Mayor Katz and Members of Executive Policy Committee;

I am here today to provide you with my observations and questions with respect to the 2010 preliminary Capital Budget.

Democracy - The manner in which the Capital and Operating budgets are being handled these days is, to me, the 'death of democracy'. There isn't even a **pretense** of involving citizens in the process of developing these budgets as there was under former mayors Susan Thompson and Glen Murray. The public be damned! Here's the budget - whether you like it or not!

Transportation - The Capital Budgets invests in priority roads, bridges, community amenities and other infrastructure projects. Over $498 million is earmarked for streets and bridges over the five year plan.

$183 million is budgeted for roads and bridges alone - a 90% increase in street projects which were authorized in 2009. As you are well aware, I am now a disabled person and my perspective has changed a great deal. I have never driven a car, but have always either walked, used public transportation or ridden a bicycle. Now, the wheelchair is my legs and is what gets me around. So, as I bounce around and zig and zag around cracks on sidewalks, I wonder, what is being done to improve the lifestyle for those who use sidewalks - pedestrians and wheelchair users? How much money is being put into repairing curb cuts and sidewalks? I can't find a penny being allocated! Yet due to extensive lobbying by the cycling community, $20 million is being put into place for bicycle paths through the Active Transportation Project. Yet no one on City Council seems to care about pedestrians or those who use wheelchairs. Furthermore, your Accessibility Program to make city facilities universally accessible and while improvements will be made to the Archives Building and to the ramps at 510 Main Street, you have no vision as to how to make the city, as a whole, accessible.

Obviously, several councillors are disappointed with the absence in the budget of the building of Phase 2 and 3 of Bus Rapid Transit. While you know that I have always opposed bus rapid transit as irrelevant to the city of Winnipeg - and on the one hand I am happy that City Council is not making any commitments to Phase 2 and 3 of bus rapid transit, on the other hand, I would suggest that a BRT that begins nowhere and ends nowhere (as this one will) will not lead to any development along the BRT line and no increase in ridership. The fact is, that the BRT was to assist the students of the University of Manitoba to get to and from the university and downtown. Since the BRT won't even originate downtown or go to the University, it will be a complete waste of money unless you proceed with Phase 2 and 3.

Transit Improvements - The existing fare collection system is many decades old and limits flexibility in the type of fares that can be offered passengers. Replacing the present fare boxes with electronic fare boxes, "Smart Cards" and "Proximity Cards" which will allow more efficient processing of fares was talked about in the 2009 capital budget, and monies were set aside for that. Consultations with the public were held (I

was involved with that), so why will this not proceed in 2010, but now in 2011?

Innovative Transit Program - This deals with transit terminals at shopping centres, passenger shelters, improved amenities at bus stops, Handi-Transit trip confirmation system, automated transit scheduling system. Why is the same amount of money being budgeted each year until 2013? What impact will that have on the number of heated bus shelters there will be - especially when older bus shelters are being torn down and replaced with smaller ones. What impact will that have on electronic displays of bus arrivals and departures at bus stops (I've only seen one at Polo Park so far).

Transit Buses - This project is for ongoing purchase of low floor urban transit buses and replacement of buses that have reached the end of their useful life (18 years). On average 30 new buses replace old buses each year. Is this figure going up or down? How many new buses are going to be built between 2010 and 2015, as ridership is increasing and you are going to need more buses. On what basis do you estimate the lifespan of a bus being 18 years? The reason I ask this is because the new buses are smaller than older buses and carry fewer passengers (on average, 10 fewer).

In Winnipeg, the trend continues to invest in new and expanded car-oriented infrastructure rather than a public transit infrastructure. Most Canadian cities, except Winnipeg, are choosing to invest significant dollars in transit as they recognize the fiscal, social and environmental benefits that come with this investment.

Recreation - While I'm appreciative of new funding for Assiniboine Park ($8 million in 2010 to the Conservatory) for significant improvements, I am concerned about how much private monies are being raised. It seems that more public than private money is being invested in the Park when, in fact, if we are talking about public/private partnerships when the arrangement should be 50/50.

Thank you.

-30-

Nick Ternette is a community and political activist, freelance writer and broadcaster.