Greetings Mayor and Councillors,

I work in transportation at Green Action Centre and I'm co-chair of the Transportation and Land Use Coalition with some incredible community groups and individuals in Winnipeg.

I'm reaching out today as someone who's passionate about transportation and the fundamental role it plays in making our city a better place for everyone. Transportation affects everyone, every day. It decides who gets access to jobs, services, recreation, and education, and who does not. An efficient transportation system allows cities to extend opportunities to residents from every neighbourhood, regardless of their physical ability, age, or economic status.

Robust transportation systems are also economic drivers for cities, providing exceptional ROI for each dollar spent.

I am profoundly concerned about the Route 90 expansion and the extension of the Chief Peguis Trail. Having just come through a health crisis, and in the midst of a financial crisis and a deepening climate crisis, I find it shocking that the top two spending items in this strategic plan are more roads.

The information that we have to-date (thanks to freedom of information requests and the tenacity of community members willing to dig through reports), shows how non-viable these projects are from both an economic and environmental perspective. Details brought forward thus far show how irresponsible it is to focus time and resources here.

- The Kenaston widening will cost us $38.7 million a year for 30 years, while generating just $6 million in benefits per year for 20 years.
    - We need to ensure our growth is generating real wealth.
    - Car-oriented growth is very expensive to build, and it does not pay for itself over time.
- Traffic over the St James Bridge is the same as it was in the mid-1990s, which is over 30 years ago. We have the Arlington Bridge and Louise Bridge on their last legs, and yet we are aiming to build an entire new span for the St. James bridge.
- We haven't been able to raise the maintenance budget for Kenaston in over 20 years. We are overburdened by the amount of infrastructure we have to maintain with our given tax base. We should not be adding to this burden.
- Larger highways induce demand. By the city's own data, congestion will have returned to Kenaston and our commute times will ultimately be slower even before we have finished paying for it.
- The Winnipeg Climate Action Plan identifies a city goal of a 50% driving mode share by 2050, which will be impossible if we keep spending our precious resources on road projects that induce demand for single occupancy vehicles. If we do want to reduce congestion, we need to help more Winnipeggers drive less.
- The new development at Naawi-Oodena is working hard to be a transit-oriented development. This will be impossible with a freeway running alongside it inducing congestion for buses to be stuck behind.

    - A reminder that the consultant hired by Canada Lands Corporation concluded that route 90 now and its planned expansion "create an urban freeway that doesn't respond to the character and scale of the existing area that would conflict with the intended future redevelopment of the Kapyong lands."
    - Treaty One Development's master plan says:
        - Route 90 – both in its current form and proposed future configuration – poses some significant challenges from the perspective of site access, pedestrian and cycling comfort and connectivity, and the creation of a strong urban character along its frontage."
- With the release of Winnipeg's 2022 financials, we can see that our net financial position has dropped by $126 million, and we have now spent over a billion dollars of future revenue on current services.

Most concerning is how other cities, cities that we are losing young people to every year, are responding to growth by building more efficient, economical transportation systems. For example, Calgary is spending $5 billion dollars now to expand its light rail system (with $1.3 billion from the federal government), while we're projected to spend just $588 million to $1.1 billion over 25 years on our transit system. Edmonton is spending $100 million over the next four years to expand their cycling infrastructure, compared to the $17 million we are spending over the next six years. ("Edmonton's Mayor Sohi said that active transportation is the cheapest way to move people around" - Global News Edmonton)

We are missing out on precious time and available resources to act now on projects that can fundamentally change how people travel in our growing city, and we must reach with both hands towards those opportunities, instead of clinging to the highway aspirations of days past. Other cities have realized it is too expensive and inefficient to rely on personal vehicles. We also need to acknowledge this fact.

For what we will spend on just one of these projects, we can complete the entire Transit Master Plan, connecting people from every neighbourhood with their city. Let's focus on freedom and liberty for all, not just those who can and want to drive (or have someone to shuttle them from place to place.)

Risks & Rewards

The floodway is a great example of a huge project with long term thinking. But, as Duff Roblin made this choice, he wasn't following a dream from decades in the past, he had before him a evidenced-based plan showing that for every dollar spent, the Province would save $2.73 in flood damage and flood fighting costs (and residents would be spared the trauma of enduring their homes flooding for generations to come).

With the information before you as you vote on this SPAP, you have the evidence that we will lose 89 cents on every dollar on the Kenaston project alone.

To be clear, I and those I work with agree that Kenaston is in rough shape. Our budgets have shown time and again how challenged we are at meeting even our basic maintenance obligations. But the expansion of this road, along with extending the Chief Peguis Trail, are out of line with the reality of our budgets and policies.

An Opportunity?

It seems like hidden behind this highway project is the potential for a project that would embrace the development of Naawi-Oodena, as well as the fact that trade routes have shifted and, with proper focus, our drive-alone mode share will be reduced. Knowing we need to maintain Kenaston (which, again, we can all agree is looooooong overdue), why not embrace a true multi-modal transportation opportunity? A transit-focused project to quickly and frequently move people between development to the south, the new T1DC/CLC development and rapid transit at Grant and along Portage Avenue is an opportunity worth exploring.

Let's truly embrace some strategic thinking in this strategic plan.

Mel Marginet
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Learn more at: anatomyofapothole.ca