



July 9, 2021

Honourable Minister George Heyman
Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

Honourable Minister Rob Fleming
Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
Government of British Columbia

Dear Hon. Ministers Heyman and Fleming,

The British Columbia Cycling Coalition (BCCC) is pleased to learn the provincial government will deliver a revised Climate Strategy for fall 2021 (“Roadmap to 2030”).

We appreciate the invitation to provide recommendations on reducing GHG emissions from British Columbia’s transportation sector. This submission addresses the 30-year acceleration of emissions from the transport sector, and:

- Situates active transportation (AT) at the core of transport-sector GHG reduction strategies
- Provides six recommendations for reducing vehicle kilometers travelled in B.C.

Since 1998, BCCC has led efforts in the province to advance bicycling as a viable and attractive transportation choice in our cities and towns. We promote the social, environmental and economic benefits of the bicycle and other active travel modes across the province for recreation and tourism. We believe well-connected, sustainable, and equitable transportation systems are critical components of healthier, livable, affordable and prosperous communities.

In the context of the climate emergency, the transition to low- and zero-carbon transportation solutions is urgent, the benefits are many and the opportunities are all around us.

Background: GHG Emissions and Transport

British Columbia has committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40 per cent (relative to 2007) by 2030, and 80 per cent by 2050. The transportation sector represents about 40 per cent of British Columbia’s GHG emissions and 45 percent of emissions in Metro Vancouver.

As with many jurisdictions, transportation emissions in B.C. continue to grow year over year, with the majority of sector emissions coming from road transport - particularly personal transport from light duty motor vehicles.¹ The overall vehicle fleet continues to grow. Total kilometres travelled and over all automobile trips are shaped by many factors, including the province’s road and highway system, and the legislative and regulatory environment for transportation.

¹ [2020 Climate Change Accountability Report - Clean BC](#)

Climate policy studies of the road transport sector have identified “three legs in the stool” to reduce emissions from road transportation:

- Low Carbon Fuels and Vehicles
- Vehicle Efficiencies
- Reductions in Vehicle Kilometres Travelled (VKTs).²

Achieving significant VKTs reductions province-wide is a complex challenge requiring a broad suite of policy incentives, infrastructure investments and legislative and regulatory reforms, all of which require cooperation among political and private sector actors.

This submission focuses on VKTs reductions, via an improved AT mode share and bolder investments in AT infrastructure, bolstered by smart growth and urban design.

Current Context: Transformations in Transport

The opportunity to transition to climate-friendly approaches to transportation has never been greater. The transportation sector is rapidly evolving, rich with technological innovations and new mobility choices, particularly in urban areas. In recent years, interest in active transportation has accelerated, with unprecedented usage of bicycles for transport in Canadian cities and increasing interest in walkable cities, better urban design, pedestrian safety and related issues. New transport options such as ride-share, car share, and micromobility (i.e. scooters, bike share) are proliferating. Transit systems are investing in electric fleet vehicles and experimenting with integrated payment systems and mobility as a service (MAAS).

Electric vehicles have now arrived, with all the large automakers fully invested in batteries and new models. Autonomous vehicles continue to be the focus of research and large capital investments.

However, the climate impacts of electric vehicles and other automobile innovations remain uncertain. Reliance on electric automobiles to solve our transportation challenges is misplaced. This approach fails to address reducing VKTs and perpetuates the negative externalities of congestion, motor vehicle related injuries and fatalities, and infrastructure sprawl.

Reducing VKTs will require a shift away from an automobile-dependent transportation system and instead make bold moves to foster and support a truly multi-modal transportation system province-wide. Providing greater transportation choices in all B.C. communities is critical to achieving a low-carbon future, and will bring with it demonstrable benefits in livability, prosperity, community health and safety.

The Active Transportation Boom

Across the globe, new investments in active transportation and supportive policies are producing dramatic results – with people choosing to walk and bike more frequently, often in concert with continued growth in transit usage and other mobility options.

² [Shifting Gears: Climate Solutions for Transportation in Cities. Metro Vancouver Case Study](#)

Paris, London, Vancouver, Montreal and hundreds more cities worldwide have carved out road space for new bike lanes and safer protected bicycle networks. In virtually every instance, the result is significant and often dramatic growth in ridership.³ Vancouver saw 40% more riders in the three years after installing its core protected bike lane network.⁴ After similar investments between 2007-2011, Minneapolis saw 47% increase in ridership, and San Francisco by 71%.

Smaller communities and cities such as Victoria, Nanaimo and Kelowna are finding similar success. The trends are evident nationwide.⁵ The 2016 Canada Census showed that bicycle commuting was the fastest growing travel mode in Canadian communities, ahead of transit and motor vehicles.

British Columbia residents enjoy and value active transportation, are using it more and expect to continue to do so.

- 22.4% of B.C. commuters walk, bike, or use public transit.
- 2.5% of British Columbians commute by bike—top cycle commuting cities in B.C. include Revelstoke (14%), Victoria (11%), Whistler (10%), Vancouver (6%), and Kelowna (4%).
- In denser urban neighbourhoods such as Fairfield in Victoria and Grandview in Vancouver, commuter trips by bike are as high as 18%.⁶
- In the urban cores of Victoria and Vancouver, vehicle trips by car have decreased over the last decade, as a growing denser population switches increasingly to active transportation.⁷
- 93% of British Columbians expect to spend more time walking or cycling in the future.
- One-third of B.C. households have at least one school-aged child walking or cycling to school.

Throughout the past decade bicycle usage and sales continued to surge, spurred by further innovations and infrastructure investments. The federal government now directly funds bicycle and other active transport facilities in cities across the country through various ‘green infrastructure funds.’ Dozens of municipalities in Canada have built protected bike lanes and networks in the last decade, delivering clear results with more people riding more places more often. Bike share systems have also emerged over the last decade, making inroads in Vancouver, Calgary, Montreal and dozens of European and American cities.

More recently, electric bikes are experiencing phenomenal growth. Deloitte estimates a 50% increase in e-bikes in circulation over the next three years – to 300 million, including 130 million in new e-bike sales worldwide.⁸ In multiple countries, E-Bikes are outselling electric cars. In the USA, e-bike sales were double that of electric cars, with similar rates evident in Europe and other countries around the world.⁹

³ [Increasing Cycling in Canada - The Centre for Active Transportation \(TCAT\)](#)

⁴ [Vancouver Makes Cycling Safer for People of all Ages and Abilities](#)

⁵ [Increasing Cycling in Canada - TCAT](#)

⁶ [Increasing Cycling in Canada - TCAT](#)

⁷ [Fewer Cars entering downtown - Cited Victoria](#)

⁸ [Technology, Media, and Telecommunications Predictions 2020](#) pg. 118

⁹ [Electric Bikes a Growing Choice for Americans: E-Bike Sales to grow to 17Million per Year by 2030](#)

Significant new markets are also evident in new cargo and carrying bikes designed for families, children, groceries - as well as delivery services for retail, food and freight.

Looking Forward

In North America, more than half of all motor vehicle trips are under 5 kilometres in length.¹⁰ Trip lengths and commute distances are even shorter in our cities, towns and suburbs, where most British Columbians live and work. Vancouver and other cities are experiencing a steady decrease in VKTs, and sustained growth in biking and walking trips.¹¹ The burgeoning usage of e-bikes are replacing longer journeys and commutes, and many users often purchase their e-bike as a substitute for a new or second vehicle.

The Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated how quickly travel behaviour and transport infrastructure can change and adapt. The pandemic accelerated the bicycle boom already underway and is expected to continue - stressing supply chains across the world.¹² The pandemic has further sparked significant changes where and how people work and is expected to have long-term impacts on commuter patterns. Peak-period travel, commuter habits and infrastructure spending have and will continue to respond to time-shifting in the labour force, as large sectors of employees choose to work-at-home some or most of the time.

One likely result are even more localized transport patterns: shorter trips and more frequent patronage of neighbourhood destinations better served by walking, cycling or new micromobility options. Significant greater mode-shifts to active transportation, public transit and other sustainable modes are achievable in communities across B.C, with concerted effort to invest in smart growth planning, connected bicycle networks and safe pedestrian environments.

Building on Opportunity

Over the last three decades, the BC Government has made important but limited contributions to active transportation in the province. The Cycling Network Program was established 1995 with funding of \$2M a year for municipal applicants. After changing banners and inconsistent funding over the subsequent two decades, recent provincial investments in this program have averaged \$6M annually between 2014-19. In 2020, the program - now called *Active Transportation Infrastructure Grants* - has expanded its mandate considerably, with base funding for the most recent budget year at \$12M - with \$6M coming from Clean BC.¹³

In 2019, the BC Government released its first Active Transportation Strategy (ATS), a welcome effort indicating a stronger set of intentions to provide additional support for walking, cycling and new mobility investments across the province. The most concrete target in the ATS is to double the mode share of active transportation in BC by 2030 – just 8.5 years away.

Historically, the provincial Bike BC/AT funding grants have been oversubscribed with applications. The interest and demand for eligible projects from B.C. municipalities has not been met with adequate

¹⁰ [National Household Trip Survey - Short Trips \(League of American Bicyclists\)](#)

¹¹ [2019 Vancouver Panel Survey](#)

¹² [Why the Bike Shortage isn't Ending Anytime Soon - Globe and Mail](#)

¹³ [Vancouver Makes Cycling Safer for People of all Ages and Abilities](#)

provincial funding and support. Most communities in BC lack sufficient revenues to build safer and effective AT facilities of their own accord. Now more than ever, AT funding should match the expanded program criteria and the ATS's top-line goal to double B.C.'s AT mode share by 2030. This goal will simply not be met without significant additional provincial funding. Jurisdictions like Ireland have committed 20% of their annual transport budget to cycling and walking (\$106M Can).¹⁴

The province's legislative and policy framework has not adapted to a rapidly changing transportation ecosystem. The *Motor Vehicle Act (MVA)* has not been substantially altered since 1957. A half-century of transport innovations – from bicycle traffic signals to new vehicle technologies – go unrecognized in the *MVA*. Reform of the *MVA* is overdue.

For MOTI-owned facilities and its operations side, efforts to accommodate active transportation usage remain patchwork and incremental, tied largely to new or major reconstruction projects. MOTI should prioritize multi-modal design and engineering on its own merits, making dedicated and consistent improvements to AT infrastructure on MOTI facilities based on public safety, Vision Zero principles and the province's climate targets.

Recommendations

Given the urgency of the climate crisis, and the opportunities presented by emerging technology and marketplace trends, Clean BC and MOTI should lead a government-wide re-orientation of the provincial transportation priorities – with expanded focus on public transit, AT and new mobilities, with complementary efforts in land use, smart growth and the built environment. These efforts should be informed by best practices, motivated by climate action and underwritten by growing buy-in from stakeholders and B.C. residents.

The co-benefits of AT infrastructure and usage are numerous. They bring affordability and equity to a historically uni-modal transportation system. Well designed AT infrastructure delivers improved safety for vulnerable road users. Every shift away from motor vehicle use brings immediate reductions in GHGs. The pandemic has further demonstrated how quickly transport design and mobility behaviour can adapt, often with relatively modest investments that deliver immediate results.

We recommend the following actions:

1. Contribute at least \$50Million annually to Active Transportation Infrastructure Grants for local governments and Indigenous communities. Continue to expand the mandate to include a broader base of qualifying projects (pedestrian infrastructure, network planning, regional projects, tourism-related) and sliding scale of qualifying applicants (smaller towns, Indigenous communities).
2. Adopt the following AT Grant program changes:
 - Restore maximum applicant project funding to \$1Million a year
 - Consider special project funding of up to \$3M a year for exceptional AT applications, where proposed AT networks are regionally significant or designed to be fully integrated into public transit systems

¹⁴ [Ireland will invest 10% of total transport budget on cycling - Euro Cycling Federation](#)

- Emphasize AT projects that provide protected bicycle lanes and clearly contribute to or expand the local bicycle network and safe routes to school – the two main ingredients to quickly and safely building bicycle ridership.

3. Reform the *MVA*. In the immediate term, establish Safe Passing Distance legislation for road users in BC – to regulate minimum passing distance between cars and pedestrians, bicycles, ebikes, or scooters. Similar legislation is in place in five provinces (QC, ON, NL, NS, and NB). Also overdue is an update of the Provincial Cycling Policy, in alignment with the AT Strategy, Clean BC targets and contemporary bicycle and road design standards.

In the longer term, begin a cross-ministerial effort to review and reform the *MVA* to reflect and support the changing transportation system in B.C. Road safety, contemporary design and engineering standards, new mobility technologies, and climate goals should be foremost considerations, as will stakeholders engagement and input. Legislation that protects vulnerable road users has been shown to increase bicycle ridership and AT mode share. The BCCC is part of a multi-stakeholder group that is proposing well-thought-out reforms to the *MVA*.

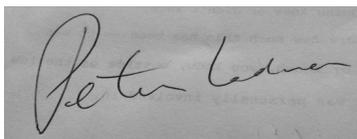
4. Support legislation and pursue policy changes to foster and encourage smart growth and land use practices that reinforce and sustain healthy compact communities and increased use of active transportation. The recently released report by the *Expert Panel on Housing Supply and Affordability* is a promising start; the B.C. Government should urgently follow through on its recommendations.

5. MOTI should undertake an immediate engineering standards review of its Ministry-controlled highway facilities where they serve as ‘main-streets’ or key corridors in local city or district jurisdictions, with an aim to prioritize reduced speeds, improved safety and design for vulnerable road users, transit use and other modes. At a minimum, existing active transportation routes should be maintained at the same level as vehicle lanes, with regular clearing of debris, repairing hazards and plowing in winter.

6. MoTI should establish explicit guidelines for accommodation of active transportation on all of its public corridors, in order to analyze current conditions and implement ongoing upgrades to achieve appropriate standards.

Bold moves in active transportation can have immediate effect in communities where British Columbians live and work. More ambitious contributions to active transportation infrastructure investments, along with supportive policies and legislative reform, are needed now. We welcome further opportunities to achieve these goals with all relevant Ministries, municipalities and stakeholder groups across the province.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature is cursive and appears to read "Peter Ladner".

Peter Ladner Chair,

BCCC Board of Directors

cc:

Hon. Minister Bowinn Ma, Minister of State for Infrastructure

Hon. Minister Josie Osborne, Minister of Municipal Affairs

Kelly Greene MLA, Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment

Jeremy Hewitt, Assistant Deputy Minister, MECCS

Kaye Krishna, Deputy Minister, MoTI

Katherine Kirby, Executive Director, Policy and Legislation, Programs & Corporate Initiatives, MoTI

Kate Berniaz, Manager, Transportation Programs, Programs & Corporate Initiatives, MoTI

Severn Cullis-Suzuki, Executive Director, David Suzuki Foundation