

Bike to the Future Delegation to NDP Caucus -- March 20, 2008

(The following notes are meant to provide a general summary of the meeting and are based on the memories of BttF members who were present. They are not word-for-word quotes.)

Participants from NDP:

Marilyn Brick (chair), MLA St. Norbert
Erin Selby, MLA Southdale
Jennifer Howard, MLA Fort Rouge
Kerri Irvin-Ross, Minister of Healthy Living
Rob Altemeyer, MLA Wolsley
Doug Martindale, MLA Burrows
Sharon Blady, MLA Kirkfield Park
Gord Mackintosh, MLA St. Johns
Erna Braun, MLA Rossmere

Bike to the Future delegation:

Anders Swanson (chair), Bike to the Future, Mayors Environmental Advisory Committee, Active Transportation Advisory Committee
Jackie Avent, Bike to the Future Co-Chair, Resource Conservation MB
Mark Cohoe, Bike to the Future
Jeremy Hull, Bike to the Future
Gareth Simons, Bike to the Future, Active Transportation Advisory Committee
Janice Lukes, Winnipeg Trails Association, Active Transportation Advisory Committee
Nancy Pallett, Physical Activity Coalition of Manitoba
Ruth Schappert, Manitoba Cycling Association
Lisa Scharf, Heart and Stroke Foundation of Manitoba/Physical Activity Coalition of Manitoba
Roger Suss, Manitoba Medical Association.

Marilyn Brick had everyone introduce themselves around the table. Following a brief introduction by Jackie, Anders made about a 30 minute presentation using the Powerpoint presentation as laid out. He added a lot of commentary, jokes, etc. and was generally very engaging and entertaining. The MLAs clearly appreciated his style of presentation. Then Marilyn invited the MLAs to ask questions, most of which were fielded by Anders, with a bit of support from others, including Ruth, Nancy and Janice. We left them with a couple of handouts (see attached), plus a few copies of our provincial budget submission. Following are the issues raised and by whom, to the best of our recollection. Most of the responses were made by Anders, with a few others contributing on some of the responses.

Question: Is Powers going to end up being a north-south bike route, with street calming and stop signs aligned to facilitate cycling? -- Doug Martindale

Response: The North End group has recommended this, but we will need to see what the city recommends, and what the traffic engineers decide is the best way of implementing the recommendations.

Comment: Been involved in the BIZ cycling discussions, and specifically thanked everyone for being so involved with active transportation. -- Jennifer Howard

Question: How can we deal with bottlenecks, such as trying to cycle through Assiniboine Park on the way downtown? Portage Avenue is too dangerous for me to cycle on. Also worried about backlash from drivers and businesses if bike lanes or paths are added taking space away from car drivers or for parking. -- Sharon Blady

Response: This is why we need better routes throughout the city, not just through the park - for example Corydon Ave and Wellington Crescent have been identified as preferred commuter routes through River Heights.

Question: What do you think about the current plans for the Peguis Trail? -- Jennifer Howard

Response: They're not good because they only provide a path on one side of the highway, so cyclists and others would have to cross Peguis Trail twice if they were traveling on the other side, plus the design of the trail embankments makes it impossible for cyclists to enter and exist at other points. In addition cyclists are expected to stop and dismount at crossing.

Question: What are the plans for the Redwood Bridge? -- Gord Mackintosh

Response: This has been looked at closely over a long time, and recommendations have been made by the ATAC committee currently under consideration by the City.

Question: How can we get kids to bike to school instead of being dropped off by their parents? I have seen hundreds of bikes parked in front of a rural school, but with 1,500 kids enrolled, Sisler High has few bike racks, and it took me 6 years to find them. -- Doug Martindale

Response: There is a great example of a project that worked in Oakbank - with a committee made up of decision-makers from various sectors, including the Minister of Transportation. The upshot was that new bike racks with space for 200 bicycles were put in at each of 3 different schools in highly visible locations, and other accommodations were made, costing something like \$650,000 in total. These bike racks are being fully utilized at each school, taking some 600 vehicles off the road. -- Ruth

Nancy added she had been involved on this (or a similar) project and great results.

Question: What about transportation using other types of vehicles, such as wheelchairs or scooters - shouldn't they be part of the planning and aren't they natural allies? -- Jennifer Howard

Response: Yes, many similar needs – and Anders noted that there should be representation of these interests on the City's Active Transportation Advisory Committee.

Question: My understanding of what you are requesting is:
1. You are looking for 5% of the provincial highways budget to be spent on active transportation projects throughout Manitoba.
2. You are looking for infrastructure such as physically separated bike lanes.
3. You are expecting the Province to work with Winnipeg and other municipalities to make things happen.
Is that right? – Rob Altemeyer

Response: Yes. We agree that there is a need for physical separation and barriers between car and bicycle traffic, such as posts, pylons, trees, etc., was mentioned. -- Janice

Question: The issue of cycling is not important in rural areas as it is in urban areas. -- Rob Altemeyer

Response: Agreed that cycling is generally an urban issue, and especially an issue in Winnipeg, but because of its value in reducing GHG emissions, it is a priority for the province.

But, for people to fully embrace the bicycle as a vehicle, they have to see it as useful for long-distances as well. Cycle touring is fun and generates a lot of money in the provinces that provide the infrastructure, the promotion and support (i.e. Quebec). Manitoba could create three first-class "long-distance" cycling routes and promote them in terms of eco-tourism, healthy living, rural-urban cooperation and physical activity, as well as the intangible benefits of creating general excitement around cycling, for example:

- The Forks to Bird's Hill to Grand Beach
- Winnipeg to the Whiteshell
- A route through the Parkland area,
- A northern route (Flin Flon–Thompson?)