

September 19, 2011

Dear Mayor and Council,

In advance of the 2012-2014 Draft Capital Plan coming before Council, the VACC Vancouver/UBC Committee urges you to reconsider the currently recommended allocations for cycling expenditures.

As the following comments show, the draft plan for the next 3 years falls far short of what is needed to cover city commitments from previous plans as well as projected expenditures to meet the goals outlined in the Greenest City Action Plan and the 2011-2021 Capital Strategic Outlook.

While there is no doubt that there are many priority issues to juggle city-wide, the VACC strongly encourages Council to seize the moment and ensure that cycling commitments have sufficient funding to be realized. Transportation is the single largest contributor of carbon emissions in BC, and increased cycling can play an important role in meeting climate change targets. In addition, the Vancouver public continues to show support for cycling improvements. If the full range of cycling improvements we recommend were completed, a true cycling city would result in a reduction of costs in many other aspects of city life.

Our committee urges you to read the comments below and fund your cycling plans more realistically.

Best regards,

Lisa Slakov and Heather Harvey

VACC Vancouver/UBC Committee Co-chairs

**VACC Comments on the 2012-2014 Draft Capital Plan**

**Introduction**

The City of Vancouver has shown an admirable commitment to encouraging and supporting cycling. Since 1990, Vancouver has constructed 225 km of bike lanes and greenways, including in the past three years segregated cycling facilities on the Burrard Bridge, Dunsmuir Street and Hornby Street. We certainly appreciate all of the cycling improvements initiated by the current Council, who have brought cycling in the city to a new level. City policies emphasize the importance of cycling, with the Greenest City Action Plan calling for the majority of trips to be taken by bike, foot or public transit by 2020. This is supported by the 2011-2021 Capital Strategic Outlook, which calls for substantially completing the bikeway network laid out in the 1999 Bicycle Plan.

The Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition is concerned with the level of funding allocated in the 2012-2014 Draft Capital Plan. In order to maintain the existing infrastructure, as well as to expand the cycling network and cycling facilities, $13M over three years, which is designated for new facilities alone, is simply not enough. This is about 1/10 of the funding allocated for major roads, despite the stated transportation priorities of Council that puts pedestrians and cyclists first. The Capital Plan must do a better job of providing funding that will help meet the goals set out in the Greenest City Action Plan, as well as other City policies and commitments. Surveys conducted for the City's Transportation Plan Phase A indicate strong support for the direction the city has taken, the creation of separated lanes and improvement of the existing cycling network.

**Ten Year Outlook**

The City has identified a number of cycling and pedestrian infrastructure improvements for the next ten years: 75 km of sidewalk upgrades, 140 km of new sidewalks, 150 km of greenways and bikeways and 120 new pedestrian-bike signals. As part of the creation of the bike network, it is expected that at least a third of these would be funded through the upcoming Capital Plan. Instead, the proposed plan includes funding only for 6 km of sidewalk upgrades, the replacement of only 15 pedestrian/bike signals and the addition of only 12 new pedestrian/bike signals and 2 km of new sidewalk. This is barely 10% of the investment required to fulfill the City’s own plans. The Capital Plan does not provide sufficient funding to meet the requirements of the City’s 10 year Capital Strategic Outlook.

**Existing Commitments**

*Bike Lanes*

Only one of 15 bike lanes identified in the 1999 Vancouver Bicycle Plan have been completed. Six have not even been started, while another three only have short sections completed. Hornby, as a reasonable substitute for Burrard, is the only one that meets the standard needed to attract people of all ages. The remaining existing sections require significant upgrades to appeal to the majority of Vancouver residents.

Table 1: Percentage of bike lanes built since 1999 Bicycle Plan

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Street Name** | **Percentage Built** | **Comment** |
| 1 | Burrard | 100% | Hornby is an appropriate replacement. |
| 2 | Smithe/Nelson | 5% | Short eastbound lane between Expo and Beatty. Section between Hornby and Thurlow approved by council in July 2005 but still not implemented. |
| 3 | West Hastings/Pender | 25% | Pender complete between Cambie and Carrall Streets. |
| 4 | Howe/Seymour | 0% |   |
| 5 | Pacific | 75% | Needs to be completed from Richards to Beach. |
| 6 | Beach | 0% |   |
| 7 | Cornwall/Pt. Grey | 0% |   |
| 8 | Dunbar | 60% | 16th to Seaside uncompleted. |
| **9** | Kingsway | 0% |   |
| 10 | Victoria/Commercial | 0% |   |
| 11 | 22nd Avenue | 40% | Renfrew to Boundary sharrows not bike lanes. |
| 12 | 4th Avenue | 40% | Cypress to Highbury uncompleted. |
| 13 | 16th Avenue | 0% |   |
| 14 | King Edward | 5% | Complete between Yukon and Heather. |
| 15 | 49th Avenue | 5% | Cambie to Oak complete. The rest is sharrows. |

The 1999 Downtown Transportation plan proposes 53 spot improvements, of which only 29 have been completed. The Greenways Plan was approved by council in 1997. Today, almost 15 years later, 5 out of 15 have not been started. Most of the other greenways have major sections that have not been completed or that require major upgrades to improve the safety and comfort of cyclists and pedestrians. Even the North Arm Greenway, which was designed recently, leaves much to be desired, with insufficient street closures, greenery and traffic calming measures. It will likely prove unattractive to people with children or to pedestrians.

**Estimated Costs for Completing the Cycling Network**

Estimates using figures available from the City and including all the bikeways, major projects, greenways and separated bike facilities suggested in the ten year Capital Strategic Outlook show that the total cost will run to about $100M. Per capital plan this would require $33M, far more than the presently recommended $13M.

**Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Directions**

The 2012-2014 Capital Plan falls significantly short of the funding required to complete the portions of the Vancouver bike network that are slated for completion. It fails completely to fund additional parts of the network, the need for which has become apparent in the 12 years since the Bike Plan was completed. We recommend that the funding within the 2012-2014 Capital Plan be allocated so that cycling network improvements receive at least **$33M**, which represents a third of our estimated **$100M** required over the next 10 years. As seen in Appendix A below, our committee is estimating that a truer estimate of costs for the next 3 years for Capital Plan Item 5a “Cycling and Walking” is $51M in addition to other Items including Roads and Seawalls at $31M.

Finally, it is important to note that we consider our numbers in Appendix A, particularly with respect to the 10 year Capital Strategic Outlook, to be conservative and that they are unlikely to adequately cover the true costs of City plans and other VACC recommended projects such as the Arbutus Greenway, upgrades to the BC Parkway and improvements to the Granville and Cambie Street Bridges.

We also recommend that an amendment to the Bike Plan be produced that focuses on increasing network connectivity where the current Bike Plan falls short. The City should focus on connections that encourage maximal use of existing high quality facilities (such as seamlessly connecting CVG to downtown and Dunsmuir through Main/Quebec). Streets such as Commercial Drive, Main Street, Point Grey Road and Kingsway St all are gaps in the cycling network that could provide important connections and increased convenience and amenity for cyclists if addressed. The gap between quality routes in many parts of the city is still too large. In particular a route is needed north of Adanac and the Dumfries St, Prince Edward St and 49th Ave routes should be completed over the entire length of the city as soon as possible.

**Appendix A: Cycling infrastructure cost estimates for the 2012-2014 Draft Capital Plan and the 2011-2021 Capital Strategic Outlook**

