

ENHANCING TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVES AND LEGISLATION TO CREATE LIVABLE CITIES (2023)

Issue

Governments across the world have made substantial efforts to combat climate change, from banning the sale of combustion-engine vehicles¹, to investing in active transportation². Transportation is the largest single contributor to B.C.'s greenhouse gas emissions so change in the sector is essential. Although these programs will result in an important move away from oil and gas-powered vehicles and towards sustainable modes of transportation such as using electric vehicles, transit systems, biking or walking, policy and legislation must change to reach the true potential of sustainable transportation systems. Cyclists are offered minimal protection in the B.C. Motor Vehicle Act and as a result, many residents are held back from adopting active transportation alternatives to single-passenger vehicles. This will result in the B.C. Government falling short of its Vision Zero and climate goals.

There is also little investment in micromobility, which is the general term for fleets of small, low-speed vehicles (primarily bikes and scooters) for personal transportation, which can be either human powered or electric or a combination of the two. Micromobility is primarily found in urban areas and used for short trips in areas with good connectivity and a density of destinations.

Background

Motor Vehicle Act

BC's Motor Vehicle Act (the MVA) as its name suggests, was written with motorists in mind. Rules for cyclists were largely confined to a section titled "Bicycles and Play-vehicles." The MVA was passed in 1957 and has changed surprisingly little since. The transportation environment has evolved since 1957.

Without adequate safety measures legislated, there will be a hesitation for users currently in single-passenger vehicles to switch to bicycles and other active transportation modes. The Motor Vehicle Act needs to be adjusted.

Active Transportation and Micromobility Investments

The B.C. Active Transportation Infrastructure Grants Program provides guidance and cost-sharing for B.C. communities to make it easier and safer for people to walk, ride or roll using

¹ <https://driving.ca/column/motor-mouth/motor-mouth-canada-moves-to-ban-internal-combustion-engines-by-2035>

² <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/transportation/funding-engagement-permits/funding-grants/active-transportation-infrastructure-grants#:~:text=The%20B.C.%20Active%20Transportation%20Infrastructure%20Grants%20Program%20provides%20guidance%20and,roll%20using%20active%20transportation%20modes.>

active transportation modes. It can take many forms and is continually evolving as new technologies emerge. It includes:

1. Walking.
2. Cycling.
3. Rolling (skateboarding, in-line skating).
4. Other emerging modes that are legal in B.C.

The program provides cost-sharing opportunities for network planning grants and infrastructure grants. Funding from these grant programs support the development of active transportation infrastructure for all ages and abilities.

These investments are welcomed and well utilized by communities but there is a lack of investment in concepts such as cycle highways³ or micromobility modes of transportation. In fact, the grants are vastly oversubscribed, showing a high demand from municipalities to implement cycling networks, and inadequate supply of cost-share funding from higher levels of government. Micromobility serves as a first/last mile option that is faster than hailing a taxi, walking, or transferring to low-frequency transit. Typical micromobility trips are about 1-3 miles, but some trips can be as long as 10 miles, especially when aided by electric drive. Micromobility vehicles rarely transport more than one person at a time.

Bikesharing and scooter sharing are methods of transportation that can be implemented in many cities across B.C., which will cut congestion, increase health, and reduce GHG emissions⁴. But these industries are unable to fully integrate into a city when there is little incentive for local governments to include their operations as they develop community plans. The 2023 Surrey Road Survey showed that 49.4% of people want bike share but need routes to be safer before they would shift to using it.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government follow the recommendation in the B.C. Road Safety Law Reform Group Position Paper⁵ to:

- 1) Amend the Motor Vehicle Act by:
 - a) Clarifying the rights and duties of road users to improve understanding and compliance and reduce conflict between all road user groups.
 - b) Acknowledging the fundamental differences between road user groups' capabilities and vulnerabilities and recognizing the increased risks faced by more vulnerable classes of road users.
 - c) Aligning the law with best practices for safer road use by vulnerable road users.

³ <https://bikehub.ca/research/making-the-case-for-cycle-highways-in-metro-vancouver>

⁴ <https://nabsa.net/2022/04/25/climatesustainability/>

⁵ https://bikehub.ca/sites/default/files/modernizing_the_bc_motor_vehicle_act_nov_2017_1.pdf

- d) Reducing the likelihood of a collision involving a vulnerable road user.
 - e) Prioritizing enforcement of laws that target activities most likely to result in collisions, injuries and fatalities.
 - f) Reducing the likely severity of injuries resulting from collisions involving vulnerable road users.
- 2) Creating an enabling policy environment for micro mobility businesses to operate in micro mobility such as e-scooters and e-bikes so that municipalities can easily adopt them.
 - 3) Increase B.C. Active Transportation Infrastructure Grant funding to \$100 million/year to better match municipal government demand.