

Opportunities and Barriers for Innovative Cycling Planning in Small Towns: Learning From the “Route Verte” Network in Quebec

Session: The benefits of Cycle Tourism at a Local Level

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The *Route Verte* : What are we talking about ?

"Greenways are networks of land containing linear elements that are planned, designed and managed for multiple purposes including ecological, recreational, cultural, aesthetic, or other purposes compatible with the concept of sustainable land use" (Ahern, 1995; p.134)



5300 km



400 townships



Cycling spendings in 2015

(Chaire de tourisme transat, 2016)

~ 700 M \$(CAD)

~ 460 M (EURO)



The Route Verte, a structuring network not only for cyclists

- A new **enthusiasm** for cycling as a **transportation mode**

2010 : 1,3 million users



2015 : 1,9 million users

- More and more **cohabitation** between **modes** (bicycles, pedestrians, motorized mobility aid...), **motives** (work, school, tourism, fitness...), and **users** (youth, adults, elderly people)
- And cyclists are not an homogeneous group (Christmas et al., 2010; Damant-Sirois & al., 2014; Vogel & al., 2014)
- Few studies on the relations between these multiple purposes and the type of infrastructure planned in small towns
- If we don't consider this issue: bike use risks to decrease



How are these multiple purposes of cycling and greenways taken into account by planners in small towns?

Methodology

- Data collection
 - **3 suburban or regional towns**
 - Route Verte within boundaries
 - < 100 000 inhabitants
 - Local destinations, employment areas...
 - **10 semi-directed interviews**
 - 1 elected representative
 - 2 local planners
 - 1 regional planner
 - 3 greenways managers
 - 2 provincial coordinators



Results

The contemporary role of the Route Verte from the participants point of view

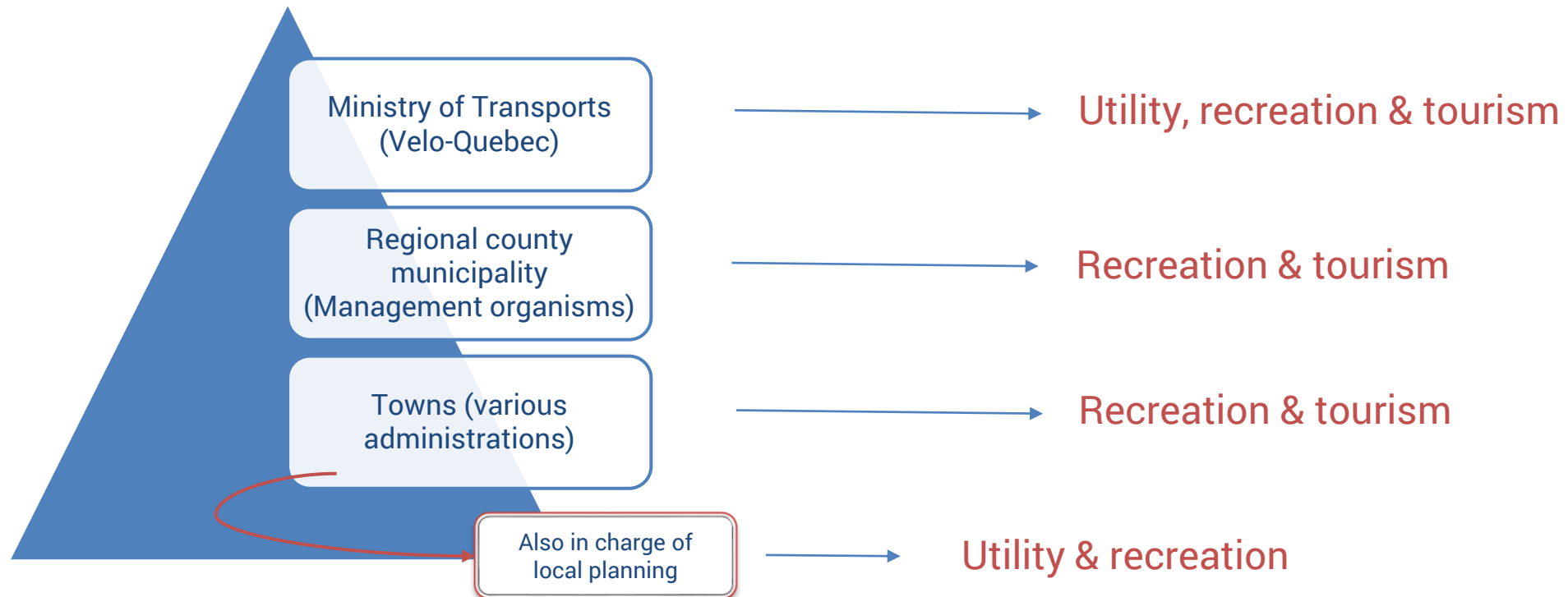
- An evolving role ; from a traditional cycling path to a multipurpose greenway
 - *“It’s not anymore the cycling path that we have known in the 90’s. It’s really a multipurpose path. (H3 ; own translation)*
 - **Multiple identities and new functions**
 - Social space, park, public health infrastructure
 - *“You know, in town centers, we have to understand that greenways are really flexible. However, between the cities on the Estriade, we see less pedestrians, less people with strollers, but more cyclists” (H3 ; own translation)*
 - **This flexibility creates a grey area when it comes to defining what the Route Verte is**
- The Route Verte is a backbone for the cycling network
 - **A backbone sometimes poorly connected with local destinations**
 - *The backbone is not connected with all the major infrastructures, that is universities, school and so on.... It’s obvious and it’s real everywhere around the province. (H5; own translation)*



Results

A complex governance leading to various representations

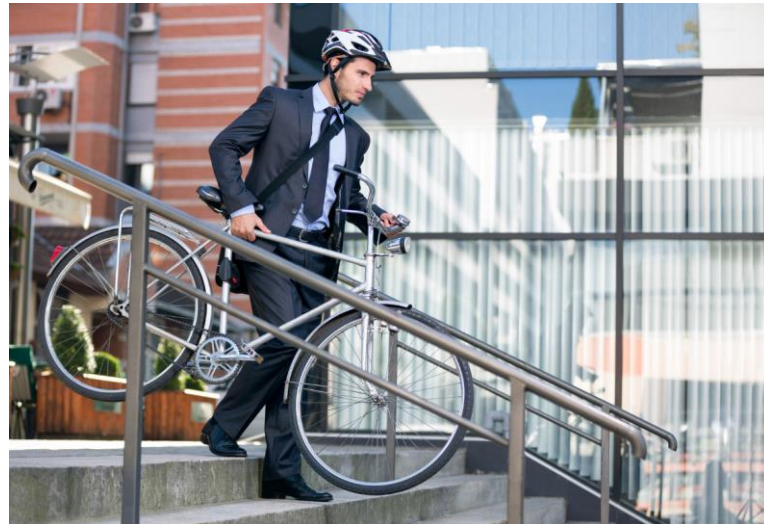
- Actors of the Route Verte in Quebec



Results

Various contexts involving a constant learning process

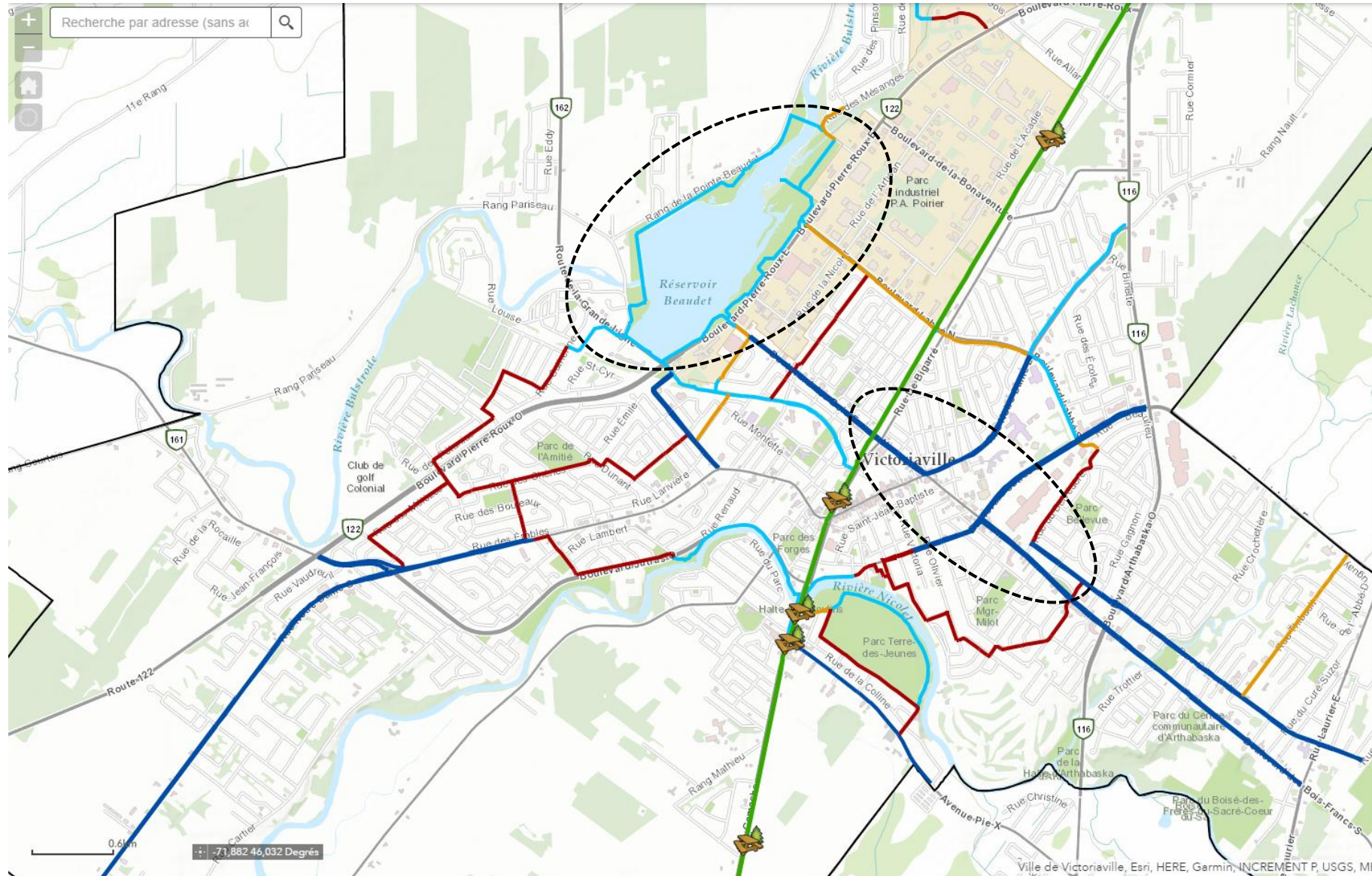
- Planners are facing unique situations
 - *“We have to understand that there are regional realities. We have 5300 km and almost as many different cases. There is no magic formulas for the Route Verte [...] We didn't dwell upon saying that the urban planning department has to take care of it.” (H6, 2016; own translation)*
- Few planning tools adapted to the regional context and limited resources
 - Need for reflection in action (Schön, 1994) where personal representations play a big role
 - Bringing a lot of trial & error
 - *“The info is there, everybody can access it. But how do you know why you should do this instead of that? Well, you go outside, you go on the field, and you try. Sometimes, you even go by bike and you realize.... iiishhh!”*



Credits : Decision-achats.fr

Results

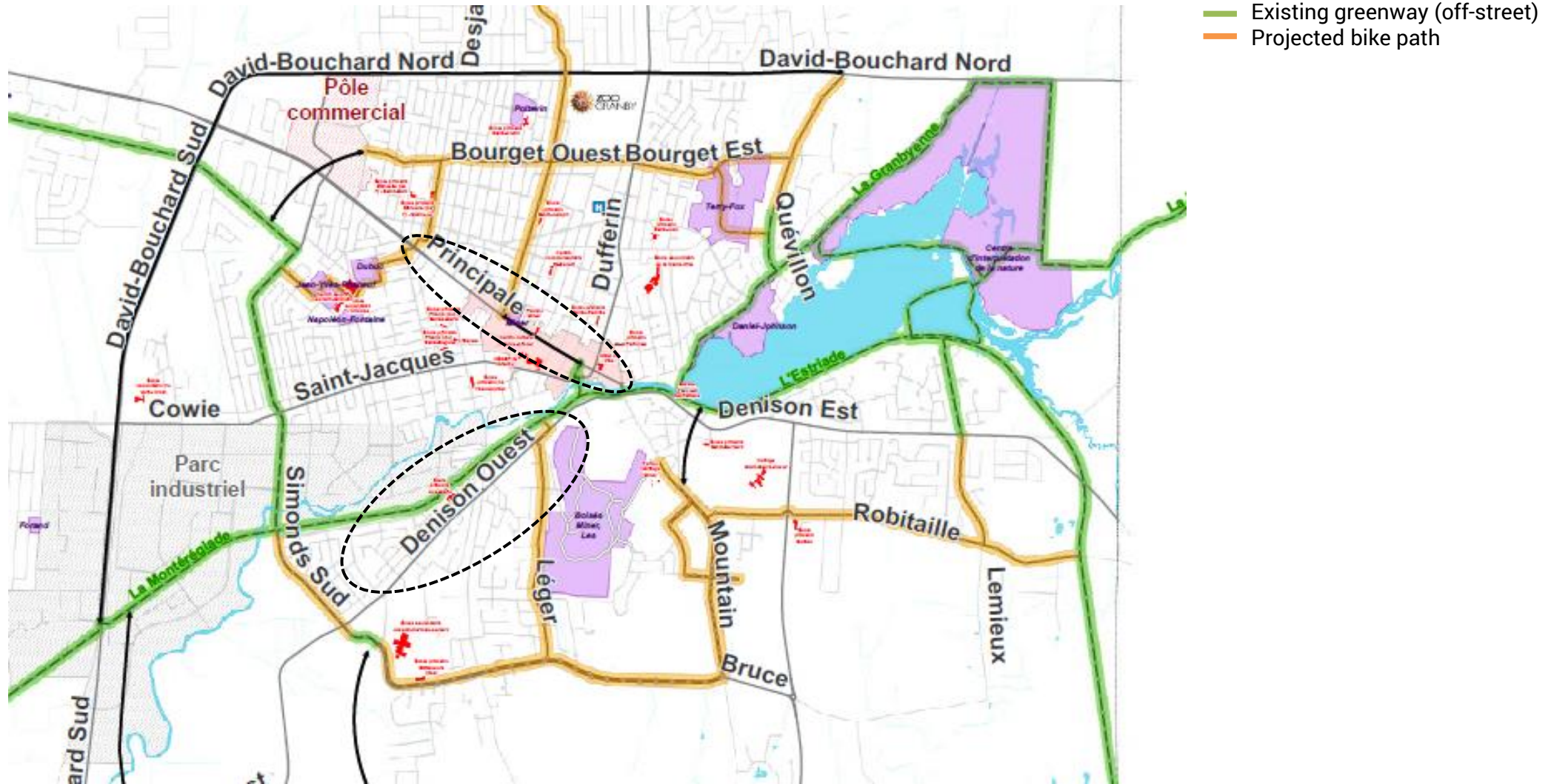
Representations that translate into planning



- Route Verte
- Local multipurpose path
- Bike lane
- Bidirectional bike path (on road)
- Designated road

Results

Representations that translate into planning



Discussion

- Greenways as an opportunity for mobility in small towns
- Multipurpose paths can be a double-edge sword
- Connecting greenways to other cycling networks in order to answer different needs
- Governance and personal representations are barriers to cycling growth
- More planners on bikes!
- Need further research on elected and citizen's representations



Source : Ville de Victoriaville



Source : Jean-Claude Tremblay



Source : La voix de l'Est

Thank you for your attention!

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