Winnipeg Rapid Transit Coalition (WRTC) Proposed Public Involvement Plan:
Towards a Community Supported Sustainable Rapid Transit System for Winnipeg

I. Introduction

Your Worship Mayor Katz, Chairperson; Deputy Mayor Leipsic, Councillors Clement, O'Shaughnessy, Steeves, Swandel and Wyatt: Greetings on behalf of the membership of the Winnipeg Rapid Transit Coalition!

Your Worship, Deputy Mayor and Honourable City Councillors: The announcement on September 9, 2008 concerning the financing and proposed construction of the first phase of a dedicated busway, that will eventually connect downtown to the University of Manitoba, has major positive benefits for the residents of Winnipeg.

The WRTC[1] today would like to congratulate this administration, and its provincial and federal counterparts, for the financial recommendations outlined on the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works Report dated October 7, 2008 concerning the approval of the "Southwest Rapid Transit Corridor."

Your Worship, Deputy Mayor and Honourable City Councillors: The construction of the first phase of the proposed transitway could potentially impact positively the quality of life for Winnipeggers, increase transit ridership, and reduce congestion, noise and greenhouse gas emissions by contributing to a reduction on the number of kms driven by private cars. The construction of the Southwest Rapid Transit Corridor places Winnipeg at par with other thriving cities where Rapid Transit is the preferred mode of transportation for many residents. Design and construction of this transit corridor will surely transform our city into a more desirable place to live, work and play, thus resulting in reduced household spending on transportation costs, more affordable housing and stable property values.

The Winnipeg Rapid Transit Coalition (WRTC) is a currently a partnership of about twenty citizen's and local organizations representing the broad community and its interest in the advancement of and implementation of the first stage of rapid transit (the Southwestern Corridor transitway between Queen Elizabeth Way and Stradbrook and Pembina and Jubilee).

II. Focus

The Winnipeg Rapid Transit Coalition focuses its combined efforts in:

- Advocating for Rapid Transit in Winnipeg
- Monitoring the status of the project;
- Identifying key issues and concerns;
- Informing and educating the public and our elected officials; and
- Raising public awareness of the economic, social, environmental and community development benefits of the construction of a Rapid Transit Infrastructure in Winnipeg.

[1] Active members of the Winnipeg Rapid Transit Coalition (WRTC) include its founding organization, Sierra Club of Canada (Winnipeg), and, in not particular order, Resource Conservation Manitoba, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, Climate Change Connection, West End BIZ, Osborne Village BIZ, Downtown Winnipeg BIZ, University of Winnipeg, Canadian Mennonite University, Red River College Students Association, The Canadian Federation of Students – Manitoba, Manitoba Audio Recording Industry Association, Urban Shaman Contemporary Aboriginal Art. Planners Network Manitoba, Winnipeg Citizen's Coalition, Cinematheque (part of the Winnipeg Film Group), H.A.S.T.A. (Hopeful, Aware Students Taking Action), Plug In ICA (Institute of Contemporary Art), Video Pool Media Arts Centre, ace art inc., PLATFORM: centre for photographic + digital arts. Other organizations and agencies interested in advocating for the implementation of a Rapid Transit System in Winnipeg are invited to join the coalition.

III. Goal and Objectives

The WRTC would like to introduce you to the goal and objectives of our proposed public involvement plan drawn according our objective #1: To accept the invitation found in *"Plan Winnipeg 2020 Vision" recognizing the importance of public participation in the decision-making process by "encouraging citizens to shape decisions that affect their lives."* A list of the objectives under consideration by our membership is available for the record.

As the implementation of the Southwest Corridor" is becoming a reality, the coalition would like to advocate for the incorporation of the following sustainable development design elements in the resulting urban form in and around adjacent areas to the proposed rapid transit corridor:

- A regional node containing a mixture of uses in close proximity including office, residential, retail, and civic uses
- High density, high-quality development within 10-minute walk circle surrounding Rapid Transit station
- Walkable design with pedestrian as the highest priority, including accesses to people with disabilities
- Connected street network designed to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclist including the easy use of scooters, and rollerblades as daily support transportation systems
- Linked open space system (parks, trails, and paths).
- Natural/cultural heritage preservation
- Significant employment areas
- Minimized impacts to natural features and environment

The WRTC supports a public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public involvement and full public access to key decisions. Currently, the WRTC is actively promoting an intense public involvement process to garner community support, including that of elected officials to reflect their views and to allay community concerns that may arise during conceptual and initial stages of this major transportation project.

IV. Conclusion

Your Worship, Deputy Mayor and Honourable City Councillors: The WRTC will make every effort to assist your Administration in the design of Phase I of the Rapid Transit Infrastructure for Winnipeg. Your decision has brought sustainable transportation to our city. Thank you.

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I. Winnipeg Rapid Transit Coalition (WRTC)

The WRTC recognizes that meaningful and effective public participation is a fundamental step in the decision-making process in the planning phases of a transportation project. WRTC strives to represent broad community interests in the successful visioning, design and implementation process of Phase One of a Rapid Transit infrastructure for the City of Winnipeg.

Active members of the Winnipeg Rapid Transit Coalition (WRTC) include its founding organization, Sierra Club of Canada (Winnipeg), and, in not particular order, Resource Conservation Manitoba, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, Climate Change Connection, West End BIZ, Osborne Village BIZ, Downtown Winnipeg BIZ, University of Winnipeg, Canadian Mennonite University, Red River College Students Association, The Canadian Federation of Students – Manitoba, Manitoba Audio Recording Industry Association, Urban Shaman Contemporary Aboriginal Art. Planners Network Manitoba, Winnipeg Citizen's Coalition, Cinematheque (part of the Winnipeg Film Group), H.A.S.T.A. (Hopeful, Aware Students Taking Action), Plug In ICA (Institute of Contemporary Art), Video Pool Media Arts Centre, ace art inc., PLATFORM: centre for photographic + digital arts. Other organizations and agencies interested in advocating for the implementation of a Rapid Transit System in Winnipeg are invited to join the coalition.

As an advocacy group, the coalition, in particular, invites seniors, students, and people living with disabilities, low-income residents and new Canadians to voice their concerns on the matter of the visioning and implementation of a Rapid Transit Infrastructure for Winnipeg. Members of these communities rely heavily on public transportation to meet their mobility, connectivity and access needs. However, they are traditionally under-represented in the transportation decision-making process[1]. Thus, the availability of reliable and efficient public transportation infrastructure could dramatically help to change their lives and to make meaningful contributions to their respective communities.

II. Urban Development

WRTC advocates for the incorporation of the following sustainable development design elements in the resulting urban form in and around adjacent areas to the proposed rapid transit corridor:

- A regional node containing a mixture of uses in close proximity including office, residential, retail, and civic uses
- High density, high-quality development within 10-minute walk circle surrounding Rapid Transit station
- Walkable design with pedestrian as the highest priority, including access to people with disabilities
- Connected street network designed to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclist including the easy use of scooters, and rollerblades as daily support transportation systems
- Linked open space system (parks, trails and paths)
- Natural/cultural heritage preservation
- Significant employment areas
- Minimized impacts to natural features and environment

These elements have been reported as contributing to the development of compact building design; extensive housing opportunities, walkable communities, high density, high-quality development within 10-minute walk circle surrounding BRT station, neighbourhood areas designed to include the easy use of bicycles, scooters, and rollerblades as daily support transportation systems.

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[1] Literature review and transportation policies in place indicate members of these constituencies rely heavily in public transportation to meet their mobility and accessibility needs. Equally important is the fact that "they not only have greater difficulty getting to jobs, schools, recreation, and shopping than the population at large, but often they are also unaware of transportation proposals that could dramatically change their lives."

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III. Goal

Goal:

WRTC advocates for the implementation of the first stage of rapid transit (the Southwestern Corridor transitway). The Southwestern Corridor includes a 3.4 km bus way between Queen Elizabeth Way and Stradbrook and Pembina and Jubilee; a recreation path adjacent to the bus way; re-alignment of the Latellier rail line and a busway running north-south just west of Pembina Highway with terminals at the University of Winnipeg (Balmoral and Ellice) and the University of Manitoba (Dafoe Road).

IV. Proposed Objectives (Under consideration by WRTC members):

- # 1

To accept the invitation found in "*Plan Winnipeg 2020 Vision*" recognizing the importance of public participation in the decision-making process by "encouraging citizens to shape decisions that affect their lives."

- # 2

To keep the public informed and monitor progress on all related developments - planning, programming, and implementation- of the rapid transit infrastructure of the first dedicated transitway (Southwestern Corridor).

- # 3

To educate the public concerning mobility, access and connectivity dimensions which due to the nature of the project, could potentially conflict with proposed sustainable development approaches.

- # 4

To enthusiastically engage the public to ensure meaningful input into the transportation decision-making process related to these stages.

- # 5

To ensure public input in identifying urban development, transportation, issues, and social, economic and environmental concerns present along the rapid transit corridor.

- # 6

To involve all residents of minority heritage, economically disadvantaged low-income or elderly or those experiencing transportation mobility and accessibility obstacles as result of disabilities.[2]

- # 7

To achieve participation and partnership among the public, the Office of the Mayor of the City of Winnipeg; Winnipeg Transit Department; Manitoba Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs; Manitoba Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation; and other organizations interested in advancing Phase One of the City's rapid transit plan.

- # 8

To hold the three-levels of government accountable for the realization of the statements found in "*Plan Winnipeg 2020 Vision*," "*Direction to the Future - The Guide to Better Transit Service for Winnipeg*," "*Rapid Transit Task Force: A Made in Winnipeg Rapid Transit Solution*" and press releases tracing the genesis, promotion and implementation of a Rapid Transit to solve inherent public transportation challenges in Winnipeg.

- # 9

To actively provide feedback and comments to the City in response to land use development and transportation challenges that may arise in the corridor through the progression of the different conceptual phases of the project.