

His Worship Brian Bowman
Mayor, City of Winnipeg
City Hall
510 Main St.
Winnipeg, MB R3B 1B9

February 11, 2021

RE: Request for the City of Winnipeg to take urgent action to provide a connected walking and cycling network

Greetings Mayor Bowman;

In 2021, Winnipeg finds itself in the midst of a health crisis, a humanitarian crisis, an economic crisis and an environmental crisis. We need brave, bold action now more than ever. Ensuring we have a transportation network that provides mobility choice to all Winnipeggers will position us on the path to becoming a happier, healthier, wealthier city in 2022 and beyond.

The City of Winnipeg is approaching one year of the COVID-19 pandemic and many lessons have been learned about who is the most vulnerable, and the challenges we will face in the coming months and years as our societies move towards a new normal. In spring 2020 we sent a request for a connected walk/bike network to address the transportation crisis, and we were thrilled to see Councillor Vivian Santos move to have it implemented at the June meeting of the Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works Committee. Unfortunately the motion was defeated in favour of a traffic study, so we are returning to you for leadership.

Today, the undersigned once again send a unified request for the City of Winnipeg to take urgent action to provide a connected network of cycling and walking routes through our city.

We call on you to direct Public Works to fill the clear network gaps immediately, using “pop-up” infrastructure, like planters, wherever necessary while developing plans to make this permanent with infrastructure stimulus funding.

“Due to the dramatic growth in the number of motor vehicles and the frequency of their use around the world – as well as the general neglect of pedestrian needs in roadway design and land-use planning – pedestrians are increasingly susceptible to road traffic injury” (*World Health Organization*, [Pedestrian Safety: A Road Safety Manual For Decision-Makers And Practitioners](#))

The City of Winnipeg implemented a pop-up response to the pandemic through its Open Streets initiative in the spring of 2020, which was expanded and extended through the fall. The responses to the project have been overwhelmingly positive, and streets that didn't work as well cost little in time and money to adjust or remove completely. **We now need to move beyond a recreation response, and towards a real sustainable transportation choice.**

Pop-up walk/bike networks have been a success in Canada and around the world during the pandemic, providing an option to essential workers who are nervous about public transit, residents who welcome a way to stay active, and local businesses who are competing more than ever with online shopping and big box stores. Winnipeggers deserve to have affordable, healthy and sustainable transportation choices too. We ask you to direct Public Works to research and implement tools from resources that have emerged, such as the NACTO [COVID-19: Streets for Pandemic Response and Recovery](#).

We understand the City must have support from other levels of government to fund these infrastructure investments long-term; however, we believe it is the Mayor's role to strongly advocate for the infrastructure necessary to provide all citizens with a reliable, safe, accessible and sustainable transportation system right now, and into the future. The Federal Government has made it clear their plan is to “Build Back Better”, and the Provincial Government has

committed to funding 150 KM of active trails as part of its 100 Days of Action. We now need the Mayor's voice to champion the mobility needs of Winnipeg to secure these investments.

The impacts of the pandemic have highlighted how inequitable our cities are. Those who are economically disadvantaged, and disproportionately our IBPOC communities, have been impacted the most by illness, by the lack of access to technology, the lack of access to yards and by joblessness. **Now more than ever we need to have our city prioritizing those who are most vulnerable.**

"If you don't have access to quality transportation, then you can't have access to quality jobs. You can't have access to quality health care. You can't have access to quality education." - Tamika Butler ([Want transportation equity? Be an accomplice, not an ally](#))

Over and over in our work, we hear from Winnipeggers who want to walk, bike and bus, but they can't. They say they have "no choice" but to drive because other options are non-existent, inconvenient or downright unsafe.

"The traffic ... before/after school is awful. I am afraid to allow my child to bike to school because this traffic is extreme." (*COVID School Travel Survey*, November 2020)

To be a progressive and resilient city through this pandemic and into the future, we must prioritize walking, biking, and transit for all citizens, no matter what neighbourhood they live in. A network through the City of Winnipeg for everyone to have the choice to walk or bike to their destinations, or to and from transit, will begin to address a transportation system that is fundamentally inequitable. The network will simultaneously address the urgent action needed to meet our Climate Change targets, as our main source of GHG emissions is transportation.

"Our main point is that once you realise the scale and imminence of the problem, it becomes clear that we need much more than individual actions like using less plastic, eating less meat, or flying less. Our point is that we need big systematic changes and fast" - Professor Daniel Blumstein, University of California Los Angeles ([Top scientists warn of 'ghastly future of mass extinction' and climate disruption](#))

We saw the "Boom" of walking and biking in 2020. With reduced traffic, more Winnipeggers of all ages and abilities felt confident to try active travel. There are numerous benefits of traveling on foot or by bike, both for public health and mental and physical wellbeing of individuals, and the sustainability of our city and health of the environment. Our Climate Action Plan requires us to reduce our driving mode share from nearly 80% to just 50% in less than 10 years. Now is the absolute perfect time to ensure we have safe, convenient options for Winnipeggers to choose to leave their car at home when they head back to work, school and other activities.

"In March & April, I drove alone in my car as I work in a lab & can't always work from home. In May, as traffic was reduced, I felt confident enough to try commuting by bike. I fell in love with biking to work. It was one of the highlights of the pandemic for me." (*GoManitoba User Survey*, December 2020)

The City of Winnipeg's vision statement - To be a vibrant and healthy city which places its highest priority on quality of life for all its citizens - is not achievable without a safe, connected network for walking & cycling. We are here to support you to ensure all citizens, all ages and abilities, are free to access the City of Winnipeg and all it has to offer.

Sincerely,



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Executive Director, Green Action Centre



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Denae Penner
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Pam Lucenkiw & Ron Mazur
Co-Chairs, OURS-Winnipeg

Dave Elmore, Bike Week Winnipeg

CC: Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada
Brian Pallister, Premier of Manitoba
Catherine McKenna, Minister of Infrastructure and Communities
Andy Fillmore, MP, Chair of National AT Strategy
Derek Johnson, Minister of Municipal Relations
Sarah Guillemard, Minister of Conservation and Climate

