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February 13, 2015

His Worship Brian Bowman  
Mayor's Office  
510 Main Street  
Winnipeg, MB R3B 1B9

**Re: Funding Rapid Transit**

Dear Mr. Mayor,

Congratulations on the welcome news that the Province of Manitoba and the Government of Canada, in partnership with the City of Winnipeg, are committed to funding completion of Stage 2 of the Southwest Transitway. It is a promising start toward completing the Rapid Transit network by 2030, which we trust will include enhancements to the entire public transit system in Winnipeg.

We read with interest your comment in the [Winnipeg Free Press article](#), dated February 10<sup>th</sup>, that "...council has yet to identify where its funds will come from," and that the administration has suggested the funds could come from raising transit fares and/or property taxes. Peter Miller, Chair of Green Action Centre's Policy Committee, and staff member, Beth McKechnie, have gathered the information below, which we feel is valuable to present to you with respect to this issue.

Green Action Centre believes it is inappropriate to add to property (or sales) taxes to meet transportation infrastructure needs when motor vehicles fall so far short of paying their share of societal costs in general and the costs they impose on society in particular. The suggestion that those who currently use transit bear the brunt of the cost of a public good is more likely to reduce ridership than generate additional revenue. As we have said on other occasions, it's time to [get cars and trucks off welfare](#).

Furthermore, public discussion often ends up pitting the repair of our existing streets against transit improvements, as if the two are incompatible and we must choose one or the other. The condition of our roads and sidewalks affects all residents, whether on foot, on a bike, in a car or in a bus. At the same time, transit improvements benefit all residents, whether or not they choose to use the service, and they are a critical aspect of attracting and retaining young residents and progressive businesses.

Meanwhile, city administration, under direction from the former administration, presses ahead with studies to expand or build new roads, which will cost in the hundreds of millions of dollars to build and require millions more to maintain. We continue to design residential areas on the edge of the city that become a self-fulfilling prophecy – the distance and lack of transit service creates car-dependence, which justifies road building and expansion, and the cycle continues. As such, we continue to assume that what was needed (and wanted) by residents 20 years ago will continue to apply for 50 more. Yet distance can be easily overcome with a robust public transit system.

To borrow a quote from US Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx, for too long transportation discussions "... have been focused on recreating the past. Instead, we need to focus on the trends that are shaping our future."

Green Action Centre would offer the following sources of funding for serious consideration:

- 1) Delay plans to build the Waverley Street underpass, Chief Peguis extension westward (Main to McPhillips and McPhillips to Brookside), Kenaston Ave widening (Ness to Taylor), and the William R Clement Parkway extension (Grant to Wilkes). These major road projects alone add up to more than \$600 million and perpetuate the expectation (and reality) of car-dependence in our city, in the absence of an ability to maintain these roadways once built. Moreover, they use public dollars that could otherwise be allocated to building a robust transit system that would provide a viable replacement to driving.
- 2) Work with the Province to explore new funding options, including a tax on registered vehicles, an increase in the fuel tax, increasing the property tax on parking lots, automated road and bridge toll billing facilitated by transponder technology, and other measures. Reduce and eventually eliminate fossil-fueled transportation subsidies by collecting revenues from vehicles and their usage sufficient to reflect the social costs of road building and maintenance as well as carbon pollution while making a fair contribution to general revenues in support of public benefits. Note that Manitoba's strategic directions report [2020-Manitoba Transportation Vision](#), the product of extensive public consultation, recommended an increase to fuel tax on the condition that the revenue generated be directed into a dedicated transportation infrastructure renewal fund. At our urging, the 2012 Budget made a partial move in this direction with a 2.5 cents/litre fuel tax increase after a two-decade freeze. But in 2013, the user pay principle, endorsed as fair by Manitobans, was passed over in favour of the 1% sales tax increase for infrastructure. With most purchases except fuel and a few items like groceries subject to the tax, the subsidy to drivers thereby increased. A sustainable Winnipeg means we all must pay our share, including drivers.

We urge you to seriously consider these options, which would free up hundreds of millions of dollars needed to complete the Rapid Transit network *and* repair our existing roadways. We would be happy to meet with you to discuss these options further.

Yours sincerely,



William Dowie,  
President of the Board, Green Action Centre

cc: Tracy Hucul, Executive Director, Green Action Centre  
cc: Peter Miller, Acting Chair, Green Action Centre Policy Committee  
cc: City Council Members