



## Winnipeg Rapid Transit Coalition

January 14, 2009

### **RE: Concern about Winnipeg Bus Rapid Transit planning for accessibility, safety, and connectivity**

We at the Winnipeg Rapid Transit Coalition (WRTC) and Bike to the Future (BttF) are dedicated to making the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project a success. However, if fundamental issues are not dealt with well before construction begins, we fear that the bikeway portion of the rapid transit project may not provide any real benefit to the cyclists of Winnipeg nor will the BRT increase transit ridership to its potential. We would like your support to ensure that these issues will be satisfactorily addressed before construction begins.

**The reason we are raising this issue *now* and the reason we are *so* concerned is because we understand that construction is slated to start in the summer of 2009.**

On December 18, 2008, there was a productive meeting between Dave Wardrop (Director Winnipeg Transit), Laura Sims (WRTC), Paul Hesse (WRTC), Thomas Novak (WRTC), Jairo Viafara (University of Manitoba Transportation Institute), Curt Hull (BttF), Jenny Gerbasi (Winnipeg City Council), Deepak Joshi (Winnipeg Planning Director), Dianne Himbeault (Winnipeg Planning Coordinator), and Barry Thorgrimson (Manager Winnipeg Economic Development). Everyone at that meeting was receptive and welcome to bringing citizen involvement into the planning process. We were very pleased with that meeting and are looking forward to working together. The major issues that we identified were: access for pedestrians and people with disabilities, personal safety, and cycling connectivity.

**Our concerns were raised when we learned that there is no provision for a bikeway in the tunnel under the Fort Rouge rail yard tracks.**

The plan we were shown for the rapid transit system is the aerial photo that was shown at the BRT announcement and is on the city's website. The map shows a purple line for the busway but does not show the bikeway. One assumes they run in parallel but evidently that is not the case. We do not know what the bikeway route will be.

At this point, we have these concerns about the bikeway from Jubilee to downtown:

- **Jubilee/Pembina** - The Jubilee Station is on the east side of the tracks. How will cyclists access the bikeway from west of Pembina?
- **Connection from east to west side of tracks and across Osborne** - How will cyclists get from the bikeway on the east side of the tracks in Lord Roberts to the bikeway on the west side of the tracks near Donald?

- **Osborne/Confusion Corner** - How will cyclists access the bikeway at Osborne Station from Fort Rouge?
- **Assiniboine River/Main Street/downtown** - How will cyclists get from the Harkness Station to the east end of Assiniboine Ave? (i.e. downtown) If northbound cyclists are just deposited at Harkness Station, and if they use the roadway (as they should) they will have to cross to the east side of Main and then negotiate back to the west side of Main to get downtown.

We have also discussed this with Kevin Nixon (Active Transportation Coordinator). Kevin is working to get input from the Active Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) on this. ATAC is now aware of these issues and is also concerned.

On April 23, 2008, Bike to the Future (BttF) made presentation to City Council in support of the rapid transit proposal. Besides a general support for rapid transit, we were excited by the promise that the project was to include a bikeway. A bikeway within a rapid transit corridor promised to overcome some of the biggest interconnection “choke point” issues facing the development of a comprehensive network of bike routes in the city (i.e. Jubilee underpass, Confusion Corner, Osborne underpass, Red River crossing) If construction of this project starts before ALL of the issues above are properly dealt with, Bike to the Future and the Winnipeg Rapid Transit Coalition are seriously concerned that the bikeway portion of phase one of the rapid transit corridor may cost a lot for the citizens of Winnipeg and not provide any real improvement for its cyclists.

Similarly, if issues of general access (e.g. How will pedestrians / riders access the Jubilee and Morley Stations from west of Pembina and north of the CN tracks?), access for people with disabilities, and provisions for personal safety are not designed with public input, anticipated ridership may not be achieved.

**Will you work with us to ensure that these issues are satisfactorily addressed before construction begins?** We look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you.

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