

# **GWTA 2019 Overview and Participant Survey**

Monday, August 26, 2019









#### Thank you to our generous partners!























#### Route Development Partners:







#### Cycle the North! GWTA 2019-July 28 to August 2

450km from Sault Ste. Marie to Sudbury launching the Lake Huron North Channel Expansion of the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail and Great Trail.

**Overnight Host Communities:** Sault Ste. Marie, Bruce Mines, Blind River, Espanola, Sudbury

Rest Stop Hosts: Garden River First Nation, Macdonald Meredith and Aberdeen Additional (Echo Bay), Johnson Township (Desbarats), Township of St. Joseph, Thessalon, Huron Shores (Iron Bridge), Mississauga First Nation, North Shore Township (Algoma Mills), Serpent River First Nation, Spanish, Township of Spanish-Sables (Massey), Nairn Centre.

**150** participants aged **23** to **81** coming from Florida, Massasschutes, Minnesota, New Jersey, Arizona, and 5 provinces: Ontario (91%), British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec and New Brunswick.

**54 elected representatives and community leaders** met GWTA Honorary Tour Directors and participants at rest stops and in some cases cycled with the group. See pages 24-26 for list.

**Special thanks to our awesome support team**: cycling and driving volunteers, camp team, Mary Lynn Duguay of the Township of North Shore for serving as our lead vehicle and Michael Wozny for vehicle support.

Great regional and local media coverage.



The Lake Huron North Channel celebrates the spirit of the North, following 12 heritage rivers, connecting with 11 northern lakes, winding through forests, Amish and Mennonite farmland, historic logging, mining and fishing villages, and 24 beaches. The expansion is the collective accomplishment of partnership including local communities, The Great Trail, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, Tourism Northern Ontario, and the Ontario Ministry of Transportation.

#### **Highlights from the GWTA and Survey**

- 102 Survey Responses
- 25% First time on the GWTA; 76% first time cycling in Northern Ontario.
- 60% choose cycling holidays based on recommendations from friends and family; 50% search the web.
- 98% will recommend the GWTA to friends and family
- 92% rate the **GWTA** as an excellent (60%) or very good (32%) summer holiday.
- 79% will recommend the Lake Huron North Channel Waterfront Trail to friends and family for a visit (absolutely 40%; yes 39%).
- 84% believe this section of the route is well-marked (33% strongly; 51% agree)
- 78% felt safe on this section of the Trail (33% strongly agree; 45% agree)
- 86% state this section of the Trail provides a great cycling experience (45% strongly agree; 41% agree)
- 83% felt comfortable cycling on Hwy 17 (51% strongly; 32% agree). Noise and truck traffic on HWY 17 were listed as concerns by respondents.
- 94% view the Trail as an important part of regenerating the Great Lakes (63% strongly agree; 31% agree)
- 79% of respondents rated Mobile Bike Assist service as excellent (74%) or good (5%). 21% responded n/a suggesting they did not use the service.



#### **Highlights from the GWTA and Survey**

- 52% will return to visit a community or area we cycle during the 2019 GWTA.
- \$985 Average spending per participant.
- \$143K Estimated local total economic benefits related to the GWTA 2019. In total, there were 88 additional hotels rooms booked by respondents before and/or after the GWTA.
- Priority improvement recommended by participants to ensure the Trail achieves tourism potential--paving or surface treating gravel and repairing potholes were mentioned in 56 comments; 7 comments received about moving the Trail off HWY 17 and 10 recommend improving signage.
- 7 Waterfront Trail Champions who raised a total of: \$8,500 as part of their GWTA. Thank you to Margot Dixon, Dave Werezak, Ruth Werezak, Randy Fisher, Janice Fisher, Sherry Vanderheyden, Euguene Todd



#### **New Projects Featured**

- · Connection to the Lake Superior Water Trail
- Hiking connection from HWY 17B to Laughing Waters Ojibway Park
- 50 kms of wide paved shoulder installed by the Ministry of Transportation along sections of HWY 17 necessary to achieve a continuous route
- · 2.4 km of resurfaced trail in the MTO right of way east of Blind River
- · Work with the communities on St. Joseph Island and the Ministry of Transportation to designate a route for the Trail on the Island.
- El Dorado Road connection—scenic hiking path meandering through forest, marshlands and scramble-worthy rocky balds, a collaborative effort between Mississauga First Nation, and the Town of Blind River with funding from the Great Trail.
- Connection from the Waterfront Trail to the Serpent River First Nation Trading Post (located on Highway 17).
- · Paving of Brennan Harbour Road, Spanish
- · Signalized crossing of Regent Street, Sudbury
- · Paved shoulders of RR55 between Simon Lake Road and Santala Rd, Sudbury
- · Bi-directional bike trail on Paris Street, Sudbury





People will love this section of the Trail. It is different from any other part of the Waterfront Trail, but equal in its power to remind us of why we love Ontario and our Great Lakes. We are thrilled to make the North part of Ontario's iconic cycle tourism experience.



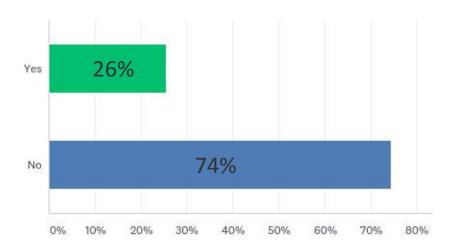
## **Survey Responses**

Question	Page		
First time on GWTA	8	What people loved	
First time cycled Northern Ontario	8	Recommended priority improvements	
Rate the GWTA as summer experience	ce 9	Choosing cycle holidays	•
Recommend GWTA	10	Age and gender	-
Future visits to the area	11	Participants with friends or alone	2
Recommend Lake Huron North Chan	nel 11	Average household income	2
Activities enjoyed on the GWTA	12	CAA	2
Rate Trail attributes	13	Political Engagement	2



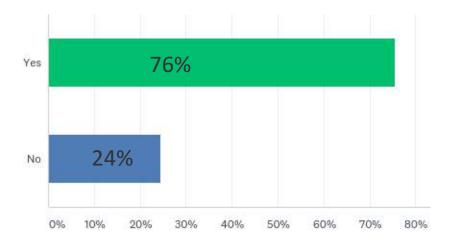
## Is this the first time you participated in the GWTA?

Answered: 102 Skipped: 0



## Is this the first time you have cycled in Northern Ontario?

Answered: 102 Skipped: 0











#### Overall, how would you rate GWTA as a summer holiday experience?

Answered: 102 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Excellent	59.80%	61
Very good	33.33%	34
Good	6.86%	7
Fair	0.00%	0
Poor	0.00%	0
TOTAL		102

90%
rate GWTA
highly as a
summer
holiday
experience



#### I will recommend the GWTA to family and friends.

Answered: 102 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Absolutely	70.59%	72
Yes	27.45%	28
No	0.98%	1
Not sure	0.98%	1
TOTAL		102

99%
recommend
the GWTA to
friends and
family



### I am most likely to return to a community or area we cycled during the 2019 GWTA to visit in:

Answered: 101 Skipped: 1

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
less than 12 months	19.80%	20
12 to 24 months	32.67%	33
Not sure	47.52%	48
TOTAL		101

## I would recommend the Lake Huron North Channel expansion of the Waterfront Trail to friends and family for a visit.

Answered: 102 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Absolutely	40.20%	41
Yes	38.24%	39
No	1.96%	2
Maybe	19.61%	20
TOTAL		102

Where do we start! The incredibly beautiful raw and untouched scenery, the excellent shoulder improvement on highway 17, the opportunity to see what lays behind the highway, the welcoming, friendly and enthused local people...

The route was wonderful and showcased the North Shore well.

I had never been to any of the places on the tour. It was so beautiful! The GWTA gave me a taste of the area and so many ideas of things to go back and do. Great hospitality and friendly people. Riding my bike on the trail took me to places I would never have seen riding in a car down the highway and a real feel for the area.

Challenge and exquisite beauty of the route

Cycling along the rivers, lakes and streams. Meeting members of the indigenous communities and having an opportunity to learn from them. The ability to swim at the Chute

## Please indicate which of the following activities you enjoyed. Check all that apply:

Answered: 102 Skipped: 0

Connecting/sharing with First Nations was the most frequently mentioned (includes Mississauga Water Ceremony, Serpent River PowWow).

Memorable activities listed by respondents: Hub Trail, Sault Ste Marie, Desbarats Greenbelt Lunch, St. Joseph Island, Bruce Mines, camping at the Blind River marina, Thessalon Marina, Spanish Marina, Chutes Provincial Park, Centennial Park Picnic lunch in Sudbury, Kelly Street Stop in Sudbury





ANSWER CHOICES	RESPON	SES
Participated in the photo contest.	29.41%	30
Paddle Lake Superior with Joanie McGuffin-Sunday, July 28th	8.82%	9
Cycle Sault Ste Marie's Hub Trail, Sunday, July 28	70.59%	72
Cycled St. Joseph Island, Monday July 29	45.10%	46
Enjoyed a slice of Bobber's Pie in Bruce Mines, Monday July 29	46.08%	47
Visited Iron Bridge Historical Museum, Tuesday July 30	13.73%	14
Attended the Water Ceremony hosted by Mississauga First Nation, Tuesday July 30	65.69%	67
Spoke with Elders of Mississauga First Nation at the Serpent River PowWow Grounds, Wed. July 31	30.39%	31
Visited the Spanish Marina and climbed the stairs to the lookout, Wed, July 31	38.24%	39
Visited the Massey Area Museum, Wed, July 31.	7.84%	8
Visited Chutes Provincial Park in Massey, Wed. July 31.	25.49%	26
Enjoyed a swim at the Recreation Centre in Espanola, Wed. July 31	23.53%	24
Participated in Yoga in Espanola, Wed. July 31	10.78%	11
Joined the fireside sing song in Espanola on Wed. July 31	43.14%	44
Entered Sudbury's Kelly Street Distillery Draw by visiting the location listed in the passport, Thursday Aug 1st	24.51%	25
Visited the Big Nickel in Sudbury on August 1, 2019	35.29%	36
Went swimming	26.47%	27
Total Respondents: 102		

## Please rate the following statements as they pertain to the Lake Huron North Channel expansion of Great Lakes Waterfront Trail from Sault Ste Marie to Sudbury:

Answered: 102 Skipped: 0							
	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO OPINION	TOTAL RESPONDENTS
	34.31%	50.98%	14.71%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	
The Trail is well-marked	35	52	15	0	0	0	102
LC by Complete and Table	34.31%	43.14%	19.61%	1.96%	0.00%	0.98%	
I felt safe cycling on the Trail	35	44	20	2	0	1	102
	46.08%	40.20%	13.73%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	
he Trail provides a great cycling experience	47	41	14	0	0	0	102
I felt comfortable cycling on the paved	50.98%	30.39%	12.75%	2.94%	1.96%	0.98%	
shoulders of Hwy 17.	52	31	13	3	2	1	102
The Trail (public access) represents an	62.38%	31.68%	2.97%	0.00%	0.00%	2.97%	
important part of regenerating the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence River.	63	32	3	0	0	3	101

#### What did people love!

In our open ended question we asked what did you love about the GWTA 2019 and the Lake Huron North Channel expansion of the Trail. 97 people provided extensive comments. Here are the most frequent comments (number of comments is provided in parentheses):

- The route itself, the landscape, the fact it was in the North, the rivers and lakes, and for many introduced them to a part of the Ontario they had not explored before. (58). Six people identified the shoulders on HWY 17 as a highlight
- Hospitality and friendliness of the communities and First Nations (49)
- Camaraderie with the other participants (39)
- Organization volunteers and support (52)







I had never been to any of the places on the tour. It was so beautiful! The GWTA gave me a taste of the area and so many ideas of things to go back and do. Great hospitality and friendly people. Riding my bike took me to places I would never have seen driving my car on the highway and a real feel for the area.

The host communities were fantastic. Everyone I spoke with was very proud to be part of the tour and showcase their community, and they went all out to make us feel welcome

Where do we start! The incredibly beautiful raw and untouched scenery, the excellent shoulder improvement on HWY 17, the opportunity to see what lays behind the highway, the welcoming, friendly and enthused local people, the painted bikes in Bruce Mines, the fabulous meals, ....the farsighted attitudes of the local politicians and the opportunity to share this fabulous adventure with like-minded people on bikes!!

#### **Comments on the Trail**

Loved cycling the North Shore gravel grind and all.

My only complaint is that the choices in the survey do not include "stupendous", "superior" or "out of sight"!! The trip was once again impeccably planned and perfectly executed. There are always things that go on "behind the scenes" with any organized event, but to the riders, it all appeared to run as smoothly as possible. Thank you!

GWTA provides a well-supported cycling platform on which participants can layer their own goals... and it works well.

Such a beautiful trail! The opportunity to view the locals with their horses and wagons, to see the lovely farms and the clotheslines flapping in the breeze, to see the vegetation and land forms and to become grounded with nature was a true highlight.

A beautiful trail. Interesting and strenuous enough to be fun, but a difficulty. ....we would have missed something if the whole trail was on HWY 17.

The Trail has an excellent foundation and the cycling infrastructure is in place, but certainly someday paving it will increase usage and therefore create greater economic opportunities for the communities in the area.







#### Recommended priority improvements for the route

In our open ended question we asked what we can do to improve the Lake Huron North Channel expansion of the Trail and GWTA. 92 people provided comments. Here are the most frequent comments (number of comments is provided in parentheses):

- Pave or compact gravel surfaces or repair rough roads (56).
- Improve signage/make sure signs are unobscured by foliage (10)
- Move the trail off HWY 17 (6). While majority of people felt safe on HWY 17, some respondents (12) noted the noise, trucks and crossings of HWY 17 made them uneasy.
- Plan for more time in the communities (6)



The off-road trails need to be improved. Less sand, less big gravel and better compaction.

The Trail has made the most of the existing infrastructure to produce a remarkable trail. To improve it, pave the gravel, use limestone screenings on all Trails, reduce the use of Hwy 17 whenever the opportunity arises. Don't panic about the gravel stretches and HWY 17. The Trail is great and the great country roads far exceed the dubious bits.

Add one more day to the experience. Allow more time to visit the local communities.

#### Comments about the Trail (Priority improvements recommended)

I feel that we would miss something if the whole route was on HWY17-if paved shoulders came to the whole section of hwy. Even though that might mean no gravel.

I missed a lot of the scenery due to the gravel. I had to keep a strong focus on my cycling for safety reasons.

Gravel roads with rough terrain and hills with curves were dangerous. I could not always ride at the edge and could not see approaching vehicles.

Felt safe on Highway 17, but less pleasant overall - especially the noise. Surface, however, was excellent. i understand these sections are necessary because of the topography and lack of alternatives.

The route is difficult, it's the north for goodness sake, but the trail was a great northern experience.

The dirt and gravel trails need to be better ie more compacted and less sand and in other areas less big rock. I hope MTO finishes installing and paving shoulders on all ON highways!

The gravel roads were somewhat of a problem on the route. Cycling along the shoulder of highway 17 was unavoidable but unpleasant due to the proximity of huge trucks (although the separation was good and the road surface was excellent).

Having a consistent surface would truly add to the enjoyment and usage of the trail. This in turn would create greater appeal for those choosing to do an end to end ride, leading to greater economic advantage to the communities in the area.







#### How do you choose your cycle holidays?

Answered: 102 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPON	SES
Web search	50.00%	51
Referral from a friend/family member	59.80%	61
Print Advertising	8.82%	9
Display booth at trade shows (e.g. Bike Show, Outdoor Adventure Show)	20.59%	21
Web advertisement/newsletter (e.g. Ontario by Bike, Adventure Cycling, Get Out There)	34.31%	35
Social Media-Facebook, Twitter etc	17.65%	18

Total Respondents: 102

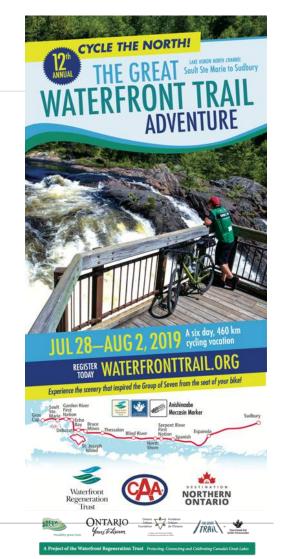












#### Age

Answered: 101 Skipped: 1

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
21 - 35	2.97%	3
36 - 45	3.96%	4
46 - 55	16.83%	17
56 - 65	40.59%	41
66 - 74	28.71%	29
75+	6.93%	7
TOTAL		101

#### Gender

Answered: 102 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Female	50.49%	52
Male	49.51%	51

41% Registrants aged 56-65

29% aged 66-74

17% Registrants aged 46-55

#### Which of the following best describes your situation?

Answered: 102 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Signed up to ride as a single participant	31.37%	32
Signed up to ride with friends and/or family	55.88%	57
Signed up as a volunteer	12.75%	13
TOTAL		102





56% Registrants with friends and family

31% Come alone

#### Q20: What is your approximate average household income?

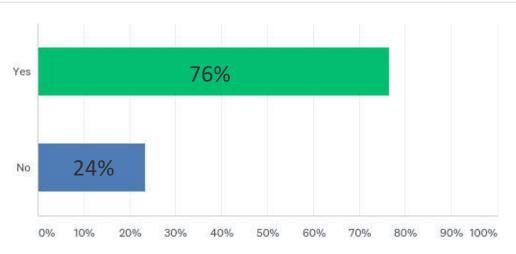
Answered: 93 Skipped: 9

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
\$0-\$24,999	2.15%	2
\$25,000-\$49,999	7.53%	7
\$50,000-\$74,999	11.83%	11
\$75,000-\$99,999	29.03%	27
\$100,000-\$124,999	18.28%	17
\$125,000-\$149,999	10.75%	10
\$150,000-\$174,999	3.23%	3
\$175,000-\$199,999	4.30%	4
\$200,000 and up	12.90%	12
TOTAL		93

49%
Household income of \$100,000 or more

#### Are you a member of CAA or AAA?

Answered: 102 Skipped: 0





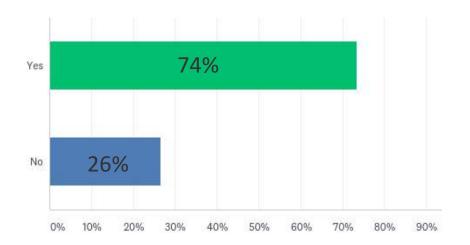






# Was the availability of the CAA sponsored shuttle service important to your decision to participate in the ride.

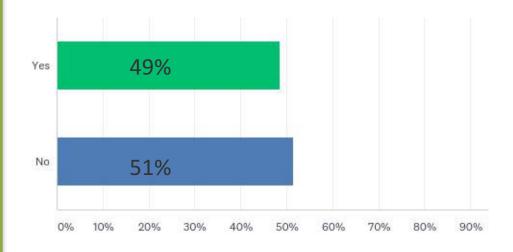
Answered: 102 Skipped: 0



CAA support was outstanding. Zack is the best!!! Extra accolades for him.

## Did you use the CAA sponsored support shuttle (s) service at any time during the ride?

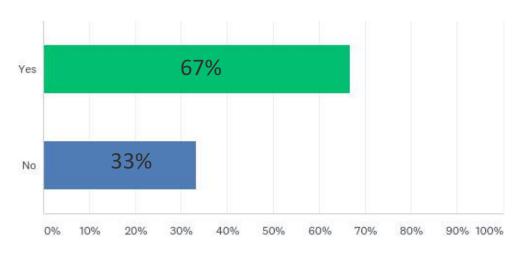
Answered: 101 Skipped: 1



Now that I have ridden with CAA support, I think that it is a real plus.

## Did you use CAA's Mobile Bike Assist Service to repair or adjust your bike during the GWTA this year?

Answered: 102 Skipped: 0





As always, the CAA support was excellent.

While I did not need the CAA services this year, I have in the past and they are an important factor in my decision to join the GWTA ride Even with getting my bike serviced days before the adventure the rough roads and dirt impacted on how my bike operated. Zack always seemed to be in the right place at the right time. His personality and mechanical skills were fantastic. I owe him a great amount of gratitude. Well done.

#### **2019 GWTA Honorary Tour Directors**

Tracy

Elected and community leaders from the WRT partnership serve as ambassadors thanking host communities for their hospitality, and sharing their impressions of the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail.



Joanne Dies, Durham Regional Councillor for Ajax (Lake Ontario)



Dave Henderson (right), retired Mayor of Brockville (St. Lawrence River) with Mayor of Thessalon and Christa Ng.

Peter Delanty, retired Mayor of Cobourg (Lake Ontario)

Nickelford, CAA representative

Bev MacDougall, former Lambton Regional Councillor for Sarnia (Lake Huron)

Jordan Hawkswell (front), Danyka Leclair, Waterlution



Rachelle Niemela, Bike Sudbury

Steve Parish retired Mayor of Ajax (Lake Ontario)



Shelley Petrie, Greenbelt Foundation

#### Political Engagement— 54 elected representatives and community leaders met participants at rest stops and/or (\*) cycled

Pam Lortie, CAO Spanish Township

Spanish Mayor Jocelyne Bishop

Sault Ste Marie Councillor, Donna Hilsinger

David MacLachlan, Destination Northern Ontario

Mayor Ken Lamming, Prince Township

Joanie McGuffin, Executive Director Lake Superior Water Trail

Shompa Hai, Trans Canada Trail Ontario/ The Great Trail

Ross Romano, MPP Sault Ste. Marie, Min. of Training, Colleges & Universities

Councillor Donna Hilsinger, Sault Ste. Marie\*

Dave MacLachlan, Destination Northern Ontario

Rob Nowosielski, Ontario Trillium Foundation

Asima Vezina, President and Vice Chancellor Algoma University\* Marlene Spruyt, Medical Officer of Health/CEO, Algoma Public Health\*

Johnson Township Mayor Blaine Mersereau

Johnson Township Councillor Gavin Grant

Edith Orr, Manager Johnson Farmers Market

Bruce Mines Mayor Lory Patteri

Bruce Mines Councillor Mariola Morin

Bruce Mines Councilor Jody Orto

Bruce Mines Councillor Jerry Bogart

Bruce Mines Councillor Richard O'Hara

Donna Brunke, CAO Bruce Mines

Kelly Belisle, Plummer Additional Township, Roads

Mike Mantha, MPP Algoma Manitoulin

Thessalon Mayor Bill Rosenberg

Debbie Tonelli, Clerk Municipality of Huron Shores













### Political Engagement--54 elected representatives and community leaders met participants at rest stops and/or (\*) cycled

Huron Shores Mayor Georges Bilodeau

Huron Shores Councillor Nancy Jones-Scissons

Huron Shores Councillor Jock Pirrie

Huron Shores Councillor Dale Wedgwood

Iron Bridge Museum Supervisor Vicki Leach

Carol Hughes, MP Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing

Blind River Mayor Sally Hagman

Jon Cada, Economic Development, Mississauga First Nation

Karen Bittner, Facility & Recreation Manager, Blind River

Katie Scott, CAO Blind River

Blind River Mayor Sally Hagman

North Shore Township Councillor Brenda Green

North Shore Township Councillor Barbara Barton

North Shore Township Councillor Gary Gamble

North Shore Township Councillor Melody Rose

North Shore Township CAO/Clerk Mary Lynne Duguay

Wilma Bissiallon, General Manager Ec. Dev. Serpent River First Nation

Spanish Mayor Jocelyne Bishop

Spanish Councillor Sandra Trudel

Mayor Mr. Leslie Gamble, Sables-Spanish Rivers

Espanola Mayor Jill Beer

Karin Bates, CAO Baldwin

Nairn Centre, Belinda Ketchabaw, Clerk/Treasurer

Sudbury Mayor Brian Bigger\*
Sudbury Councillor Deb MacIntosh\*
Jamie West, MPP\* for Sudbury
Dan Barrette, Rainbow Routes\*
Edward McDonnell, CEO Greenbelt Foundation\*





#### What our partners say...

"Cycling tourism is growing across Ontario thanks to organizations like the Waterfront Regeneration Trust and events like the Great Waterfront Trail Adventure. CAA is a proud supporter of this work," said **Tracy Nickleford, manager, community relations, CAA South Central Ontario**. "With all this momentum, it's becoming increasingly important for motorists to be aware of how to maneuver with more cyclists on the road and for cyclists to be aware of their rights and responsibilities. Exploring this great province by four wheels or two is all the more enjoyable when we share the road and keep safety and consideration top of mind."

"I am grateful to the many people who have worked so hard over the last number of years to make the Lake Huron North Channel route a reality and I am thrilled that we are hosting the Great Waterfront Trail Adventure starting in Sault Ste. Marie this year." **Donna Hilsinger, Councillor Sault Ste. Marie** 

"The Municipality of Huron Shores is pleased to be providing a rest stop and water station at the Iron Bridge Museum to welcome the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail's Cycle the North Riders and hear about the trip! We are excited to be a part of the provincial cycling network and wish you perfect pedalling weather as you explore the North Shore!" -- Georges Bilodeau, Mayor of Municipality of Huron Shores

"The Town of Spanish welcomes the 2019 Great Waterfront Trail Adventure cyclists to enjoy the beautiful vistas you will encounter as you travel along the North Shore of Lake Huron. We know you will want to make many return trips to the North to further explore the incredible landscapes, abundance of nature and friendly communities that await you." -- Mayor Jocelyne Bishop, Town of Spanish.

"In this world, full of examples of disconnection, it is great to witness examples of connection through this route. Bravo to all those who made this a reality!" **Susan Sonnenburg, Councillor Township of Sables-Spanish River** 

"The Town of Espanola is proud and pleased to be a critical junction point on the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail," says Mayor Jill Beer, "What an opportunity it is to extend a warm welcome to 150 cycle tourists this week. The size and enthusiasm of this cycle group will serve as an inspiration to our local cycle enthusiasts and confirms the importance of investing in active travel infrastructure and services." -- Mayor Jill Beer, Town of Espanola

