



Coun. Matt Allard chairs the Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works Committee

## Moving Winnipeg toward an active, healthier transportation option

BY MATT ALLARD

**T**he push towards creating a safe and pleasant active transportation (AT) network in urban areas across Canada and the world is one of the defining municipal issues of the early 21st Century.

In 2015, Council and the City of Winnipeg adopted its award-winning Pedestrian & Cycling Strategies, which laid out a high-level vision and plan for creating a variety of active transportation links across the City.

Since then, the City of Winnipeg has worked steadily towards the implementation of this vision at various locations.

This effort has been conducted in conjunction with, and often complementary to, the massive and historic investment in local and regional road infrastructure.

Working backward from the record-setting \$130 million in roadwork budgeted and underway in 2020, Council has since 2014 invested over \$600 million, and is set to nearly double that investment by 2025.

City of Winnipeg policies and budget facilitate the incorporation of active transportation infrastructure into road projects both major and minor when possible, and when our strategies call for it there.

The concept of 'mode shift', meaning the shifting of a greater percentage of our commuting population to forms of transportation other than single occupancy vehicles, is central

to this. Public transit, biking, pedestrianism, car-share and telecommuting all fit into this picture. While we by no means intend to eliminate vehicles from our streets, we can strike a greater balance between different modes of transportation that help Winnipeg achieve our larger objectives.

Continuing to invest in AT is essential for our city as our population grows, and with it, demands on our transportation system. Our arterial road network through established neighbourhoods and core areas are not getting any bigger. We have to find ways of moving more people to their destinations in the same amount of physical space.

Encouraging more active transportation is critical to achieving our climate targets. Climate change is a top of mind issue for Winnipeggers and people all around the world. Walking and cycling are viable options for many people as long as the proper infrastructure is there.

A healthy, happier population is one of many outcomes of safer, more convenient and more pleasant active transportation options. Families, in particular, who want to travel throughout their city and communities with their children and afford them a measure of independence, are asking for us to deliver the infrastructure necessary to do so.

Some advocates recently have been encouraging the City of Winnipeg further to explore a greater "return on investment" (ROI) analysis in our budgetary

decision-making. To that end, Council is directing the public service to prepare a report comparing the economic spinoffs of various types of infrastructure investment. Preliminary data and analysis point to positive things for active transportation. When smaller and more affordable projects create significant movement of people throughout our communities, linking them up more conveniently and accessibly with local business, everyone can benefit.

Further, in our partnership with the heavy construction

to see, we do feel that we are moving forward in a proactive and constructive way...no pun intended.

Guided by our vision document, the work of our public service, record-breaking investments in transportation infrastructure and a more collaborative approach than ever with our industry partners, we believe we can and should continue to link together our growing AT network. When we refurbish our roads to the clean and smooth state that

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industry, we have created jobs and economic activity with our historic infrastructure investments, especially during the hard economic times brought on by COVID-19. Casting a curb for a bike lane, a residential road or a highway all get money flowing to local businesses and workers alike.

While progress hasn't always been as fast as we might like

Winnipeggers want and deserve, we also extend the lifespan of those roads by reducing wear and tear.

Whether it be for recreation, commuting or connectivity between different modes of transportation, Winnipeg is moving forward to a fast and fit future where bikes, buses, cars, trucks and pedestrians all have high-quality infrastructure.

