

City of Mississauga Memorandum



Date: June 5, 2023

To: Chair and Members of Mississauga Cycling Advisory Committee

From: Matthew Sweet, Manager, Active Transportation

Meeting date: June 13, 2023

Subject: **Cycling Engagement and Education Program Options (2023-24)**

Recommendation

That the memorandum dated June 5, 2023 entitled “Cycling Engagement and Education Program options (2023-24)” from Matthew Sweet, Manager, Active Transportation requesting that the Tour de Mississauga event for 2023 be paused and not proceed at this time while new options for engagement and education programs are developed and evaluated, be approved.

Current Status of the Tour de Mississauga

The 2022 Tour de Mississauga event took place on Sunday, September 18 and welcomed over 1,300 attendees to ride routes of varying lengths highlighting cycling infrastructure across the city. Epic Tour, who have a contract with the City to operate the Tour de Mississauga through 2024, operated the event.

When the Tour was transitioned from the Mississauga Cycling Advisory Committee to third party operations in 2016, the intent was to develop a sustainable funding model which minimized staff time while delivering an effective program. Notwithstanding the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Tour has now been run by a third party in its conventional format on three occasions: 2016 (run by Sustain Mobility) and 2019 and 2022 (both run by Epic Tour). In each of these years, the net operating cost (i.e. gross operating cost minus any revenues) for the event was significant – varying between \$35,000 and \$80,000 – while also requiring a large commitment of staff time to oversee the event operator and ensure that the event met all City requirements. Moreover, the 2022 event increased participation but also increased costs by offering a 100 km ride, resulting in no improvement to the balance of operating costs versus revenues.

Delivery Models / Scaling Options

Several delivery models have been used to run the Tour de Mississauga since its inception.

The Mississauga Cycling Advisory Committee (MCAC) started the Tour de Mississauga in 2007. The Tour grew over the following years to a peak attendance of 3,300 people in 2016. During this period, the Tour was free of charge, included a complimentary lunch for participants, and was run by a mix of volunteer and staff resources.

On April 10, 2013, Council adopted the following recommendation (GC-0187-2013), “That during the next term of Council, MCAC be directed to present a business model for Tour de Mississauga to determine if it will be a community-run event or a City-run event, including City resources required, for approval of the Budget committee”.

In 2016, SustainMobility operated the Tour. The 2016 event featured 15, 30, 50, 80, 100 and 120 kilometre rides and hosted 3,300 participants. SustainMobility increased on-route safety measures, improved directional signage and rest stops, and delivered a positive experience for participants. The event reported a net operating cost of approximately \$35,000 – not including City staff liaison time.

The Active Transportation Office led the organization of the Tour de Mississauga 2017 in partnership with SustainMobility and MCAC. The 2017 Tour featured 5, 10, 25 and 50 kilometre rides and hosted 1,690 participants. Significant changes were made to the event structure in an effort to create a more sustainable business model, including introducing registration fees, ending the free lunch for participants, and shortening ride routes to minimize logistics and policing costs. Several hundred hours of staff time were required to plan and deliver the 2017 Tour, limiting the possibility for other engagement and outreach programming.

The 2018 Tour was operated under a similar model as in 2017. The 2018 event hosted 1,400 participants and required a \$42,000 investment from the City to continue the partnership with SustainMobility, in addition to significant staff time.

The City entered into a contract with Epic Tour for event operations for the Tour de Mississauga beginning in 2019. The overall event model remained similar to 2017 and 2018, with shorter rides and paid registration. The 2019 Tour hosted 1,200 attendees and resulted in a net operating cost of approximately \$80,000.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the 2020 Tour was cancelled. The Tour returned in 2021, albeit in a virtual format, where routes were promoted to residents to try on their own, with no ancillary on-site event activities taking place. The City paid Epic Tour their agreed management fee as per the contract.

In 2022, the Tour returned in its in-person format with similar net operating costs as in previous years.

Table 1 below provides annual summaries of the Tour operations from 2016 to 2022.

Table 1: Operating Model Highlights for Tour de Mississauga, 2016-2022

Year	Operator	Routes (km)	Registration Fees (relative cost)	Attendees	Net Cost ¹ (\$)
2016	SustainMobility	15, 30, 50, 80, 100 and 160	None	3100	35,000
2017	City of Mississauga	5, 10, 15, 30 and 50	\$	1690	34,000
2018	City of Mississauga	5, 10, 25 and 50	\$\$	1400	42,000
2019	Epic Tour	5, 10, 25 and 50	\$\$	1200	80,000
2020	Epic Tour	Cancelled			
2021	Epic Tour	Virtual – 5, 10 and 25 at three locations across the City	None	660 (self-guided)	37,500
2022	Epic Tour	5, 10, 25, 50 and 100	\$\$\$ (100 km route was more expensive)	1300	80,000

Net operating cost, not including staff time.

Engagement and Encouragement Programs

The Active Transportation section plans and delivers a wide variety of Engagement and Encouragement programs across the City. These programs are generally planned by full time staff and delivered by the Bike Ambassador's summer students.

Community Rides

Every year the City of Mississauga's Active Transportation Office, with support from the Mississauga Cycling Advisory Committee, runs Community Rides from May to October throughout the City to encourage residents to explore their neighbourhood by bike, meet new people, and connect with their community.

Educational Trail Pop-ups

Pop-ups are a way for the City to interact with residents outside of a scheduled event and provide an opportunity to reach out to people where they are, answer questions, provide education material, promote events, and observe trail use to help inform education material and programming. Active Transportation staff plan the pop-up locations in partnership with the Parks, Forestry and Environment team; Bike Ambassadors assist in determining six to eight areas along the City's trail systems with high complaints, higher traffic and new infrastructure.

Library Workshops

Active Transportation and Mississauga Libraries partner to host in-person and virtual workshops. Many library branches offer hour-long safety and repair workshops for any ages in either an interactive, indoor workshop that would require open classroom space for the participants to work, or an outdoor bike skills circuit that teach basic safety and cycling skills.

The Active Transportation team and others in the City have also have offered other Engagement and Encouragement activities in previous years.

Bike Challenge

The Mississauga Bike Challenge was a digital event that challenged residents to collectively reach a large goal of kilometres cycled within a set timeframe to unlock a community benefit. The Challenge was hosted on the City's cycling website, equipped with software that enabled residents to sign up and log their kilometres cycled. Participation in the event was designed to be free, easy and fun. Participants would go for bike rides, keep track of their kilometres cycled, and log them to unlock community benefits. The Challenge was run from 2017 to 2019.

The community benefit changed over the course of the three-year period. In 2017, every 10 kilometres cycled resulted in a tree planted in the community. In 2018 and 2019, kilometres cycled led to donations to the Trillium Health Partners Foundation, through a partnership with existing donors.

The cost of developing the software was approximately \$10,000.

Options for 2023-2024

There are two options moving forward utilizing the existing investment that the City has already committed to for cycling education and encouragement. Should the Tour proceed in its current form, other programming options and potential to enhance existing offerings will be extremely limited, due to limited resources and staff capacity. Therefore, one option includes the Tour in its typical format and another option includes new engagement concepts, a revised Tour concept, and enhancements to other program offerings.

Option #1: Tour de Mississauga run by Epic Tour

Operate the Tour in 2023 in its current format, with the understanding that to-date there is limited evidence to suggest that additional revenue can be found either through registrations or sponsorship. Therefore, it would be reasonable to expect that the City would need to invest \$80,000 in order to operate the Tour in 2023.

Alternative delivery models for the Tour could be explored. However, the current contract with Epic Tour includes a fixed management fee, limiting the ability of the City to reduce the necessary investment to run the Tour.

Option #2: Pause the Tour for 2023 and Reallocate Resources

Pause the planning for the Tour de Mississauga and do not proceed with the 2023 event, and re-allocate the associated staff time and financial resources to develop, evaluate and deliver a different set of programs aimed at deepening engagement and education opportunities, such as the following potential opportunities:

Bike Festival

Create a Spring Bike Festival, starting in 2024, to kick-start the cycling season and promote all upcoming events and cycling support systems available in the City. Invite bike shops, community groups and program other “expo” style components (skills training, demonstrations) to a large scale event to promote not just riding bicycles, but lifestyle aspects around cycling.

Enhance Community Rides and Restart the Bike Challenge

Increase promotion and program offering associated with Community Rides, including creating a passport system, adding more explicit educational offerings like skills training, etc. Update and restart the Bike Challenge and associate closely with Community Rides and other program offerings.

Tour de Mississauga Series

Revise the Tour model and rebrand Community Rides held in September as part of a “Tour Series”. Reduce overhead and logistical requirements (i.e. no road closures or police presence) and focus on enhancing attendance, education and engagement at these rides.

Staff recommend proceeding with Option #2 - pausing the Tour de Mississauga in 2023 while new options for engagement and education, such as the potential opportunities described above, are developed and evaluated.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts associated with the recommendations in this memo. Existing budget in the Infrastructure Planning and Engineering Services operating budget will be reallocated to support the proposed Option #2.

Conclusion

The current resource-intensive operating model for the Tour de Mississauga limits the City's ability to engage and educate residents about cycling outside of the one-day Tour event. By reallocating those resources to a variety of programs, intended to take place throughout the year, staff intend to deepen engagement with residents, incorporating skills training components and connecting residents to more resources to support them as they become more comfortable and confident riding in Mississauga.



Prepared by: Matthew Sweet, Manager, Active Transportation