



TORONTO-NIAGARA BIKE TRAIN A RESOUNDING SUCCESS!

November 1, 2007

The Toronto-Niagara Bike Train Initiative was developed in response to the growing tourism demand and opportunity for improved transportation for cyclists between Toronto and the Niagara Region.

The initiative addressed a key need identified in the Niagara Region Tourism Strategy. In order to increase visitation to key Niagara tourist areas, one of the four pillars of success in that report was Destination Development and the need "to enhance all modes of transportation to support accessibility for visitors."

The Pilot Year of the Toronto-Niagara Bike Train service officially launched with two media events on June 5, 2007, and operated over four weekends during the summer, receiving an overwhelmingly positive response from Bike Train passengers, tourism industry representatives, media and the general public.

To facilitate the Bike Train service, a baggage car with 56 bike racks installed onboard was added to select VIA Rail departures between Toronto and Niagara Falls.

In total, there were 286 passengers who travelled on the Bike Train with a notable diversity of age, abilities, partners and group affiliations. There was an average of 90% capacity on Saturday departures from Toronto; two out of the four were at 100% capacity.

Creative means were used to promote the Toronto-Niagara Bike Train with a limited budget including media launch events held in both Toronto and Niagara, co-promotional campaigns, a customized Bike Train Guide to Exploring Niagara, event and conference attendance, passenger "Ambassadors", social networking websites and weblogs.

The media launch generated at least 20 tracked media hits with a reach of over 3 million people, while the project website received over 20,000 unique visitors from around the world in just six months. The initiative was also nominated and won the "I Bike T.O. First Annual Award" at a bicycling event recently held in Toronto.

The Bike Train attracted new cycle tourists to the Niagara

Region. Over half of the passenger survey respondents had never travelled to Niagara to cycle, 72% stayed overnight, and 94% indicated they were very likely or definitely going to take the Bike Train in the future.

Positive participation and feedback from Bike Train passengers has shown significant market potential for increased cycle tourism and overnight stays in the Niagara region. More broadly speaking, the Bike Train Initiative has demonstrated an opportunity to grow environmentally sustainable, green tourism options throughout Ontario.

Plans are underway to further develop and expand the Bike Train Initiative in 2008.

www.biketrain.ca

The Toronto-Niagara Bike Train Initiative is a partnership project founded by the City of Toronto, Government of Ontario, Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce and Visitors & Convention Bureau and VIA Rail Canada, and is supported by partners Tourism Niagara, The Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation, Pedal Magazine, Moving the Economy, and by more than 20 organizations and businesses.

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