Physical Activity Coalition of Manitoba

City of Winnipeg Capital Budget
Executive Policy Committee
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Submitted by the Physical Activity Coalition of Manitoba (PACM), Active Transportation Task Group

The Physical Activity Coalition of Manitoba (PACM), comprised of 30 organizations across Manitoba, seeks to increase physical activity levels through collaboration, promotion and education. Membership of PACM represents health, environment, seniors and disability groups, education, physical activity, recreation, sport, and government.

PACM's goal is to achieve a positive change in physical activity among Manitoba's population by pooling commitment, leadership and resources of different communities, organizations and governments. PACM believes that physical activity opportunities should be accessible for people of all ages; include all groups; and provide opportunities in a variety of settings. For this reason, PACM has identified active transportation as one of its priorities and initiated a working group that is dedicated to finding ways of improving active transportation opportunities.

PACM envisions healthy, vibrant communities where citizens use active transportation as the preferred mode of travel in their daily routine as part of a healthy, active lifestyle year-round.

Investing in Active Transportation

We believe the increased attention and funding directed to Active Transportation in Winnipeg is a positive step forward; however, the financial commitment needs to be large enough to make a visible and meaningful impact on the Active Transportation network, and thereby allow walking and cycling as transportation to become a *real* option for Winnipeggers.

There are a number of reasons why the City of Winnipeg needs to increase investment in Active Transportation facilities and create an environment in which walking and cycling is the easy choice, for short trips within neighbourhoods and for commuting.

Some of these include:

- Responds to the wishes of Winnipeg residents – people are looking for cycling and walking opportunities. An example of this is the immediate popularity of the Northeast Pioneers Greenway. The fact that multi-user conflict is already occurring is testament to the number of people wanting to use Active Transportation infrastructure.

- Safety needs to be a priority - Winnipeggers want to be able to walk and cycle to destinations but they want the experience to be as convenient, safe and fun as the alternatives. A common response we hear from Winnipeg residents is that they want to cycle but don't feel it's possible right now due to the lack of Active Transportation specific infrastructure. There needs to be a bigger investment for Winnipeg residents to be able to see and experience a real impact in Active Transportation infrastructure.

- Allows for timely completion of the Active Transportation Network - at $1-2 million per year investment, completing the Active Transportation Network as identified by the City's Active Transportation Advisory Committee will take up to 100 years to complete. Winnipeggers interested in using the Active Transportation Network are frustrated with piecemeal bits of improvement that they sometimes can't even see or don't know about, as opposed to a larger investment that would be immediately visible and provide longer connected routes.

- Creates a positive impact on neighbourhoods – the ability to easily walk or cycle to destinations is an important factor in how residents perceive quality of life, how we *all* feel about our city and neighbourhoods. It can encourage more interaction between neighbours and increase safety for cyclists and pedestrians as well as generally within neighbourhoods due to more "eyes on the street".

- Helps build a healthy vibrant community – can enable Winnipeg to keep up with other cities and attract/retain residents, particularly our youth who are keenly interested in cycling, walking and other active modes of transportation.

- Improves the health of residents - obesity and physical inactivity are huge issues in our community. Making physical activity easy, fun and safe for the majority of Winnipeggers to ride or walk to the store, work or school could change this and even reduce health care costs. "If exercise could be packaged into a pill, it would be the single most widely prescribed and beneficial medicine in the nation" - Dr. Robert Butler, former Director of the National Institute on Aging.

- Decreases costs in other transportation areas - investing in Active Transportation infrastructure needs to be at a level and type that will allow the majority of the population to participate, beyond the core 7-10% who are anxious and already committed to Active Transportation. The resulting shift in transportation modes would reduce dollars needed for road building/widening and parking facilities.

- Benefits all Winnipeg residents - *Wouldn't you like to be able to walk and cycle easily and safely in your neighbourhood? And your children to be able to?*

Tough times ahead – can be good news

As household budgets tighten, Winnipeg residents will be looking for more economical ways to get around. Transit will benefit but walking and cycling will also become much more attractive, especially for short trips. Those savings from transportation costs mean Winnipeggers will have more disposable income to spend within their community and neighbourhood – dollars that will stay in Winnipeg.

Supporting Plan Winnipeg 2020 Vision

An increased investment in Active Transportation supports a number of policy statements from Plan Winnipeg 2020 Vision, including the following:

- Provides integrated transportation networks that support the City's commitment to sustainability, compact urban form and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.
- Promotes safety on streets and sidewalks
- Commits to environmental stewardship

Conclusion

An increased investment in Active Transportation infrastructure will allow the City of Winnipeg to create a connected Active Transportation network that supports residents in making healthy and sustainable choices. We thank you for the opportunity to address this issue and welcome the chance to speak to it further.