

26 March 2021

Andy Fillmore, M.P.  
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities  
Via email: [Andy.Fillmore@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Andy.Fillmore@parl.gc.ca)

## **RE: National Active Transportation Strategy & Fund**

Dear Mr. Fillmore,

Green Communities Canada (GCC) is thrilled with your government's recent announcement of a National Active Transportation Strategy as well as a dedicated Active Transportation Infrastructure Fund. We appreciate having this opportunity to share our insights on these ground-breaking initiatives.

### **Who we are**

GCC is a nationally incorporated non-profit association of 20 community-based environmental organizations working together for a vibrant, equitable and sustainable future. GCC and its members have been leaders in active transportation (AT) programming, education, and advocacy for over two decades. We have had a particular focus on walking and active school travel through various past programs including [Canada Walks](#) and [Walk Friendly Communities](#). Since 2017 GCC has been delivering the [Ontario Active School Travel Program](#) on behalf of the Government of Ontario. We co-chair the Active School Travel Canada Working Group and were one of the founding members of the National Active Transportation Alliance.

### **Our observations and recommendations**

- **Ensure an equal voice for walking:** With the large number of cycling-focused stakeholders participating in the regional consultations, we want to stress the importance of ensuring that walking and walkability are given equal voice. When properly supported, walking is our most accessible, equitable and inclusive form of transportation with well-documented health, environmental, economic and community [benefits](#). Therefore, we encourage the Government of Canada to take a holistic approach that recognizes the unique needs of those who travel by foot (and mobility aids) and clearly prioritizes walking followed by cycling, public transport and, lastly, vehicle use, in its policy and investment choices.
- **Land use and transportation planning that supports walkability:** We need policies and investments that prioritize high levels of connectivity and amenities that support walkability in both new communities being planned and existing communities being re-developed. This means more connected systems of sidewalks, pathways and trails that lead not only to transit but also to schools, stores, community centres and other local destinations. This will require greater strengthening and alignment of relevant provincial and municipal policies and guidelines (see next bullet). GCC's [Walk Friendly Communities](#) designation program could help support this shift. Similar to Share The Road's Bike Friendly Communities, Walk Friendly encourages municipalities

to create and improve spaces and places to walk and set targets for ongoing improvements. It has been successfully tested in a [dozen communities across Ontario](#) and, with new resourcing, could be adapted for dissemination across the country.

- **Establish a Federal/Provincial/Territorial Working Group:** The Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety ([COMT](#)) authored this [2018 report on Active Transportation](#). In its role as co-chair of the Council the federal government should relook at the recommendations presented to develop policy guidelines that integrate AT into the national and provincial/territorial transportations systems.
- **Reduce vehicle traffic volumes and speeds:** Vehicle volumes and speeds pose a serious safety hazard to pedestrians and other vulnerable road users and are major barriers to active transportation. More than 300 pedestrians die each year on Canada's streets, a stark reminder of their vulnerability. This needs to be addressed with investments focused on traffic calming, complete streets, pedestrianized and traffic-free areas, and road space reallocation.
- **Education and encouragement:** From GCC's years of experience in active school travel we know that increasing modal shares for walking and other forms of AT will not be achieved through building infrastructure alone. This must be accompanied by education and encouragement policies and programming that rebuild a culture of walking and cycling and give people the tools and skills they need to be active and safe. A key target should be investment in curriculum and training for children, youth and marginalized communities to build confidence and skills for life.
- **Improved data collection:** Currently Statistics Canada only captures and reports data on AT as it pertains to the journey to work (commuting) and walking/cycling are counted only if they represent the longest portion of that journey. Collection must be broadened to include: AT use for non-commuting and multi-modal trips (trip-chaining), seasonal variations in AT, and trips to school. New reporting tools are also needed to capture levels of AT in smaller geographic areas (including rural communities and reserves) and more diverse characteristics including gender, age, immigrant status, visible minority etc.

As we are invested and passionate about transforming active transportation in Canada, we are at your service to discuss and collaborate. I look forward to any upcoming meetings where we can help guide and support your team in the design phase.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carol Steuri".

Carol Steuri, Executive Director  
Green Communities Canada