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HUB Cycling Recommendations for Improvement to the BC Active Transportation Infrastructure Grant Program

BC's Active Transportation Infrastructure Grant Program has been improved through adjustments and increased funding over the last few years. Smaller municipalities and First Nation groups are now given more opportunities to secure funding through network planning grants and a higher percentage of cost-sharing funds. Previously unsuccessful applications are now eligible to be re-submitted. Now, potential high-quality projects that didn't make the cut the first time due to inadequate grant funds receive another look. The inclusion of funding for end-of-trip facilities, lighting and wayfinding enhance both the quality of active transportation routes and also provide additional benefits and incentives for active transportation users. These have all been important improvements to the program.

With BC's ambitious and necessary goals to reduce emissions and encourage more active transportation use, it is essential that the BCAT Grant Program be as impactful as possible. HUB Cycling suggests the following further changes to continue to improve this grant program.



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Fund bigger, multi-year projects

Currently, multi-year projects are not eligible for BCAT grants. These larger projects can be divided into multiple phases to be eligible, but each stage needs to apply for and receive funding separately. There are significant benefits for more extensive, multi-year projects such as long-distance cycling routes and rapid build active transportation networks to be eligible for BCAT grants. Also, grants for improvements tied to larger infrastructure projects such as major bridges and tunnels should be approved upfront, as these projects are necessarily built out over several years.

Recommendation: Allow multi-year projects to be eligible for BCAT grant funding without separately applying for each phase.

Increase the funding amount for larger projects

We understand that the Province of BC reduced the maximum funding amount for each project from \$2 million to \$500,000 to help fund a more significant number of projects. However, larger more impactful projects will only be able to receive a portion of the needed funding through BCAT grants, so are less likely to be built. Many municipalities rely on significant cost-sharing to convince their elected officials to make the investment. These more extensive projects, such as long-distance routes that cross jurisdictional boundaries (cycle highways), are key to developing active transportation networks across a region, particularly with the growth in e-bike usage and demand, dramatic fuel cost increases, and a shift of more people to suburban and rural areas to seek affordability.

Recommendation: Allow larger projects to access funding beyond the \$500,000 per project that currently exists.

Fund cycle highway projects

Safe, comfortable, direct, long-distance, branded routes (cycle highways) are becoming increasingly common in European cities. These cycle highways have the potential to provide a 'jump forward' in active transportation use, provide all the social, physical and mental benefits of cycling, and generate economic benefits including the potential for substantial increases in cycle tourism (Europe's cycle tourism is estimated to be worth €44 billion euros).



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Recommendation: Fund long-distance, multi-jurisdictional cycle highway projects. Incentivize their construction by prioritizing these route types over route types within a municipality, as additional coordination across jurisdictions is required, and benefits are greater.

Reduce focus on multi-use pathways

Multi-use pathways can be comfortable and enjoyable routes, allowing people walking, cycling and using other modes to enjoy the pathway. However, multi-use paths can be much less safe than people imagine.¹ Multi-use paths placed alongside a busy, four-lane arterial can have multiple driveways, crossings and intersections, where drivers are not expecting people cycling fast in the opposite direction of motor vehicle travel, increasing the likelihood of a collision. Rigid bollards, utility poles and other street furniture along a multi-use path also increase the likelihood of a collision, especially with faster moving users such as people cycling. When the volume of users is higher, there is a greater likelihood of conflicts and collisions between path users.

Recommendation: Limit the number of multi-use path projects funded especially in busier urban areas. Consider funding separated or segregated pathways or protected cycling lanes instead. Ensure that multi-use path projects that are funded adhere to the highest standards of the BC Active Transportation Design Guide, and include high-quality intersection treatments.

Increase the project elements that are eligible for funding

A newly-built pathway that is unlit, isn't properly promoted, and is missing branding signage doesn't reflect well on the project as a whole, and limits the mode shift potential. The following project elements should also be included for funding:

- Service stations (bicycle pump, tools, etc) along the route
- Building on the included wayfinding, route branding should also be included. This allows unique branding along a route to quickly orient users that they are on the correct path (e.g. the Spirit Trail along the North Shore in Metro Vancouver).
- Promotion and enabling funding - new projects should be promoted to increase awareness and uptake. This can include advertising, videos, events, etc. TransLink's

¹ Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. (2019). [British Columbia Active Transportation Design Guide](#), p. E11



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BICCS cost-sharing program requires 1-5% of grant funding to be used for promotion and enabling.

Recommendation: Include service stations, route branding, and promotion and enabling as eligible project elements for funding. Require that 1-5% of grant funding be used for promotion and enabling.

Intersection treatments should be a required element of projects

While intersection treatment is currently an included cost under the grant program, projects aren't required to include intersection treatments. A safe, comfortable and enjoyable route can completely fall apart at intersection crossings. Intersections are the site of most collisions. Using best practices for intersection crossing is key to ensuring that users have a pleasant and safe experience along the full length of the route.

Recommendation: Intersection treatment should be required for all major crossing points.

Existing routes should be eligible for upgrades

Existing pathways and routes should be eligible for upgrading to a higher standard. A number of cycle highways in Europe were existing routes, before getting a significant increase in quality to be included in the cycle highway network.

Recommendation: Provide funding for existing low-quality routes to be upgraded to higher-quality facilities.

Funding criteria should be based on the quality of the proposed facility

Not all routes and pathways are created equal. The highest quality routes, that enable the widest range of users to feel comfortable, should be given priority and provided with a higher percentage of funding. In Metro Vancouver, TransLink provides a higher percentage of funding to what they consider to be 'class 1' facilities, while lower quality 'class 2' facilities receive a lower-cost share amount. For example, a protected bike lane should be eligible for more funding than a painted bike lane.



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Recommendation: The highest quality facilities should receive a higher percentage of funding and be more likely to be approved.

All projects should adhere to the highest quality standards of the BC Active Transportation Design Guide

Although the BC Active Transportation Design Guide notes high-quality facilities, the guide also outlines all facility types, including lower quality ones. Approved projects should only be the highest quality facilities, such as protected cycling lanes when the route includes higher-speed, higher-volume roadways.

Recommendation Adjust the criteria of BC grants to ensure that approved projects meet the highest quality standards outlined in the BC Active Transportation Design Guide.

Additional points should be given for elements of high-quality facilities

High-quality active transportation facilities such as cycle highways often have a number of elements that set them apart from other facilities and attract users. These can include:

- Connecting major destinations such as high-density residential areas, and major employment, amenity and education spots
- Consistent and ample widths and high-quality paving along the pathway
- Lit, direct, protected and longer distance routes
- Intersections that prioritize and protect active transportation users

Recommendation: Assign additional points for facilities that include key elements of high-quality facilities.

Extra points should be given for letters of community support

Often community members and groups have an excellent sense of the desirability and impact of a project. Letters of support from community organizations such as active transportation groups should provide a project with additional points. Additional benefits can be gained from including active transportation representatives on the selection committee.



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Recommendation: Award additional points for letters of support and consider including active transportation representatives on the BCAT grant selection committee.

The BC Active Transportation Infrastructure Grant Program is a key funding program to increase active transportation use throughout the province. Adjustments recommended in this letter should be made to improve the reach and effectiveness of the program and to help realize the provincial goals of reduced emissions and greenhouse gas emissions through increased active transportation use.

Sincerely,

Jeff Leigh
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Director, and VP, HUB Cycling
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About HUB Cycling

HUB Cycling is a charitable not for profit organization that has spent over 22 years removing barriers to cycling in Metro Vancouver, while cultivating the health, environmental, and economic benefits that active transportation can bring. HUB has educated thousands of people, motivated thousands more, and championed improvements that [#UnGapTheMap](#) to create a connected cycling network. HUB Cycling's mission is to get more people cycling more often. HUB Cycling has more than 45,000 direct supporters. HUB Cycling has 10 volunteer committees across Metro Vancouver that encourage cycling for all ages and abilities (AAA) in municipalities across Metro Vancouver. For more information, visit bikehub.ca.