

# **Proposal to establish a Fund to Encourage Active Transportation (FEAT)**

April 19, 1999. Modified: September 4, 2001

Hi Folks: We have been working on this proposal over the past few months, and have circulated it to various environmental and other groups in Canada. If you are a member of a Canadian health, women's, union, environmental, social justice or other group that might be interested in signing on, please pass it along. If you would like to circulate it - please do! And thanks in advance for any help you can offer.

We have all heard much talk about protecting the environment. We invite you to join us in some action.

We are convinced that there are significant opportunities to create jobs, save money, and at the same time improve our health and the health of the environment. One potent but largely overlooked solution is active transportation: walking, cycling, rollerblading, skiing, etc.

Below is an exciting proposal aiming to motivate the federal government to establish a national Fund to Encourage Active Transportation. We call it FEAT.

We invite your group to sign on to this FEAT initiative: please let us know. Once we have collected the names of groups that endorse this proposal, it will be circulated to a variety of government agencies and Members of Parliament for their consideration. We hope that this discussion paper will help to catalyse policy decisions and free up significant increases in funding for active modes of transportation.

The old saying goes: "we can all hang together, or we can all hang separately." We hope that your group will hang with us and sign onto this proposal. Together, we have great strength and can bring about significant change.

We look forward to working with you on this campaign. Please don't hesitate to contact us with any ideas you may have for advancing the campaign, or improving

this report. And feel free to circulate this report to other groups you think may be interested.

Sincerely,

Angela Bischoff and Tooker Gomberg; greenspiration at web.ca (416) 532-3939

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## **The Case for a National Fund to Encourage Active Transportation (FEAT)**

April 11, 1999 by Tooker Gomberg and Angela Bischoff

Prepared for EcoCity Society, Edmonton. Modified September 4, 2001.

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### **1. Overview**

We are proposing in this discussion paper that a federal Fund to Encourage Active Transportation (FEAT) be established to support active transportation in Canada.

As outlined below, there is great value in promoting active transportation (AT - also known as non-motorized transportation, or NMT) - walking, bicycling, rollerblading, and other active, people-powered modes of transportation.

This report outlines:

- \* the rationale behind supporting AT
  - \* similar programs that have been implemented elsewhere
  - \* an array of funding mechanisms and policy initiatives which would serve to improve infrastructure for AT and attract more people to use active transportation modes.
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### **2. Where We're At Now**

As it stands, automobiles are the dominant form of transportation, and the use of cars is growing. They also get the lion's share of the funding. A study done for Edmonton City Council in 1996 found that each driver is subsidized by \$1855 per year while each transit rider is subsidized \$193 per year, each pedestrian \$53, and each cyclist \$14 per year.[1] Numerous other studies have reached similar conclusions.

One third of car costs are paid by society at large (via general tax revenues) rather than the drivers themselves (via licence and fuel taxes). Paying for our system of highways and roads requires an extra \$4.6 billion each year from general tax revenues.[2] Cars are more heavily subsidized than public transit.

Such automobile dependency has significant social, environmental and economic costs: health care costs from car crashes, parking subsidies, congestion, roadway building and maintenance, pollution, energy consumption, land use impacts, and inequitable disbenefits to non-drivers. Additionally, automobile-oriented cities devote up to 30% of their land just for roads, plus additional land for parking, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of increased car use, reduced travel choices, and a sprawling form of development.[3]

If the goal of most transportation is "access" to desired goods, services and destinations, then it is reasonable to consider and support the least-cost options. Active transportation fits the bill on all accounts, including: reducing traffic congestion, alleviating air pollution, reducing parking demand, user cost savings, energy conservation, mobility for non-drivers, health promotion, and sustainable urban development.[4]

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### **3. Promoting Active Transportation Will Help Save Money**

As budgets shrink, governments are faced with growing demands for increased services and infrastructure expansion.

\* Bicycle and pedestrian facilities take up little space, and are considerably cheaper to accommodate than automobile or transit facilities.

- \* If just 5 percent of the miles driven in North America were shifted to bike transport, savings would top US\$100 billion.
  - \* Designing our cities in a more compact form can save huge sums of money. The Greater Vancouver Regional District concluded that they could save \$2.2 billion on transportation costs if urban growth became more concentrated.[5]
  - \* Vélo Quebec estimates that every dollar invested in trail and pathway infrastructure will bring \$16 to \$41 into the local economy. As well, bicycle trails can be significant tourism attractions.
  - \* Because of regular exercise, people who cycle or walk to work are healthier and more productive.
  - \* According to the Conference Board of Canada, a 1% increase in the proportion of Canadians who are physically active could save over \$10 million annually in health care costs for ischemic heart disease alone.[6]
  - \* The costs associated with motor vehicle collisions reaches \$3.5 billion every year in Alberta alone.[7]
  - \* The hidden costs of automobile dependency to Canada's economy is estimated at \$34.2 billion per year.[8]
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#### **4. Promoting Active Transportation Will Help Improve Our Health**

Physical inactivity represents a major health risk and physically inactive Canadians are a priority for government action.[9]

- \* The Heart and Stroke Foundation estimates that 2 out of 3 Canadian children and youths are at risk of premature death and disability because of inactivity.
- \* Obesity in the general population is rising.
- \* Lack of regular activity may be as detrimental to longevity as cigarette smoking.
- \* Regular participation in physical activity can increase a person's average life expectancy by as much as two years.[10]
- \* The health benefits of cycling greatly outweigh any negative impacts associated with cycle crashes by a massive factor of 20:1.[11]
- \* Traffic crashes are the largest killers of Canadian children and youth aged 1 to 24.[12]

- \* Time spent in traffic jams contributes to mental stress, which has a major health impact.
  - \* Society invests enormously in the fight against childhood diseases, but we accept the far greater hazards of automobility as if they were somehow natural and thus unavoidable.[13]
  - \* Health Canada identifies active transportation within their mandate of increasing fitness and active living of Canadians.[14]
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## **5. Active Transportation Means Healthier Communities**

An emphasis on active transportation, especially walking, will help improve quality of life in neighbourhoods by sustaining the "fabric" of the community, while driving cuts it.

- \* More bicycling and walking helps to calm neighbourhoods, and make them safer with what Jane Jacobs calls "eyes on the street".
  - \* Bikes and pedestrians tend to pull communities together, while cars tend to break them apart due to social isolation, danger, and the great distances they create between destinations.
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## **6. Promoting Active Transportation Will Help the Atmosphere**

Current trends in transportation in Canada are not sustainable, according to Transport Canada and the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy. The challenge is to reduce the need for motorized travel.[15]

Canada projects increases in fossil fuel consumption for transportation of 40% over the next 25 years.[16] Already cars and light trucks produce as much as 75% of the pollutants that cause smog in some Canadian cities.[17]

Although new, well-maintained cars emit less on a per-mile basis compared to older cars, cars now travel much greater distances than in the past.

The outer areas of Canadian cities are growing faster than the older, more-sustainable cores, resulting in increasing reliance on motor vehicles, and longer commutes.

\* Air pollution from burning fossil fuels is a major contributor to deteriorating human health. A recent study by the David Suzuki Foundation refers to Canadian government estimates that 16,000 Canadians suffer premature death annually due to air pollution.[18]

\* Emissions from fossil-fuel-based transportation contains carbon monoxide and particulates, both of which are a challenge, especially for those with respiratory problems.

\* Air-conditioning in cars contain CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons) which eat the upper ozone layer that protects us from the sun's ultraviolet rays. CFCs that leak from vehicle air conditioners are the third most important source of CFCs in the atmosphere.[19]

\* A trip by bike/on foot rather than by car reduces noise and nitrogen oxides, small particulate pollution (PM10 and PM2.5) and ground level ozone.

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## **7. Canadians are Willing and Able**

Surveys repeatedly show that Canadians would be keen to ride their bikes to work, and walk more, if they could do it in a safe and attractive manner.

\* Walking is the top choice of Canadians for exercise; 82% of Canadians would like to walk more.[20]

\* Experience from other jurisdictions, especially western Europe and Japan, show that people in highly-industrialized countries, even in countries with severe weather, will use active transportation modes in great numbers.

\* Cycling is the fastest growing recreational activity in Canada.

\* 66% of Canadians want to cycle more, according to a recent Environics survey.[21]

- \* 82% of Canadians support government spending for dedicated bike lanes.[22]
  - \* 70% of Canadians would definitely use dedicated bike lanes to commute to and from work if they could do so within 30 minutes at a comfortable pace.[23]
  - \* Most urban trips are less than 5 kms.
  - \* There is a perception that cycling in the streets is dangerous. Over half of Canadians surveyed "believe cycling on the streets of their community is dangerous because of vehicle traffic." [24]
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## **8. Canada's International Commitments**

Canada made commitments at both the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit, 1992) and at the UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II, 1996) to move away from car dependency, and to develop and promote environmentally-sound transportation.

In December 1997, Canada signed the Kyoto Protocol pledging to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 6% below 1990 levels by 2008-2012. In Canada, transportation accounts for 27% of greenhouse gas emissions, and 46% of those emissions come from cars and light trucks.[25] Increased support for active transportation would help Canada to meet its international commitments.

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## **9. Learning From Success in Canada and Other Countries**

According to the Worldwatch Institute, Canada - with less than 1% of trips by bicycle - is one of the worst nations at promoting bicycle use.[26]

Compare that to some cities, especially in Western Europe and Asia, where 30% or more of the trips are by bicycle. In some Chinese and Dutch cities, over half of all trips are by bike - more than walking, buses and cars combined.

**USA**

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) provided major funding to active transportation in the United States under a variety of programs. In fact, all states and metropolitan planning organizations were required to incorporate programs for bicyclists and pedestrians into their transportation plans. U.S.\$1.183 billion was allocated for non-motorized transportation between 1991 and 1997, or 1% of Federal transportation expenditures. Several thousand improvements have been funded, from bicycle parking racks in Chicago to bike racks on all buses in Seattle. Every State must have a bicycle and pedestrian co-ordinator. Funding was primarily focussed on projects that enhanced the transportation system (Transportation Enhancements), or reduced congestion (Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality).

In 1998, ISTEA was re-authorized, and re-named the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). It allows states to fund education, research, outreach, community development, information clearinghouses etc. for active transportation.

If Canada had a similar program with a similar per capita budget, it would represent a budget of approximately Cdn\$24 million, or \$1 per person per year.

Oregon has a 1% Bike Bill which specifies that new roads that are constructed, or any road being modified, must be built with pedestrians and cyclists in mind. At least 1% of highway funds must be spent for bicycle and pedestrian facilities (i.e. extra width on the road). Over the past few decades, this bill has helped make the state much more bicycle-friendly. Sometimes 10% - 15% of funds on a roadway improvement are spent for active transportation improvements.

Illinois has a tax of US\$2 on the sale of each automobile. This tax, which is allocated for bicycle routes, garnered almost US\$6 million in 1995.

### **United Kingdom**

The British government recently awarded 42 million Pounds (approximately Cdn\$105 million) to Sustrans, a non-profit rail-to-trail group, to help build a 4,000 km network of walking- and bicycle-routes around the country. The total cost is expected to be

183 million Pounds, with additional funds coming from local authorities, other public funds, and fundraising.

### **Italy**

A new national program in Italy will allocate 60 million Euro for bicycle transportation (approximately Cdn\$0.20 per capita over the next fifteen years).

### **Denmark**

Municipal budgets fund an extensive bicycle infrastructure. Denmark has doubled bicycle use by promoting bicycle education and by doubling the bike path network.[27]

### **Canada**

There has never been federal funding earmarked for active transportation. However, there are some provincial programs, and some municipalities have used federal infrastructure program funds for specific AT projects.

The federal Millennium Bureau recently awarded \$7.7 million to the Trans Canada Trail Foundation to help build a 15,000 km., shared-use trail through every province and territory in Canada.

British Columbia has a provincially-funded program for communities to build transportation-related bicycling facilities. In 1995 as part of the BC transportation policy, the government put in place the Cycling Network Program which helps municipalities finance bicycle facilities. This program has an annual budget of \$2 million, and aims to expand the network of utilitarian bicycle routes. Aimed at municipalities, projects can be subsidised up to 50%. Vancouver has numerous programs to finance bicycle facilities. In its 1994-1996 three-year plan, the city planned to invest \$10.3 million for pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

In 1992, the Ontario Ministry of Transport adopted a cycling policy that aimed to integrate bicycle transportation into the overall transportation network. The City of

Toronto has recognized the potential of bicycling for urban transportation: six full-time and fourteen summer staff work on bicycle and pedestrian programs. Where separate bicycle lanes have been built in Toronto, bicycle use has increased by an average of 23% in just 2 years.

The Province of Québec has undertaken an extremely ambitious program to build a network of bicycle routes connecting rural and urban communities throughout the province. They expect to spend \$88.5 million for the 3,400 km-long Route Verte, the most impressive bicycle network project on the continent. In Québec City over \$6 million, split between different levels of government, will be spent to build a multi-use trail along the railway tracks in the old port.

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## **10. Canadian Funding and Policy Opportunities**

Road construction in Canada is a provincial responsibility. Health care, air pollution, and climate-change regulation are shared between the federal and provincial governments.

Huge sums of money are spent building infrastructure for motorized transportation. In 1993, Canadians spent over \$10 billion on roads, highways, and parking lots.[28]

There has been recent news coverage that the federal government is considering another infrastructure program aimed at improving and repairing the country's 25,000 km network of highways. A report done for federal and provincial transportation ministers identified spending needs of \$17.4 billion to upgrade and repair highways, while the infrastructure program is expected to cost from \$8 to \$12 billion over the next 10 years to be split between provinces and possible private funders.

To better serve the public interest, any federal highway infrastructure program should include 5% for promoting active transportation (i.e. wider road widths, intersection design, signage).

To meet our Kyoto Conference commitment, a National Climate Change Process has been established and, for a number of issues, tables have been formed, including one

on transportation. Each group provides expert and detailed input for identifying greenhouse gas reduction opportunities. Funding to Encourage Active Transportation should be included in the list of options and recommendations from the Transportation Table.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) board supported asking the federal government for 2 cents/litre from the Federal Gas Tax for sustainable transportation (including public transit). This could come from existing gas tax revenues, or increases in the gas tax.

A portion of these funds, if realized, should go to active transportation.

A federal program similar to TEA-21 in the US would ensure long-term, secure funding for active transportation initiatives throughout Canada.

Transport Canada should identify active transportation as a priority and fund it accordingly.

A Fund to Encourage Active Transportation (FEAT) could be used for:

- \* training and hiring of active transportation (AT) staff/administrators
- \* community-based AT activities and programs such as Walking School Buses, Bicycle User Groups (BUGs), Bike-to-Work Weeks, Commuter Challenges etc.
- \* traffic-calming measures
- \* rail-to-trail conversions (more than half of current rail lines are expected to be abandoned over the next few years)
- \* building, integrating or improving safety and convenience of AT paths, lanes and routes
- \* roadway improvements to accommodate AT
- \* benches, bike parking, water fountains, etc.
- \* marketing of the benefits of AT
- \* education campaigns for greater pedestrian/cycling safety
- \* AT health and safety research
- \* a national AT conference

- \* AT/transit marriage (i.e. bike parking at all major transit stops, bike racks on all buses and trains)
  - \* awards for AT innovation (e.g. free loaner bike projects)
  - \* employee programs and facilities (i.e. showers)
  - \* AT maps, and more!
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## 11. Conclusion

Increasing the role of active transportation is critical if Canada is to achieve a healthy environment and a robust and sustainable economy - but it requires federal leadership and support. We call upon the Canadian Government to implement a Fund to Encourage Active Transportation initiatives across the country, and to provide policy direction to municipalities and provinces to ensure that active transportation is provided for. Such a fund would prove to be an invaluable investment for our common, sustainable future.

Signed,

Alberta TrailNet, Edmonton

EcoCity Society, Edmonton

Environmental Resource Centre, Edmonton

Greenspiration Odyssey, Edmonton

Sierra Club - Prairie Chapter, Edmonton

Vision 2020, Edmonton

Clean Nova Scotia, Halifax

Enviro-Clare, Weymouth

Greenpeace Canada

Le Monde a Bicyclette, Montreal

Terre Centrale, Montreal

Guideposts for a Sustainable Future, Merrickville

Ottawalk: Association of Pedestrians and Walkers of Ottawa

Pembina Institute, Drayton Valley, AB

Public Transportation Co-operative, Prince Edward Island

Saanich Bicycle Advisory Committee, Saanich, BC

Advocacy for Respect for Cyclists, Toronto

BiKesKool, Toronto

Community Bicycle Network, Toronto

Green Party of Ontario, Toronto

Greenest City, Toronto

North Toronto Green Community, Toronto

Toronto City Cycling Committee, Toronto

B.E.S.T. (Better Environmentally Sound Transportation), Vancouver

Bicycle People, Vancouver

David Suzuki Foundation, Vancouver

Friends of False Creek, Vancouver

Southeast False Creek Working Group, Vancouver

Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition

British Columbia Cycling Coalition (BCCC), Victoria

Victoria Centre for Appropriate and Responsible Transportation Society - Victoria

Yukon Conservation Society, Whitehorse

**The following groups are being solicited:**

**Calgary**

- \* Calgary Outdoor Recreation

**Edmonton**

- \* Alberta Bicycle Association
- \* Capital Region Community Greenways Society
- \* Cyclists Advisory Committee
- \* Edmonton Bicycle Commuters
- \* Solar Energy Society
- \* Toxics Watch

**Medicine Hat**

- \* Alberta Trailnet

## **Montreal**

- \* Equiterre
- \* Vélo Quebec

## **Ottawa**

- \* Federation of Canadian Municipalities
- \* Go For Green
- \* Sierra Club of Canada
- \* Transport 2000

## **Quebec City**

- \* Promo-Vélo

## **Toronto**

- \* Centre for Sustainable Transportation
- \* Feet on the Street
- \* International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives
- \* Toronto Environmental Alliance

## **Vancouver**

- \* Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition

## **Victoria**

- \* Victoria Bicycle Coalition

- \* Victoria Transport Policy Institute

**Elsewhere**

- \* Trails BC
- \* Trans Canada Trail

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**Strategies to Ensure Funding for Active Transportation:**

Note: We have come up with some potential strategies for pursuing the FEAT agenda once groups have signed on. Any thoughts, ideas or contributions would be greatly appreciated.

- \* Develop a national media campaign including news releases, public events, literature and grassroots organising to illustrate the attractiveness of AT.
- \* Ensure AT inclusion in the Climate Change National Roundtables, the FCM proposal, and the Federal Infrastructure program.
- \* Educate MP's, the federal administration, health care workers and community groups as to the overall benefits of AT.
- \* Broadly disseminate this national campaign statement (FEAT) signed by numerous national, regional and local groups as well as individual Canadians.

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**Endnotes:**

- \* 1. City of Edmonton, Transportation Full-Cost Analysis, KPMG, pg. 22, 1996
- \* 2. Environment Canada, Canada's Transportation Challenge, 1996
- \* 3. Todd Litman, The Costs of Automobile Dependency, Victoria Transport Policy Institute, 1996
- \* 4. Todd Litman, Quantifying Bicycling Benefits for Achieving Transportation Demand Management Goals, Victoria Transport Policy Institute, 1996

- \* 5. Active Living - Go for Green! Developing Communities for Active Transportation, 1995
- \* 6. Conference Board of Canada, Physical Activity and the Cost of Treating Illness, 1996
- \* 7. Alberta Motor Association
- \* 8. Environment Canada, Canada's Transportation Challenge, 1996
- \* 9. Health Canada, Physical Inactivity: A Framework for Action,
- \* 10. Canadian Council for Health and Active Living at Work, Walk and Roll, 1998, p. 15
- \* 11. British Medical Association, Cycling Towards Health and Safety; cited in Walk and Roll, 1998, p.15
- \* 12. Statistics Canada, 1991
- \* 13. John Barber, Globe and Mail, 1995
- \* 14. Health Canada, Sustainable Development Strategy, 1997
- \* 15. National Round Table on the Environment and Economy, The Road to Sustainable Transportation in Canada, , 1997
- \* 16. Ibid.
- \* 17. Environment Canada, Canada's Transportation Challenge, 1996
- \* 18. David Suzuki Foundation, Taking Our Breath Away, p.32, 1998
- \* 19. Environment Canada, Canada's Transportation Challenge, 1996
- \* 20. Edmonton Journal, Province has top percentage of cycling enthusiasts, Sept. 21, 1998, p.A5
- \* 21. Ibid.
- \* 22. Ibid.
- \* 23. Ibid.
- \* 24. Montreal Gazette, Would-be bikers petrified to pedal? September 21, 1998, p.A7
- \* 25. Art Jacques, Trends in Canada's Greenhouse Gas Emissions 1990-95, Environment Canada
- \* 26. Worldwatch Magazine, When Cities Take Bicycles Seriously, September/October 1998
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- \* 28. J. Phillip Nicholson and Jeff O'Neill, The Case for Active Transportation, 1998

