

Bike Winnipeg Review of OurWinnipeg 2045

OurWinnipeg 2045 is presented as the lead plan for Winnipeg; the one that will guide all the lower level plans.

“OurWinnipeg 2045, articulates the City’s goals and aspirations at the highest level, and serves to guide the physical, social, environmental, and economic objectives and sustainable land uses and development of our city.

OurWinnipeg 2045 isn’t intended to provide all of the answers, but rather a lens or way to analyze and evaluate community needs, and prioritize municipal services...”

Unfortunately, OurWinnipeg 2045 does not plan for a healthy, environmentally and economically sustainable future for Winnipeg. It reflects current planning priorities in land use planning to accommodate population growth. It is very weak in climate change and transportation planning.

OurWinnipeg2045 is planning to fail on climate: it is planning to fall far short of national GHG commitments, both in 2030 and 2050. Approving this plan will pass this legacy on to future leaders in the city.

OurWinnipeg is structured around six of the United Nations 17 Sustainable development goals: Leadership and Good Governance, Environmental Resilience, Economic Prosperity, Good Health and Well-being, Social Equity, and City Building:

Environmental Resilience

OurWinnipeg 2045 relies on the Winnipeg 2018 Climate Action Plan for climate change policy, which does not meet the national climate action standards.

When First Ministers met in March 2016 in Vancouver, they agreed to take action to meet or exceed Canada’s 2030 target of a 30 percent reduction below 2005 levels of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

The city’s 2018 GHG reduction targets did not meet that national standard:

- *20 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 relative to 2011 levels.*
- *80 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 relative to 2011 levels*

National standards have advanced since 2018. In November 2020, the federal government tabled the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act which legally binds the government to a process to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

Winnipeg’s climate action plan estimates that emissions from transportation account for over half of Winnipeg’s total GHG emissions (50.5 percent). Personal vehicle travel is the

predominant mode of transportation in Winnipeg, representing 81 percent of total weekday trips. Winnipeggers love their automobiles.

OurWinnipeg 2045 bows to that addiction. It does not choose to step in front of the Winnipeg commuter and redirect them to other modes of transportation. It asks them to engage in shopping therapy; buy an electric car.

City Building

This is the sustainable development goal of most interest to the planners. Here, they have chosen the change they want to promote; densify older neighbourhoods in the city, to partially limit sprawl and its associated commuter traffic.

In promoting “Complete Communities”, the plan is positive about cycling; specifically communities where it is possible to get around by bike.

That’s nice. The message is; the City will accommodate cycling and make it attractive in spots. It does not prioritize building and maintaining a city-wide all weather cycling network sufficient to make cycling an attractive means of transportation year-round to Winnipeg families. Even the illustrations of complete streets show painted, unprotected, bike lanes, which are below the standards set out by road engineers for safe cycling on such roads. Only adults who are sufficiently confident to share the road with drivers are likely to use such lanes.

“Integrate resilient land use, transportation and infrastructure planning, and investments. Ensure that land use, transportation, and infrastructure planning are aligned to provide the conditions for compact, complete and connected communities, supported by sustainable transportation options and municipal infrastructure capacity.

Actively explore innovative approaches to city building, sustainable transportation and related infrastructure capacity enhancements that mitigate the impact of climate risk on infrastructure; leverage targeted densities as detailed in Complete Communities; and minimize conflict between different street functions and users.

Prioritize sustainable transportation as the mobility options of choice. Transition to a sustainable transportation system that safely and efficiently moves people, goods and services, increases access to a variety of affordable mobility choices, encourages less reliance on personal vehicle travel, reduces travel time, mitigates congestion and related greenhouse gas emissions, and supports the development of denser, better-connected, healthy and complete communities. “

Currently, even Winnipeggers who live in relatively dense communities well served by transit commute by car. Densification and making AT and transit available are not sufficient to alter mode share. Transit and AT have to offer a better transportation option: mode share change will happen when it is evident to drivers that biking and/or busing is more convenient than car travel.

In other cities, the requirement to change away from internal combustion automobiles is being used as an opportunity to switch infrastructure spending priority from personal vehicles to transit and AT.

OurWinnipeg does not call for reducing investment in private motor vehicle infrastructure:

“Eliminate Fossil Fuel Dependence; Pursue an increase in the use of alternative fuels, electric and zero-emission vehicles and charging infrastructure as part of a sustainable transportation system and green fleet “

It relies on electrification of the commuter vehicle fleet to reduce GHG in transport. This is an energy substitution plan; a felicitous switch to Manitoba’s hydro power. Import substitution is nice for Manitoba Hydro and the Province, but it results in the same old traffic, and the same costly commitment from the city to provide infrastructure for commuters in private vehicles.

Throughout the document, OurWinnipeg 2045 emphasizes transit and walking as alternative modes; not cycling.

“Reduce Road Congestion; Increase the efficiency, convenience and usage of the public transit system, to improve air quality, provide a viable alternative to the automobile, and reduce current and future road congestion.

Support Rapid Transit and other primary transit corridors with strategically located transit stations, that facilitate transit ridership through development intensification, a mix of complementary land uses, and a pedestrian and cycling-friendly environment consistent with transit-oriented development”

The plan includes vague positive ideas;

*“Sustainable Transportation Connectivity Prioritize enhancements to the public transit system and active and public transportation network that improve their viability and access to places such as educational institutions, employment opportunities, recreation and library facilities, providers of essential goods and services and health providers, **especially for neighbourhoods most impacted by poverty”***

Winnipeg needs an aggressive framework with hard targets and policies that are in step with national and international GHG reduction targets to change how roadspace is allocated among modes. Reallocating road space from private vehicles to buses and bikes accelerates the rate of mode change, reduces infrastructure costs, reduces energy consumption, and facilitates reaching national targets.

This approach is needed city-wide. It would be highly undesirable for the city to set up transit and cycling as the modes of choice for “those most impacted by poverty”. This would reinforce the desire among some people who are not of limited means to avoid transit or cycling.

In OurWinnipeg 2045, it is clear that Winnipeg planners do not believe that winter cycling is a realistic transportation option. Under current winter maintenance conditions that is true; it is too hard for most people to get around on bike routes where snow and ice have not been

properly cleared off in the winter. In other winter cities, where bike paths are well cleared and safe throughout the winter, ordinary people adapt and ride throughout the year on ordinary bikes. Cyclists can dress to deal with the cold, but there is nothing they can do about ice and snow on the bike paths.

To make cycling a viable option for all healthy Winnipeggers the City must commit to:

- A network of separated bike lanes throughout the city where moms and kids feel safe. This network should meet and exceed the design set out in the Winnipeg Pedestrian and Cycling Strategies plan.
- Year-round bike route maintenance programs that offer safe cycling.
- Road safety measures, including reduced speed limits, cyclist/pedestrian - friendly crossings, improved signage and implementation of Vision Zero.
- Convenient and secure parking for bikes.

Winnipeg will need to measure inputs and results in the transportation sector, and do annual analysis of costs and measures to allow decision makers, and citizens can see whether Winnipeg's transportation system is moving toward environmental and financial sustainability.

Fiscally sustainable growth is discussed within the "City Building" goal.

"A successful strategy for sustainable city growth uses a variety of planning approaches. It strikes a balance between 'growing out' and 'growing up', offering choices ranging from traditional, single-family neighbourhoods to denser forms of urban housing and new neighbourhoods designed around a mix of land uses and a sustainable transportation system.

Through land use regulation, asset management and transportation network planning, the City directly influences sustainable approaches to land development, resource management, and the protection of significant built, cultural, natural, and heritage assets, including buildings, structures, landscapes, and neighbourhoods.

Ensure that growth is fiscally sustainable through the use of financial tools; guidelines that outline the fair and equitable sharing of costs for servicing and the subdivision and development of land; fiscal impact analysis for new development; and collaboration with other levels of government on legislative and regulatory reform initiatives, to enhance the authority of the City to collect revenue to finance land development"

This chapter does not spell out the massive infrastructure costs for roads. This is a huge omission, when road building and maintenance are such important election issues. Supporting automobile commuters is a major expense to the city and to the environment. That expense should be clearly spelled out in this planning process, to facilitate realistic decisions about economically and environmentally sustainable transportation policy.

Where there is supportive policy for active transportation in OurWinnipeg, there is no evident conviction to implement it:

“Apply complete streets principles in the design, reconstruction, construction and operation of designated Urban Mixed Use Corridors, and other areas of the city where appropriate, to enhance the safety and usability of a mixed transportation network based on a hierarchy of users which safeguards those most at risk of fatality and injury.”

Great words, but meaningless if it is only followed where convenient. Sadly, the recently released Transit Master Plan demonstrates this issue by excluding protected bike lanes from all of its proposed transitway designs. As these proposed transitways are the very definition of Urban Mixed Use Corridors, the lack of protected bike lanes for "those most at risk of fatality and injury" is a critical and foretelling omission.

Good Health and Well-being

One chapter of OurWinnipeg is about good health and well-being. Despite the pretty picture of a cycle path, and the positive language, that chapter does not prioritize policy to improve health outcomes through transportation planning.

“A municipal government can fulfill its role on behalf of this sustainability goal by planning a city that is designed and built to create access to conditions, circumstances, and social determinants of health that support good health and well-being, and public safety.

A healthy city supports the physical, social, cultural, mental, and spiritual well-being of its communities and residents. Promoting well-being for all, at all ages and abilities, is vital to building prosperous societies. A city that supports good health and well-being is built in ways that preserve natural environments; create complete, compact and connected communities; support active and safe transportation networks; provide quality and affordable housing; and increase access to healthy and affordable foods

Support positive health outcomes through the built and natural environments. Design, develop, and maintain healthy and inclusive built and natural environments that facilitate access to basic needs, encourage active lifestyles, and strengthen social- and nature-based connections.”

The adverse impact of automobile travel on the health of both vehicle occupants and other road users receives no mention in this section.

Public health research shows that every kilometer that people choose to drive instead of walking or cycling has a negative impact on their health that results in a measurable financial impact on the health system. The estimated cost to society is in the range over 20 cents per kilometer driven. In contrast, travelling by bicycle or on foot improves the well-being of those travellers and other street users. One of the best returns on investment among built environment health projects is achieved by building infrastructure that results in people changing mode from automobile to active transportation. No mention of that in the OurWinnipeg chapter on health.