



Saskatchewan Health Authority

Office of the Medical Health Officers
Idylwyld Centre
204 - 310 Idylwyld Drive North
SASKATOON SK S7L 0Z2
P: 306-655-4338 | F: 306-655-4414

March 18, 2019



To His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council;

The journey to build a healthier and happier community for all is a long and arduous one. The City of Saskatoon plans you have before you demonstrate that you recognize that we need to design a better city to enable all those who live within it to thrive. Myself, and the Medical Health Officers who have come before me, along with the experts with the Saskatchewan Health Authority's Saskatoon Population and Public Health have walked with you on this journey and are glad to continue to offer our support.

Designing communities to be health promoting is the new horizon I see both our organizations striving towards. Our lives today are not what they were 100 years ago. Many people's days are filled with long hours of sitting with very little physical activity required. Our bodies and minds need physical activity to stay happy and healthy. Active transportation, the use of your own body's locomotion to get around, is a great way to increase the amount of physical activity you get in a day and improve resident's quality of life.

Research has shown that it takes more than just planning to use active transportation to make it happen. The place you live in needs to change to help make it easier for you to move your plan to action. This includes the introduction of better routes and facilities for various kinds of active transportation so you can get there quickly and safely.

The Active Transportation Plan, the Downtown AAA Cycling Network Plan and the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Plan all provide better active, multi-modal transportation options to people that are efficient, convenient and economical. For many living in Saskatoon, these non-automobile based modes of transport are their only option for getting to work, to school, to access healthy food options and to access the services they need. For those who rely on non-automobile modes of transport, bettering these systems is imperative to ensure they thrive within our community. The freedom that comes with access to reliable active transportation options can help overcome inequities and increase cohesion and inclusion.

In addition, improvements in active transportation infrastructure will do more than just improve the experience for those already using active transportation, they will open opportunities to others to start building physical activity into how they get to the places that are important to them as well as start moving the dial on achieving the mode share targets for walking and cycling.

One of North America's largest contributors to air pollution and carbon emissions is the personal automobile. As more and more people consider other ways to get from place to place and more and more of those include active transportation, models suggest that the amount of air pollution and carbon emissions being produced in the City of Saskatoon will be reduced on a *per capita* basis. This means that even those people who will still need to use a car or truck to get around, will see health benefits as others make the choice to switch. Changes now can help bend the curve on air pollution's direct health harms and the many societal and individual risks linked to climate change.

Better buses, better trails and routes and safer interfaces between active transportation users and automobiles means people living in Saskatoon will break down barriers to living healthier lives, in mind and body. It will take time, and it will take investment, but the science is telling us it the right thing to do.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jasmine Hasselback
MD, MPH, FRCPC
Medical Health Officer – Saskatoon