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Support for a one percent increase to the 2019-2023 Road and Traffic Safety Utility Levy

ATTN: Mayor and Councillors

Cc: Douglas McLeod, Transportation Planning Manager

HUB Cycling is a charitable not-for-profit organization that works to get more people cycling for transportation more often, through education, action, and events. We are Metro Vancouver's leader in making cycling an attractive choice for everyone. We have over 2,000 members, 40,000 direct contacts, ten municipal committees and one regional advisory committee.

On behalf of the HUB Cycling Surrey-White Rock Local Committee, we are writing to oppose the Finance Committee's recommendation to Council to approve *Section 8.0* in the 2019 Five-Year (2019-2023) Financial Plan - General Operating which would eliminate a planned one percent increase to the Road and Traffic Safety Utility Levy.

As outlined in the staff report ([Item No. F001](#)), "The elimination of the 1% increase to the Road and Traffic Safety Levy for the 2019-2023 period **will reduce the City's repaving program, bike and sidewalk program, and land acquisition program by approximately \$60M over five years**" (p. 6).

With the adoption of the 2012 *Cycling Plan*, the City of Surrey is working to become one of Metro Vancouver's leaders in improving transport cycling for people of all ages and abilities (AAA). In the last few years, protected bike paths on 105 A Avenue, 80th Avenue, 100 Avenue, and Bridgeview Drive, are some of the many successful projects that are increasing the City's percentage of trips by bicycle. Furthermore in 2017, Council unanimously adopted ambitious new design standards that will enhance cycling in the City's downtown core by requiring protected facilities on select new roadways¹. Since then, the number of participants and trips recorded during HUB Cycling's Spring and Fall Bike to Work Weeks increased by nearly 15% throughout the City.

Despite these successes, increased capital funding for cycling is required to achieve 15% of all trips under 8km by bicycle -a regional target supported by the City. Nearly 41% of people are interested but concerned about cycling and for many, unsafe cycling infrastructure is the major inhibitor. The vast majority of the City of Surrey's cycling facilities are shared lanes, painted bike lanes, or bike accessible shoulders on busy arterial and collector roads- types of facilities that are often unsafe and uninviting for many people interested and/ or concerned about cycling².

¹ <https://bikehub.ca/about-us/news/surrey-councillors-approve-new-bike-infrastructure-in-city-centre>

² Teschke, K, et al. (2012). Route infrastructure and the risk of injuries to bicyclists: A case-crossover study. *American Journal of Public Health* (102)12, pp. 2336-2343.



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To address this concern, the City's *10 Year Servicing Plan (2018-2027)* has recognized the critical need to upgrade the safety of the cycling network as part of the Bicycle Network Improvement Program (Program 1120). This program allocates funding for AAA cycling infrastructure, resulting in more people cycling while reducing the demand for motor vehicle road capacity and the need to widen roadways ([p. 14](#)).

As noted by staff, the Road and Traffic Safety Levy was established in 2008 to ensure that a sustainable funding source was available to meet the growing traffic and safety needs of the City. **Without the planned one percent increase, an estimated \$60 million is expected in lost revenue** ([p. 6](#)).

ICBC data from 2010-2015 highlights a concerning trend with total collisions per 100,000 population in Surrey increasing by 13%. During this period, an average of 11,000 people were injured each year (17 people per day) in traffic collisions on Surrey roads, resulting in 20 fatalities. The impact of injuries and deaths is far-reaching, affecting family, friends, and co-workers. In 2017, the City of Surrey adopted the Vision Zero philosophy³ in order to establish itself as a leader in road safety. It is imperative that the City of Surrey give the Vision Zero plan the appropriate priority and associated resources to ensure its success in reducing road deaths and injuries.

Investments in cycling infrastructure and education provide a significant return on investment. When governments invest in safe infrastructure and increase their cycling mode-shares, they reduce traffic congestion, move more people more efficiently as the population grows, increase affordability, and make transportation options more equitable for people of all ages and abilities. Research from Denmark suggests that the benefit-to-cost ratio for every dollar invested in cycling infrastructure is at least six to one⁴. These benefits, among others, clearly show that increasing the Road and Traffic Safety Utility Levy by one percent over the next five years would be a financially responsible strategy, allowing the City to meet its municipal and regional transportation and environmental targets, in addition to the known health and societal benefits.

We urge the Council to reinstate the planned one percent increase to the Road and Traffic Safety Utility Levy before supporting *Section 8*.

Sincerely,

Tim Yzerman
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³City of Surrey : www.surrey.ca/bylawsandcouncillibrary/CR_2017_P010.pdf

⁴ Gossling, S. and Choi, A. "Transport Transitions in Copenhagen: Comparing the Costs of Cars and Bicycles. *Ecological Economics* 113 (2015), p 106-113.