

2019 Budget

Why Fund Active Transportation?

Active transportation, such as walking and biking, significantly contributes to our population achieving enough physical activity each day.^{1,2} Health benefits accrue to Individuals who participate in active transportation, including lower rates of non-communicable diseases and the achievement of a healthy body weight.³ Research conducted for the City reveals that safety and convenience are major barriers preventing our population from walking and biking more (unpublished results from the Active Transportation Plan's telephone survey). It is clear that we need to improve our City's active transportation infrastructure in order to support residents in making healthy choices, and for the City to create a healthy population.

With strategic and integrative investments in Active Transportation such as separated bike lanes, shared pedestrian pathways and facilities, upgrading and connecting existing paths, improving road markings and reducing vehicle speeds, as well as improving accessibility, cities can see significant returns on their investments. One example from New Zealand is shown in below.

Table 1: Costs and benefits (in 2010 millions in net present value (NPV) terms) of an intervention to increase cycling and walking. Reproduced from ⁴, Table 2, p. 7.

Discount Rate	Costs*	Health and Injury Benefits	CO2 Reduction Benefits	Net Benefits	Benefit/Cost Ratio
3.5%	\$15.0	\$163.6	\$2.6	\$151.2	11.1
6.0%	\$14.1	\$153.1	\$2.1	\$141.1	11.0

*Costs include upfront and maintenance costs, converted to net present value. NB: Value of carbon dioxide emissions in this study was taken to be US\$125/tonne of CO2 (NZ\$175/tCO2)

Active transportation infrastructure in Saskatoon has been chronically deprioritized, and continues to receive significantly less funding than vehicular infrastructure, even though it provides a greater return on investment as well as other benefits listed below. Investment in active transportation results in: lower infrastructure costs; reduced healthcare spending; reduced traffic congestion; increased retail sales; higher property values; increased tourism; increased business investments and consumer cost savings; increased health and fitness;

¹ Pucher J, Buehler R, Bassett DR, Dannenberg AL. Walking and cycling to health: a comparative analysis of city, state, and international data. *Am J Public Health*. 2010;100(10):1986.

² Brockman R, Fox K. Physical activity by stealth? The potential health benefits of a workplace transport plan. *Public Health*. 2011;125(4):210–216.

³ Wanner M, Götschi T, Martin-Diener E, Kahlmeier S, Martin BW. Active Transport, Physical Activity, and Body Weight in Adults. *Am J Prev Med*. 2012 May 1;42(5):493–502.

⁴ Chapman R, Keall M, Howden-Chapman P, Grams M, Witten K, Randal E, Woodward A. A Cost Benefit Analysis of an Active Travel Intervention with Health and Carbon Emission Reduction Benefits. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2018;15(962):1-10.

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reductions in air and noise pollution; decreased greenhouse gas emissions; improved safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers; more livable communities; and improved mobility options.^{5,6,7}

This is also an issue of social justice. Active transportation methods are often a necessity for low-income individuals. By not making active transportation a priority, we are inadvertently creating greater inequality in our society. This is evident both in terms of accessibility for those less able (short crossing times for wide streets, poor side walk quality or missing sidewalks, lack of ramps to/from streets, lack of ice and snow removal in residential areas, insufficient number or poor placement of pedestrian crossings across major roadways), and in terms of class, as priority is given to those who can afford to drive; pedestrians are positioned as second class citizens, at best.

Being aware of this and continuing to underfund active transportation, Council becomes complicit in perpetuating these inequalities.

What to do

Current funding for the AT Reserve is insufficient for any meaningful implementation of the AT Plan. It is vital for Council to support continued progress towards AT implementation, as this will improve resident health (as a result of increased uptake of active transportation), financial sustainability for the City (ROI on pedestrian infrastructure outpacing that of ROI on roadways) and province (healthier citizens means less reliance on health care), along with benefits to the environment through reduced pollution from vehicle traffic. These facts are well established within the AT plan, as well as beyond.

- As such, we support the funding of a permanent AT manager position (\$100,000; “2019 Business Plan and Budget Operating Options” from June 2018 Report, Attachment 2, p. 10, “Moving around”), freeing up much needed dollars for infrastructure such as sidewalks and ramps.
- Also from the “2019 Business Plan and Budget Operating Options” document, we support increased funding of the AT Reserve (Attachment 2, p. 11), and call for the full \$200,000 recommended by Administration, instead of the \$75,000 indicated in the August 2018 prioritization documents.

Active transportation is an integral, but often unrecognized, component of the Plan for Growth. For this year’s budget, funding for the implementation of the Growth plan is proposed at \$1.23 million (“2019 Reserve for Capital Expenditures Options”). If we are expecting to see more people come to Saskatoon, then our Active Transportation networks and infrastructure have to be prepared for the increased flow of peoples. Further, the design and maintenance of that network infrastructure needs to incorporate the principles of Vision Zero to ensure safety for all.

⁵ http://physicalactivitystrategy.ca/pdfs/BEAT/BEAT_Publication.pdf

⁶ <http://www.vtpi.org/nmt-tdm.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.tcat.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Economic-Impacts-of-Active-Transportation-Backgrounder.pdf>

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Without viable options to be active and safe as we ‘move around’ people will still resort to private vehicles as a preferred mode of transportation. To grow towards our target in a safe and healthy manner needs to be a priority for the City. As such, we urge Council to support Administration’s efforts to implement the AT plan by way of secure and sufficient funding.

About Walking Saskatoon

We are a group of Saskatoon citizens engaged in pedestrian advocacy. Our main purpose is to find ways to improve walking infrastructure for all ages and abilities. This includes the use of social media to bring awareness of issues that face pedestrians (and wheelchairs, walkers, strollers, etc), and also to highlight progress made by the City in improving walking infrastructure. Our members participate in the Active Transportation Advisory Group, and provide feedback to the City on various issues as a stakeholder group.

Warrick Baijius, on behalf of Walking Saskatoon