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## Bike repair clinic preps Scarborough cyclists for year-round riding

Lack of infrastructure hindering growth: Scarborough Cycles

**BY RAHUL GUPTA SCARBOROUGH MIRROR  
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AccessPoint on Danforth's Marvin Macaraig (left) supervises a t  
Staff/Metroland

A DIY bicycle repair clinic shows Scarborough cyclists how to keep their rides in shape all year round.

Organized by Scarborough Cycles, the repair sessions are aimed at improving participants' knowledge about cycling maintenance, as well as instilling personal habits for keeping vehicles in good running order, according to program manager Marvin Macaraig.

“We hope everyone walks away with a basic understanding (of cycle repair),” said Macaraig who, along with staff ranging from four to seven volunteers, helps administer the weekly clinic which is held at the AccessPoint on Danforth community hub.

Visitors can pick up tips ranging from making quick repairs on-the-go to learning how to strip down old bikes for necessary parts.

“Cycling is an everyday activity, and there are very few places where (cyclists) can congregate in Scarborough,” said Macaraig.

Knowing how to fix your bike in a pinch is an essential skill, perhaps doubly so in Scarborough where the lack of bike infrastructure and dominance by automobiles often makes for an isolating experience.

That lack of lane space likely explains why Scarborough hasn't yet experienced an explosion in cycling as has taken place in the rest of Canada, which according to 2016 census data has seen an over 60 per cent increase from just two decades ago. In comparison, Scarborough's gains are much more modest.

The difference, Macaraig believes, is the lack of meaningful infrastructure.

“If you create a patchwork (of bike infrastructure), you're only going to see minimal improvement,” he said.

The Gattineau Trail, located on hydro corridor lands between Victoria Park Avenue and Kennedy Road, is an exception acting as an essential thoroughfare for local cyclists — even if it isn't lit or plowed after a snowfall — along with pockets of southwest Scarborough, such as Kingston Road, where it narrows and takes on more of a downtown feel. The rest of Scarborough, however, presents not only a physical barrier but a mental one for commuting by bicycle.

Ironically, it's precisely such an environment which provides a golden opportunity for bolstering the ranks of those who prefer to ride year-round, argues Macaraig.



Adding bike lanes, even to major arterial roads, is made much easier he says, by the lane space already available here. Unlike more built-up areas of the city, where adding bike lanes often means removing space traditionally reserved for motorists, in Scarborough there's already enough room to accommodate every road user.

“Not everyone will ride a bike, but if you give people options, those who do cycle will leave more road space for those who drive,” said Macaraig.

DIY repair, training and other “soft” approaches for boosting cycling are on the rise, but without hard infrastructure improvements like bike lanes and curb cuts, it's hard to imagine Scarborough ever becoming attractive for commuting on two wheels, he said.

“You get the mode share you build for,” said Macaraig.

Scarborough Cycles' weekly bike repair clinics take place every Thursday from 4 to 7 p.m. at AccessPoint on Danforth, 3079 Danforth Ave.

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## Rahul Gupta

Rahul Gupta covers community news in Bloor West and Parkdale, focusing on relevant local issues like housing, transportation and infrastructure.