



December 12, 2018

Hon. Scott Fielding
Minister of Finance
Government of Manitoba

RE: Budget 2019 Consultations

Dear Mr. Fielding:

As you and your colleagues “make choices” in framing the budget for the coming fiscal year and beyond, Bike Winnipeg urges you to set aside the image of a bicycle as a toy for leisure, and think of it as a tool for building a sustainable economy in Manitoba.

We salute your Government’s vision to make Manitoba Canada’s most improved province. Supporting active transportation offers low cost opportunities to lead in improving Manitoba communities.

Governments face enormous pressure to spend a disproportionately on road building and renovation. Whether the requests are framed as “economic development”, because trucks use the roads, or as “job creation”, because people are hired in the building of the roads, the underlying demand is from the many drivers who want their trips to be faster and smoother. While politically attractive at first glance, building more and better roads is economically and environmentally unsustainable. Creating more room on free roads leads to more cars on those roads and more miles driven; a vicious circle creating insatiable demand for expensive infrastructure. At a macro level, most spending on enhancing road infrastructure is an economic drain that leads to productivity loss, not economic gain.

For the Province, the infrastructure cost of more miles driven is compounded by the terrible impact of motor vehicles on the health of the people who rely on them for transportation, and those who live near where they are operated. Health costs in Manitoba consume over a third of the Government’s operating expenditures. Motor vehicle use adds approximately 20 cents per kilometer driven to overall health costs.

Your success in managing demand for road infrastructure improvements will depend on your ability to encourage Manitobans to rely less on their motor vehicles for transportation.

There are politically unpopular ways to create such a “mode shift”, such as imposing tolls for the use of busy parts of the infrastructure, and there are politically popular ways of creating such a shift, such as making sustainable modes of transportation more attractive, convenient and affordable.

Our transportation tool of choice, the simple bicycle, can play a much larger role in short haul transportation in Manitoba communities.

A Bike Winnipeg / Manitoba CAA survey of a random sample of Winnipeg residents asked how they travel in the city, and how motor vehicles and bicycles interact on the road.

- 45% of Winnipeggers said they would cycle daily or a few times a week if conditions were optimal (the proportion is higher among younger people)
- Cyclists worried about safety-related issues, such as drivers who are distracted or pass too closely
- Drivers worried about the quality of the road and congestion
- **Bike lanes were a mutually satisfactory solution; 47% thought there should be more protected bike lanes downtown**

The City has been making slow progress building a patchwork of bike lanes in various parts of the city; but the available funding has not allowed them to connect those pieces of infrastructure into a network that will attract timorous but willing cyclists to travel in the city by bicycle. The City is shovel-ready to build bike lanes faster; they have a Pedestrian and Cycling Strategies Plan, they have staff and consultants experienced in building cycling infrastructure, and they have developed an effective system for public consultation and planning. They need funding from the Province to accelerate the implementation of Active Transportation infrastructure.

The dollar amount required from the Province to accelerate the rate of development of cycling infrastructure is relatively small; and it would leverage additional federal funding for green infrastructure. The pay-back to the Province in health costs alone would be significant; shifting people from motor vehicles to walking and cycling is one the most cost-effective preventive health measures available to governments, significantly surpassed only by vaccination programs.

To maximize the effectiveness of all its expenditures, the Province should re-establish a planning official to coordinate all the government's activities that impact transportation throughout Manitoba; ensuring that legislation, investments, greenhouse gas reduction plans, and other programs make active transportation an attractive and convenient choice, rather than continuing to build a Province which requires everyone to own and operate a motor vehicle.

Making our communities sufficiently bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly that families choose to own one less vehicle each would eliminate a huge financial drain on their budgets, municipal budgets and the provincial budget. It would have a massive impact on ensuring a "brighter, more prosperous future for our beautiful province".

Yours sincerely



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cc: Minister of Infrastructure,
Minister of Health,
Minister of Sustainable Development,
Opposition leaders