

# Rural Development Strategy Submission

## *The Economic and Community Benefits of Investing in Cycling and Walking*

Cycling and walking are popular activities that more people want to do more often for transportation, recreation and vacation. British Columbia is fortunate to be a North American cycling leader with 1.9 million residents riding a bike at least once a year. With 2.3 million British Columbians wanting to cycle more, increasing the funding for appropriate facilities will help make communities more affordable, safer and healthier.

In addition to attracting tourists and BC residents interested in cycling to smaller communities, cycling and walking trails and protected bike lanes can also attract and help retain skilled workers.<sup>1</sup> Cycling can provide people with basic mobility enabling them to affordably access educational opportunities, employment, recreation, community services and shops. Cycling and walking improvements are typically more cost effective than highway projects and they create more jobs per dollar invested.

Unfortunately, many BC residents still don't have access to safe cycling routes for their daily trips. Many people enjoy living in areas where they can walk and cycle comfortably and are often willing to pay more for housing to do so. Those with lower incomes, including many families with children, are forced to live in areas where it may be difficult and dangerous to walk and cycle. The result is lower levels of physical activity, higher transportation costs, limited access to jobs and services and a higher risk of injury & death in motor vehicle collisions. Those in rural communities without regular transit service are especially in need of affordable transportation choices.

### **Rural Dividend Fund**

Government funding such as the Rural Dividend Fund for longer regional routes connecting communities is critical to help enable those who live further away from employment centres, educational institutions and other key destinations. We are encouraged that the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services recommended that the provincial government "Create a provincial active transportation strategy, including increased investment in active transportation infrastructure."

We are pleased by Rural Dividend Fund support for cycling and trails. In 2017, by our count, 24 trail projects costing a total of \$3.3 million were approved. We are impressed that the Rural Dividend Fund addresses many of the challenges smaller communities face in developing projects by providing funding for all phases of projects, including feasibility studies, planning, consultation and implementation. In particular, the Destination Trails addition to the program seems to be well received.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://b.3cdn.net/bikes/123e6305136c85cf56\\_0tm6vieu0.pdf](https://b.3cdn.net/bikes/123e6305136c85cf56_0tm6vieu0.pdf) p 15.

## Recommendations

Key recommendations to improve the Rural Dividend Fund and other such initiatives include:

- Prioritizing Active Transportation - Prioritize support for trails and other facilities that can be used for active transportation (cycling and walking) and include active transportation and cycle touring in the criteria for Destination Trails;
- Support for Complete Streets with Protected Bike Lanes - Ensure that Rural Dividend funding can be used for Complete Street upgrades that include protected bike lanes.
- Expanding Investment in Destination Trails - Help ensure that everyone has access to high quality cycling and walking facilities;
- Improving Trail Maintenance - Ensure there is policy support and ongoing funding for trail maintenance and upgrades;
- Prioritizing Non-motorized Trails - Enact policies and procedures that ensure trails remain non-motorized so that everyone can cycle and walk on them for transportation, recreation and tourism;
- Providing Separate Motorized Trails - Provide information to ATV and motocross users to enable them to find appropriate locations for these activities. Funding should be available for separate motorized trails to discourage use of cycling and walking trails by ATV's and other motorized vehicles; and
- Paving Trails - Encourage the construction of paved trails to increase accessibility, improve safety and increase the distance people can cycle;

### **Cycling and walking are popular activities that many people want to do more often**

The 2016 Census shows significant cycling progress in BC with twelve communities now having more than 10% of commuters cycling to work. Leading the way are the Ashnola (33%) and Qualicum (29%) First Nations followed by Thompson-Nicola (21%), Revelstoke (15%), Soowahlie (14%), Quaaout (13%), Victoria, Oak Bay, the Comox First Nations, Stewart and Whistler.

#### In addition:

- 1,900,000 British Columbians ride a bicycle at least once a year
- 250,000 children walk or cycle to school; 130,000 children ride a bicycle at least once a year
- 2,300,000 adults indicate they would ride more if there were separated bike lanes that protected them from traffic.<sup>2</sup>
- 1,325,000 BC residents say walking (23%) or cycling (11%) would be their ideal commute.<sup>3</sup>
- 14% of adults 18-35 years old say cycling would be their ideal commute.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Andrea O'Brian.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Insights West.

- Cycling and walking are especially popular with young people, 18-35, with 8% cycling & 10% walking to work.<sup>5</sup>

### **There is broad public support for cycling improvements**

- 2,800,000 adults in BC **support enhancing cycling infrastructure.**<sup>6</sup>

### **Building cycling & walking infrastructure creates more jobs than road projects**

- 11.4 jobs are created for each \$1 million spent on cycling projects vs. 7.8 jobs for road projects<sup>7</sup>

## Detailed Recommendations

### **Prioritizing Active Transportation**

Active transportation (walking, cycling, mobility aid use) should be including in the criteria for Destination Trails and other trail projects. People who are too young to drive, don't wish to or are unable to drive or can't afford a motor vehicle are often forced to walk, cycle or use a mobility aide on a busy road with high speed traffic and no physical separation from motor vehicles. These roads may not even have a shoulder to walk or bike on. During the winter, shoulders can be covered with snow forcing people to walk or cycle in the traffic lane.

### **Complete Street Upgrades and Community Trail Connections**

Bike paths and protected bike lanes along main streets are proving to be valuable in connecting trails to community centres, shops, accommodations and other businesses. By enabling visitors to arrive in the heart of the community by private vehicle, bus or public transportation with their bike, shop and eat at local businesses and then safely and conveniently cycle to the trailhead, good community cycling connections will help improve the economic value of Destination Trails. Otherwise, visitors will often drive directly to the trailhead, use the trail, load the bicycles back in their vehicle and head home without ever stopping in the community for meals or accommodations. Funding that would otherwise be spent on trailhead parking lots could be invested instead in community cycling connections.

While the Rural Dividend Fund does not fund traditional municipal infrastructure including water, sewer, road and sidewalk projects, it would be helpful if it could fund a large portion of the incremental cost needed for Complete Streets upgrades that include protected bike lanes and are coordinated with road, sewer and water projects. For example, Cumberland received Bike BC funding to cover a portion of the additional cost needed for bike lanes on Cumberland Road in its Village Upgrades project.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Insights West, Survey on Commuting in British Columbia, May 24, 2016, [http://www.insightswest.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/CommutingBC\\_Tables.pdf](http://www.insightswest.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/CommutingBC_Tables.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Kirk & Co. Consulting Ltd. & Mustel Group, B.C. on the Move: Engagement Summary Report, January 2015, [http://engage.gov.bc.ca/transportationplan/files/2015/03/BCOTM\\_Summary-Report\\_March-2015\\_web.pdf](http://engage.gov.bc.ca/transportationplan/files/2015/03/BCOTM_Summary-Report_March-2015_web.pdf), page 57

<sup>7</sup> Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure: A National Study of Employment Impacts, University of Massachusetts Political Economic Research Institute, <https://www.peri.umass.edu/publication/item/427-pedestrian-and-bicycle-infrastructure-a-national-study-of-employment-impacts>

<sup>8</sup> <https://cumberland.ca/news/2017/03/cumberland-receives-bikebc-grant-for-road-upgrades/>

Some municipalities have approved individual bicycle and complete street projects with budgets higher than the total BikeBC annual outlay. With only \$6 million allocated for BikeBC in 2018, Rural Dividend Fund investment in protected bike lanes and complete streets would be of real value. The Rural Dividend Fund could follow the BikeBC lead of 75% of project funding for smaller communities.

### Streets Ready For Automated Vehicles

An emerging economic opportunity is for communities to make themselves ready for automated vehicles (and ride-hailing, delivery, etc.) by reconfiguring streets so they have protected bike lanes and drop off/pick up zones. As small communities do not have many streets that would need reconfiguring, this is a far less expensive to do in smaller communities than in larger ones. Rural Dividend Funding really could help smaller communities be leaders in this opportunity.

### Improved Trail Maintenance

The Rural Dividend fund provides a good model for trail implementation as it provides funding for feasibility and project development as well as planning, consultation, design and construction. However, funding mechanisms and better policies for maintaining and upgrading trails are also needed. While volunteers can play a valuable role in maintaining trails in some communities, volunteer lead groups for maintenance can be problematic as key volunteers can move on or become interested in other volunteer opportunities. As well, disadvantaged communities with no individuals in a position where they have the time and resources to volunteer for trail maintenance, will left within usable trails. Thus, providing reliable mechanisms and funding for maintenance is key to ensuring that all people regardless of income level have access to trails for recreation and transportation now and in the future.

### Non-motorised Trails

People cycling and walking prefer an experience that is free from noise, dust, pollution and the threat of collisions caused by motorised vehicles such as ATVs.<sup>9</sup> Just as importantly, ATVs damage trail surfaces making them difficult or impossible to cycle, walk or use a wheelchair on.<sup>10</sup> Rougher surfaces require more expensive bicycles with larger tires and shocks making such trails less accessible for touring cyclists and those with lower incomes. Bicycles built for rough trails are also less efficient when used on roads or paved sections of trail thus reducing the distance people can reasonably cycle.

In the end, it will most likely be less expensive to build separate motorized and non-motorized trails rather than constantly repair the damage to trail surfaces in order to ensure that it is usable for people walking and cycling.

For both visitors and residents, bicycles are significantly more accessible and affordable than motorised vehicles. Used bicycles can be purchased for under \$200 while used ATVs typically

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<sup>9</sup> Shared Use Trails in Canada, <http://www.gkaa.ca/Study%20of%20Shared-Use%20Trails%20in%20Canada%20v9.pdf> p 34.

<sup>10</sup> Shared Use Trails in Canada, <http://www.gkaa.ca/Study%20of%20Shared-Use%20Trails%20in%20Canada%20v9.pdf> p 34.

start at around \$2000. As a result, bicycles are much more popular than ATVs. Around 1.3 million bicycles are sold per year in Canada<sup>11</sup>. ATV sales have been falling Canada wide from 59,797 in 2009 to 46,087 in 2016<sup>12</sup>. ATVs are also expensive to rent costing around \$150 per day<sup>13</sup>. Adult bicycle rentals cost between \$30 and \$40 dollars per day for adult bikes and children's bike rentals cost around \$25/day.

ATV use is very male dominated with men representing 81% of primary riders<sup>14</sup>. Especially in rural Canada, cycling is significantly more gender balanced with 44.9% of men and 35.5% of women cycling at least once a year<sup>15</sup>.

Over 50 of our supporters have written government officials in support of non-motorized cycling and walking trails. With the lack of high-quality cycling trails in BC, some even fly to Europe to enjoy cycling vacations with their families.

## Paved Trails

Due to decreased rolling resistance, paved trails enable people to cycle further on less expensive bicycles increasing the usage of and thus the benefits of trails. Paved trails can be used by touring bikes improving the safety and the quality of the experience for touring cyclists. Paved paths are also safer as gravel paths tend to have higher cycling injury rates. Paved trails are much more accessible for those who use mobility aids.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.bike-eu.com/sales-trends/artikel/2010/10/canada-2009-bike-market-remains-in-good-shape-10110362>

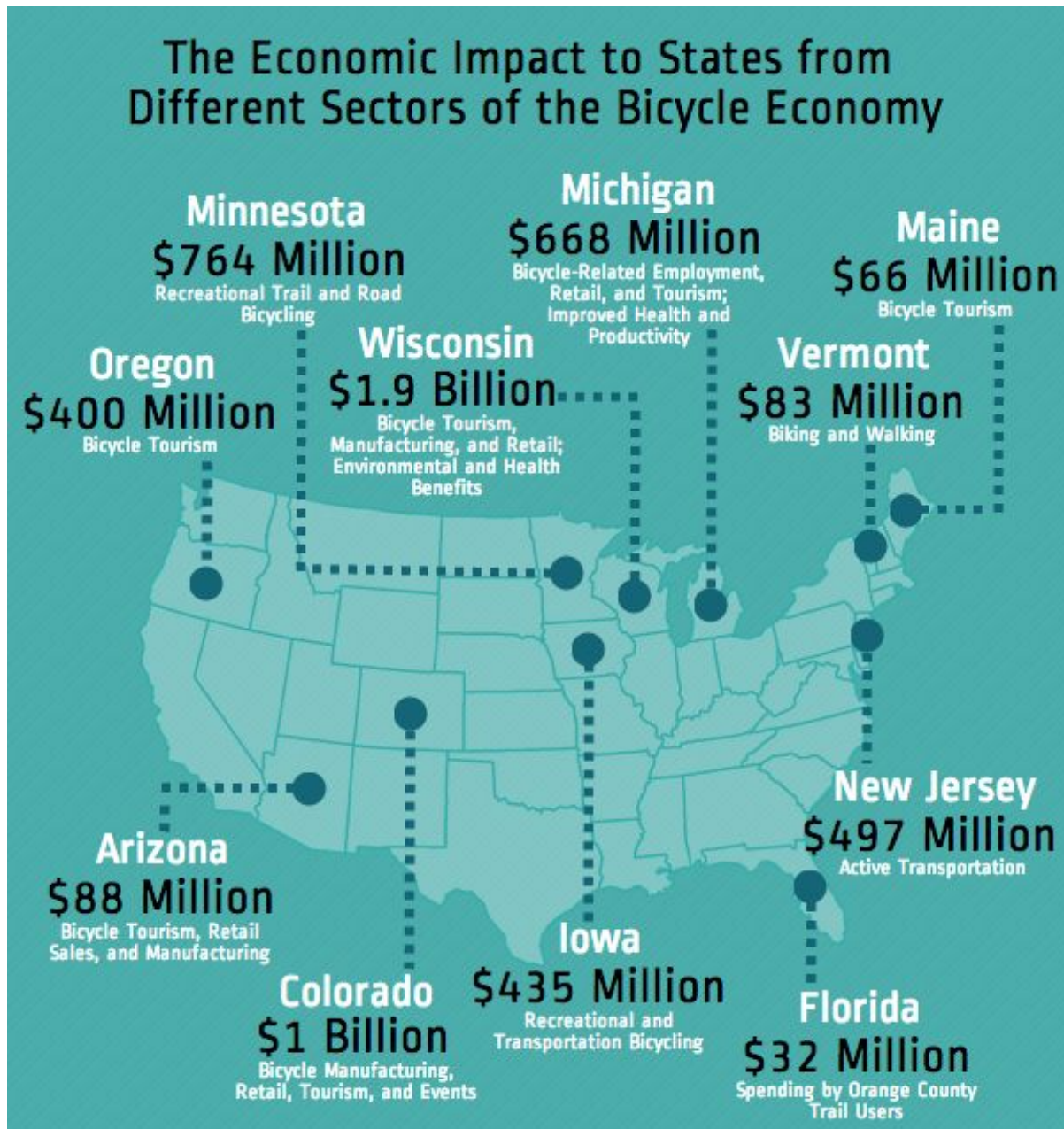
<sup>12</sup> <http://www.mmhc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/MMHC-COHV-ANNUAL-INDUSTRY-STATISTICS-REPORT-2016.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <http://backcountryrentals.ca/#rates>

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.nohvcc.org/docs/2009-conference-presentations/MIC\\_OHV\\_Trends.pdf?sfvrsn=0](http://www.nohvcc.org/docs/2009-conference-presentations/MIC_OHV_Trends.pdf?sfvrsn=0)

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-003-x/2017004/article/14788/tbl/tbl01-eng.htm>

## The Economic Benefits of Cycling



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### Cycling Tourism

A network of cycling routes linking communities and attractions throughout the province will also offer visitors and residents wonderful cycle touring experiences. A dramatic increase in cycle tourism could have significant economic benefits to rural and urban BC communities.

<sup>16</sup> Bike Utah, 2014.

For example, Oregon estimated that in 2012, cycling tourists contributed \$400 million to their economy<sup>17</sup> while cycle tourism in Europe is worth almost \$60 billion per year. Québec's Route Verte, a province-wide network of cycling routes, has proven to be very effective in attracting tourists from around the world and nearby states and provinces. In 2006 it is estimated that Route Verte users spent \$134 million supporting over 2,800 jobs. This economic activity is estimated to generate more than \$36 million in tax revenue for the provincial and federal governments<sup>18</sup>.

## Attracting Talent and Jobs

Cities around North America are improving their bicycle networks to attract talent, companies and jobs.<sup>19</sup>

"Biking is definitely part of our strategy to attract and retain businesses in order to compete in a mobile world," says Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak, as we glide across the Mississippi River on one of two bike-and-pedestrian bridges that connect downtown to the University of Minnesota. "We want young talent to come here and stay. **And good biking is one of the least expensive ways to send that message.**"

Young people today are driving significantly less than previous generations, according to a flurry of recent reports. These young people represent the "creative class" talent pool that many companies covet. That's why civic, business, and political leaders around the country are paying attention to the next generation's wishes for lively, liveable places to work and play. This means ample transportation options like biking—not only for commuting to work, but also for recreation after work and, in some cases, over the lunch hour.

## Workplace Productivity

There are significant benefits to employers of having staff that are physically active. Employees who participate in physical activities report fewer days off due to illness (by 6-32%), lower turnover rates, lower healthcare costs (by 20-55%) and increased productivity (by 2-52%) than non-physically active employees.<sup>20</sup>

Commuting by bicycle allows the employee to build physical activity into their daily routine. With people's many responsibilities and daily time commitments, using active transportation may indeed be the only way they can get the daily physical activity they require. Commuting by active transportation may prove to be more acceptable and more cost-efficient than programs that focus on activities at the work site during the day.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Dean Runyan Associates, *The Economic Significance of Bicycle-Related Travel in Oregon: Detailed State and Travel Region Estimates, 2012*, April 2013, [http://www.deanrunyan.com/doc\\_library/bicycletravel.pdf](http://www.deanrunyan.com/doc_library/bicycletravel.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Route Verte (no date) *Economic spin-offs*. [www.routeverte.com/rv/index\\_e.php?page=retombees\\_e](http://www.routeverte.com/rv/index_e.php?page=retombees_e)  
<http://www.routeverte.com/ang/facts.lasso?page=retombees>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.yesmagazine.org/happiness/how-bicycling-is-transforming-business>

<sup>20</sup> World Health Organization, *Economic Benefits of Physical Activity*, (<http://www.who.int/hpr/physactiv/economic.benefits.shtml>), 2003.

<sup>21</sup> Shephard, "A critical analysis of work-site fitness programmes and their postulated economic benefits", *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, 24(3), 1992.

The ability of a physically active executive group to make complex decisions increases dramatically compared to the group that does not exercise. Studies suggest that those who exercise work at full efficiency all day, amounting to a 12.5% increase in productivity over those who do not exercise.<sup>22</sup>

In companies with employee physical activity initiatives, the improvements in productivity and reductions in absenteeism, turnover and injury can result in a benefit of \$571 per worker per year.<sup>23</sup>

## Contact

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Thanks to the Real Estate Foundation of BC for their support of our Moving Active Transportation Forward in BC initiative.



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<sup>22</sup> Health Canada, The Business Case for Active Living, ([http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/fitness/work/impact\\_e.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/fitness/work/impact_e.html)), 2004.

<sup>23</sup> World Health Organization, Economic Benefits of Physical Activity, 2003. \$513 in 2003 dollars adjusted by CPI to \$571 in 2010 dollars.