

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Active Transportation for States of Emergency



28 APRIL 2020

THE BRITISH COLUMBIA
CYCLING COALITION



Acknowledgements

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Bike Abbotsford
Bike Victoria Society
City of Kelowna
City of North Vancouver
City of Vancouver
**Cross Canada Cycle
Tour Society**
Cycling BC

**Friends of Rails to Trails
Vancouver Island**
**Great Blue Heron Way
Working Group**
HUB Cycling
**Regional District of
Central Okanagan**
Ribbons of Green
Share the Road Cycling Coalition

Trails Society of BC
**Transportation Choices
Sunshine Coast (TraC)**
**Member representatives of the
Union of B.C. Municipalities**
Vélo Canada Bikes
Victoria Transport Institute
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Executive Summary

COVID-19 has resulted in decisive action from various levels of government to protect British Columbians and our healthcare system, including temporary directives to keep people at home, and physically distanced in public.

We must all adapt to new conditions, and so we are all innovating new solutions for the challenges of everyday life — in education, social services, the economy, arts and culture, sports and recreation, and the justice system.

Decisive action is also needed in transportation.

Walking and bicycling have the least contagion risk, serve those who cannot or do not wish to drive, and support physical activity. Improving conditions for active transportation is thus important to maintaining population health during states of emergency, like the COVID-19 pandemic, and the climate crisis.¹

Enhancing society’s active transportation resources and capabilities is also critically important to building resilience. From an environmental impact perspective, walking and cycling are both superior to other modes of personal transportation, due to their negligible emissions footprint, as well as their direct contribution to reducing existing emissions from personal vehicles.² They’re both also among the most efficient travel modes; at peak capabilities, on-street bicycle facilities move more people than automobiles, and just one-third fewer than local bus transit.³

Lastly, active transportation infrastructure is — by far — the most cost-effective category of transportation facility to build, in terms of both capital and operating costs. For the same cost of 4-6 km of new city roads, or 8km of 2-lane road widening, over 150 km of sidewalks, and 250 km of separated cycle tracks could be constructed.

Safety and Affordability by Mode

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|---------|
| Pandemic Safety → | Single-Occupant Vehicle | Telework | Bicycling | Walking |
| | Auto with passenger | Taxi/ Ridehailing | Transit bus | |
| | Aviation | | Subway | |
| | Increased affordability → | | | |

Todd Litman, Victoria Transport Institute. (2020)

Beyond the compelling evidence that the provincial government should do more to support transportation mode shifts in communities across the province, there is reason to ask for and expect the same bold leadership and action on active transportation as in other sectors, especially while there is both the public will and the demonstrated need in this province.

New laws, policies and strategies to support active transportation on our highways and roads, water crossings and transportation facilities can help meet the mobility needs of all British Columbians, without compromising either our climate goals or the health and welfare of future generations.

Issuing recommendations for reallocating road space is not enough. Our regional and local governments, including our transit authorities, need access to additional resources from the provincial government so they can quickly plan and implement a variety of tactical interventions, in order to allow both more physical distancing between people and enhanced mobility options.

We're asking the Province of B.C. to consider four sets of actions during the pandemic to support

Reallocation of Roadway Space for Physical Distancing

Physical distancing from others is important during COVID-19. These guidelines will help local governments ensure space is available for active transportation opportunities for the community.

Sidewalks and walking paths in some areas are seeing extra foot traffic as people get out for exercise and fresh air. Physical distancing guidelines to keep 2 m apart is challenging when walking space is constrained or many people are trying to use the same space.

Municipalities around the world are using temporary lane and road closures to provide extra space for people walking and cycling and this may be an option for B.C. municipalities.

Recommendations

- Closures should consider emergency vehicle passage, goods movements, and access for local residents.
- Frequently monitor and check closures and closure devices to ensure they are working as intended and have not been knocked over, removed or otherwise interfered with.
- Closures should be in the daytime only (7am-7pm, or similar hours). Closure devices should be set up and taken down daily.
- Some modification of Traffic Management Manual layouts will be needed. Consider using C-030 series (lane closure ahead) or other custom signage.
- C-004 (Crew Working Ahead) or C-018 (Construction Ahead) are not applicable.

www.gov.bc.ca/temporaryroadspace
(April 22, 2020)

active transportation, while simultaneously planning proactively for effective measures to deal with population growth in our urban centres, and the impacts of impending climate crisis.

1 | Revisit Active Transportation Policy & Planning Structure

UPDATE & ENFORCE THE CYCLING POLICY

Released in 1998, the province's current Cycling Policy was intended to support and encourage cycling, in part by ensuring:

- **Provisions for cyclists** on all new and upgraded provincial highways.
- **Consultation with cycling stakeholders** for route evaluations that impact cyclists
- **Involvement of cycling interests and local government officials** responsible for cycling in all highway planning consultations.

The province's new active transportation strategy also specifically mentions the importance of making connections both within and between communities, and that, "*as provincial highways are developed, improved or reconfigured, active transportation will be integrated in their design and construction.*"

This policy has not been enforced consistently across a variety of major capital projects for transportation over the past two decades; one such example is the current widening of Highway 1 from 216th to Highway 13 in Langley which, despite repeated requests for accommodation for cycling, is proceeding without consideration as a potential active transportation corridor. In response to requests for cycling and walking connections using local roads along this corridor, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) has cited practicality and feasibility concerns due to space limitations as reasons why such connections could not be made.

Yet, without proper consultation with the community, or serious attempts to make provisions for cycling and walking, not only will this province's active transportation goals not be met, physical distancing challenges and the ongoing needs for safe and accessible commuting options (which have been deemed essential during this pandemic) cannot be reasonably met.

The provincial government promise to review and monitor the cycling policy on a regular basis, and to consult with stakeholders, has also not yet occurred.

More, higher quality of cycling and walking infrastructure along provincial rights-of-way — proportionately equivalent to the major capital expenditures

made for motor vehicles — are still expected from our provincial government. In order to achieve this, B.C.'s cycling policy must be updated, and enforced.

INCREASE FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS

Annual per capita spending on cycling and walking in B.C. is a fraction of similar spending in comparable jurisdictions worldwide, and far less than the amount that should be spent based on actual mode share for cycling and walking today, as well as our targets for 2030.

MoTI did recently establish an active transportation branch, which in turn developed a multi-year strategy and design guide for municipalities, but due to the level of investment and the arms-length nature of these strategies and resources, the actual impacts of the province's investments in AT have often been far less visible or far-reaching than similar work undertaken by some B.C. municipalities.

While the province does make matching funds available to all cities and towns on an annual basis to improve active transportation connections, the actual funding envelopes, eligibility criteria and cost-sharing rules for such projects limit their viability and effectiveness; consequently, many communities do not (or cannot) apply.

Furthermore, MoTI funding criteria require, and support the development of, community active transportation planning, yet there is a lack of critical evaluation to ensure projects contribute in the most effective way possible to complete regional networks that connect our fastest-growing cities and towns.

Provincial funds should be used strategically, to the benefit of the most people in these communities — many of which are experiencing population growth of 2% or more annually — in order to preclude the unnecessary addition of more motor vehicle traffic on our major road networks and provincial highways.

More opportunistic approaches to active transportation funding could also be used to the benefit of the provincial tourism sector, by supporting recreational cycling and walking infrastructure that can, and in some cases already does, connect to transportation networks. Tourism revenue and employment in the province has been hit hard by the current COVID-19 crisis; this sector will be well-positioned to recover in the coming years, and could leverage the future value of facilities suitable for recreation and sport cycling, if only we begin to invest today.

CONSOLIDATE ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS & RESOURCES

Accelerated progress on improved safety, accessibility, and equity related to active transportation could be realized by combining staff and programs related to road safety and active transportation within MoTI.

Such consolidation could also establish a centralized, multi-disciplinary active transportation ‘centre of excellence’, which in turn would fulfill much of the latent potential for transportation policy adaptation and innovation, related to both the current pandemic and future climate crises.

Currently, parallel initiatives supporting safe walking and cycling are both managed from, and utilize resources across, four different provincial government ministries:

- the Motor Vehicle Act Pilot Project on **micro-mobility**
- the **Vision Zero program** within RoadSafetyB.C.
- the CleanB.C. transportation strategy
- **provisions for vulnerable road users** in ICBC Enhanced Care

Uniting these strategies and resources under a single umbrella — as well as other ministries with links to personal mobility and physical activity,

such as Children & Family Development, Education, Finance, Health, Indigenous Relations & Reconciliation, Jobs, Economic Development & Competitiveness, Mental Health & Addictions, Social Development & Poverty Reduction, and Tourism, Arts & Culture — would provide enormous efficiencies of scale, and potentially reduce wasteful spending that could be otherwise allocated to directly supporting active transportation.

2 | Prioritize Legislative Protections for Vulnerable Road Users

The British Columbia Motor Vehicle Act (MVA) is the complete legislation containing the laws governing road use in B.C..

While the reality of people and goods movement has changed drastically in the past six decades, requisite updates to legislation have not followed suit. The priorities and expectations of British Columbians regarding travel on our roads are vastly different from 1957, the year the MVA was written.

We propose two interim amendments to the MVA, which would extend important protections for vulnerable road users, particularly as it relates to recent (and ongoing) shifts in road use in communities across B.C. towards more cycling and walking:

ELIMINATE BARRIERS TO BLANKET SPEED LIMIT REDUCTIONS

Across B.C., citizens are walking and cycling on roads in order to adhere to provincial health directives related to physical distancing. However, speeding and careless driving is adding to the risk of injury and death.

In fact, data from provincial speed cameras suggest speeding is on the rise in the first 3 months of 2020, compared to the last 3 months of 2019. Furthermore, we know speeding increases both the likelihood of collisions, and the severity of those collisions; research shows that when motor vehicles are traveling at speeds greater than 40 km/h, both drivers and pedestrians are more likely to make mistakes judging the time required to stop or cross the street safely. A pedestrian struck by a car travelling at 50 km/h is eight times more likely to be killed than someone hit at 30 km/h.

Even small reductions in vehicle speed can yield significant reductions in injury risk; by law, either MoTI or incorporated municipalities may alter posted speed limits.

In 2016, the B.C. Road Safety Law Reform Group recommended that a default provincial speed limit of 30 km/h for local streets should be included in the MVA, and that individual municipalities should be allowed

to adopt default speed limits lower than the provincially mandated 50 km/h; in 2019, the Union of B.C. Municipalities (UBCM) endorsed this same policy recommendation, the 7th time such a resolution has been passed at a UBCM meeting since 1999.

However, in a recent response to the UBCM resolutions, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MAH) declined to follow this recommendation, reiterating the clause of the MVA which states, “*if a municipality lowers a speed limit, they must use traffic signs to define the new speed limit throughout each area...*”

The signage requirement remains a practical and financial burden for most municipalities interested in reducing speed limits in communities for the purposes of increasing the safety and comfort of all road users.

While the provincial government has committed to review legislative, regulatory and policy frameworks to acknowledge all road users and emerging active transportation modes, we cannot wait for a more expedient time to actively support speed limit reductions.

Now is the time for the Province of B.C. to eliminate the burden of the current signage requirement for municipalities to lower speed limits.

ENACT SAFE PASSING LEGISLATION THROUGH AMENDMENT

As municipalities begin to reallocate space for active transportation, there is even greater need for motorists to establish a reasonable distance when passing a cyclist or a pedestrian.

Drivers who do not establish safe passing distances pose a potentially fatal risk to these vulnerable road users; research suggests that initiatives to enforce safe passing distances could prevent 25% or more of the crashes that seriously injure or kill vulnerable road users.

Currently, the MVA states that an overtaking vehicle “*must cause the vehicle to pass to the left of the other vehicle at a safe distance*” (Section 157). Bicycles, however, are not deemed ‘vehicles’ in this particular section, and even where courts have accepted that motorists have an obligation to pass cyclists safely, the actual passing distance which might constitute ‘safe’ remains unclear.

The need for enabling legislation to establish an actual definition of what this reasonable distance should be is more urgent than ever before.

Such legislation has been enacted by other Canadian provinces to meaningfully reduce the threat posed by motor vehicles, and provide

municipal and local police forces the appropriate mechanism for enforcing road safety.

In light of current and ongoing changes to road use across the province, the provincial government should amend the MVA to establish safe passing distances related to vulnerable road users — people on foot, bicycle, or in wheelchairs/motor-assist devices — so motor vehicle operators are required to maintain an appropriate and defined clearance when passing.

3 | Reallocate Road and Trail Space for Cycling and Walking

For many British Columbians, the only infrastructure connecting suburban and rural communities are highways, bridges and other facilities which fall under provincial jurisdiction.

In these cases, people who travel by foot, bicycle, or other personal mobility mode are placed in close proximity to fast-moving motor vehicle traffic; in addition to the obvious dangers posed to these vulnerable road users, the space allocated to these modes is often incompatible with today's physical distancing needs.

MoTI issued recommendations for municipalities regarding road space reallocations on April 22, 2020, but made no commitments to implement road safety measures on any of the province's own facilities, nor did it issue any public statements indicating the need to do so.

When combined with the loss of regional transit operations in some areas of B.C., these gaps in policies and facilities leaves many British Columbians unable to perform essential travel, to receive health care, or to support family members, unless they place themselves in dangerously close proximity to other people, to motor vehicles, or both.

MoTI should collaborate with other cabinet portfolios — in particular, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, and the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development — in order to introduce immediate measures to ensure provincial transportation corridors can be made safe and accessible for all British Columbians, regardless of their preferred mode of transportation:



- **Reallocate shoulders and under-utilized lanes** on provincial highways between municipalities to walking and cycling;
- **Restrict the use of motorized vehicles on trails** — such as The Great Trail, and rail trails that often run in parallel to highways — in all three provincial transportation regions;
- **Increase service levels for sweeping and maintenance** of existing paved shoulders along all provincial highways in order to support the safety and access for use by all ages and abilities;
- **Identify and preserve provincial rights-of-way** along highway, utility, and rail corridors connecting communities that may be utilized to provide physically separated facilities for use by people on foot and wheels, and to ensure safe and equitable access to the transportation network for all.

4 | Make Big Moves

Historically, regardless of the governing party of the time, the provincial government has lagged in developing and championing the legislation, policies, and project and operational planning required to provide British Columbians safe, accessible, and equitable transportation facilities

of regional significance — that is, projects that connect destinations and populations of significance, and commensurate to similar projects delivered to other modes and uses.

There is no better time to demonstrate the province's readiness and will to build active transportation networks and facilities — for both present and future needs — than by making the kinds of 'big moves' already initiated by city and state governments elsewhere in North America.

DEVELOP CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE TO MOVE ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION FORWARD

Over the past generation and across the province, the development of provincial infrastructure for Expo '86, investments in the Pacific Gateway and other bridge and highway mega-projects, and rail decommissioning efforts have often included promises for improved, dedicated facilities for active transportation.

Not only have few met these promises, most of these projects have failed to meet the present-day needs of those who cycle and walk for transportation, let alone the anticipated needs of future generations.

We're calling on the provincial government, including current cabinet members and Members of the Legislative Assembly from all parties, to follow the lead of many B.C. municipalities, as well as other provinces, and leverage the collective vision and expertise of active transportation experts required to connect our communities via truly sustainable transportation options:

- **Establish suitable facilities and access to provincial rights-of-way** for cycling and walking along specific highway corridors where alternative routes for active transportation are lacking but in demand, such as:
 - **Highway 1** (between Surrey and Chilliwack)
 - **Highway 6** (between Vernon and Lumby, and much of the Slocan Valley)
 - **Highway 16** (from Prince Rupert to Prince George)
 - **Highway 19A** (between Campbell River and Nanaimo)
 - **Highway 97** (between Lake Country and Kelowna)
 - **Highway 101** (between Langdale and Earl's Cove)
- **Provide safe access to and from all B.C. Ferries terminals**, with particular attention to deficiencies and accessibility issues in Tsawwassen, Horseshoe Bay, and Nanaimo, and all adjacent metropolitan areas, for all ages and cycling abilities.

- **Invest in more traffic signals, safe crossings, and space** for cycling and walking on all provincial highways across B.C. primarily served by provincial highways.

INITIATE ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION 'MEGA-PROJECTS'

Perhaps the biggest and most symbolic contributions the provincial government could make to active transportation would be commitments to support the development of major, regionally-significant cycling and walking networks and routes, which could be used to connect multiple, large, urban communities underserved by transit or other mobility options.

Major projects of such significance would also serve the needs of the province's recreation, sport, and tourism sectors, which could benefit enormously from the development of major active transportation 'destinations' to serve future recovery efforts.

Examples of such projects at various stages of planning across B.C. include:

- [The Great Blue Heron Way](#) in Metro Vancouver
- [The E&N Rail Corridor](#) on Vancouver Island

- The Central Okanagan regional cycling and walking trail network planned jointly by Kelowna, West Kelowna, Lake Country, Peachland, and Westbank First Nation

FAST-TRACK FUTURE MOBILITY, TODAY

Lastly, the rise in popularity of electric-powered bicycles (e-bikes) and cargo bicycles have resulted in a clear and present opportunity for the provincial government to investigate and develop the necessary legislative and regulatory frameworks to enable the growth of this important sector.

This has become even more relevant with the recent decision by Transport Canada to repeal its legislative authority of electric bikes, and transfer their regulation to the provinces and territories; this has created confusion within the e-bike manufacturing and retail sectors across the country regarding common definitions and uses of e-bikes.

In B.C., all electric bikes are now regulated by ICBC as ‘Motor Assisted Cycles’ (MAC), which places limits on their operation, power and speed. Given the possible validity of safety concerns relating to the current regulatory environment, the increasing numbers of various kinds of mobility devices now in use on public roads in B.C. communities, and the

fact that uncertainty surrounding the legal definition of MACs remains, there is a great need for a provincial review of e-bikes, scooters, and other micro-mobility devices.

In light of MoTI’s recent invitation to B.C. municipalities to bring more micro-mobility devices into our cities via the new Motor Vehicle Act Pilot Project, the need to resolve the inherent, legislative contradictions in the MVA — which does not allow such devices to be used on streets and sidewalks — is now more urgent than ever.

The future of people and goods movement will include human-powered technologies, and the ingenuity of B.C.-based companies like Grin Technologies, Motorino, Ohm Electric Bikes, and Shift Delivery has positioned British Columbia as an innovator and leader in this area, as it has become in managing its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion

In summary, the time for the Government of B.C. to connect the province, by making greater, more strategic investments in active transportation for our many growing communities, is now.

While the provincial government should be commended for greenlighting ongoing work to fulfill the goals and deliverables of the Active Transportation Strategy, addressing the unanticipated impacts of COVID-19 and supporting our newly emergent and collective needs for cycling and walking requires additional policy focus, legislative remedies, and resources.

We must be prepared to make changes not just to begin to rebuild social and economic life in this province today, but to also prepare for crises to come.

We must develop solutions that can be sustained in good times, and in times of environmental and health challenge.

We must be ready, willing, and able to update legislation and regulatory frameworks quickly to prevent any risk of unnecessary injuries and deaths.

We're asking Premier Horgan, Minister Trevena, cabinet ministers and the B.C. Legislative Assembly as a whole, to enable the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to lead British Columbians through the COVID-19 pandemic by providing real active transportation solutions to all communities.

We hope to see this leadership expressed through bold and decisive action in the coming weeks and months.

Sources

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3. *The Other 25%: The Big Move & Active Transportation Investment*, Toronto Centre for Active Transportation, Clean Air Partnership (September 2013).



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