and useful to benchmark their achievements with what's happening in [. "*
- *"I liked learning what different communities are doing in different locations. The Rural presentation was particularly interesting and useful, but the Vancouver presentation was inspiring. Most communities can't do what Vancouver does, but it's nice to learn about what they are doing.*
- *"Practical information on experience of those implementing built environment policy."*
- *"The presentation on "Implementing Active Transportation Facilities in Small Communities" confirms that the issues or challenges that large municipalities are encountering aren't that different from other communities. "Retrofitting Existing Streets & Neighbourhood to Support Active Living & Active Transportation" in Vancouver illustrates how making active transportation a priority and having Council's support can achieve great things. We loved the photos in the presentation as they exemplify how streets that were once designed for cars can be transformed into a design for all modes of transportation. "*
- *"There were so many great ideas and solutions that I can bring forward to different groups that I work with. It's great to have practical ideas for community groups and show real examples."*
- *"Variety of solutions (and lots of practicality) based on context."*

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However, some participants noted that these practical examples addressed issues or had implications for public health staff that nonetheless appear daunting:

- *"Some of the work in the planning stages like reviewing capital projects etc. can be daunting. Also some of the issues and challenge with design like drainage and dealing with property owners can seem daunting."*
- *"Several jurisdictions in Canada (and certainly the one I live/work in) are squeezing their public health budgets of every last drop, so that taking on new challenges like building support for active transportation solutions is well beyond the means of the [remaining] staff. "*

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Some participants indicated that the examples did not go far enough in providing them with enough information to move forward and take action. Several responses suggested that the examples provided were too partial to be immediately useful ; i.e, that they shared only a piece of

processes that are actually much more complex. Another theme here was that this community already knows what to do, but not how:

- *“The audience here was very disappointed with the session, reflected in the attendance in the conference room dropping from 9 people at the beginning of the session, to 1 person (myself) by the 60 minute mark. Presentations provided too much introductory material, which was unnecessary given the audience listening at my location as we are all very familiar with the arguments for active transportation. The presentations went on to give very high level overviews of active transportation master plans, which are useful documents in their own right but have very little to say about the on-the-ground experience of retrofitting streets. As a platform to encourage communities that do not have AT master plans to consider developing such plans, the presentations were likely a success. For those of us working in communities which already have AT master plans and are struggling with actual implementation, there was little value. The examples of actual implemented infrastructure from Vancouver were interesting but no context was provided which could give insight into the process of retrofitting these streets. It is not enough to say that the streets were retrofitted or should be retrofitted. How those retrofits came to be is the question we were all left asking. The presenters’ experiences, as reflected in the presentations, were not particularly relevant to the area of work of those listening in at my location.
The first presentation addressed master plan development for 90% of the time allotted, speaking very little to technical solutions, barriers and challenges, or effective implementation strategies. At the end a single case study was presented, which concluded with a frankly disappointing technical recommendation.
The second presentation covered Vancouver’s work at a high level, focusing on statistics of success and highlighting a few specific projects but again without the detail necessary to derive any lessons or benefits. Why were specific streets chosen for AT projects? How were staff able to achieve traffic diversion as pictured? Stating that some opposition to projects appeared in local papers is not a sufficient amount of detail. While Vancouver’s success is enviable, the presentation focused too much on celebrating that success rather than discussing the ways that success is achieved one project at a time.
Recognizing that time is limited in this sort of an event, presenters should be encouraged to dispense with the preamble, provide specific case studies where concrete lessons were learned, respect the knowledge and expertise of the audience and condense discussion of context and project backgrounds, and get elbow deep into the details. A one hour presentation covering 3 or 4 case studies in depth would be far more valuable and a far better reflection of the title of the session.”*
- *“Vancouver was a good presentation as always, but I would have liked that he outlined more technical stuff and give less of an overview of everything. I think public health people get the overall argument, but they lack the skills to deal with the technical issues that the engineers always fall back on to tell them they can’t change anything. Hearing from an engineer that what they are being told usually is misleading would have been quite useful!”*
- *“I think people are getting the “what”. The issue most people will have is the “how” – how do you convince policy makers, elected officials to buy into this?”*

More examples were sought by some about smaller communities:

- *“I work with communities of 5,000 or less that are spread over a large geographical area. I would love to see more information for this*

type of population. “

- “I still don’t think we have examples that reach our small [] towns where populations (and tax bases) are much smaller.
- Some things that appeared daunting were for small communities, where do they even start?
- “Vancouver is great, but it has close to no application in smaller municipalities in real life interventions (principles apply, but technically nothing). It would be good that we have presenters who can extend their presentations to deal with possibilities in other contexts. “

THEME 2 : PUBLIC AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

♥ **Several respondents indicated that they had been inspired about the creative ideas shared about engaging publics who may be hesitant to commit to active transportation, especially in the context of limited resources.**

- “I liked the idea of framing workshops and consultations in different terms like the safety forum which brought many different players to the table. All too often you have the advocates and believers sitting around the table together and having the “believers” sitting next to and talking to the “non believers” in a forum around safety was wonderful.”
- “I liked the comment about bringing the consultations to the people in the first presentation. This seems common knowledge but was nice to have it reiterated.”
- “My two main take aways were: 1. The idea of consultation/engagement by theme groups rather than stakeholder groups (for example, in Vancouver they held a session for people interested in safety, rather than a session for cyclists or for truckers). 2. Being creative in your partnerships (again in Vancouver, designing separated bike lanes that can also be used as a route for emergency vehicles – being explicit about that partnership/benefit).”
- “Be creative in making connections, developing partnerships, seeking allies...”

☺ **On the other hand, respondents also emphasized that garnering support from car- or- truck centred citizenry and lukewarm municipal councils is a huge challenge and one not fully addressed in the presentations – although many recognize there is no easy solution.**

- “What I found truly daunting is that it seems like nobody really addresses the challenges to motivating a public that is intransigent in their lack of support for active transportation solutions or municipal governments that pay lip service to active transportation but pay actual service to developers who do not want restrictions or conditions place on how they can build. The silence on these topics is deafening. Occasionally there is a mention of something to the effect of “get your public health workers to engage in the community and raise awareness of the benefits of active transportation and a healthy built environment”, as if this is some kind of universally understood formula.”
- “in boom towns like [], where there is a sudden influx of private money and a rapid growth in population based largely on people moving to the city from more rural areas, the culture is solidly anchored to the car. Not even, the truck. Vehicles are clearly signs of affluence after a prolonged period of economic depression and economically motivated relocation and change or loss of historical work (fisheries, forestry). Furthermore, many of those same people want homes that recreate something approximating where they come from: big yards, big garage, maximum spread preferably bordering on a wooded area. In other words, sprawl. Changing this kind of thinking is very challenging and I

have not heard much to address it. I'm sure there are examples out there of other boom towns or similar communities (Fort McMurray and Edmonton comes to mind, both are majorly sprawled out and on overdrive from the oil patch, drawing in a lot of formerly rural residents). Same goes for municipal councils who talk the active transportation talk but are either incapable or unwilling to enact bylaws that would facilitate better urban planning. Obviously a motivated citizenry would help guide councils, but if the citizenry is split on the issue or a majority belong to a car culture, then what? I would like to see more examples of places where the critical mass of public motivation and/or economic resources did not exist and were either manifested or the changes were achieved despite them."

- "While the case studies were inspiring, the challenge of engaging the politicians, publics and professionals with a stake in AT and sustaining their interest and support can be daunting. In my view this is the core of the challenge."
- "Due to limited financial resources, the first presentation highlighted (in a roundabout fashion) the barriers that exist in convincing growing municipalities to take a long term focus on societal health. While developers are always asked to implement new initiatives, municipalities and taxpayers need to be partners in ensuring their success, along with long term funding commitments."
- "I work in health and it reinforces the need to support planners and local council in whatever way we can to keep this type of activity on the agenda and provide them with evidence and other types of supports to ensure this continues to be a priority"

THEME 3: COMPLETE, SYSTEMIC SOLUTIONS

♥ Some participants came away with a better understanding of the need to develop complete, holistic, systemic solutions for active transportation, i.e., that take a range of considerations and interest into account:

- "A holistic and collaborative approach with a clear vision and mandate is absolutely essential for success. This often is easier said than done."
- "I also took away from both presentations the need to continue to advocate for the complete street model when planning for active transportation."
- "What I was hoping to see more of was a direct relationship between supply and demand, to confirm my hypothesis that if you build it they will come! And we all know that a system solution – engineering, encouragement, enforcement -- is needed."

THEME 4 : EVALUATION

♥ A few participants were struck by the example of how data can be useful in changing minds:

- "I liked how Dale reinforced the need for metrics and constantly bringing data supporting the work you are doing back to counsel. With the metrics I especially liked the slide that compared the safety in numbers mentality showing that while cycling numbers went up, collisions went down. This verified to me the need for evaluation as I think this can be a very powerful tool for building the case"
- New ideas/info- the reduction in collisions as walking and cycling has increased; showing 5 year plans so people can plan ahead; be "opportunistic".

FOR THE NEXT TIME, HOW COULD WE IMPROVE?

- Other than the obvious technical problems that occurred when a group forgot to mute their line, many of the logistical improvements suggested were related to improving how the questions (and the time left for them) were handled:**
- *“Each presentation provided sufficient information to allow the audience to reflect on the cases and challenges presented. However the presentations were lengthy (especially the later one) and the available time for meaningful questions or follow-up questions was insufficient.”*
 - *“Unfortunately, the questions were monopolized by a few people with a certain focus. With so many people on the conference call, a strict one question per person protocol should be enforced. The background noise during the question segment was trying. In the future an e-mail to all participants prior to the call, explaining how the question segment will work (muting, etc...) might be helpful for all concerned.”*
 - *“Too many people were on the line to be asking for questions from the audience. I think people should email their questions to the moderator to ask.”*
 - *“One thing that I thought would be interesting is, at the end, to have some pre-selected individuals from different sectors and from different towns/places, for example a developer, a public health official, a municipal representative, a member of the public, and who are familiar with the presentation just given, have some prepared statements on what they took away from the talk and a prepared question that relates back to their particular background. It’s not that the questions asked weren’t good, it’s just that it can be hard to articulate a good, in-depth question on the spot. Sometimes a bit of reflection and thought can really lend themselves to deepening a question (or some comments) that gets to the root of the issues being discussed. “*
- Presentation length and numbering also prompted some suggested improvements:**
- *“The presentations need to have page numbering and the presenters should frequently reference where they are during their presentation.”*
 - *“We would recommend that future webinars minimize the number of slides, and request that they be numbered so that it is easier for the audience to follow. “*
 - *“Next time, we need a heads up in an email pre-webinar to let us know there are a large number of slides, and to set aside time to access or print.”*
 - *“2 hours out of a busy day is still way too long to sit and listen – I would have got just as much out of 2 - 20 minute presentations.*
- In terms of improving content for the next time, It was suggested by several participants that there is now a need for information sharing at next level of case study, with more detail :**
- *“ I know there are some basic things lots of people ask, and maybe a set list of questions presenters should address, e.g., how long did it take to plan? To build? How much money did it cost? (and in some cases how did you finance it?). This would be of interest in both capital projects and planning exercises.”*
 - *The first presentation could have gone a bit deeper with the level of details, I like the case study format with concrete examples and solutions. Some more detail on overcoming political will is always helpful.*
 - *“What I would like to see next, and this is why you had so many questions, is for you to move from general overview, to specific planning and*

design case studies. Engineers, planners, and community decision makers need the whole story – how did you find the champion, how long did it take, who was involved, how did you get funding, what challenges, what design solutions, how did construction go, what about stakeholder consultation, how successful was it, what volumes changed, what lessons learned, what would you do differently next time, what design standards did you use, what modifications were necessary, what were the tradeoffs – on only one project. With complete graphics of the design, from first sketches, to final CAD drawings”.

Another suggestion related to the diversity of the audience and their different information needs:

- *“Perhaps the audience was too broad to achieve meaningful results for all participants. The needs of a technical group in a community with established AT plans are likely very different from the needs of public health professionals in communities where AT is a foreign language.”*