

Bike to the Future

Presentation to the Highway Traffic Board

Regarding Increased Speed Limits in seventeen specific locations

Introduction

In a separate submission to the Highway Traffic Board, Bike to the Future brought to the Board's attention clear medical evidence that speed kills and increasing speed limits dramatically increases the probability of death for pedestrians and cyclists when struck by motor vehicles at 60 km/hr. We stated:

As a general principle, Bike to the Future believes that the Manitoba Highway Traffic Act should state that the default speed limit on all residential streets in an urban setting should be 30 kilometres per hour unless otherwise posted.

We ask that in everything the Highway Traffic Board does, you consider and EXPRESSLY STATE in your documents what the impacts of your decisions will be on cyclists and pedestrians. We ask that you acknowledge that speed kills, and that higher speed limits pose a particular danger to cyclists and pedestrians and result in fewer Manitobans choosing to cycle and walk. If you believe higher speed limits in specific places are necessary, we ask that you EXPRESSLY make recommendations for mitigation measures to promote cycling and walking in areas close to where you recommend higher speeds. Mitigation measures can include separated bike lanes or improvements to nearby multi-use paths.

If the Board is especially concerned about streets with frequently changing speed limits, we say that, in general, to achieve consistency, adhere to the lower speed limit, not the higher one. ...

A speed limit of 30 km/hr. means that only 5 per cent of pedestrians struck by such a vehicle will die. A speed limit of 60 km/hr. means that 85 per cent will die.

We noted that in her presentation to the Manitoba Legislative Committee studying Bill 3, on June 6, 2012, Dr. Warda of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority's Injury Prevention Centre explained that the argument that "drivers won't obey" is not a valid argument. "There are proven strategies that increase driver compliance and effectiveness of these zones. These include: traffic calming road modifications designed to lower speeds where the speed humps are the most effective and economical; speed zones that are greater than 200 meters in length; active enforcement; fencing parallel to the zone; specific types of signage, such as flashing lights; speed display devices; and the presence of crossing guards. I've included a copy of a recent Calgary study which nicely summarizes the research on this and provides Calgary data for school and playground zones."

We stated: "Improved signage; flashing signs showing actual speed of vehicle; speed limits painted on the roadway; rumble strips; speed humps; raised cross-walks; street bump-outs: there are many ways to get drivers to slow down."

Seventeen Specific Locations

The Manitoba Traffic Board is holding hearings on Nov. 27 and Dec. 4, 2012 to discuss raising the speed limits on:

1. Corydon Avenue between Kelvin Blvd. and Cambridge Street
2. Grant Avenue between Kenaston Blvd. and Stafford Street
3. Waverley Street between Taylor Ave. and Grant Ave.
4. Kenaston Boulevard, between Grant Avenue and Academy Road
5. Taylor Avenue, between Guelph Street and Pembina Highway
6. Roblin Boulevard between Haney St. and Wexford St.
7. University Crescent between Chancellor Matheson and Pembina
8. Pembina Highway, between Ducharme Avenue and the bridge crossing the La Salle River (also under consideration is increasing the speed zone from 60 km/h to 80 km/h between rue des Trappistes to south of Turnbull Drive and increase the 90 km/h to 100 km/h between Turnbull Drive and the City limit);
9. Dugald Road near Plessis Road from 50 to 70 km/h
10. Broadway, between Osborne Street and Main Street
11. Memorial Boulevard/Colony Street/Balmoral Street, between Broadway and Qu'Appelle Avenue
12. Isabel Street/Salter Street, between William Avenue and Stella Avenue
13. Main Street, between Assiniboine Avenue and Manitoba Avenue
14. Inkster Boulevard, between Lansdowne Avenue and Main Street
15. Moray Street, between Portage Avenue and Ness Avenue
16. Wellington Avenue, between the east limit of James Armstrong Richardson International Airport and St. James Street
17. Provencher Boulevard, between Westbrook Street and Archibald Street.

Let's take these one by one.

1. Corydon Avenue between Kelvin Blvd. and Cambridge Street.

Corydon Avenue is a very high volume street. It features schools, community centres, playing fields, libraries, grocery stores and many small stores with high levels of parking in the curb lanes. It continuously intersects with residential streets and back lanes. It has numerous bus stops. Children cross these streets on a regular basis to attend school, for recreation or other reasons. The stretch of Corydon under consideration has two major intersections, at Kenaston Blvd. and again at Tuxedo Blvd. before arriving at Assiniboine Park. We cannot understand any rationale for increasing speed limits in this area.

2. Grant Avenue between Kenaston Blvd. and Stafford Street.

Grant Ave. is a very high volume street. It features schools, community centres, playing fields, the Pan Am pool and medical clinic, churches, a major shopping mall and many small stores and restaurants with frequent parking in the curb lanes. This section also includes the Grant Park shopping centre that has mid-block pedestrian cross-walks. It continuously intersects with residential streets and back lanes. It has numerous bus stops. Pedestrians, including children, cross Grant Ave. frequently all along this section. This is not a street on which to encourage higher speed traffic. We also note that the corner of Grant & Kenaston is rated as one of the city's top 20 most dangerous intersections on the city's Just Slow Down website.

3. Waverly Street between Taylor Ave. and Grant Ave.

There is a very short distance between Grant and Taylor. Northbound on Waverly comes to one of the most confusing intersections in the entire City of Winnipeg at Waverly and Grant, especially for persons unfamiliar with the intersection where Waverley changes from a two-way street to a one-way street. Just south of Taylor there are railway tracks that frequently back traffic up north of Taylor and a relatively confusing intersection and a small shopping mall at Waverly and Taylor. Waverly Street itself is and always has been a residential street. The Montrose School catchment area straddles this section of Waverley, so that some students must cross it to get to school.

4. Kenaston Boulevard, between Grant Avenue and Academy Road.

This is a very high traffic area with residential neighbourhoods on both sides of Kenaston. The traffic lanes are narrow on this stretch, and it is also a truck route. The catchment area for Carpathia School straddles this section of Kenaston, so that some students must cross it to get to school.

5. Taylor Avenue, between Guelph Street and Pembina Highway.

Taylor Avenue is designated as a bike route in signage and in the City's active transportation network, even though there is nothing about Taylor Ave. that appears to take cyclists into consideration. Increasing speeds will further diminish any respect for the "bike route" that is alleged to be at this location. In this stretch of Taylor there is an elementary school and playground, a nearby church, and complicated intersections at Taylor and Pembina; Stafford and Pembina; and Harrow and Pembina. Crossing Pembina Highway to get from the bike route on Taylor and the bike lane on Harrow over to Jubilee Ave. and points east of Pembina is extraordinarily difficult and complicated. There are numerous high density apartment units on Taylor in this area.

The above 5 locations are all located in one small, highly residential neighbourhood, South River Heights. All of them cut through school and community club catchment areas. Grant Park shopping centre, other stores and businesses on Grant and Taylor, and the Pan Am pool are regional destinations that people from these neighbourhoods frequent. It is shocking to find so many proposed speed increases in this one small residential area. The timing for this proposal seems especially inappropriate given the recent death of a Kelvin High School student in a traffic accident close to the area under consideration.

6. Roblin Blvd. between Haney and Wexford.

This is a much used commercial strip running through a residential area where people often stop to park and where pedestrians frequently cross the road. Chapman School and Day Care Centre are located on the north side of Roblin in this stretch, with students having to cross to get to school.

7. University Crescent between Chancellor Matheson and Pembina Highway.

This is a high traffic AND high cyclist and high pedestrian area. Part of this stretch runs through a residential neighbourhood. It is narrow and curves and at the point that it reaches the University of Manitoba, it becomes quite a confusing intersection. With increasing volumes of traffic expected with the new stadium and with the University's development of the former Southwood Golf Course, we can expect higher volumes of pedestrian, cycling, motor vehicle and transit bus traffic in the near future. Students from this area must travel across Pembina Highway to attend school at the Bonnycastle or Arthur A Leach schools. There is an inadequate multi-use path on one side of the road for part of this section, and on the opposite side cyclists and pedestrians frequently use the shoulder. Although there are plans to develop paths to the university, this will not eliminate the need for many cyclists and pedestrians to use University Crescent.

8. Pembina Highway between Ducharme Avenue and the La Salle River.

This section of Pembina Highway is a truck route and the main connection for highway travel to the south, between the Perimeter Highway and Highway 75. St. Norbert is a busy commercial and residential community. It has high traffic due to combination of local residential/commercial traffic and traffic to points south, and in summer the farmer's market. The St. Norbert arena is a destination as is the St. Norbert Farmers Market in the summer, when this section of Pembina is full of cars arriving from all over the city, looking for parking. Cyclists travel to the market and other St. Norbert destinations, such as the St. Norbert Arts Centre, the new Southwood Golf Course, and even further to Labarriere Park, along Rue des Trappistes. The stretch of Pembina Highway from the Perimeter Highway to Rue des Trappistes is deficient in cycling infrastructure.

9. Dugald Road near Plessis.

Note that of the locations under consideration, this is the only location that does not have schools on it; is not (yet) a residential area; and DOES have a separated bike path. The proposed increase in speed limits is not a major concern here.

10. Broadway, between Osborne Street and Main Street.

Broadway is one of the busiest streets in Winnipeg for pedestrians. It crosses Donald and Smith, two of the highest volume intersections in Winnipeg. With the expansion of the Convention Centre, this area will see greater volumes of motor vehicles, curb lane parking and pedestrian traffic. There are many traffic lights on this section and it makes no sense to increase the speed limit here.

11. Memorial Boulevard/Colony Street/Balmoral St. between Broadway and Qu'Appelle Ave.

Memorial Blvd./Colony Street/Balmoral Street is a heavily used north-south route along the western edge of downtown Winnipeg. There are several major intersections, notably at Portage Ave. and Ellice Ave. There are traffic lights at almost every intersection. The stretch runs adjacent to Memorial Park, frequently the venue for outdoor summer events, the University of Winnipeg complex, the Winnipeg Adult Education Centre, the YMCA, Sister Macnamera School, all of which generate parking activity and pedestrian traffic as well as cyclist traffic. Again, it makes no sense to increase speed limits on this route.

12. Isabel Street/Salter Street, between William Ave. and Stella Ave.

This is a high density residential and commercial area. Dufferin School, Children of the Earth School, R.B. Russell High School, the Freight House Community Centre and adjacent park are located on or near this stretch. For this reason there is a lot of pedestrian traffic crossing Isabel and there is also frequent parking and resulting pedestrian traffic among those going to stores or restaurants along Isabel and adjacent streets. There are major intersections at Notre Dame and at Logan Ave at the foot of the Slaw Rebchuk Bridge where there is heavy truck and commuter traffic.

13. Main Street, between Assiniboine Ave. and Manitoba Ave.

This stretch of Main Street is the major north-south route and hub through Winnipeg's downtown. It has high traffic volumes and connects to the Disraeli Freeway and to the continuation of Main St to the north and to St. Mary's Rd, Marion Ave and Pembina Highway to the south and east. It includes Winnipeg's major downtown intersection of Portage and Main, connecting with traffic to the west. Main St. already presents a major barrier to pedestrians wanting to cross the wide intersections and to cyclists traveling in the downtown area. Diamond lanes that cyclists share with buses and right turning vehicles provide some help for parts of this stretch, but the route remains a challenging one for cyclists, notably for cyclists traveling north on Main at the turnoff to the Disraeli Freeway, traveling south on Main at Portage Ave., or in either direction through the underpass at the CPR tracks.

There is frequent pedestrian traffic crossing Main St throughout this stretch, including those crossing in the Exchange entertainment district (which is also becoming more and more of a residential district), the commercial and service area between Logan and Higgins, and the residential/commercial area from the CPR tracks to Manitoba Ave. Two cyclists were killed this year on or near this stretch of Main Street. It is inconceivable to Bike to the Future that speeds would be increased in this area.

14. Inkster Boulevard, between Lansdowne Ave and Main Street.

Although this stretch of Inkster Boulevard is divided by a central boulevard, it is very much a residential neighbourhood with high pedestrian traffic. It cuts through the Inkster School, Lansdowne School and St. John's Junior-Senior High School catchment areas, with many children crossing Inkster to go to school.

15. Moray Street, between Portage Avenue and Ness Ave.

Although this is a divided four lane street, it runs through a residential neighbourhood of St. James. The Bannatyne School is two blocks west and Golden Gate School is two blocks east of this stretch of Moray and the Sturgeon Creek High School, the Sturgeon Creek Community Centre and Golden Gate Park are also close by.

16. Wellington Avenue, between Richardson International Airport and St. James Street.

This stretch of Wellington is the major route to and from the airport. It goes through an area with hotels and discount or specialty stores with off-street parking. Closer to the airport the speed limits are currently reduced to 30 km/hr.

17. Provencher Boulevard, between Westbrook St. and Archibald St.

This section of Provencher runs through the heart of old St. Boniface, through a commercial/residential area and is one of the major routes connecting downtown Winnipeg with eastern areas of the city. Major destinations on the east side of the Red River include the Cathedrale de St. Boniface, the Centre Franco-Manitoban, and on the west side the Forks, the Human Rights Museum, Shaw Baseball Park, and connections to the Exchange District and downtown. Marion School, College Louis Riel, Universitaire de St. Boniface, and the Notre Dame Community Centre are on or near this stretch of Provencher. There are two travel lanes plus a parking lane on Provencher, and it is part of Winnipeg's designated bike route network, although it is identified as a "challenging" route (apart from the Esplanade Riel). The residential/shopping/tourism character of the area, especially east of the Red River, mean that there is frequent pedestrian traffic crossing Provencher. It makes no sense to increase traffic speed on this route.

Summary

Bike to the Future is shocked that the Highway Traffic Board is proposing raising speed limits in these areas (with the possible exception of Dugald Road). It is clear to us that increasing speed limits in these areas will result in more accidents, more fatalities and will definitely discourage people from walking and cycling in these areas. Bike to the Future cannot understand what the benefits of the speed increases would be; would they save a couple of seconds, or even 60 seconds, for drivers who wish to drive through these residential neighbourhoods as quickly as possible? If the goal is more consistency and predictability for motorists, the best approach would be to set the limits at 50 km/hr on these roads rather than increasing them for some sections to 60 km/hr.