# WAT’s Sustainable – Episode 06 Transcript

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WAT is up, Waterloo? Welcome to WAT’s Sustainable? the official podcast of the University of Waterloo's Sustainability Office. My name is Jenna and I am the host of this episode. Here on Episode 6 today we will be exploring the topic: WAT is Bike Month?

Before we get into the content for today, I just wanted to say welcome back. This is the second episode of season two of our podcast in the spring 2021 term. I hope you enjoyed the last episode where we had our very first podcast guest.

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On today's episode, we will be exploring the history of Bike Month, what Bike Month actually is at Waterloo and around the community, and how you can get involved this month to promote sustainable transportation.

As always, make sure to subscribe to our podcast so you never miss an episode, and follow us on social media on Instagram and Twitter @UWsustainable to stay in the know and be updated on all the other sustainability content that we share. And if you have any questions, feel free to email us at sustainability@uwaterloo.ca.

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Now we can't have an episode without a Global Hurray. This Global Hurray is about a project going on in Waterloo, specifically relevant to Bike Month. Last year, if you were in the City of Waterloo around this time, June, you would have noticed some separated bike lanes being created as part of a pilot project. Well, according to a CBC News article that just came out, this separated bike lane pilot project will become permanent in Waterloo. They saw huge success with this project. On some streets, the average number of cyclists increased 57% and even up to 105% in the mornings and evenings – the prime rush hour times.

This is very exciting because it makes the city more accessible for cyclists, promoting more sustainable transportation and taking action on climate change in the area of transportation, which, according to ClimateActionWaterlooRegion, is the main source of emissions in Waterloo.

I don't know about you, but having those permanent bike lanes makes me much more comfortable and feeling safer to sustainably travel around the city.

All right, let's get on to today's topic: WAT is Bike Month?

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The month of June is recognised as Bike Month both at the University of Waterloo and across the region of Waterloo. Why are we running Bike Month in the first place? Well, there's many reasons for this. One of the biggest ones is the problem with driving personal vehicles, especially in Southern Ontario where the university resides, many of our cities are car dependant. This means that people need to use cars to travel because work might be far away from home, or essential services might be far away from home, and this creates challenges because if you've ever been on the 401, let's say during rush hour you know how bad the traffic can get. No one likes congestion.

In addition, cars produce a lot of air emissions. ClimateActionWaterlooRegion accounts 49% of Waterloo's emissions to transportation alone because we are using cars so much. The fact that half of our emissions almost in our community are coming from cars says a lot, and it defines a clear problem that we need to address if we want to meet our emissions reduction goals. We clearly need to address the ways that we travel around the city and in our community.

Not to mention, when you are constantly driving places, you as an individual or stationary. Yes, your car is moving but you are not, and so people are getting as much physical exercise as they could be because they are travelling everywhere by car. This can not only impact your physical health, but it can impact your mental health if you are not getting fresh air, if you are not moving your body, and then it can end up leading to feelings of frustration, fatigue and more.

A recent study from New Victoria University of Wellington found that investments in bicycles are 10 times more effective than investments in personal vehicles. The study found that not only were investing in bicycles more cost effective, but they also had many social benefits. For one, the study estimated that the annual benefits were two lives saved as a result of more healthy lifestyles, reduced rates of cardiac diseases, diabetes, cancer, respiratory diseases and more. There have been other studies around the world that have demonstrated the same results. The link to this study is shared in the show notes if you want to check it out for yourself.

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There are also issues of accessibility and equity. Not everybody can afford to own a car or even lease a car because they are so expensive to manage and maintain. We need a clear solution, and one of the solutions is to promote active transportation. Active transportation means that we are not moving around by car, but ways that engages our physical body, reduces our emissions, and promotes community connection.

That's where Bike Month comes from. It encourages active transportation, specifically by encouraging the use of bicycles. June is when it really starts feeling like summer, and what better time to start getting interested in cycling and start travelling around through active transportation than in June? Hence we have Bike Month in the month of June.

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Now that we know the history of Bike Month, let's talk about the impact it has had. The official campaign began in the Region in 2013 and began at the University in 2015. It is catered to staff and students on campus, encouraging the use of active transportation to get to and from campus, as well as in our daily lives to various activities such as work, shopping and so on. The University has hosted many educational an engaging events and campaigns during Bike Month over the years. These include safety courses, repair workshops, free tune-ups, a bike tagging campaign to show our appreciation for those cycling to campus, a month-long biking competition and more. Like other campaigns that we have run, Bike Month demonstrates the power of collective action. In the first year of operation at the university, so 2015, there were 110 staff and student cyclists, 2,749 bike trips logged over 14,000 kilometres biked, and 3,200 kilogrammes of carbon dioxide emissions avoided, all because people chose to ride their bike instead of drive a car.

Notably, we have partnered with TravelWise, which we will hear from in the next episode, to run the month-long competition for University of Waterloo members in which they logged their biking trips through the TravelWise software online, and those who travelled the greatest distance by bike and logged the most trips win prizes.

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Now, last year was a little bit different than our typical programming because we couldn't hold any in-person events because of COVID-19. We did instead run an educational social media campaign, which included blog posts on cycling safely, such as how to use proper hand signals, the best trails in the Region to explore, as well as interactive IGTV videos that shared the Sustainability Office’s adventures on trails, cyclist features from the UW community and more. This demonstrates that Bike Month is still very possible during the pandemic because cycling is a way that we get around. It's a form of exercise, and it's a way to commute to and from work and essential shopping needs. It's also just a way to get out of your house and relax and reconnect with nature. You don't need to do it with other people, but if you choose to, you could cycle with your family or your household and still be safe from COVID-19.

No matter whether we can run Bike Month in person or if it has to be virtual as it was last year and this year, you can still take action in your own home to reduce your personal emissions by choosing more sustainable transportation methods, such as cycling.

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This year will look different than the normal Bike Month activities, but very similar to last year. We will have lots of online engagement and we challenge individuals to connect with us. There are many reasons to participate in our Bike Month challenges. For one, it helps you reduce your personal emissions from travelling. Again, referring back to that ClimateActionWaterlooRegion statistic, 49% of emissions in Waterloo Region are from transportation alone because so many people rely on their cars. But especially when the weather is so nice out, why not try to take a trip through your bike to work or to the grocery store or whatever it may be instead of driving? Second, cycling can save you money. There's free parking, you don't need to pay for fuel. For instance, in our 2015 challenge, participants in total saved over $4,500 from driving expenses alone. Third, cycling helps you get exercise. This is important for your physical and mental health. And if gyms are still closed during Bike Month, it's one of the best ways you can get active outdoors in a safe manner. You can do it alone or with your household. You can go on various trails, you can go on elevated services if you enjoy mountain biking. It's a great activity to get fresh air and to get exercise. And fourth, the more cyclists there are in Waterloo or whatever city you may be in, the more momentum there is to create cyclist-friendly cities. Our global hurray is a clear reflection of that; the bike lane pilot project went so well that they are making these bike lanes permanent, making our city more accessible and cyclist-friendly. Waterloo is already considered a gold bicycle friendly community by the Share the Road Cycling Coalition, and we can only get better from there by adding more cycling lanes.

In addition to cycling lanes, there are more than 225 bike parking spaces in Uptown Waterloo alone. We also have bike sharing programs and other programs and services that make cycling accessible to you. So the more people that demand it, the more services like this that we can get and the quicker we can get and the quicker we can get to our emissions reductions goals and reduce our personal emissions from travelling.

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Now WAT? It's time to take part in Bike Month! I will provide all the resources for you to participate in our Bike Month activities in the show notes. Whether it's a trip to the store, a trip to work, just to drive around the city, try switching over to a bike and see how it makes you feel, see how different it is. You are doing good for the community, you are doing good for the environment, and you're doing good for your own health and your wallet.

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That is WAT’s up, Waterloo. I hope you enjoyed this episode about Bike Month and that you are excited and inspired to participate in our month-long event. Again, all the resources you need to participate in this year's Bike Month are linked in the show notes. In addition, I also again encourage you to subscribe to our podcast, follow us on social media @UWsustainable on Twitter and Instagram so you stay updated on our sustainability content, and if you have any questions or potential ideas for podcasts or guest that we could bring an email us sustainability@uwaterloo.ca.

And lastly, thank you to Bennett Gallant for producing our brand-new jingle that we will use in all of our episodes!

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This is Jenna signing off. I hope you have a great day, and we will see you in the next episode.