

Let's get Mississippi Mills to Silver Level Bicycle Friendly Community

The Bronze Bicycle Friendly Community (BFC) designation for Mississippi Mills is coming up for renewal - and as the result of so much cycle activity and increased bicycle infrastructure in our community, we believe our community can move from Bronze to Silver BFC designation.

To kick-off our BFC application, the undersigned request a letter of endorsement and support from the Mississippi Mills Council (see below).

Let's lead by example and be the first Silver BFC in the region!

Over the past 7 years, the bicycle friendly community in Mississippi Mills has ridden success after success. Since 2016, the year Mississippi Mills was awarded Bronze designation, our community has embraced cycling in so many measurable ways.

Mississippi Mills has enjoyed and promoted **greater cycling safety** by way of:

- CanBike workshops for adults and teens
- Walking school bus initiatives at area schools
- Designated bicycle lanes along two busy commuter streets in Almonte: One makes biking to high school much safer, the other joins Downtown Almonte to the commercial area of Ottawa St
- The 2020 County of Lanark "Warden's Slow Roll" on the OVRT - an event promoted County-wide to encourage cycle safety and enthusiasm. Over 100 participants from Beckwith, Carleton Place, Mississippi Mills as well as Ottawa. Many participants were municipal and county councillors
- Mississippi Mills Youth Centre (MMYC)'s successful application for MTO Road Safety Challenge funding - to be used for intergenerational bicycle rides, advocacy, and maintenance programs in 2021
- Bicycle Month in Mississippi Mills and Lanark County each June continues to promote safety and accessibility around cycling. The Mayors' Slow Bike Race is one such annual event as is [The Silver Chain Challenge](#), a friendly competition between a growing number of participating counties from across Eastern Ontario to inspire and promote more active, safer and healthier communities.

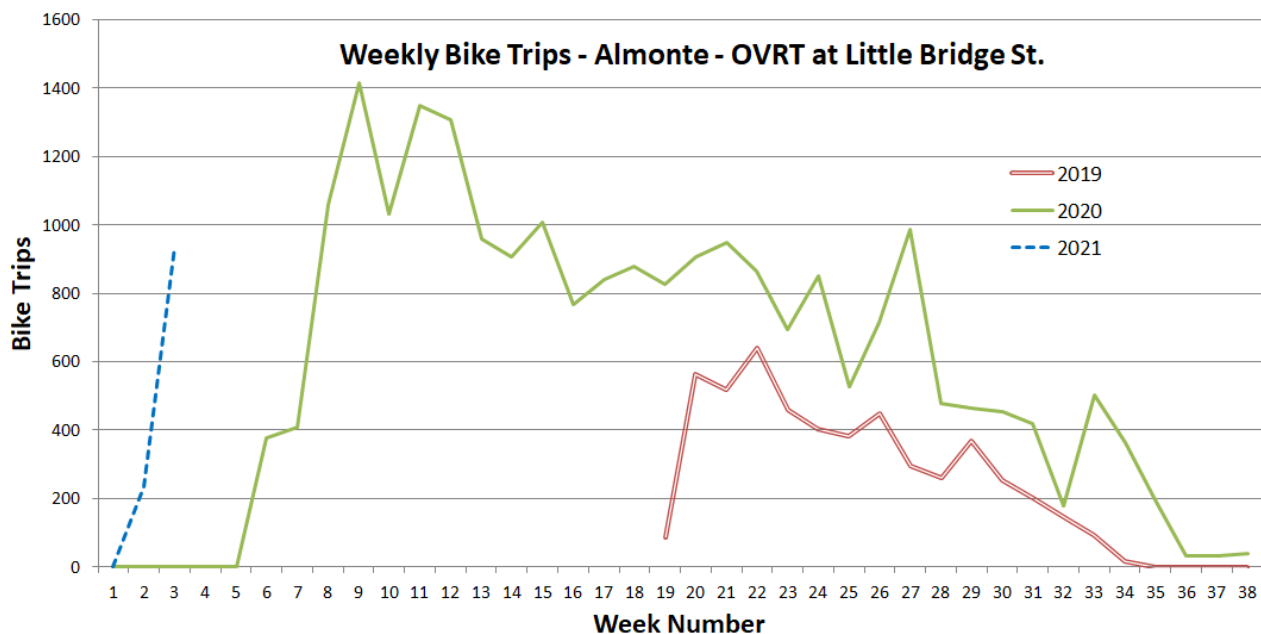
Mississippi Mills **cycle tourism & economic development** is booming. Four provincial tourist routes include our municipality and are highlighted in the Ontario by Bike tourism publication, Cycling Ontario 2021. These routes and initiatives are:

- The Provincial cycling network includes Mississippi Mills in one of the spine routes
- The Voyageur cycling route from Ottawa to North Bay runs through Mississippi Mills. This is the loop that connects to the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail circle route of southern Ontario
- Mississippi Mills is on Freewheeling.ca Adventure Cycle Tour routes, with overnight stops in Almonte
- The M.O.R.E (Mississippi Ottawa Rivers Experience) trail is a 180km multi-day cycle loop that connects us with cycle tourists from Ottawa
- A few years of Mississippi Mills "Right Bikes" bike rentals at the Almonte Old Town Hall

- Ontario by Bike Network certifies tourism businesses as bicycle friendly, Lanark County has 22 certified Bicycle Friendly businesses. A 28 April 2021 webinar will help more business certify - details below
- The Eastern Ontario Active Transportation Summit began in Almonte in 2013. It's goal: to create walkable, bikeable rural communities. Representatives from Mississippi Mills attend and share knowledge each year of the Summit.
- Almonte Bicycle Works bike shop and its "Bikes for Haiti" charity wing have sold new and used bikes at reasonable prices and have kept them in good repair for over a decade.

In similar ways that the Hallmark movie industry has brought more wealth and more curious visitors to Mississippi Mills, so has **increasing bicycle infrastructure**:

- 6.5 kms of Lanark County and Mississippi Mills bicycle lanes along Martin Street North, Ottawa Street and Perth Street - used more than ever during this era of outdoor recreation as a respite from COVID-19 isolation. Look out summer of 2021!
- Lanark County connected Almonte with Appleton and onto Hwy 7 with 13.5 km of bike lanes along the paved shoulder on Appleton Side Rd and 2.5 km of rural bike lanes in northern Pakenham (Mississippi Mills) along the Waba Rd. Lanark County is committed to paving shoulders as they redevelop rural roads to be more bicycle friendly
- Lanark County Mountain Bike Associations addition of the Bennie's Corners trails increased mountain bike trail riding from 10 km in 2016 to 20 km in 2021 - all within Mississippi Mills. An asset that attracts Kanata and Ottawa trail riding clubs for an afternoon or a day, when they also need a meal or more after their rides
- An increase in bike racks within Almonte and Pakenham - attractive to cyclists. The latest racks have just been installed at the Alameda on the OVRT.
- The stone-dusting of the Ottawa Valley Rail Trail surface within the communities of Carleton Place, Ramsay, Almonte and Pakenham. The surfacing was paid by a Ontario Municipal Commuter Cycling (OMCC) grant. In 2017, Lanark County along with Carleton Place and Mississippi Mills received \$598k in OMCC grant money to make the OVRT more bicycle friendly for commuters, tourists and more accessible to seniors and residents with disabilities.



The **sheer volume of cyclists** in our communities over the past few years is astounding. The OVRT has proven to be a HUGE bike resource. The bikeable distance from Pakenham

to Almonte to Carleton Place is 20km - all on bike friendly surfacing and all safely off-road! The Voyageur Cycling Route provided a bicycle counter and collected statistics for two years on the OVRT in Almonte. In 2019, Aug- Nov, the total was 5138 bikes and the yearly total for **2020 was a whopping 22,717 bike trips!** In 2021, our second COVID-19 summer, we expect to see a record number of bikes out – [check out the 2021 count above!](#)

We're taking seriously the **health of active aging residents!** Our community most recently acquired two **Trio bikes**, owned by Carebridge Community Support's Wellness Program. The Trio bikes transport seniors from retirement and long term care facilities for recreational rides in Mississippi Mills.

One trio bike was paid for by the [Almonte Civitan Club](#) and the other by citizen-fundraising. Look for the trio bikes at all outdoor community events this summer and up and down the OVRT!



Trio Bike Delivery by the Almonte Civitan Club

Both Lanark and Mississippi Mills maintain Active Transportation Plans that support cycle infrastructure, safety, planning, education and enthusiasm.

All this cycling-driven success in our municipality has inspired a group of organizational partners to reach for Silver Designation in the Bicycle Friendly Community (BFC) Program. The BFC Program was launched by the Share the Road Cycling Coalition in Canada in August 2010 in partnership with the Washington-based League of American Bicyclists. The Canadian Automobile Association (CAA) is the primary sponsor for the BFC Program. In 2016, Mississippi Mills was the first small rural community to be awarded BFC Bronze level certification in Ontario.

Need more reasons to support a BFC designation in Mississippi Mills?

- Now more than ever, cycling and cycle tourism is increasingly popular
- Welcoming cyclists is good for business

- Helps a community to take advantage of regional and provincial promotions and projects supporting cycling and cycle tourism
- Designation can help entrepreneurs uncover new business opportunities
- The explosion in cycling and other safe outdoor pursuits are keeping people healthy and sane in this era of COVID-19

Mississippi Mills Bicycle Movement (MMBM) is spearheading the application for Silver BFC designation. Any volunteers who would like to get involved can please contact MMBM. Please direct your letters of support to the same email address: **info@mmbm.ca**

The undersigned request a letter of endorsement and support from the Mississippi Mills and Lanark County Councils in order that a Silver BFC designation application can be submitted to Share the Road.

Looking forward to hearing from you all! With warmest regards,

Rob Riendeau, Robbie Brady, Jeff Mills, Jill McCubbin, MMBM representatives, with the committed and confirmed support from the following groups:

- Age Friendly North Lanark (Carebridge)
- Almonte Bicycle Works
- Almonte Civitan Club
- Bridging Generations Pakenham
- Lanark County Mountain Biking Association (LCMBA)
- Mississippi Mills Bicycle Month
- Mississippi Mills Youth Centre
- Mississippi Mills Family Cycling Group
- Pakenham Business and Tourism Association
- Rimm Rovers

Note: This letter was sent to all the following:

- Every member of Mississippi Mills Council
- Mississippi Mills CAO and Clerk
- Every member of Lanark County Council
- Lanark County CAO and Clerk
- Mississippi Mills Dept Roads & Public Works, Dept Recreation, & Dept Economic Development
- Lanark County Dept Roads & Public Works, Tourism and Economic Development

Upcoming webinar details:

“Destination Bike - Welcoming Cyclists in Lanark County”

The Ontario By Bike Network certifies tourism businesses as bicycle friendly, helping businesses reach the growing number of cycle tourists

Wednesday, 28 April, 10 - 11am

Registration Page: **ontariobybike-lanarkcounty.eventbrite.ca**

All info about the webinar is at the above link.