bikewinnipeg
MORE PEOPLE BIKING
MORE OFTEN

March 20, 2023

Executive Policy Committee

Re: 2023 Draft Operating and Capital Budget

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the City of Winnipeg's draft 2023 budget.

While the draft budget does not increase the annual allocation for the Pedestrian and Cycling Program, we are happy to see that an increase of $3 million/year has been included for the Recreational Walkways and Bike Pathway Renewals line item under the Regional and Local Street Renewals Program, along with an addition of $978,000 for the Road Safety Improvement program (previously titled as the Traffic Engineering Improvements program), with three staff members funded for the program through the operating budget..

We are also happy to see the allocation of $4 million in 2023 to allow for an extension of the Keewatin Pathway from Burrows Ave to Gallagher Ave W, creating a much needed connection across the CPR's mainline. This will provide a much needed connection across the rail line, which serves as a major dividing point for the city, and especially for the city's bike network,

This is a long overdue increase of funding that is critical for the city if we are to have any hope of meeting our climate goals. These additional funds will allow us to start adding more bikeways to our network, and we are eager to help the city identify the priority projects that this new money will help fund.

AT Improvements via Road Renewals Need to be Identified

Another key addition we see in the 2023 budget is the text of the December 15, 2021 motion calling for better inclusion of walking and cycling facilities in regional and local road renewal projects.

> On December 15, 2021, Council directed (as per 2022 Adopted Capital Budget recommendation 2L) the Public Service to:
>
> i. Include active transportation facilities in all road renewals and rehabilitations that have been included in the 2022 Preliminary Capital Budget and 2023 to 2027 Five-Year Forecast, if facilities in those locations have been identified within the Winnipeg Pedestrian and Cycling Strategies.
>
> ii. That in the event the road project and the active transportation facilities exceed the delegated authorities of the public service, or the project cannot be built as contemplated in the Winnipeg

Pedestrian and Cycling Strategies, the Public Service be directed to report back to the appropriate Committee of Council on their recommendation to construct the facilities as prescribed, with a request for additional spending authorities, or recommend an alternate plan to restore the connectivity of the active transportation strategies network.

iii. Update the Winnipeg Pedestrian and Cycling Strategies in conjunction with the next update of the Transportation Master Plan to ensure that future roads investments requiring AT will be reviewed and analyzed prior to making road investments.

Road renewal projects offer critical opportunities to improve the pedestrian and bicycle networks, and offer substantial value for money as including walking and/or cycling facilities in a road renewal project is far cheaper than providing that same facility in a standalone project. Traffic disruption is also limited to a single project.

Previous budgets had listed the value of planned walking and cycling improvements to be included within road renewal projects (the amounts are listed at the end of the Pedestrian and Cycling Program section), but in this budget we only see items from road renewal projects that had been forecast and listed in the 2022 budget.

Road renewal projects that overlap the pedestrian and bicycle networks but are not included in this listing include:

- Inster, Mountain, Taylor Ave, St. Mary, York, Patridge, Lagimodiere, Gouet, St. Vital Bridge…

It's our understanding that some of these renewals are planned to include AT improvements, but are not indicating the improvement in the budget (Goulet, St. vital Bridge). We fear that despite the clear language of the motion noted above, many of the road improvements that overlap planned walking and cycling improvements are not being planned to include any walking and cycling improvements. **We need to be following the intent of this motion.**

Where values of improved AT are unknown, values can be left blank, as has been done in previous budgets using an asterisk. This at least provides us with the knowledge that the need for an improvement has been identified and is being worked on. It adds transparency to the budget.

Abandoning AT Improvements on the Arlington Bridge

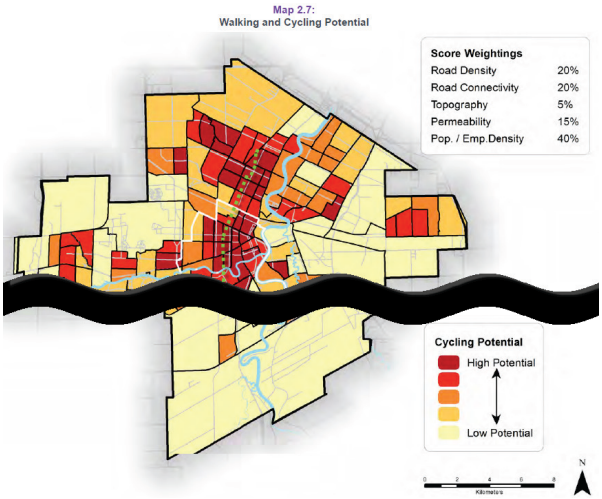
A second concern with the 2023 budget is the decision to undertake a feasibility study on the viability of rehabilitating the Arlington St Bridge instead of following through on the replacement strategy that has been recommended in previous studies. This new rehabilitation strategy eliminates efforts to improve walking and cycling improvements included in the plan to replace the Arlington Bridge. These improvements were highly valued by the public, and there absence will leave a massive gap in the city's bike network through

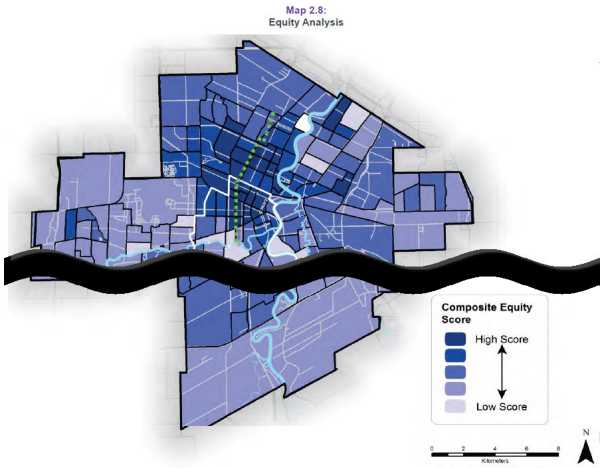
Previous studies rejected the possibility of rehabilitation based on value for money. We remind the city that the cost estimates for the Arlington Bridge Replacement include not just the cost of construction for the bridge, but also costs to:

- improve the roadway
- Add protected bike lanes
- Add community or park space
- Demolish the existing bridge

Why Arlington Should be a High Priority

The installation of protected bike lanes on Arlington should be viewed as a high priority for the city. As mentioned above, protected bike lanes on Arlington will run through a section of the city identified as having both a high potential for cycling and a high equity score.





Replacement of the Arlington Bridge and the inclusion of protected bike lanes as part of that project will add a huge impetus to extend those protected lanes south to Portage and North to Inkster. When judged against the criteria for project prioritization, the installation of protected bike lanes on Arlington scores very high. Protected bike lanes on Arlington will:

- Improve Network Connectivity by filling area, network and crossing gaps;
- Provide access to numerous schools and other destination that generate trips;
- Provide access to high volume transit routes on Portage, Ellice, Notre Dame and Arlington
- Provide a high level of protection;
- Add a high quality cycling facility to an area of the city with a high potential for biking;
- Add a high quality cycling facility to an area with a high equity score;
- Improve safety along a corridor with one of the worst safety records in the city;

It should also be noted that alternatives to the Arlington Bridge replacement would have an effect on the proposed bike network. For instance, if the McPhillips underpass were to be widened to expand its capacity, how would that affect plans for a two-way bike path along McPhillips St connecting the McDermot bike lanes to the planned Ruby/Banning neighbourhood greenway?

Return AT Funding lost When Provincial Funding was Frozen

In the 2019 Budget, facing a freeze on provincial funding and a reduction in your expected budget that led to cuts in the proposed budget, a disproportionate burden of those cuts fell on the budget for the Pedestrian and Cycling Program, with funding for the 6 year span of this budget has been cut by more than 50% from the previous budget.

With the recent announcement that provincial funding will increase by $30 million/yr in 2023, we would want to see funding for the Pedestrian and Cycling Program restored to where it was in 2018, plus inflation.

Let's Build a Predictable Snow Clearing Budget & Reserve

We recommend that as part of its review of snow clearing in June, the city consider changing its budgeting process for snow clearing so that it can better account for the wide variation in annual snowfall, and thus the annual snowfall budget. We need to ensure that we are providing funding to match or exceed our expected annual needs, and that we are making proper use of our snow clearing reserve.

We would hope that the annual review would consider what level of variation should be considered normal, reserve amounts needed to maintain a predictable snow clearing budget given annual variation in snowfall, appropriate terms for transfer of funding from any snow clearing reserve, and a plan to bring the snow clearing reserve up to minimum levels.

Sincerely,



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