

Council Submission, June 25, 2026

Agenda Item: In opposition to Item 1 of the Report of the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works dated June 10, 2026 (Winnipeg Transit Master Plan Update)

Delegation: Kenneth Klassen

A Two-Year Transit Delay Winnipeg Can't Afford

Mayor Gillingham and members of Council:

You are being asked to put Winnipeg's transit future on hold for another two years.

You should reject that recommendation.

The Winnipeg Transit Master Plan was approved in 2021 and is due for an update this year. Its central vision remains sound: frequent, reliable service supported by an expanded bus rapid transit network.

The Administration argues that the update should wait until preliminary design of the Downtown Rapid Transit Corridors is further advanced. That design work should inform detailed decisions. But it is not a valid reason to postpone the entire plan.

This is an update, not a wholesale rewrite. Travel patterns, housing growth, project costs, priorities and funding opportunities need to be refreshed. That work should begin now.

Since this Council was elected in October 2022, it has presided over one of the weakest records in Canada for advancing rapid transit and securing federal funding for its expansion.

Please look at **Appendix A** attached to my submission.

Winnipeg's Transit Master Plan proposes eight rapid transit programs. None has been approved for construction. Federal cost-sharing remains undetermined. At the current pace, even this modest network may not be completed until 2045 or later.

Its original Class 5 estimate was between \$588 million and \$1.1 billion in 2020 dollars. That is now roughly **\$720 million to \$1.34 billion in 2026 dollars** before financing charges.

Now look at the comparison below it.

Calgary, Edmonton, Hamilton, Ottawa and Quebec City are constructing, completing or preparing major rapid transit projects. Together, the projects shown represent approximately **\$26 billion in investment and \$7.3 billion in federal commitments**.

Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver are investing billions more in expanding their transit systems with federal support.

These cities are building—or preparing to build. Winnipeg is proposing to wait. That contrast matters even more because Canada is entering a major new period of federal transit investment.

The Canada Public Transit Fund will provide \$25 billion over 10 years beginning in 2026–27. Based on population and ridership, Manitoba and Winnipeg should target securing at least \$900 million from this fund, mostly for Winnipeg Transit.

At annual construction inflation of three to four per cent, a two-year delay could reduce the purchasing power of that amount by \$54 million to \$72 million. The new \$51-billion Build Communities Strong Fund creates further opportunities.

But federal funding rewards cities that are ready.

Under the Metro-Region Agreement process, applicants must prepare a 10-year transit investment program before individual projects can advance. While other cities move from planning to construction, Winnipeg is debating whether to postpone updating its plan.

For years, Council has said Winnipeg cannot meet its infrastructure needs without greater federal and provincial support. Yet when Ottawa offers record transit funding, the City proposes to delay the planning needed to secure it. You cannot plead for funding and then hesitate when the opportunity arrives.

No other city can make a stronger case for bus rapid transit than Winnipeg.

We are home to New Flyer, with major engineering, design and manufacturing capacity here. A serious BRT program would support local jobs, strengthen a made-in-Manitoba clean transportation industry and showcase technology built in Winnipeg. Electric buses can run on clean Manitoba electricity, reducing emissions and dependence on imported fossil fuels.

Yet City Hall continues to pursue senior-government funding to widen Route 90 and extend Chief Peguis Trail—projects costing more than \$1 billion combined whose economic benefits remain highly contested. Meanwhile, only \$5.8 million is being provided in 2026 for preliminary design of the next rapid transit phase.

This is a question of priorities.

Roads matter. But Winnipeg is already struggling to maintain the road network it has. Adding costly new capacity encourages more driving and brings more congestion, maintenance costs, taxes and emissions.

Transit is not a luxury. It connects people to jobs, schools, health care and essential services. For many residents, especially newcomers, it is the only practical alternative to the high cost of owning and operating a car. Better transit also supports downtown renewal and allows more affordable housing to be built in locations where residents do not need to depend on a car for every trip.

Expanding transit is central to any credible climate action plan. Transportation produces nearly half of Winnipeg's greenhouse gas emissions. Electric vehicles will help, but replacing every gasoline-powered car with an electric one will not reduce congestion, road-building costs or car-dependent development. Winnipeg cannot meet its climate commitments without giving residents a practical, reliable alternative to driving.

Mayor and Council, federal funding windows will not wait for Winnipeg's internal timetable. And voters will not ignore the choices you make. This fall, Winnipeggers will judge whether Council recognized a historic opportunity and acted with urgency—or accepted another delay while competing cities moved ahead.

Reject the Administration's recommendation and direct the Administration to return promptly with:

- a work plan and the resources needed to complete the Transit Master Plan update on an accelerated schedule;
- a prioritized 10-year rapid transit investment program; and
- projects positioned to secure federal and provincial cost-sharing.

This is not about producing another glossy report. It is about creating a credible plan and being ready to build.

Choose action, not delay, before Winnipeg falls even further behind.

Appendix A – Recent and Current Rapid Transit Expansions: Winnipeg Compared with Selected Canadian Cities

City	Project	Estimated Capital Cost ^{1,2.}	Federal Cost-Sharing	Project Status
Winnipeg	Program 1 - Downtown	\$191 to \$355 million	To be determined.	Not approved for construction. Full build-out projected for 2045 or later.
	Program 2A – North and East	\$19 to \$35 million		
	Program 2B – Southwest and Southeast	\$35 to \$65 million		
	Program 3A – North	\$82 to \$152 million		
	Program 3B – Southeast	\$48 to \$90 million		
	Program 3C – Grant	\$18 to \$33 million		
	Program 4A – East	\$90 to \$168 million		
	Program 4B – West	\$105 to \$195 million		
		\$588 million to \$1.1 billion^{3.}		

Notes:

- 1. Source: Winnipeg Transit Master Plan, March 2021.
- 2. Class 5 estimates. 2020 dollars. Does not include inflation and financing charges.
- 3. Equivalent to roughly **\$720 million to \$1.34 billion** in 2026 dollars, assuming average annual construction inflation of 3.5 per cent.

City	Project	Estimated Capital Cost ¹		Federal Cost-Sharing	Project Status
Calgary	Green Line	\$6.248 billion		\$1.53 billion	Approved. Under construction.
Edmonton	Valley Line West	\$2.6 billion	\$4.308 billion	\$991 million	Approved. Under construction.
	Capital Line South	\$1.38 billion		\$400 million	Approved. Under construction.
	Metro Line Northwest Extension – Phase 1	\$328 million		\$127 million	Approved. Completed in December 2023.
Hamilton	Hamilton LRT	\$3.4 billion		\$1.7 billion	Approved. Enabling civil and utility construction underway.
Ottawa	Ottawa Light Rail Transit – Stage 2	\$4.66 billion		\$1.1 billion	Approved. Partly opened and partly under construction.
Quebec City	TramCité	\$7.6 billion		\$1.44 billion	Approved (first phase). Planning and preparatory construction underway.
		\$26.2 billion		\$7.3 billion	

Notes:

- 1. Project costs are stated in nominal dollars reported by the responsible governments and are not fully comparable. They reflect different base years, scopes, estimate classes, procurement stages and treatments of financing.