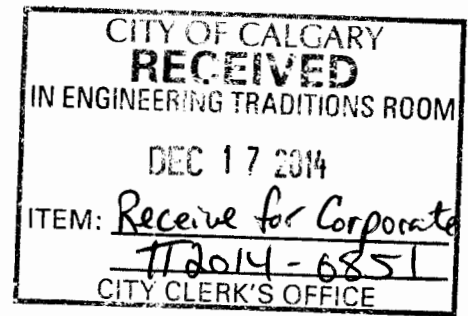


**MANNING
FOUNDATION**
FOR DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION



December 17, 2014

To Transportation and Transit Committee

From Jeromy Farkas
Research Fellow
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Re Manning Foundation research on Cycling strategy

In October, the Manning Foundation released a critique of the way the City of Calgary is evaluating cycling needs, and a series of recommendations to improve that evaluation. Today, the Foundation released the second part of its analysis.

Combined, the Manning Foundation for Democratic Education hopes these reports will contribute to the ultimate aim of achieving a seamless, safe, and efficient transportation and recreation network to better move Calgarians of all ages, means, and abilities.

The previous report, *Shifting Gears Part I: Smarter Cycling in Calgary*, provided a mix of guiding principles for the creation of a comprehensive Pathway and Bikeway Plan (“Framework”) for the City of Calgary, as well as some more ground-level suggestions for smarter cycling in Calgary at large. Key points were as follows:

- Calgary is a young and growing city, which poses substantial public policy challenges, especially in the area of mobility and transportation policy.
- However, Calgary is the safest major city in Canada for bicycling and has become measurably safer over the last five years.
- Calgary also leads other major Canadian and American cities in terms of its cycling and pathway infrastructure.
- Transportation in Calgary need not be a zero sum game - there are many net-gain, or low-cost opportunities to enhance safety and mobility for both motorists and cyclists in Calgary.
- There is no inconsistency between offering choice and promoting mobility; different modes of transport may offer the best mobility at any given time.

- The City has a great opportunity to improve its data collection at low cost, in order to improve the safety of cyclists as well as increase public support for cycling.

This report, *Shifting Gears Part II: Safer Cycling in Calgary*, focuses on providing a set of best-practice criteria for measuring a 'bicycle-friendly city' and track progress towards that goal. The key points of this reports are as follows:

- Calgary should measure its progress on cycling by using an easy to read scorecard with clear performance targets.
- These performance targets should include more on cyclist safety and quality of infrastructure, not just quantity.
- Cycling infrastructure should be designed to maximize safety, enhance accessibility, and minimize inconvenience to others, wherever possible.
- City plans must be designed around evidence-based policy, not policy-driven evidence.
- Calgary still relies heavily on manual counting, despite technological advancements that have made automated data collection systems far less expensive and far more accurate.
- Calgary must follow its own Open Data policies and release as much original source data as possible, not just final interpreted results and figures.

Good Data

Good data makes for good decisions and, thanks to advancing technology, the ability of organizations to gather, store, and analyze data has grown exponentially in recent years. All levels of government, but especially municipalities, have failed to keep pace with these developments both for internal planning purposes and for public transparency and disclosure.

The City of Calgary has recently launched an Open Data Catalogue – a great step toward open government – but there is much room to expand the practice of data sharing across all aspects of its operations. Calgarians, to the utmost degree possible, should have access to more ways to assess the performance of their administration and elected officials.

Where no baseline data yet exists for new measures recommended in our report, investments should be made in technologies that provide reliable and unbiased data in the most cost effective and efficient way available. Where data does exist, it should be released in full - including source data - not just final, interpreted results and figures.

Doubtless, governments would prefer to control what information is released regarding their own operations, as well as how it is presented to the public. Indeed, there is always a

risk that some people will misinterpret source data, but most disagreements reflect differences of opinion or interpretation, not malice.

Attempting to control the flow of information in the modern era is futile and the ability for others to reverse engineer calculations, such as in an academic peer-review process, is the key to the accountability and robustness of the Open Data process. In the end, when it comes to the interpretation of data in a democracy, the public gets to be the judge, and the public has made it clear they want as much transparency as possible.

For more on open governance, see the Manning Foundation report: *Municipal Government & Open Data*.

Measuring Success

When it comes to cycling policy, it can be difficult to measure success. Even something seemingly as straightforward as counting the number of cyclists can be a challenge when there is no easy way to quantify the results.

Why measure a 'bicycle-friendly city' to begin with? Simply put: what's measured improves. Using a scorecard to define and organize measures can provide a structure that allows policy planners, elected officials, and the public to quickly determine how their government is performing and what areas may need more attention.

Cycling policy is just one of many areas that would benefit from more thorough performance evaluations. Such an exercise should be performed for all types of transportation planning, such as large automobile projects that, up until now, have received little scrutiny.

While cycling in Calgary is used as a case study for this discussion, this report is best understood as an exercise in unconstrained optimization for any city facing similar transportation planning challenges. In other words, this section of the report aims to set out best practice ways for cities to measure their progress towards improving cycling based transportation policy, regardless of their present progress.

The proposed measures can be used to compare performance over time, or between cities. Some municipalities suffer from a significant lack of data and so merely being able to source and determine a baseline for many of these measures would be significant progress for these cities.

Calgary presently tracks 25 measures in 4 main categories: cycling infrastructure, cycling activity, cyclist satisfaction, and cycling safety.¹⁶ While a good start, these four themes miss

many of the bigger issues that impact cycling in Calgary as a whole. In addition, all 25 measures focus exclusively on cyclists but more should be done from the perspective of all road users, and residents.

Finally, the City's measures are also heavily focused on the needs of "home to work" downtown commuters, over those who might ride recreationally or to school. This is a substantial problem as all types of cyclists have a role to play in helping to achieve an efficient and safe transportation network.

Sincerely,

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Manning Foundation for Democratic Education

Enclosure:

Shifting Gears Part I: Smarter Cycling in Calgary

Shifting Gears Part II: Safer Cycling in Calgary