

## **Nothing done on road-safety strategy ordered in 2017, councillors told**

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The death toll on Winnipeg's streets continues to mount while officials appear unable to develop a plan to make the streets safe for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.

It's been more than two years since the public works department was directed to produce a road-safety strategy that would strive to eliminate traffic fatalities across the city.

But no work has been done since the public works committee issued the directive in January 2017, David Patman, the city's transportation manager, told councillors Tuesday. Department staff have been working instead on a handful of safety measures, he said.

In that time 14 pedestrians and one cyclist have been killed in traffic collisions, as have nine people in vehicles and two motorcycle riders.

Coun. Janice Lukes, who urged the committee to get tough on the department, said the death toll on city streets is tragic.

"We are making record investments in roads, in transit and in active transportation, yet we are nowhere near having a comprehensive road-safety strategy in place," Lukes said.

Patman told the committee that turnover in two senior positions was behind the department's failure to begin the work, adding he expects it will get underway and become part of an updated transportation master plan due in three years.

Anders Swanson, executive director of Winnipeg Trails Association, said the number of fatalities on Winnipeg streets is proof that they are being designed for the benefit of motorists, not all users.

"The reality is everybody would like to do the right thing, but only you folks (councillors) have the political tools," he said.

Swanson, who is participating in a panel discussion at the annual conference of the Canadian Association of Road Safety Professionals in Calgary in May, said

professionals aren't designing city streets from the perspective of people who walk or cycle, or from the perspective of a child.

"You like to blame bad behaviour for causing traffic glitches. The reality is the same bad behaviour is the same behaviour inherent with children," he said.

"If we designed a public road system around children specifically, then it would be, by definition, safe; there would be basketballs flying around, bikes weaving in and out, there'd be three bikes riding side-by-side with children laughing, giving high-fives, passing a Slurpee to each other. And that would be OK.

"But we haven't and the reason we haven't is because in 1950 or so we got addicted to building a city for cars, for dad, driving alone to work in the morning, and we haven't been able to get ourselves out of that and that's a conscious decision."

Committee chairman Coun. Matt Allard said the public works department has initiated traffic-safety measures across the city and he's confident a report will be completed someday.

"From my experience, the public works department is really prioritizing this in ways that I haven't seen in the past," Allard said.

"We have a number of things on the go. There's a lot going on on road safety and traffic calming in the city and I'm looking forward to the reports coming down the pike."

Allard was unable to explain how either he or the department could be certain ongoing safety initiatives meet any defined target without a strategy in place.

"I think the public service is doing what they can to keep us safe on the roads and they'll be confirming that in future reports," he said, while acknowledging the department has yet to provide him with a comprehensive list of safety initiatives he requested in November.

"I think you heard today we're going above and beyond the status quo," when it comes to road safety, Allard told reporters. "The public service is doing their job. They are working on this."

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