



Bicycle Newfoundland and Labrador Supports a National Active Transportation Strategy

Bicycle Newfoundland and Labrador strives to promote the many benefits of cycling and other forms of active transportation. These include:

1. Improving health
2. Living up to environmental commitments
3. Creating more liveable streets and reducing traffic
4. Saving government and taxpayers' money
5. Helping people live more affordable lives
6. Helping businesses and growing the local economy
7. Saving people time
8. Attracting skilled workers to the province

As a province with some of the lowest rankings in the country on many key health metrics¹, Newfoundland and Labrador stands to benefit significantly by increased participation in active transportation.

At the same time, the province and municipalities face unique economic and demographic challenges that threaten to impede progress on much needed improvements in communities.

St. John's, the largest municipality in the province, has struggled in the past with cycling infrastructure² and remains far behind many other cities³ across Canada. City leaders, faced with an aging demographic and financial challenges, are forced to make difficult decisions when it comes to active transportation. Despite acknowledging significant health and environmental⁴ challenges, the city's progress on active transportation is slow and constantly under threat. Other municipalities in the province face similar challenges.

COVID-19 has resulted in unprecedented interest in cycling, walking, and other forms of active transportation but it has also exacerbated existing challenges. Municipal budgets are strained while public health guidelines increase the pressure to develop infrastructure for alternative modes of transportation. For example, the NL English School District Safe Return to School Plan⁵ will remove school bus service for an estimated 6000 students in the province. Safe and effective active transportation infrastructure would lighten the burden for many of these families.

¹ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/82-624-x/2014001/article/11922-eng.pdf?st=q-6bzPAI>

² <http://www.stjohns.ca/publications/cycling-master-plan>

³ <http://cyclingincities.spph.ubc.ca/motivating-cycling/tools-training/>

⁴ <http://www.stjohns.ca/media-release/city-takes-action-climate-change>

⁵ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1aep4XHilyxGU5-_7-DfHqFIQpvZ2fC7p/view

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Bicycle NL believes that communities in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador would benefit significantly by a national active transportation strategy. Such a strategy would help to:

Provide technical leadership to the province

Newfoundland and Labrador could benefit from technical leadership and experience with designing well-connected, sustainable, and equitable active transportation infrastructure within communities. While these initiatives should be community-driven, a national strategy would help to define the standards and best practices for communities that may be lacking in experience and resources.

Promote parity with other provinces

Newfoundland and Labrador lags behind most other provinces when it comes to active transportation adoption. A national strategy could help the province “catch up” with other provinces that have made more progress on building active transportation infrastructure and culture.

Direct funding efficiently and appropriately

Municipalities in the province are often reliant on cost-sharing arrangements to fund critical active transportation projects. A national strategy could help to streamline the funding process for municipalities, reduce doubt during planning stages, and allow local leaders to advance long-term projects more efficiently and predictably.

Help to build an active transportation culture

Currently the nascent active transportation culture in Newfoundland and Labrador is fostered by passionate local residents and volunteer-based organizations. A national strategy would help to accelerate the development of a vibrant active transportation culture and help to change attitudes and norms around active transportation by helping with education, marketing and promotion, media relations, events, and other initiatives.

In conclusion, Bicycle Newfoundland and Labrador believes that active transportation is an important component in the future health, economic, and environmental well-being of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and that a national active transportation strategy would be of immense benefit to the residents of the province.

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors of Bicycle Newfoundland and Labrador