

Bryant, Shellie

From: Jared Stephenson <City.Council@Saskatoon.ca>
Sent: April 28, 2019 11:09 PM
To: City Council
Subject: Form submission from: Write a Letter to Council

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Submitted values are:

Date: Sunday, April 28, 2019
To: His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council
First Name: Jared
Last Name: Stephenson
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Address: [REDACTED] Temperance Street
City: Saskatoon
Province: Saskatchewan
Postal Code: [REDACTED]
Name of the organization or agency you are representing (if applicable):
Subject: Proposed permanent downtown separate cycle network and BRT
Meeting (if known):
Comments:
His Worship the Mayor and Members of Council:

First and foremost, I want to acknowledge that the decisions before you are not inconsequential and appreciate that their weight must be a heavy burden to bear.

I wish to express my support for the implementation of the BRT and strongly support the 1st Ave and Broadway routing. Beyond the lack of consensus regarding the final routing, the merits of the BRT are muted in comparison to the separated downtown bike lanes. Should the dedicated bike lanes go forward, my preferred option of the N-S spine of the bike network would be 3rd Ave for reasons of best connectivity and options for expansion at either end. The rest of this letter addresses the bike lanes.

Much of the discussion around the downtown bike lanes that I have personally engaged in, and have witnessed in the news and social media has revolved around the merits, pros and cons, of the options before you. Surprisingly though, what hasn't really seemed to be discussed is that these decisions have broader long-term implications and will dictate how we collectively decide to develop and move around our city going forward. This is indeed a watershed moment and I don't think that most seem to get beyond taking a self-interested perspective and get lost in the details of lost parking spaces, congestion, personal convenience, potential effects on business, name your talking point, etc. If we filter out all the noise, what is really being debated here is whether we are going to continue to let auto-orientated development continue to dictate just about every aspect of our civic daily lives (at the cost of everything else)? I encourage you as Council to look beyond the dissenting voices (though very numerous), and consider what is the most efficient, resilient, and cost-effective way to move forward. Research, history, common sense, and logic will confirm that it isn't single-occupant automobiles (including autonomous).

It should be apparent, but the pendulum has swung so far to one side on this matter that going back the other direction is sure to cause disruption in the businesses and lives of many; I'm sure many people have tried to make you aware of this in the last few years. I don't argue this, some concerns are likely valid, but most are blown out of proportion in a distorted market that rewards personal over-consumption of public goods, and are rooted primarily in the promotion of self-interest. But I have to ask based on this continued approach: Are

municipal finances improving? Infrastructure commitments and liabilities going down? Are municipal taxes going down and levels of service going up? Is there a perceived safe environment provided for all people who choose to cycle downtown? Is it current mode share environmentally efficient? Does it promote social equity? I could go on, but the answer to all is a resounding NO. Should we not then be taking a more aggressive and unconventional approach to try to improve these things?

I hesitate at even drawing attention to the immense importance of these decisions as there still seems to be a few of you who seem bent on maintaining the status quo to maintain favour amongst the majority of your ward residents (people talk and share your responses to their letters) and repeating the mistakes of the last 100 years when it comes to land use and transportation planning. I just don't get it and I fear bringing attention to what is truly at stake here because it sounds like some of you are going to choose wrong because the fear of change and backlash is too great. I don't build a case not to make a necessary change. Delaying or putting it off for a couple years until other aspects of the ATP are implemented, or when the "timing is better", is not good either. This is a flaming emergency that requires course correction now.

I implore Council, please LEAD on this matter. Many, if not all of you, have said at various times in the lead up to this decision, something along the lines of "this is what I am hearing from my residents"; or something similar. We did not elect you to simply execute the will of the majority of ward residents. Leading is different, and often the opposite of representing the majority public opinion. Very few will ask or support something that will change an aspect of their daily life, nevermind if they further perceive it to affect them for the worse - this is human nature. But that gets us nowhere and we will continue to amplify the same problems. We need Council to consider these decisions rationally and take a stand for what might not be popular and what might be challenging, and in all of our long-term best interest.

Relevant personal background:

- I have cycled year-round as a form of commuting starting in grade 6 (early 90s). I have yet to encounter conditions that were unmanageable in Saskatoon. Even though we can get deep cold, cold and dry makes for completely manageable conditions and is far better than wet or melt.
- Until recently worked downtown and commuted year-round by bicycle as it was the most efficient option with respect to time and costs.
- Used the 4th Ave bike lanes daily
- Comfortable riding in auto traffic; preferred them to the poorly implemented trial lanes.
- We manage with 1 household auto. Consciously choose to minimize use where possible, but do still drive.

Thank you for considering this letter. Please vote with your head, not with your ears.

Jared Stephenson

Attachments:

The results of this submission may be viewed at:

<https://www.saskatoon.ca/node/398/submission/305044>