

July 17, 2023

Project Calgary

RE: Letter of Support to retain and make permanent the 3rd Avenue Mobility Track

Sustainable Calgary is providing this letter of support for making the 3rd Avenue Mobility Track a permanent part of downtown Calgary's transportation infrastructure. We need to build a city in which walking, biking, and public transit are the norm, and the private automobile is a tertiary mode. Why? To address the climate emergency, make life better and more affordable for citizens, and provide greater opportunities for Calgarians to adopt healthy activities as part of their daily routines.

As part of this larger picture, enhancing and expanding 5A infrastructure will be critical, such that it is efficient, safe, and pleasant. Successful infrastructure connects residents to basic household services, schools and post-secondary institutions, workplaces, cultural and recreational amenities, community and spiritual gathering places, and transit hubs.

The 3rd Avenue Mobility Track is a vital and well-used east-west connector forming an important part of the active mode network that provides direct access to varied destinations and communities in the downtown core. While Calgary has made great investments in bicycling infrastructure that make it possible to move quickly and safely through busy downtown roadways and arterials, many gaps in this infrastructure undermine citizens' ability to negotiate roadways safely to destinations or make safe connections to other active transport infrastructure. In the absence of the 3rd Avenue Mobility Track, 5A users have only the pathway along the Bow River to the north and the 8th/Stephen's Avenue active mode corridor to the south; the large area in between forms a dense urban setting, with fast-moving traffic on arterial roads, that would be unwelcoming and barriered to many active mode users.

Calgary's commercial core includes 8,500 residents, and Calgary's downtown strategy in large part hinges on encouraging significant growth in the resident population. New mixed-housing types are in development to attract varied residents, including families and low-income persons. Indeed, the City's office conversion to residence program seeks to transform 6 million sq ft of office space to mixed-residence types. The city will not be successful in transforming downtown into a desirable, vibrant community if amenities that serve the needs of an expanding and varied community are neglected, such as leaving residents and families to negotiate congested arterial roads in absence of a protected 5A facility or negotiate missing 5A links.

An impressive breadth of research on wheeling lanes shows that we are much better off with them than without. On the climate emergency, a study of Calgary neighbourhoods found that average personal vehicle travel per household ranged from 16,200 km to 45,600 km annually, resulting in GHG emissions of between 5.0 and 15.1 t of CO₂e. The burning of transportation fuel accounts for 37% of Calgary's annual GHG emissions. A 2021 study published in *Transportation Research* found that people

who cycle daily have 84% lower carbon emissions from all their daily travel than those who do not. The average person who shifts from car to bike for just one day a week can cut their carbon footprint by 3.2kg of CO₂, equivalent to the emissions from driving a car for 10km. Urban residents who switch from driving to cycling for just one trip per day reduced their carbon footprint over a year by the equivalent emissions of a one-way flight from London to New York. Replacing car trips with bike trips is a critical component of meeting climate targets in Calgary.

On affordability, Statistics Canada's Household Spending Survey found that the average cost of private transportation in Canada is \$11,433 per year. Based on driving habits of Calgarians noted in the previous paragraph, annual kilometres driven results in expenditures for gas alone of between \$2,060 to \$6,169 per year (2007\$). Living in a car-dependent city is expensive. Providing citizens with travel options that allow more families to drive less or even reduce the number of cars they own and operate can provide significant cost relief on family budgets.

On health outcomes, a 2017 study published in the *British Medical Journal* found that cycling to work (a proxy for people making regular trips by bike for transport) was associated with a 41% lower risk of prematurely dying overall compared to commuting by car or public transport. Cycle commuters had a 52% lower risk of dying from heart disease and a 40% lower risk of dying from cancer. They also had a 46% lower risk of developing heart disease and a 45% lower risk of developing cancer at all.

A study published in 2019 in the *Journal of Transport & Health* reviewed 13 years' worth of data from 12 major U.S. cities, including Denver, Seattle, Kansas City, and Chicago. Researchers found compelling evidence indicating that high-bicycling-mode-share cities are not only safer for those pedalling but for those driving and walking as well. Study co-author Wesley Marshall, a University of Colorado Denver engineering professor, noted, "Protected separated bike facilities was one of our biggest factors associated with lower fatalities and lower injuries for all road users." It turns out that bike infrastructure – particularly physical barriers – significantly lower fatality rates regardless of how many cyclists are on the road. They do good work just by being part of the street.

The built form of our city must be rethought and rebuilt to reflect our reality. We cannot continue the status-quo. Our auto-dependent city comes with real social, economic and ecological costs. We can instead retrofit our city to improve public health, while also benefiting the environment, the economy, and our quality of life. Retaining the 3rd Avenue Mobility Track is consistent with Calgary's Climate Strategy, the Downtown Strategy, and the Safe Mobility Strategy. Sustainable Calgary urges the City of Calgary and Calgary City Council to make the 3rd Avenue Mobility Track permanent.

Sincerely,



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