

Members of Cycle Hamilton Encourage Advocacy and Community Engagement

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Cycle Hamilton Board of Directors and Kate Whalen at Winter Bike Day on February 10, 2023.
Photo credit: Peter Topalovic

Overview

Cycling is a sustainable and active means of transportation that benefits the environment ¹, human health ², and economy^{3,4}. As the population grows, there is a greater societal need to provide sustainable, efficient, and equitable modes of transportation, like cycling.⁵ In 2016, the city of Hamilton had the highest proportion (27.8%) of commuters using sustainable transportation in southern Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe.⁶ However, cities like Toronto see higher proportions of ridership, reaching above 40%, demonstrating opportunity for improvement.⁷ Cycle Hamilton, a non-profit organization, aims to make Hamilton "the best place for anyone to get around by bike."⁸ To inform their future practices, the goal of our project was to explore their members' perceptions of the most significant impact that Cycle Hamilton has had or could provide. We leveraged the Cycle Hamilton's Annual General Meeting (AGM) to connect with current and potential members.

Objectives

1. Conduct interviews with AGM event attendees
2. Identify recurring themes from interview data
3. Present and share findings with Cycle Hamilton

Reporting

To achieve our first objective, we leveraged the work of Fall 2022 SUSTAIN 3S03 students ^{9,10}, who hosted Cycle Hamilton's AGM on November 22, 2022, to recruit and conduct our qualitative interviews. In our questions, we touch on topics such as member experience, how their experience with the organization can be further excelled, and overall engagement with the organization. We asked AGM attendees about what Cycle Hamilton can implement or offer to achieve their goal of making Hamilton the best place for anyone to get around by bike. In one hour, we conducted 20 interviews. Our participants were made up of 15 Cycle Hamilton members, and five non-members.

To fulfill our second objective, we identified reoccurring themes in the interview data suggesting that Cycle Hamilton can better serve its members through increased individual advocacy (e.g., educating younger demographics) and structural advocacy (e.g., advocating for better cycling infrastructure to governing bodies). Cycle Hamilton can also better serve its members through increased engagement, specifically increasing event promotion, diversity of attendees, and community collaborations.

To achieve our third objective, we discussed our findings and recommendations with Cycle Hamilton's Board of Directors and shared our results with the broader organization through online promotion. Our recommendations included advocacy through campaigns, increased consistency and frequency of smaller events, and leveraging current community relationships for increased support and resources.

Collaborators

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