

April 7, 2021

Attention:

Hon. Catherine McKenna, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure
Andy Fillmore, Parliamentary Secretary
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CC: Jagmeet Singh, Leader of New Democratic Party (NDP)
Erin O'Toole, Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada

Regarding: Active Transportation Funding and Strategy

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. We make cycling better through education, action and events. More cycling means healthier, happier, more connected communities. We're leading the way in making cycling an attractive choice for everyone.

We are pleased to see your Ministry dedicate funding to active transportation - this is an important step towards achieving the impressive potential for combating climate change, improving mobility options, reducing traffic congestion, creating jobs and improving well-being and livability in Canadian communities.

Research shows that increases in cycling rates, and declines in crashes, are directly tied to [safe and comfortable cycling infrastructure](#). The recently released [State of Cycling report](#) in Metro Vancouver shows that 46% of the bikeway network in the region is comfortable for most people. This leaves slightly more than half of the bike network that is not comfortable for most people. The areas that showed the greatest growth in ridership levels were also the ones that built infrastructure that was comfortable for most people. More needs to be invested in AT networks to ensure there are safe, comfortable and connected facilities for people to walk, cycle and use other forms of active transportation. The earlier the investment, the greater the return.

Spending on non-infrastructure items such as **education is necessary, and needs to be paired with spending on physical infrastructure spending**. Cities across the province have made significant strides in the development of active transportation infrastructure. Physical improvements alone, however, will not be enough to attract more people to switch to active transportation. Many external factors like cultural practices, social influence, emotions, and attitudes all influence which

mode of travel people will use. Spending on education and promotional events programs, including youth active travel programming, costs a fraction of infrastructure investments, yet can be very effective in increasing ridership to maximize the use of new as well as existing infrastructure. In recognition of this, **Government of Canada funding should include a mandatory minimum amount (1-5%) to provide for promotion of the new infrastructure**, similar to the BICCS cost share funding criteria at TransLink.

Municipalities should be able to receive the funding directly, and they should each have a prioritized AT network gap list that shows the merits of each infrastructure project so they can do the most meaningful projects first and use evidence-based policy making.

To better equip communities with the data they need to make sound decisions, the federal government should **improve their AT-related Census data collection** to include transportation habits for all trips, not just work trips, and not just the most frequent mode in a week, but all modes used.

Any investment you make in cycling has a triple benefit of creating good green jobs for Canadians, providing social and health benefits, while reducing emissions. With this in mind, your funding for AT should increase so that total government spending on AT is at least \$21/person/year to complete cycling networks and an additional at least \$2/person/year on cycling promotion enabling and education. By comparison, the Netherlands spends \$48 per person per year on active transportation programs; Denmark \$34, and New Zealand \$24.

To create an irresistible alternative to fossil fuel dependent transport, the Government of Canada should be **future focused and visionary in applying funding for projects such as cycle highways that meet the growing demand from electric-assist bike users and help people travel longer distances** between suburban and urban areas for work and utilitarian trips, as well as for tourism and recreation.

The Government of Canada can support the uptake of cycling by vulnerable populations by **improving data collection, incentives, funding, promotion, and education that specifically targets marginalized segments of the population** (including newcomers, racialized people, low income populations) that may have limited access to bikes and the knowledge/confidence to cycle for transportation.

HUB Cycling recommends that government funding for Active Transportation be increased significantly to at least \$21/person per year.

Research from [New Zealand](#) and the [UK](#) shows that investment in active transportation facilities such as cycling infrastructure has a return on investment between 5:1 to 11:1 considering the health improvements and injury and CO2 reductions.

We request that the federal government accelerate their commitment by creating a Permanent Active Transportation Fund, just like the \$3 billion/year Permanent Public Transit Fund¹ introduced by the Federal Government earlier this year.

Long-term Federal investment is the catalyst needed for securing provincial funding and bringing local government leaders together to develop regional active transportation plans. The federal parties must commit to maintaining consistent investment over the long term so that cities can plan and keep pace with the exploding demand for active transportation.

Proactive investment in projects that serve underserved and racialized communities

Transportation is the linchpin that allows us to function in our daily lives. The lack of active transportation options in racialized communities has become increasingly clear. Lack of access to safe active transportation infrastructure has contributed not only to rising obesity and diabetes rates, but also contributes to a mounting toll of injuries and fatalities to people walking and cycling without other options than traveling on unsafe streets. Research² shows that people with low-income walk and bicycle more than people in the upper-income brackets, but safe active transportation options are often limited for low-income individuals and families. Lack of transportation options often leads to restricted employment possibilities and low school attendance.

Providing safe and convenient walking and cycling infrastructure in racialized and marginalized communities can help overcoming these challenges. Many studies³ have shown the need to **create networks of wide, barrier-protected, bicycle-exclusive cycle tracks in lower-income ethnic-minority neighborhoods to help these communities get to work affordably, quickly and safely, and improve public health and quality of life in communities where these benefits are most needed.**

The Government of Canada should encourage that funding for active transportation projects is targeted for these communities and not encourage the philosophy that communities that already bike the most deserve more additional resources. This philosophy perpetuates a vicious cycle where cycling grows quickly in some neighborhoods, while underserved communities continue to stay underfunded.

In summary, we recommend:

- Prioritizing AT infrastructure that is protected from motor vehicles, smooth surfaced, direct and lit - to allow people of all ages, abilities and bicycle or wheel types (including wheelchairs, kids' scooters, road bikes, mountain bikes, strollers, etc) to use it both day and night safely and conveniently.
- Prioritizing AT infrastructure that serves marginalized populations
- Prioritizing AT infrastructure that separates walking from cycling due to their significant speed differences and resulting safety issues.

¹ [A Plan to Permanently Fund Public Transit and Support Economic Recovery](#)

² saferoutespartnership.org

³ [Bicycle Facilities Safest from Crime and Crashes](#)

- Adding a minimum amount of funding for promotion for each infrastructure project (i.e. opening event, advertising, editorials or earned media, education at schools or community centres nearby, signage, etc). This helps people become aware of new infrastructure and be motivated, feel more comfortable to use it. TransLink’s cost-sharing AT funding mandates 1-5% for promotion and enabling. Research shows significant ridership increase when promo is added, and promo is very affordable.
- Developing a National Active Transportation Strategy and a permanent AT infrastructure fund of \$700M per year.
- Designating electric assist bikes as zero emission vehicles & implement financial incentives and funding projects such as cycle highways that meet the growing demand from e-bike users and help people travel longer distances.
- Incorporating cycling directly into Government of Canada climate change plans.
- Applying a gender-based and equity-based budget approach to active transportation .
- Improving AT-related Census data collection to include transportation habits for all trips, not just work trips, and not just the most frequent mode in a week, but all modes used. Collecting better data to understand the equity implications of current active transportation allocation.
- Funding municipalities directly.
- Leveraging existing resources and coordinate efforts - there is much research and many strong AT strategies at regional and provincial levels that can be used as a template to create a national AT strategy. Existing effective policies and standards should be used rather than creating new ones from scratch. See [TransLink’s Regional Cycling Strategy](#) and [BC’s Active Transportation Strategy](#) and related [Design Guide](#) for example frameworks and targets.

Moving toward greener, fairer and more resilient ways to get around.

The recent allocation of AT specific funding is promising; however, Federal funding for AT is far below demand, and is missing out on the huge potential benefits of more people using active transportation. For example, [Metro Vancouver’s cycling network is full of gaps](#)—or areas lacking cycling infrastructure—and safe, connected infrastructure is needed now, more than ever before to #UnGapTheMap.

HUB Cycling encourages the Government of Canada to apply their funding to the most meaningful infrastructure and promotion, and to increase investment in AT to ensure environmentally and economically healthier communities, improve climate resilience, poverty reduction, and an equitable, sustainable and proactive public health system.

Sincerely,

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