

TOWARDS A BIKE-FRIENDLY CANADA

A National Cycling Strategy Overview




“ Potential for **this modal shift can be found in municipalities of all sizes, in every population group, and for a number of types of journeys.**

–Finland’s National Action Plan for Walking and Cycling 2020

What is a National Cycling Strategy?

A national cycling strategy is a consultatively written plan to achieve the overall goal of more cycling. It is evidence-based, includes financial implications and results in a set of policies, guidelines and actions. A Canadian cycling strategy will guide all levels of government and partners as they work to improve conditions for cycling across the country.

Typically, a federal government agency (such as Transport Canada) will lead and coordinate the development of such a strategy on behalf of the federal government with input and resources from relevant internal and external stakeholders including other federal government agencies (such as Health, Environment, Sport, and Infrastructure) provinces, municipalities, NGOs, research institutions, industry groups, cycling advocates and community organizations.



Cover photo: Cycling home from school, Den Haag, Netherlands. Photo by Anders Swanson
Eager kids summer. Photo by Janice Lukes

Why do we need one?

Canada faces many critical challenges in the next few years including soaring health care and infrastructure costs, CAC and GHG emissions, and traffic congestion. Reliable research has shown that increasing cycling mode share delivers significant savings and positive returns unmatched by any other type of government spending. Nothing else eliminates pollution and emissions while increasing worker productivity, longevity and well being at such a low cost. Cycling is the sustainable solution to transportation that brings substantial benefits for society and across multiple ministries. With the right infrastructure and programming support, cycling can occur anywhere and in any weather. If a national cycling strategy, which can include walking and other active modes of transportation, is not specifically identified and implemented, experience has shown that cycling falls through the policy and funding cracks and remains neglected. The opportunity for improvement is too great and the costs of doing nothing are too high for Canada not to embark on a National Cycling Strategy.

Who has one?

Every country engages in activities that target and affect bicycle usage. Many have formal policies. Many countries who recognize the benefit of cycling and wish to see it increase will develop a coordinated, high-level approach. The summary of research, policies, guiding principles and targets is called a national cycling strategy. The best ones are comprehensive in their approach and provide evidence-based justification for investment.

Who is it for?

All Canadians . Decisions are continually being made across the country that affect our ability to ride a bicycle. Those decisions leave a lasting impact on our country, our cities and who we are as a people. From the most modest bike to school program to a billion-dollar bridge project, a national cycling strategy can detail how cycling fits in everywhere and helps governments at every level understand their role and target their investments. It ensures that everyone, regardless of their age, ability, gender, economic status or postal code is able to personally enjoy the innumerable benefits of cycling.



“ ...it is believed possible that **cycling could have a 15 % share of all journeys made.**

-Germany's National Cycling Plan 2020

What Does a National Cycling Strategy Cover?

The following topics should be addressed in the context of a national cycling strategy:

Usage and Demand

A review of benchmarks used to measure bicycle usage in Canada including improved modal share statistics for different trip types to help us all know more about where, when and why Canadians are currently choosing to travel by bicycle. Just as importantly, it would include improved estimates of the level of latent demand that exists so that we can map our progress, set realistic targets and better predict what is going to happen in the future.

Strategic Capital Infrastructure Investment

A review of capital investment and funding frameworks to be sure that infrastructure funding is being directed strategically to:

- Urban Cycling Networks (Protected lanes, Cycle Tracks and Cycling Highways)
- Regional Cycle Touring Networks
- National Cycling Routes, the Trans Canada Trail, Rails-to-trails, Rails-with-Trails
- River, Roadway and Railway Crossing Improvements
- End of Trip Facilities and Wayfinding

Strategic Policy Development and Planning

A review of key policies governing the external and internal operations of governments across the country in relation to cycling.

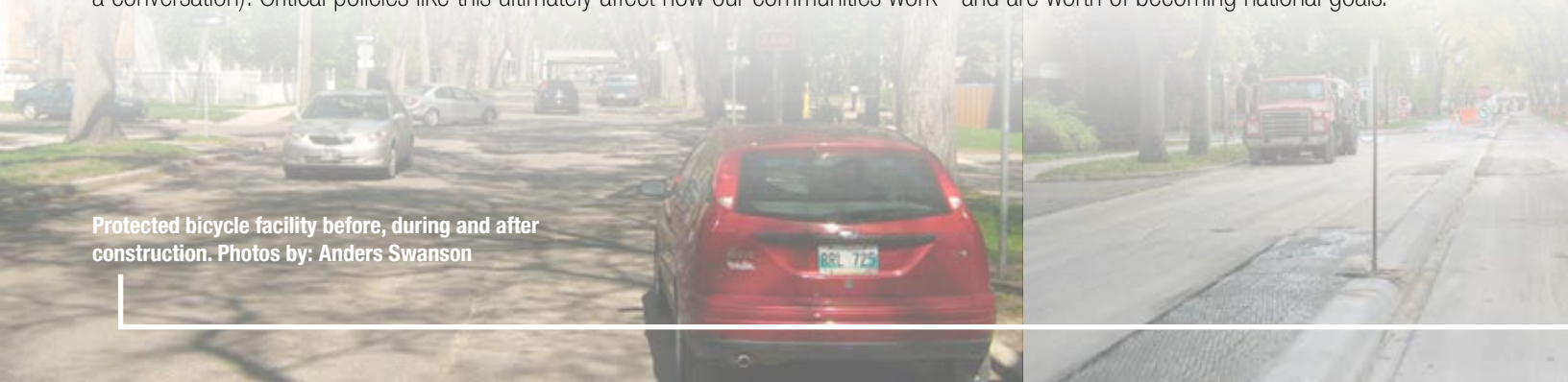
Capacity for Research, Program Delivery and Knowledge Transfer

Programs and services related to cycling are delivered by governments, NGOs, industry associations, schools and community groups. A national strategy will examine Canada's ability to catalyse change, recommend funding mechanisms and develop new programs and services. These will increase our capacity for knowledge transfer and help us learn from each other.

Infrastructure Design Quality

Includes bike-friendly protocols/standards when building any nationally-funded infrastructure and a review of standards, guidelines and funding criteria that are in place for transportation projects across Canada. Includes guidance to foster the adoption of important concepts like year-round accessibility, all-ages-and-abilities design, Vision Zero or even something as simple as conversational cycling (ensuring that our bicycle infrastructure standards and laws, like the Danish example, aim to allow two people to ride side by side having a conversation). Critical policies like this ultimately affect how our communities work - and are worth of becoming national goals.

Protected bicycle facility before, during and after construction. Photos by: Anders Swanson



The Role of Federal Government Ministries and Agencies, Provinces, Municipalities and First Nations

A clear understanding of how cycling rates are both affected by and affect the entire spectrum of government activity at the national level. Detailed description of the federal government as a policy maker, an evidence-based leader, a coordinator and major funder. A clear understanding of everyone's role and guidance so that they may better understand their contribution to the national strategy.

Cycling and Health

A thorough understanding of the impact of daily physical activity on disease prevention and the Canadian healthcare system leading to empirical funding justification for infrastructure investment.

Cycling and the Economy

A thorough understanding of the impact of local and regional bicycle transportation on worker productivity, local economies, and the finances of individuals and their families. Funding justifications for infrastructure investment based on productivity increases and other economic benefits.

Cycling and the Environment

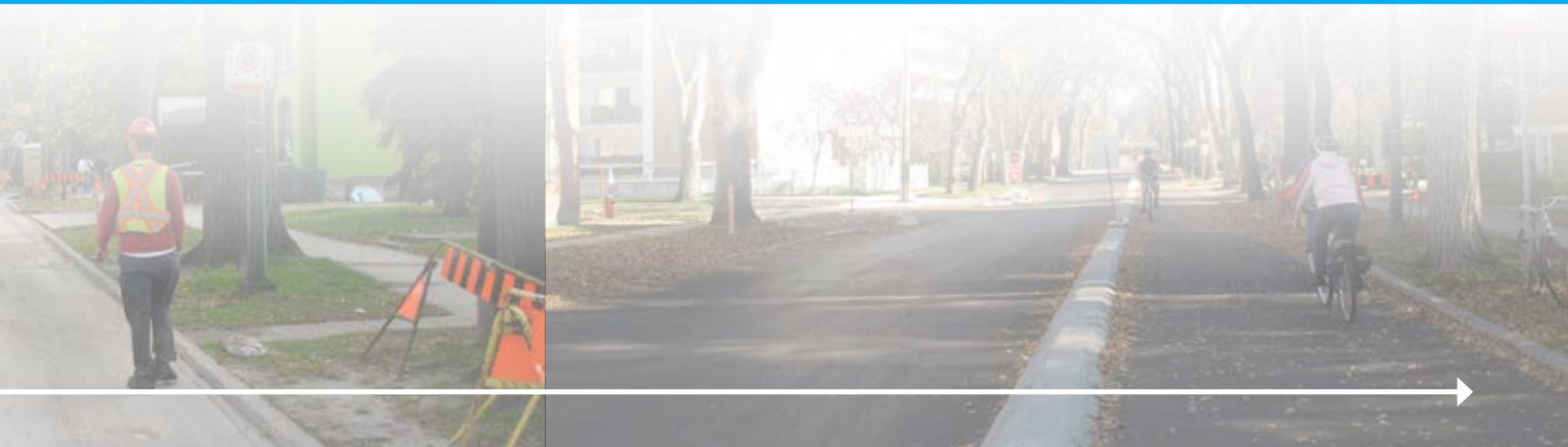
A thorough understanding of the impact of climate change and the role of cycling in meeting our international commitment like CO2 emission reduction targets.

Cycling and Transit

Comprehensive consideration and analysis of trip-chaining and cycling's contribution as a solution for the first and last mile of a transit journey.

“ ...new bicycle facilities, facilitating cycling on existing traffic areas and better operation and maintenance in cooperation between the state, counties and municipalities [are] the most important instruments for increased cycling. **Winter operation is particularly important.**

-Norway's National Bicycle Strategy (2014)



Cycling and Recreation

A review of the importance of cycling as a recreational activity for millions of Canadians, including the economic and health benefits of investing in mountain bike trails, amateur sports, etc.

Cycling and Tourism

A national cycling strategy will help us understand and plan for the significant economic and cultural impact of daytrips, weekend trips, long distance touring and adventure cycling.

Placemaking and the Knowledge Economy

A thorough understanding of cycling's role in building smarter cities and stronger communities.

Land-Use Planning

Guidance on efficient planning approaches that encourage sustainable local travel, and internal policy considerations like the siting of federal government buildings.

Rural and Northern Communities

From Canada's smallest rural communities to its largest cities, people ride bicycles. Each community is different, and a national strategy needs to consider everyone's needs.

“ Despite the various measures implemented, the longer-term trend over the past several years is unfortunately clear: The number of children cycling to school has decreased. **It is therefore necessary to examine what can be done in order to reverse this trend.** ”

-Denmark's National Bicycle Strategy (2014)



New cycling infrastructure in rural Alberta and (opposite) Downtown Calgary.
Photos by: Anders Swanson
(above) Modified infographic. Original via European Cycling Federation.



Road, Vehicle, Personal and Public Safety

A renewed approach to policy frameworks, safe vehicle design and technology that help eliminate death and serious injury on our roads, with a focus on reducing risk for vulnerable road user populations. . A recognition that cycling infrastructure is a form of social infrastructure that helps make our communities stronger and safer.

Communications, Messaging and Education

A look at the messaging of Canadian government organizations and how they are contributing to the normalization of cycling.

Children's Mobility

Tailored strategies designed to provide more children with the opportunity to travel to school actively and safely. A comprehensive approach would include infrastructure improvements, programming and education for students, parents and teachers and would ultimately reverse national trends in the number of children meeting daily requirements for physical activity.

Accessibility and Electric Mobility

Policy frameworks, regulations and design guidance that benefits everyone, especially those traveling on foot, in wheelchairs, or using electric-assisted chairs and bicycles. Specifically, guidelines, policies, standards and regulations for e-bikes and their use on cycling infrastructure.

The Bicycle Industry

Providing bicycles to 34 Million Canadians means big business. A National Cycling Strategy should help guide innovation, streamline the prospects of Canadian bicycle-related businesses and, ultimately, ensure all Canadians have access to good quality, well-maintained bicycles. It will also study taxes and tariffs considering the basic principle of taxing "bads" and subsidizing "goods".

Funding

A review of funding and grant evaluation mechanisms in place for transportation projects across Canada. Cost-benefit research that quantifies the existing and potential impacts of cycling for a wide array of federal government ministries and agencies. Projections for federal funding on bicycle-specific projects over the next 20 years.

Targets

Targets are projections of what is possible and act as simple but effective communication and leadership tools. A handful of key, clear targets helps to quickly and easily measure success.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Methodology for ongoing measurement of key metrics, criteria by which success can be measured and a regular timeline for review.



For more information on building a Bike Friendly Canada, visit CanadaBikes.org



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