

NDP promises safe crossing of the Perimeter for the NE Pioneers Greenway

Last night (2011-Sep-20) in Rossmere MLA Erna Braun's campaign office, Premier Selinger, flanked by NDP candidates from Concordia, Elmwood, Radisson, and River East, announced to area residents that, if re-elected, they would build a safe pedestrian / cyclist crossing over the Perimeter Hwy from the Northeast Pioneers Greenway into the RM of East St Paul. It will be one of the first things they do.

The vision of connecting The Forks to Birds Hill Provincial Park is one step closer to reality.

Sigrun Bailey's (Co-Chair of River East Neighborhood Network - Trail Committee) attended the announcement.

Comments by Janice Lukes (Manager, Special Projects, Winnipeg Trails Association – <http://winnipegtrails.ca>):

Some people may have a hard time understanding the significance of this safe pedestrian / cyclist crossing over the Perimeter. There is a **big picture vision** to what seems to be a whole bunch of bits and pieces. I'll try to briefly summarize:

CentrePort: (<http://www.winnipegtrails.ca/2011/08/22/centreports-impact-on-active-transportation/>)

As per Manitoba's Director of Highway Planning & Design, with the development of CentrePort "over the next 20 years, traffic volume on the Perimeter Hwy is projected to go from 14,500 to 40,000 vehicles per day". Infrastructure changes on the Perimeter Hwy are occurring around the city to develop the Perimeter into expressway. In the north east quadrant, the interchange of the Perimeter and Hwy 59 is undergoing an \$80 to \$100 million overhaul projected to be completed by 2017.

RM of East St Paul:

According to the latest census, East St Paul is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Manitoba.

Birds Hill Provincial Park:

It is the most heavily used Provincial Park in Manitoba. Manitoba Conservation's park officials identify a need to reduce 'stress' on the park and support trail systems leading out of park onto floodway.

Northeast Pioneers Greenway: (<http://www.winnipegtrails.ca/trails-maps/northeast-pioneers-greenwaynew/>)

It is the most heavily used trail in Manitoba -- primarily used by area residents.

Economic Benefits Provincial Cycle Tourism:

- Margo Goodhand has written a Winnipeg Free Press story about cycle tourism & economic benefits in Wisconsin: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/travel/Wisconsins-cycling-secrets--130020773.html>
- Economic benefits in the Province of Quebec from the 'RouteVert' cycle tourism route: http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/pdf/atag_report6.pdf
- Google 'economic benefits' and you will see countless other examples.

The Long and Winding Trail from Winnipeg to Birds Hill Provincial Park & Lockport:

- 2004: Red River Floodway Expansion is announced: (http://www.floodwayauthority.mb.ca/pdf/floodnewsletter_all.pdf) – page 3.
- 2004: Rivers West enables the formation of the Red River Floodway Trails Coalition.
- 2004 – 2006: Multiple studies investigating recreational opportunities were conducted by the Manitoba Floodway Authority and Rivers West (<http://www.floodwayauthority.mb.ca/reports.html>, <http://www.riverswest.ca/index.cfm?pageID=5>, and http://www.floodwayauthority.mb.ca/pdf/newsletter_08_11_05.pdf).
- 2006: John Buhler engages the City of Winnipeg in the purchase of the Marconi rail line -- to convert it to a multi-use trail.
- 2007: At the grand opening of the Northeast Pioneers Greenway, then Premier Doer states this trail will ultimately connect to Birds Hill Provincial Park.

- 2007: The Forks (Paul Jordan, then co-chair of Winnipeg Trails Association), Bike to the Future, River East Neighborhood Network - Trail Committee, and Rivers West initiate discussions with the RM of St Paul for 'The Forks National Historic Site to Birds Hill Provincial Park' trail connection.
- 2008: Phase One of Winnipeg's Rapid Transit is announced. It will include a separate active transportation / cycling pathway.
- 2009: Construction of asphalt trails on the floodway begin. An asphalt trail from Birds Hill Park to Lockport is also being constructed.
- 2010: Following strong advocacy, the City of Winnipeg includes a separated pedestrian /cycling bridge for Northeast Pioneers Greenway users to **safely** cross over the \$100M Chief Peguis Expansion. (The Chief Peguis Expansion is another key link in CentrePort transportation route).
- 2010: Construction begins on a pedestrian / equestrian / cyclist bridge over 59 Hwy connecting Birds Hill Park to the Floodway.
- 2011: Manitoba Floodway Authority highlights overall recreational plan (http://www.floodwayauthority.mb.ca/pdf/floodway_nwsltr_eng_2011.pdf , page 3).
- 2011: Winnipeg Trails Association, River East Neighborhood Network - Trail Committee, Prairie Pathfinders, One Green City, and Bike to the Future launch a *Winnipeg to Birds Hill Awareness Campaign*, citing the need to include **safe** active transportation in the PTH 101 / PTH 59 interchange rehabilitation (\$80-\$100M).
- 2011:NDP promises, if re-elected, they will build a safe pedestrian / cyclist crossing over the Perimeter Hwy from the Northeast Pioneers Greenway into the RM of East St Paul.

The Future:

The dream is to go from the University of Manitoba through the City of Winnipeg to Birds Hill Park, and then to Lockport **on a completely separate multi-use pathway**, and while there are still a few missing pieces that need to come together, I and many others are confident this will occur within the next 5 years.

Yet to occur:

- **Winnipeg**
 - a separate pathway from Chalmers to The Forks. (The route has been identified.)
 - a safe / civilized pedestrian cycling crossing on Osborne St under the CN rail line. (It is in the City of Winnipeg 5 year budget projection, and will have to occur as the rail line bridge needs maintenance.)
 - Phase Two of Rapid Transit to UofManitoba (also to include an active transportation pathway) -- perhaps in the next 4 years? The new stadium's location at UofManitoba is helping move Phase Two up the ladder of priorities.
- **RM of Birds Hill:**
 - asphaltting / upgrading of Raleigh / Gateway route which is currently on roadway
- **Floodway:**
 - The Dunning Road crossing is currently seasonal and related to floodway levels. A separated year-round route is being investigated by the Manitoba Floodway Authority.
- **Lockport:**
 - The trail is being constructed, and refinements into Lockport will occur in the next few years.

In Summary:

Many folks & organizations have been working towards this vision. Huge thank yous to all who have helped the vision get this far, but the development of CentrePort, positioning Manitoba as a 'global transportation hub', will impact countless pedestrian and cycling crossings in the year to come -- in Winnipeg and in Manitoba. There are opportunities to enable **safe** pedestrian and cyclist crossings in the development of this trucking network, as we are seeing in the Forks / Birds Hill / Lockport / Floodway trail, but **strong / non-stop/ hardcore advocacy** was required -- I know, I've been involved since 2004, and it hasn't been an easy ride at all to get to last night's announcement!

If the Province had a Provincial Active Transportation policy, the government would consider active transportation when they are investing billions of taxpayers dollars into roadways. Pedestrians and cyclists would have far higher odds of having safe transportation routes and crossings. We have yet to hear a formal commitment from any party stating they would implement a Provincial Active Transportation policy. **When candidates come knocking, please stress the need for a Provincial Active Transportation policy.** Provincial Election Active Transportation details can be found here: <http://www.winnipegtrails.ca/2011/08/23/provincial-election-2011/>