Future of Active Transportation

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Consultations: Emerging Themes and Concerns

Lack of Connectivity	Political Barriers & Needed Supports	Safety Concerns & Needs	Other Pushbacks &Challenges
• Bikesharing and biking needs(e.g. bike storage options, newer bicycles) • Lacking on-the-road design acts as a deterrant for new cyclists due to safety issues	• Challenges to implementing the road diet scheme; master plan (ideal network) ≠ routine accommodation (for active transportation) • Limited funding for project completion due to fragmented priorities in city council	• Pavement marking for drivers would lead to improved driving behaviours • Barriers to making biking safer would lead to increased confidence and comfort for cyclists	• Air quality and pollution • Beautification of city space

For this project, we interviewed 7 stakeholders, including representatives from the City of Hamilton, Smart Commute Hamilton, Downtown Hamilton BIA, SoBi, Friendly Streets Hamilton, and community members.The most consistent theme emerging from the stakeholder interviews is the following: To achieve a healthier population, cities need to move from being auto-centric to communities that consider active transportation as a 'natural' mode of movement. This requires transforming communities to create a more positive experience for people to engage in active transportation, with an emphasis on the social and community-building aspects of movement. For example, Jane's Walk allows people across cities worldwide to come together as a community to engage in "walking conversations" about the areas in which they "live, work, and play." In addition, there needs to be more collaboration between businesses and government to create a future that balances public and private interests. Also, more political will needs to be generated to support long-term strategies, such as major infrastructure changes (e.g. cycling lanes).

From these conversations, we also identified weak signals that point to upcoming disruptions in the future:

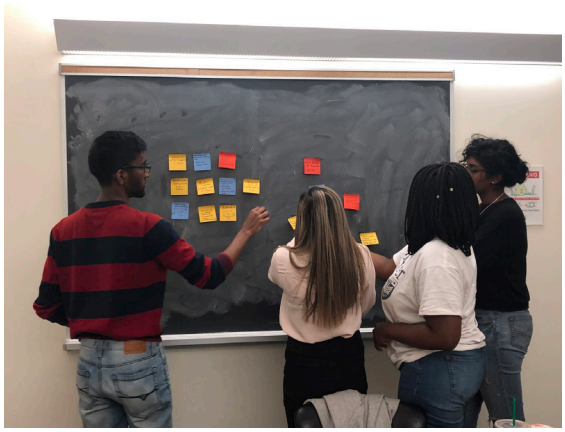
- Autonomous vehicles, self-driving cars, will be increasingly influential due to technological advances.
- Changes in active transportation infrastructure may include, for example, the transformation of centre road lanes into an accessible path for walking, biking and wheelchair purposes.
- The prominence of virtual reality may allow people to immerse themselves into nature even from the comfort of their homes or workplaces. An example is the NaturePod demo that allowed workers to take a simulated walk in the woods.
- The development of sidewalk lab neighbourhoods (currently piloting in Toronto) may allow the city to combine urban design with technology to create neighbourhoods that provide a more convenient and safe transportation options for its residents.

Overall, by identifying these signals, we were able to critically consider futures scenarios that may occur, with an emphasis on reconciling the various priorities of different stakeholders working in active transportation across the city of Hamilton.

Future Insights & Creating Scenario

Based on stakeholder interviews and identified weak signals, we developed questions that explore the different scenarios or possibilities that may have implications for the future of active transportation in Hamilton.

- What if we imposed toll charges for driving in the downtown Hamilton core?
- What if the usage of autonomous vehicles leads to an even further increase in chronic illness?
- What if those using autonomous vehicles were somehow also required to participate in some form of physical activity?
- What if there is a heavy reliance on virtual reality such that it leads to negative impacts on physical and mental health of individuals?
- What if virtual reality could remove any phobias associated with using active transportation?
- What if we begin to rely on virtual reality for experiences of nature and beautiful scenery rather than experiencing it in real life?
- What if a social movement was created that pushed for living in more active neighbourhoods?
- What if the public and political decision makers do not support building active transportation infrastructure?
- What if we incentivized companies for building communities that promote an active lifestyle?



Our scenario exhibit was developed after many brainstorming sessions as we strived to portray and consolidate all the information gathered throughout this project in the most robust way possible. In designing our scenario, our inspiration was also drawn from our visit to the McMaster Museum, where the abstractness of the pieces showed how unique ideas can be represented in creative ways.

Our exhibit, which is a card game that asks users to meaningfully think through various futures scenarios and create their own solutions, was also inspired by the "Thing from the Future" card game. We ensured that our card game covers futuristic topics, such as the implementation of the LRT, as well as the role of climate change and other social determinants of health on active movement across Hamilton. With its human-centred design, this card game will serve as a unique data collection method to paint a picture for stakeholders regarding the Hamilton community's perspective on the future of active transportation in Hamilton.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

Working on this project allowed us to build both our knowledge and technical skills. From a knowledge perspective, gaining exposure to the foundation and application of strategic foresight thinking demonstrated to us the difference between predicting the future and planning for it, learning how to identify the possibilities and the types of futures that people might want so that we can develop strategies to move towards them.

In regards to skill-building, this project enabled us to work as a team and learn how to reconcile the diverse opinions of stakeholders in a way that was imaginative and creative in thinking. To address such a large challenge as active transportation, it also pushed us to gain a better understanding of the current state of active transportation in Hamilton so that we can make Hamilton a healthier and more active place to live, work and play in 2030.