



**MORE PEOPLE BIKING  
MORE OFTEN**

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April 21, 2020

## Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works

**Re: Item #12 – Pilot Project –30 KM/HR Speed Limit within the Waverley West Ward**

Dear Councillors,

While we certainly support the notion of piloting a 30km/hr zone in the future, we recognize that under the current circumstances, it may be more beneficial for the city to pivot toward projects that meet the demands of physical distancing during the COVID-19 crisis. It's our understanding that the city administration is looking into options to create additional street closures, create widened sidewalk spaces to ease physical distancing, and to provide temporary bikeways to ensure people have safe access to essential services and employment at a time when transit capacity is reduced. We absolutely encourage these actions to be implemented as quickly as possible, and see this as an urgent response to the current crisis.

As the current lockdown extends into warmer spring and summer weather, the human need to get out and enjoy the fresh air and sunshine needs to be accommodated. We urge you to keep in mind that not everyone has access to a backyard or easy access to a park that can facilitate physical distancing. In many parts of the city sidewalks are absent or pinched in between buildings (or fenced lots) and the roadway, and lack the type of connectivity required to facilitate even a 30 minute walk without forcing people to disregard physical distancing requirements.

### Recommended Actions:

#### **Remove the Need for People to Push Buttons to Activate Crossing Signals**

Reprogramming traffic signals that still require people to push a button to activate a crossing signal would be an easy step to take, and would provide a couple of benefits. First, it removed the need for people to push a potentially contaminated push button to cross a street. In addition, this step may also help limit the amount of people held up waiting together at signalized crossings, especially if combined with our recommendation to reduced signal cycle lengths.

#### **Take Actions to Reduce Traffic Signal Cycle Lengths**

We recommend that the city work to reduce traffic signal cycle lengths to minimize delays at signals that lead to grouping of people waiting to cross. Given reduced travel demand, we believe there should be capacity to reduce times dedicated to vehicles while maintaining pedestrian crossing times.

#### **Expand the Street Closures Program so that All Winnipeggers have Access to Safe Walking Areas**

We strongly agree with the city's decision to extend the timing of street closures to 7 days per week. This has made a huge difference for people able to access these streets, making it far easier to cope with the demands of the lockdown. Obviously, the current inventory of roadway closures is only able to serve a small portion of the city. We hope that the city, in close cooperation with neighbourhood and residents associations, can work as quickly as possible to identify and implement similar roadway closures throughout the city.

The goal should be to ensure that all residents have access to such space, and that a network of such closures will provide people with access to 30 minute walking loops that they can easily put together.

We fear that a failure to do so will force people to travel to these limited sites and parks, and will ultimately overwhelm the ability of these sites to facilitate the recommended physical distancing.

## Expand Sidewalk Space through the Removal of Traffic Lanes

As noted above, sidewalks in many areas of the city are either absent or pinched tightly between property lines and traffic lanes. Under these conditions, people meeting each other are faced with the choice of crossing paths without the recommended 2m of physical distancing or walking onto a traffic lane to avoid others. This is especially true on commercial streets in some of the city's older neighbourhoods that provide people with access to essential services like groceries. Given the reduced traffic being experienced during the COVID-19 crisis, we strongly urge the city to work with BIZs and Neighbourhood Associations to remove traffic and or parking lanes to allow sidewalks to be temporarily widened through the used of bollards separating people from traffic.

Where parking must be removed to widen a sidewalk, we suggest that businesses cooperate on shared use of off-road parking and that the city pay for signage to guide patrons to appropriate locations. Where closed lanes are on transit routes, we suggest two potential solutions. Ideally, the city could look into temporary bus platform installations as shown below.



A great benefit of the above example (taken from Oakland), is that once purchased, the materials used for these temporary installations can be re-used in future pilot projects at little cost to the city. These modular, temporary structures can be used to trial a whole host of features, including: curb bulb-outs, floating bus stops (as above), parklets, refuge islands, or mid-block crossings.

Failing that, we would recommend that transit stops be implemented as pull ins, similar to what is done on Sherbrook Street between Ellice Ave and Cumberland Ave.

Ideally, where traffic lanes have been removed to provide space, the outside portion of the removed traffic lane could be marked for use as a bike lane.

## Create Popup Bikeways

Our final recommendation is to move ahead with popup bikeways; on major routes through closure of lanes, through integration of temporary street closures, and through temporary implementation of previously studied neighbourhood greenways.

For many people without access to a vehicle, access to essential services is only possible by foot, bicycle, or transit. Given the reduced capacity of transit due to physical distancing, and people's understandable reluctance to use transit, safe routes to these services by bicycle will be essential.

## Prioritize Implementation Based on Needs

We urge that the city prioritize implementation of these and other recommendations on the basis of need. Important factors in that prioritization should include:

- Higher Density Neighbourhoods, with special emphasis on areas with higher densities of multi-unit residences in the built up area;
- Routes that provide access to essential services & workplaces;
- Where East/West or North/South alternates are absent or limited;
- Where boulevard/setback/sidewalk widths are limited;
- Areas with limited park space (a deficiency in parks/person)

Finally, we trust that your decisions will be based on Equity, Empathy, and Ethics.

Sincerely,

Mark Cohoe  
Executive Director  
Bike Winnipeg  
t: 204-894-6540  
e: [mark@bikewinnipeg.ca](mailto:mark@bikewinnipeg.ca)