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News / Winnipeg

Proposed downtown bike grid for Winnipeg gridlocked at city hall

Coun. Janice Lukes' motion for a gapless network of bike lanes downtown denied for third time

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METRO FILE

By: Keila DePape For Metro Published on Tue Jun 27 2017

A motion to install a bike lane network downtown died (again) at city hall Tuesday.

"It's frustrating," said Coun. Janice Lukes, who wanted the Infrastructure and Public Works Committee to direct city staff to cost out a rapid install of adjustable protected bike lanes.

"We know we can do something cheaper, better, faster—why aren't we?"

Coun. Marty Morantz criticized the bike grid concept as a "dramatic" departure from the "award winning" Pedestrian and Cycling Strategy (PCS) council approved in 2015, which details active transportation infrastructure plans across the city.

"If we decided to drop it (the PCS) and just do a downtown grid, projects all over the city would be in jeopardy for a temporary structure that would have to be made permanent at some point," Morantz said, adding "adjustable elements" are already included in the current strategy.

But that's not enough for councillors who say a bike grid is key for the city's connectivity.

"We've already built some significant suburban routes that connect to downtown," said North Kildonan Coun. Jeff Browaty, who spoke in favour of Lukes' plan and the "final mile" connectivity it would offer. "That final stretch to get to people's offices where people work and play, that's what's really missing right now."



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Coun. Devi Sharma (Old Kildonan) sided with Browaty, saying she'd "like administration to work on this," and study it at least. But the fourth committee member, Coun. Matt Allard (St. Boniface) sided with Morantz, questioning the merit in going for a temporary grid with a permanent plan already on the horizon.

The committee's 2-2 split on Lukes' motion means a study to find out how much the downtown bike network would cost won't happen anytime soon in Winnipeg. That's despite other Canadian cities offering a point of reference and successful examples.

Edmonton introduced a \$7.5 million bike grid plan in October and installed seven kilometres of lanes within the same three-month period it took Winnipeg's public service to report on whether elements of that approach fit the PCS.

Likewise, Calgary finished a 6.6-kilometre bike lane network within four months for \$5.45 million.

Lukes wanted the study to be included in the 2018 budget when she first advanced the motion in October, but she adjusted her expectations when it failed again in May.

Now, blocked in her third attempt Tuesday, the forecast for 2019 isn't looking good either.

Lukes said she will continue to fight for the bike grid, but doesn't yet know how to go about it at this point after being stymied at the committee level.

"With this public works committee, I will not be able to make progress," she said.



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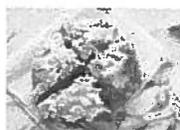
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