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Pre-budget consultations; Transportation expenditures

Bike to the Future calls on the Government of Manitoba to break out of the pattern of increasing motor vehicle dependency by reallocating its transportation expenditures in urban areas to support active transportation, so as to and achieve:

- **Environmental sustainability,**
- **Improved public health,**
- **Lower long costs to taxpayers in the long term, and**
- **Better quality of life**

Resetting Manitoba's Transportation Goals

In 2006, the Government committed more than \$4 Billion over 10 years to road building, with stable funding of \$400 million a year.

To the extent that these roads make travel by motor vehicle faster and more convenient, the result will be an increase in motor vehicle usage. Citizens will become yet more dependent on their cars and trucks, and other infrastructure in the Province will further evolve to accommodate people getting around in cars and trucks. In urban centres, this is bad news for our health, our environment, and the livability of our communities. We, our children, and our grandchildren will be further committed to pay the growing cost of using motor vehicles and maintaining the infrastructure to support them.

It may appease current demands for “better roads”, but it won't look good a generation from now. Thirty years out, Manitobans won't see the expansion of urban roads as an “investment in infrastructure” which brought economic prosperity, but rather as an “expenditure on more roads” which deepened public debt, encouraged sprawl, and exacerbated unsustainable dependency on motor vehicles.

Each year, the average Canadian makes 2,000 trips of less than three kilometers by motor vehicle.

- Manitobans do this because it is the safest and most convenient way to get around our towns and cities.
- Our cities are built to accommodate motor vehicles because that is the way Manitobans get around.

It is a vicious circle that spins off poor health, enormous environmental costs, and urban streets which are unfriendly to people who are not in a truck or a car.

There is a direct relationship between the walkability of communities and the health of people who live there. Health services consume over a third of Manitoba's budget and costs grow year over year. Inactivity causes poor health. According to “[Making the Case for Primary Prevention](#)”, the total cost to Manitoba of inactivity was \$327 million in 2008, and growing. That report demonstrates that even a small change in the proportion of Manitobans who are more likely to suffer health problems because of a lack of physical activity could have a huge impact on future health costs.

What are we waiting for? Bike to the Future recommends the Government take immediate and significant action in this budget to involve multiple government departments in a concerted initiative to

slow down and eventually reverse the vicious circle of motor vehicle dependency in urban areas, rather than delaying any effective action until the costs force the issue.

Manitoba should redefine the mission of transportation administrators, planners and engineers to make active transportation the most convenient option for travel in towns and cities, and launch a multi-year initiative to improve convenience and safety for those who choose to travel by bicycle, including:

- Bicycle infrastructure
- Planning to make to travel by bicycle or on foot most convenient
- Safety education for drivers and cyclists of all ages
- Legislation and regulations that offer cyclists greater safety on the road

Manitoba's public health authorities should be assigned resources to:

- Change public attitudes about the health consequences of driving in the same way as they changed public attitudes about smoking.
- Work with transportation planners to ensure better health outcomes.
 - In Toronto, following the release by a report entitled [Road to Health: Improving Walking and Cycling in Toronto](#), The City of Toronto Board of Health recommended that the Medical Officer of Health work in collaboration with the General Manager of Transportation Services to support the increased use and safety of walking and cycling

A few AT projects here and there are not enough

The Government has committed funding for some AT projects, but not enough to make a significant change in the safety and convenience of cycling anywhere in the province. At the same time, some recent road building projects have made it harder to walk or bike from place to place. As a result, Manitoba is lagging further behind other jurisdictions in encouraging residents to travel short distances by bike or on foot, and dependency on automobiles continues apace.

A new attitude toward transportation and a significant commitment of stable annual funding across several departments is necessary to break out of the current mold, and make travel by bicycle and on foot safer and more convenient.

The Government must challenge transportation planners with the measurable goal of increasing the proportion of Manitobans who choose to commute and run errands on foot or by bicycle, and measure progress towards that goal year after year.

Plan, Act and Measure

To help Manitobans can make better decisions on transportation, the Government must develop the capability to measure which transportation modes cost or save Manitobans money and boost the local economy. Analysts in other jurisdictions have developed such tools:

- The Victoria [BC] Transport Policy Institute's [Transportation Cost and Benefit Analysis](#) report calculates that the total cost of a motor vehicle in an urban setting at rush hour is \$1.64 per mile. For every dollar that the driver spends, the motor vehicle causes costs of \$2.55 to the rest of society.
- The City of Copenhagen produces a "[Bicycle Account](#)" to report on the status of cycling in the city every two years, which includes the finding that, when taking all factors into account, every

kilometre ridden on a bike saves Danish society 22 cents and every kilometre travelled by car costs them 12 cents.

- Intelligent Communities, a program of the National Building Museum, demonstrated that [only 16 percent of household car expenses stay within the local economy](#).
- The Australian Heart Foundation has demonstrated that [cycle accessibility has important economic benefits for local businesses as compared motor vehicle accessibility](#).

Step 1: Implement the “Greater Strides” recommendations

The Manitoba Active Transportation Advisory Group generated a number of recommendations in the “[Greater Strides](#)” report in 2011. This report provides guidance about where the Government should direct its initial resources without further study.

The recommendations in Greater Strides that require action in the provincial Budget include:

- Publicly commit to measurable targets and goals on the status of active transportation in Manitoba;
- Provide long-term active transportation funding for municipalities to use towards the cost of active transportation planning;
- Assign a dedicated percentage of the annual roads and bridges capital and operating budgets to fund a cost-share program with municipalities to encourage the development and maintenance of active transportation infrastructure in and between Manitoba communities;
- Develop a paved provincial active transportation network for residents and tourists;
- Develop plans and establish resources to increase active transportation opportunities in northern and remote Manitoba;
- Provide funding to institutions and businesses to improve active transportation options at workplaces.
- Encourage comprehensive cycling training programs in Manitoba through service organizations and through schools in collaboration with Manitoba Education and school divisions.

Conclusion

Now is the time to change transportation priorities, and make Manitoba a healthier, wealthier and happier province, by allocating resources in this budget to:

- Implement the recommendations of the “Greater Strides” report,
- Provide significant resources over multiple years across departments to improve the safety and convenience of cycling in towns and urban areas,
- Reduce motor vehicle dependency,
- Evaluate and analyze the impacts of various transportation modes on provincial finances, health, and economic activity.