

Bike to the Future Presentation: Policy Recommendations Regarding Speed Limits For the Highway Traffic Board Hearing

We would like to outline why the proposals to increase speed limits in most of the locations being considered by the Highway Traffic Board would be bad for the health and well being of Manitobans.

When setting speed limits, we urge the Highway Traffic Board to fully address:

- **Impact on bicycle & pedestrian injuries and fatalities due to crashes, and**
- **Impact on transportation choices and public health.**

The Relationship between Speed, Injuries and Fatalities

For Manitobans on foot or on a bike, speed limits are a matter of life or death.

When pedestrians or cyclists are hit by motor vehicles, the likelihood of death increases exponentially with the vehicle's speed. **At 30 km/hr, 5% of pedestrians struck by a vehicle will die. At 50 kph, 55% will die. At 60 km/hr 85% will die.**

Higher speeds also increase the probability of collisions occurring, because:

- Braking distance for a vehicle travelling at 60 kph is at least 30% greater than at 50 kph, and
- At higher speeds, a given driver response delay results in a longer stopping distance.

The posted speed limit further affects the perceptions of motorists' right of way over other road users. A speed limit higher than 50 kph in the city gives drivers reason to believe that other road users should stay out of their way and allow them to travel through at that speed. A higher speed limit makes drivers less likely to slow down – and hold up other traffic – even if they see cyclists or pedestrians on the road.

The Impact of Posted Speed on Healthy Living

The posted speed limit has an immediate impact on the walkability and bikeability of a neighbourhood. Higher speed roads used by drivers to travel quickly through a community are barriers to pedestrians and cyclists. They force pedestrians and cyclists to make lengthy detours to cross at controlled intersections, or to risk jay walking.

Walking/biking mode share is directly related to the perceived safety of a route. Higher speed roads feel less safe to vulnerable road users, so only the most confident people will cycle or walk, resulting in reduced bicycle and pedestrian traffic. These roads encourage people to use cars, even for short trips within the neighbourhood. Each year, the average Canadian makes 2,000 trips of less than three kilometers by car. Safer roads result in people being more likely to choose to cycle and walk higher speed roads do the opposite.

There is a direct relationship between the walkability / bikeability of a community, and its health. Rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and many other ailments are higher in communities where people

spend less time getting around on their own power. Regulations that bias our transportation system to favour travel by motor vehicle encourage lifestyle choices which cause suffering and high health care costs among both adults and children.

These reasons have persuaded authorities such as the Toronto Public Health Officer and the Ontario Coroner's Office, among others, to recommend reducing speed limits in urban residential areas.

The City of Winnipeg's Sustainable Transportation Strategy lists five strategic goals:

- > A transportation system that is dynamically integrated with land use
- > A transportation system that supports active, accessible and healthy lifestyle options
- > A safer, efficient and equitable transportation system for people, goods and services
- > Transportation infrastructure that is well-maintained
- > A transportation system that is financially sustainable

The Province of Manitoba approved this plan on June 27, 2011.

Driver Compliance Requires Road Design, Signage, and Good Will

Grid roads through commercial and residential areas must be properly designed and signed for 50 kph. Given those conditions, believe most Manitoba drivers will have the common human decency to slow down and be careful in the presence of non-motorized traffic.

Conclusion

Bike to the Future urges the Highway Traffic Board to recognize that increasing speed limits on roads through commercial and residential areas will make those streets more dangerous and less welcoming for Manitobans to travel by foot or by bicycle. Increased speed limits will result in more motor vehicle traffic, more collisions, deaths, and injuries. Increased dependency on automobiles will make people sick.

We ask that speed limits be based on the real needs of all the people who use or would like to use the street, especially those who live, work, shop or attend school in the immediate neighbourhood.

As a general principle, we believe that the default speed limit on all residential streets in urban settings should be 30 kilometres per hour, unless otherwise posted, and that grid road speed limits through residential and commercial areas should not exceed 50 kph.

We request that there be no speed limits over 50 kph on streets through commercial and residential areas, and that the board require improved signage and road design to remove any confusion experienced by motor vehicle drivers.

We urge the Board to set speed limits that will promote the health and well being of all Manitobans.
