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Dear Members of the Budget Committee,

RE: 2015 Capital and Operating Budgets – Cycling Infrastructure

On behalf of Cycle Toronto advocates in six west end wards, we thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on this year’s budget. In the letter below, we identified a number of areas where the budget could better support cycling and help build a healthy, vibrant, and safe city.

Support “Minimum Grid”

During last year’s election campaign, Cycle Toronto and its over 2,800 members called on mayoral and council candidates to support the construction of 200 kilometres of bike lanes during this term of council, including 100 kilometres of cycle tracks. A petition supporting this “Minimum Grid” obtained almost 6,500 signatures.¹ By October 27, 25 elected councillors had pledged support to this campaign.

However, a “Minimum Grid” cannot be delivered without the necessary resources. Page 13 of Transportation Services’ 2015 – 2024 Capital Budget and Plan states the ten-year funding of \$87.9 million would enable only 100 kilometres of off road trails and 80 kilometres of on street bike lanes.² We believe this will not satisfy the growing demand for safe cycling in Toronto.³

Fully Utilize Capital Budget

Upon reviewing this year’s cycling infrastructure budget, it appears there has been a carryover of \$6.3 million from last year’s budget. While we understand the ability to fully utilize the budget has been an issue in the past, this carryover is due to the two-year nature of Transportation Services’ capital budget and the 2014 budget appears to have been fully committed. We applaud the cycling unit staff for their efforts and professionalism, though operating capacity remains an issue. Therefore, it is important that the cycling unit staff receive the support they need to allow them to utilize the funds made available and invest in new infrastructure.

Address Bicycle Ring Post Backlog

Last year, Transportation Services reported that the backlog for the installation of ring-and-post bike parking had reached 1000 spots. There is no indication in this year’s budget that they have been able to catch up. For this reason, we would suggest earmarking a new full-time equivalent human resource to bike parking installation (rather than street furniture in general) to eliminate the backlog by the end of 2015 and then report back next year on progress.

¹https://secure.avaaz.org/en/petition/Toronto_Mayoral_Candidates_Support_Minimum_Grid_100km_protected_lanes_100_km_bike_blvds_by_2016/sign/?atfNkeb

²<http://www1.toronto.ca/City%20Of%20Toronto/Strategic%20Communications/City%20Budget/2015/PDFs/Capital%20Analyst%20Notes/Final%20-%20BC%20Capital%20Budget%20Analyst%20Notes%20-%20Transportation.pdf>

³ A table indicating bicycle mode share from 2011, 2006, and 2001 can be found in Appendix A. (Page 3)

Increase Transparency

For future budgets, it would also be useful if the costs of cycling infrastructure were made more transparent to help Toronto's residents better understand how cost effective cycling infrastructure is.

Expand Bike Share Toronto

We are pleased that funds are being set aside to acquire new Bike Share assets, including bikes and docking stations. To be a truly viable element of Toronto's transportation infrastructure, Bike Share Toronto must expand from 1000 bicycles to 5000 sooner rather than later – with an expansion of stations from the core to High Park in the west, the Beaches in the east, and gradual northward expansion as demand dictates.

Conclusion

We understand that specific infrastructure line items must wait until next year's budget; given the City of Toronto's Cycling Unit is currently developing a new Bike Plan which will be sent to council for approval this summer. Even so, the 2015 budget can set the level of support required to build a "Minimum Grid" of bike lanes, catch up with the ring post backlog, and provide a much needed expansion for Bike Share Toronto. We believe that delivering on these goals would require a higher level of spending than is currently provided for.

By investing in safe cycling infrastructure, not only would it encourage 73% of Torontonians to bike more⁴ (including cycling to work or school), but cycling has been proven to be good for local businesses and tourism. The business case has been confirmed by the Toronto Cycling Think and Do Tank, whose research indicated merchants often overestimate the proportion of customers who arrive by car, as well as higher spending by pedestrians and cyclists.⁵

Thank you for taking the time to review these recommendations. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you wish to discuss this further.

Sincerely yours,

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Ward 13 Bikes

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⁴ <http://www.sharetheroad.ca/files/STR2014Pollingsummary.pdf>

⁵ http://www.torontocycling.org/uploads/1/3/1/3/13138411/cycling_economies_eqlinton_final.pdf

Appendix A

	2011	2006	2001
# of Toronto residents who commute by bicycle	25,350	19,780	14,925
# of Toronto commuters	1,174,610	1,148,915	1,145,990
Bicycle mode share	2.16%	1.72%	1.30%

Sources:

https://www1.toronto.ca/city_of_toronto/social_development_finance_administration/files/pdf/nhs-backgroundunder-labour-education-work-commuting.pdf (2011 Information - Page 14 of PDF File)

<http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=baa00995bbbc1410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD&vgnnextchannel=caa5970aa08c1410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD> (2001 & 2006 Information)