



REPORT

From the office of the...

Associate Vice-President Services

TO: Executive Board
FROM: Kristina Epifano
SUBJECT: MACycle Review
DATE: Friday, November 17, 2017

MACycle is a full-service bike repair shop, they specialize in tuning up bikes, refurbishing bikes, and selling used and new parts. They act as an affordable option for McMaster students looking to repair their bikes and purchase new parts. They offer free services to students with a membership, which costs \$10 for the year. Typically, MACycle holds one large event per year, A Bike Auction, where refurbished or abandoned bikes are auctioned off at low cost.

This service is seeing large changes this year. Some of these changes include, the hiring of 4 executive members. This team will give the part-time manager the support they need and help expand and strengthen the service. As well, the part-time manager is working towards creating a standardized price list – with all their parts and services listed at a set price, as people have complained about inconsistencies in the past, and is working on upgrading the shop to create a safer and more effective environment.

In my meetings with the MACycle Part-Time Manager, we discussed some of the challenges they were facing, and some aspects of the service they would recommend being reviewed. Some of MACycle's major challenges include volunteer retention and training, lack of promotion and awareness of the service and its location, and a demanding workload on the part-time manager, as they continue to work more than their expected number of hours.

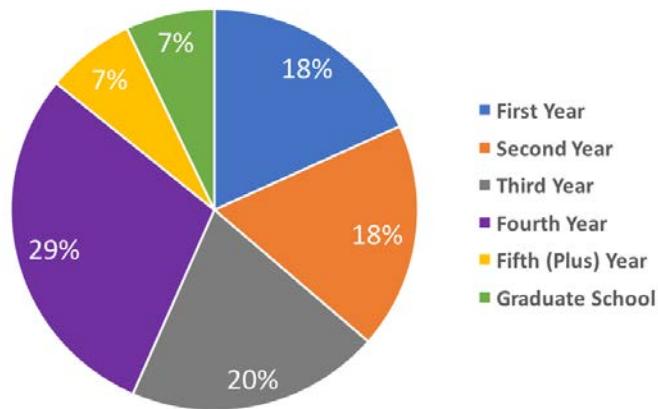
With these challenges and changes to the service in mind, the services committee carried through a detailed review of the service.

Public Survey

The committee created a public survey and advertised it to the student body to grasp opinions, experiences, and knowledge about MACycle. From October 26 to November 16, a total of 55 students participated in the survey, with only 3 being current MACycle volunteers. We have compiled our findings below.

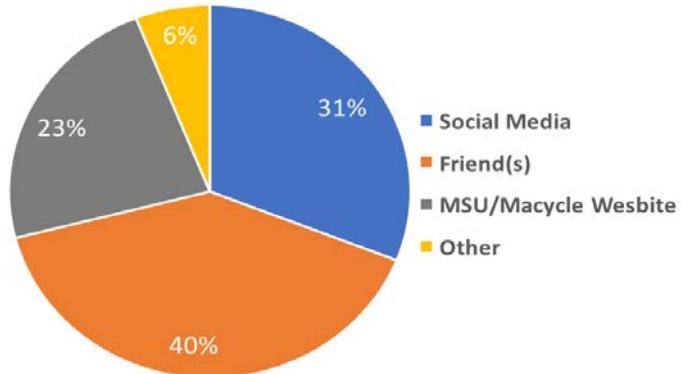
Survey Demographics

Year of Study:

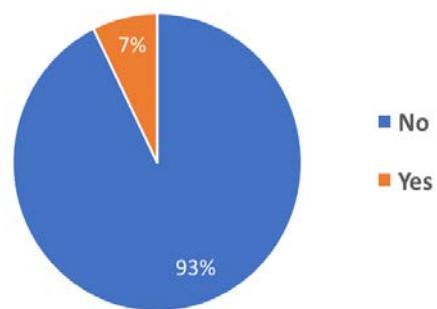


MACycle Results

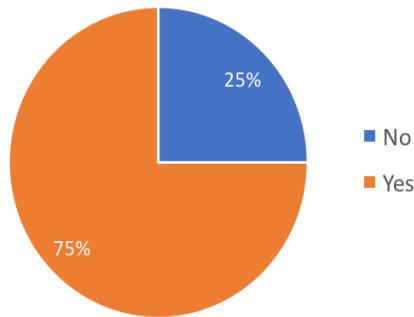
How did you hear about the MACycle?



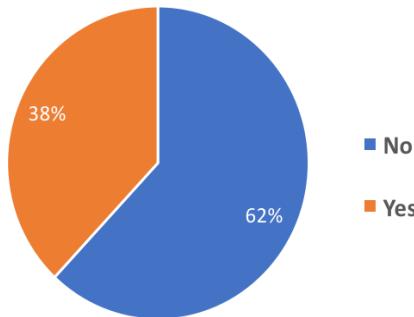
Do you currently volunteer with MACycle?



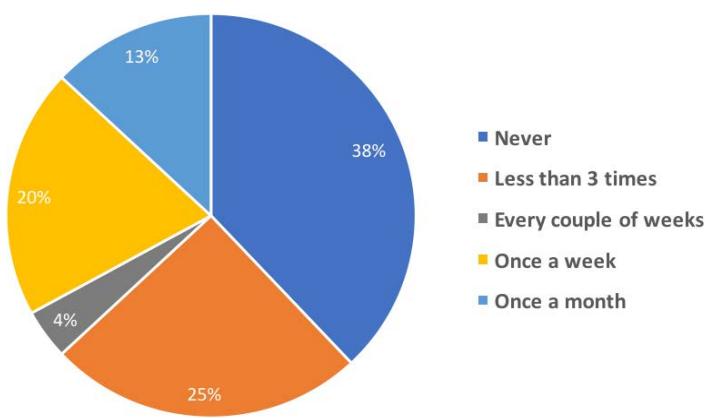
Do you know where MACycle is located on campus?



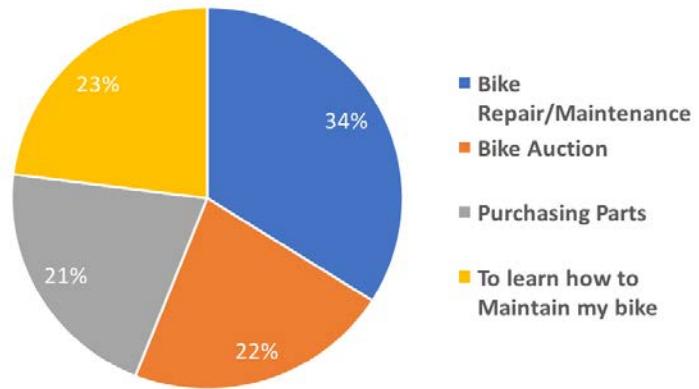
Do you have a MACycle membership?



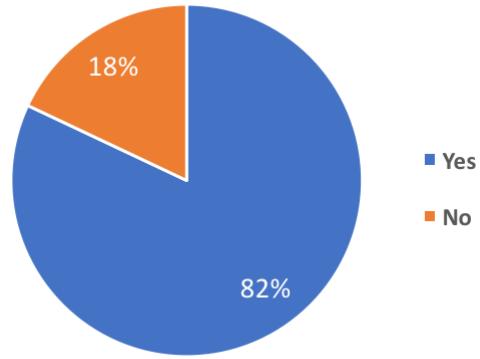
How often have you visited the space?



How have you interacted with the service/why have you visited the space?



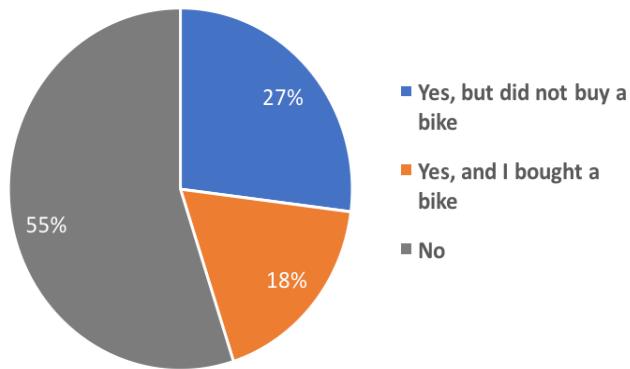
Did the volunteers at MACycle provide adequate service?



Out of those who said no, some also left the following comments

- The quality of service really depends on who is helping you. I've had one person struggle to fix my derailleur for 10 minutes, then somebody else came, pointed out the problem, and fixed it in less than half a minute. It gets frustrating if you got class soon and the skilled guy is off helping somebody else. There has been one time where nobody on shift knew how to fix my problem and I was told to come back another time when the director is on shift.
- Hours of operation did not work with peoples schedule

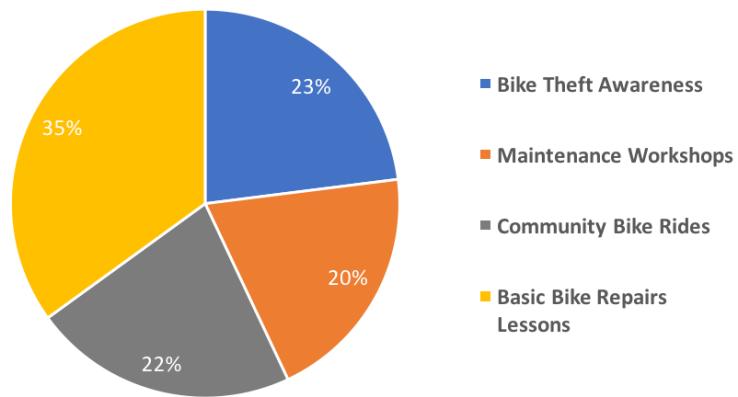
Have you ever attended MACycle's annual Bike Auction?



Individuals who replied “No” mentioned they did not attend because

- Time of day/They were busy
- Already have a bike/Don't need or want a bike
- Did not know it was happening

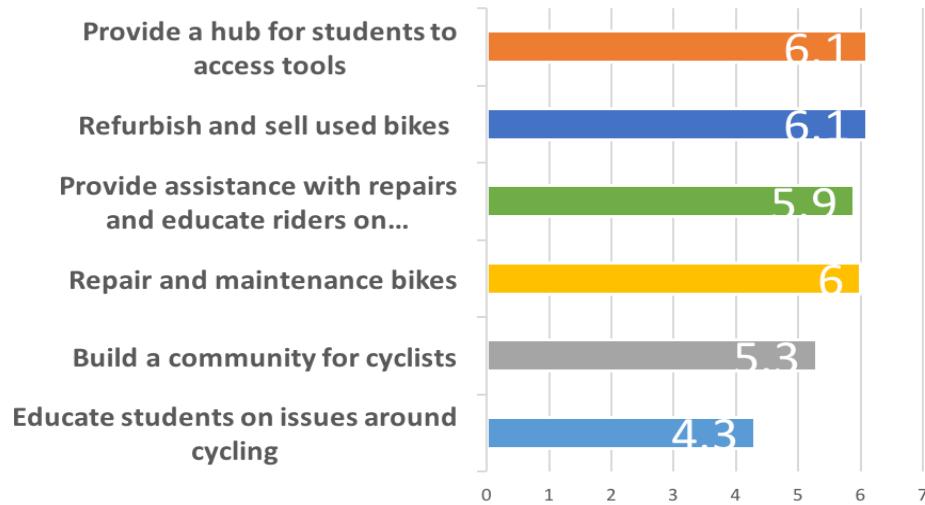
Which events provided by MACycle do you believe are valuable?



What other events would you like to see MACycle host?

- Bike Give-Away
- Bike Theft Awareness Campaign
- Community Bike Rides / Mountain Bike Trail Rides
- Basic Repair Workshops
- Safety Lessons on Street Biking
- Winter Bike Maintenance Workshop
- Bike Buddy Social
- Café Bike Crawl

Please rate how you feel MACycle does each of the following, on a scale of 1 (below expectations) to 7 (exceeding expectations)



Is there any other information you would like to share?

- MACycle is an extremely valuable and unique resource to students. It should remain open, to provide education and bike maintenance to the students. A huge number of students bike to school each day, which is encourage due to the exercise benefits and low environmental impact. Without this service, many students may not have the ability or funds to fix their bikes.
- I feel like their promo is a bit lacking and there should be more visibility on where exactly MACycle is. It's extremely useful resources for people in the community/Mac/Profs and I want this to continue.
- Service and volunteers are so needed on campus but prices are getting a bit high and membership doubled since last year, this seems a bit disheartening
- MACycle's been there for me through thick and thin. I honestly would have missed so much classes had the volunteers not helped me maintain my commuter.
- Apparently MACycle is going to be closed again for the remainder of the year? Last year I had to go across town to another bike co-op because MACycle is closed, and a bike shop close by told me to fix all my problems they are charging \$50 dollars per hour, however long it takes (I know my bike isn't that great, I'm pretty sure they just didn't want to fix my bike). I really hope MACycle won't be closed for rest of the year! This really is the most valuable service on campus. I've criticized them hard here but they work really hard and every time I go there I'm always grateful for their help!

- MACycle is a necessary part of the cycling community at McMaster, and by extension the West End of Hamilton. Especially as a bike co-op, not as a bike store. A co-op provides affordable prices for those who wish to ride a bike but can't afford the repairs from a typical bike shop.
- No offence, but the parts at the current Mac Cycle, are not the best, I find that once I repair and replace something, I come back with the same problem. So, you guys just need to better parts. Because although you guys are aiming for affordability, I would rather pay a little bit more to get a better part, which you do not currently have.

Internal Research

Throughout some months of his term, I had Richard send me monthly usage reports, specifically indicating how many people are coming in to use the shop. For one of the months, I also asked him to identify what people were coming into the shop for, please see the compiled data below.

Summer Hours: Thursday 1pm-5pm, Friday 4pm-8pm, Saturday 1pm-5pm

JUNE

Date	# Visits
Thursday, June 22	8
Friday, June 23	7
Saturday, June 24	5
Thursday, June 29	7
Friday, June 30	9
Saturday, July 1	CLOSED

JULY

Date	# Visits
Thursday, July 6	8
Friday, July 7	11
Saturday, July 8	6
Thursday, July 13	9
Friday, July 14	9
Saturday, July 15	7
Thursday, July 20	10
Friday, July 21	8
Saturday, July 22	13
Thursday, July 27	6
Friday, July 28	9
Saturday, July 29	2
MONTH TOTAL	98

August

Date	# Visits
Thursday, August 10	8
Friday, August 11	6
Saturday, August 12	5
Thursday, August 17	1
Friday, August 18	9
Saturday, August 19	9
Thursday, August 24	7
Friday, August 25	3
Saturday, August 26	12
MONTH TOTAL	60

Visit Type	Amount in Month
Repairs	17
Flat Tires	10
Purchase Parts	8
Service Maintenance/Tune up	10
Install New Chain	1
Borrow pump/wrench/tools	9
Fix Brakes	3

From September to end of November, MACycle operates Tuesday: 2:30pm-6pm, Wednesday: 2:30pm-6pm and Thursday: 1:30pm-7:30pm. The part-time manager mentioned they are always at full capacity on Thursdays and always have at least 2 people in the shop on Tuesdays. He was not able to provide me with exact usage for during the school year, as it got busy.

MACycle planned and ran 2 events, outside of their annual bike auction, during the fall term. The first event was a collaboration with SCSN, A Bike Ride to Princess Point. There were 5 attendees. Their next event will be happening at the end of November, A Workshop in Basic Repairs. Promotions of the service have increased, they have reached 1,125 likes on their Facebook page and increased interactions on their posts. From what we have seen this year, the new executive positions have done great things for the service.

External Research

The committee focused on two areas of external research, local Hamilton bike shops as well as other universities in Ontario that provide a similar bike service. From our local research, we could conclude that MACycle prices are significantly lower than many other shops in Hamilton. A bike repair and tune-up ranges from as low at \$45 and can be as high as \$130, where you get these services free with the purchase of a \$10 MACycle membership. Prices of parts are also significantly lower, we sell chains for half the price of most local Hamilton bike shops, and many other parts for lower than 50% the cost at local shops.

In terms of researching similar services provided by other universities, we found the Western University provides a service most like our own. Their Purple Bikes service is not for profit cycling co-op, with similar operations as MACycle. Some key things that differ between our programs are membership fees, Western charges \$10 for a 1 month membership and \$30 for a yearlong membership. Their operating hours are Monday to Thursday and they operate from March to end of November.

University of Toronto also operates their service, Bike Chain, as a DIY, not for profit co-operative service for students and community members. The service is free for all U of T students and they use a pay as you can system for community members. They typically take appointments if individuals would like to use bike stands for repairs but also offer walk-ins as an option. In terms of stock, they offer used parts that have been donated for a discounted price and high quality parts that are more expensive. Their shop is a little bigger than ours, considering they have 8 bike repair stands and we have 2, they can service more students at a time.

In terms of staff for these services at other universities, the structure varies. There were however trends we recognized across structures, each service had at least 2 paid staff members and many had a shop coordinator and/or a shop mechanic.

From this external research, we began to look at ways to improve and adjust our service, specifically through evaluating structure, operating months and hours, and pricing/structure of how the service operates for students. These are reflected in our recommendations below.

Recommendations

1) The MSU should continue to run MACycle as a service.

The usage reports indicate there is a need for the service on campus. There are upwards of 90+ students utilizing the service during the summer months, and that increases during the school year. Nothing currently exists for cyclists on campus outside of this service. Removing the service would put a gap in student services. It is affordable and accessible for university students, and with the right support and changes, has the potential to be an amazing successful service.

2) The MSU should consider combining the positions of Volunteer Coordinator and Shop Coordinator and create a paid Assistant Coordinator position for MACycle.

MACycle requires another paid dedicated staff member for the service to operate smoothly and receive the support it needs. Currently, the part-time manager indicated he constantly works more than his assigned number of hours and cannot always be present in the shop to sell parts, answer questions and supervise staff. The service was only operating for 3 days a week, this should increase to at least 5, and having an additional paid staff on contract can hopefully increase the hours of operations. Support and training for volunteer is one challenge that part-time manager has, having additional support in this aspect can strengthen the volunteer core and the service. As well, currently the part-time manager is the only individual who can sell parts and operate the cash register, as they are the only paid employee. This causes challenges when the part-time manager is not available in the shop and individuals get sent away from buying parts.

3) MACycle should extend its months of operation to begin March 1 and close after Nov 30.

Through our external research, we found all other bike services are either open March 1 – Nov 30, or open all year round. Being closed for 5 months is detrimental to the service and through our public survey, many students requested the service not be closed during the winter months. We believe this is a good start as the weather in Hamilton from March to November is adequate cycling weather. This will also allow the service to interact with and serve more MSU students as they will be open for more months during the school term. Additionally, the service can hire executives, volunteers and begin promotions before majority of students leave for the summer.

4) MACycle should aim to create a larger and stronger volunteer team.

This year we created a volunteer intake form, modeled after U of T's volunteer recruitment form. It allows the Union and Service to keep track of volunteers registered without them having to go through a long process of applying, which could deter some individuals. MACycle should continue to recruit and register volunteers through this intake form. Feedback from the survey shows that expertise and experience varies depending on the volunteers on shift. Some are more knowledgeable than others on bike mechanics and repairs. With proper training, all volunteers should be at or around the same level of baseline knowledge of bike repairs. In the past, many volunteers were not trained and were expected to learn on the job, this proves to be a safety concern for volunteers who are unaware of how to repair or handle bikes. MACycle and the MSU should work to create or outsource a standardized bike repair and safety training that is mandatory for all volunteers.

5) MACycle should consider removing the membership aspect of the service and increase the price of parts. Working towards a zero-cost service.

The part time manager stated it is too difficult to keep track of memberships, so they rarely check them when individuals come into the shop. If we are having individuals pay for memberships but not holding them accountable for showing it as they enter the shop, the system is flawed. Other universities in Ontario typically provide the service free to students and charge a flat rate for community users. We believe this is a good direction for MACycle to go in. To off-set the loss of cost in membership fees, the MSU and MACycle can consider a small increase in prices for parts, while still ensuring the prices are lower than local community bike shops.

6) MACycle should consider running at least 3 events outside of their annual bike auction during an operating term. As per the operating policy MACycle should be running a "crash-course" on bike repair at least once per term, as well as multiple workshops facilitated by MACycle staff.

The operating policy states that as a resource and community center, MACycle should provide basic and advanced workshops facilitated by technical staff, as well as provide a "crash-course" in bicycle repair at least once per term. We recommend this operating policy be mandated to implementation in the following years of the service, especially now with an events executive to take this on. In addition, MACycle should be providing students with at least 3 events during their operating season. In our public survey, students identified events they believed were valuable as well as additional events they would like to see.

7) The MSU should consider moving MACycle into the new Student Activity Building or finding an alternative location for it on campus.

Feedback from students in the public survey was that the space was too small, frequently overcrowded, and the part-time manager expressed this concern as well, mentioning the space hits over capacity at least once per week. We currently only have 2 bike repair racks, U of T has 8, allowing them to service more students. If this is a need on campus, we need to expand to ensure MACycle has the resources to service all students. The space is also difficult to located, 25% of individuals who filled out the survey did not know where MACycle was located, it is not visible to students, especially being behind a dumpster. In addition, the part-time manager complained about the gas fumes coming from golf carts that are being parked and drive beneath the stadium, this is a safety concern and merits the search for a new space. Ideally, the part-time manager commented that a new location more central to campus would be beneficial. The space would need to be accessible by bike, have access to a door leading outside and be on ground level.

8) MACycle should host a Bike Theft Awareness Campaign and Safe Cycling Campaign

Many students identified Bike Theft Awareness as a valuable event hosted by MACycle and other mentioned they wished MACycle had events on safe cycling on the streets of Hamilton. We believe we can grow MACycle as a service by improving the educational aspects of the service. Bike theft on campus is increasing as the years go by, we believe this are valuable campaigns for the service to run. MACycle operating policy states that the service must aim to “Educate and inform the McMaster community about issues related to cycling,” this was rated the lowest on our public survey when asked students experience. By running 1-2 campaigns throughout their term, MACycle can fulfill this Operating Policy and their role as a service better educate McMaster students on issues relating to cycling, including but not limited to Bike Theft and Safe Street Cycling.

9) MACycle should improve promotions in the following areas; hours of operation, location, price comparisons, available parts, and workshops.

There are still many individuals on campus who do not know MACycle exists or are unfamiliar with the service. Adding promotional material to bike racks and near the self-help bike repair stations are recommended to attract target audience. Having more promotions in MUSC about the services location and hours of operation would be central enough to hit multiple students – potentially a pop up banner outside of compass. Hiring the promotions executive has improved the services online presence, increased promotions around campus will also help the service grow.

10) The MSU should considering exploring partnerships or relations with Athletics and Recreation, The Graduate Students Association, McMaster Engineering.

The MSU should considering partnering with the Graduate Students Association as many graduate students use the service, there is potential to creating a partnership like the one the MSU has with Mac BreadBin where the GSA pays the MSU money based on the number of graduate students using the service. MACycle should aim to track the number of graduate students using the service so they can be presented to the GSA in support of this argument. As well, conversations with the Faculty of McMaster Engineering could potentially expand the service through offering co-op placements to engineers or support and add to the co-curricular record that is currently being developed by the faculty. Also, simply having the faculty promote it to their students may also get better outreach for Coordinator and executive positions.

Best,

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