

**Revealing Winnipeg's Car-Free Culture:  
An Exploration of Discourse and  
Subsequent Policy Implications**

by  
**Katy Walsh**

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of  
The University of Manitoba  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF CITY PLANNING

Department of City Planning  
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Winnipeg

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## Abstract

In Winnipeg, car culture is the norm, yet many people choose not to drive. This study explores the idea of car-free culture and its potential to both inform and be supported by city planning policy through three phases of research. First is an analysis of the prevailing discourse of transportation in Winnipeg as heard on a public radio program. Second are in-depth interviews with people who choose not to drive, presenting a car-free perspective, from which is created a profile of car-free culture. Third, a questionnaire for local policy-makers offers professional responses to the findings and helps to identify recommendations.

The findings confirm that the prevailing discourse in Winnipeg expresses the viewpoint and characteristics of car culture as described in the literature. The profile of car-free culture created from the interviews presents a different reality. Car-free culture occurs entirely in the public realm, at a local level, and offers an immediate experience of the surrounding environment. While being car-free can be liberating and the journey enjoyable unto itself, personal safety, particularly considering the power imbalance when sharing the road with cars, is a concern. Car-free culture is rational yet requires flexibility, often achieved by using multiple modes. Though there are grades of deliberation in choosing to be car-free, the choice expresses one's self-identity.

The findings also indicate there is value in further developing car-free culture, currently in its early stages in Winnipeg, and in using the concept to inform policy which in turn will better support living car-free. Recommendations are made to encourage, facilitate and promote car-free culture in the areas of infrastructure, regulation, policy, funding and marketing, to shift what is considered normal discourse away from the car and towards other modes. The study is intended to normalise car-free culture so it is more widely accepted and practised in the mainstream, ultimately contributing to the long-term sustainability of transportation.

*Key words: active transportation; car-free; culture; discourse; promote; reality; sustainable transportation; transit; Winnipeg*

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For my parents

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# Chapter 1      Introduction

## *1.1 Preamble*

One of the first things I noticed when I moved to Winnipeg in 2005 was how out-of-place I felt when on a bicycle. Sharing the road with cars, I had the impression I was in the way of drivers. Glares, sounded horns, a few close calls – it was as though motorists did not know what to do when they saw me. I often found myself opting for the sidewalk in certain situations, as I'd noticed many others doing, for fear of my life. Similarly, the sound of my bell upon approaching pedestrians on a path only seemed to cause confusion – raised arms, turned heads and hesitation as to where to move to get out of the way. *The Cyclist's Map of Winnipeg* showed a substantial network of routes suitable for a bicycle, but once I was on the ground, with the exception of a handful of streets or the occasional recreational path, there was nowhere that felt truly welcoming to me as a cyclist.

Walking, I noticed, also felt like a clash of cultures. Cars very often blocked crosswalks, pedestrians hurried across the road for fear of wasting motorists' time, and pedestrian crossing signals were scarce. Unless I walked right in front of them with my hand out, moving cars simply did not stop for me at unmarked corners – and often not at marked ones, either.

What was it about Winnipeg that made cycling and walking feel like a battle? Other cities also had fewer bike paths than roads and none accommodated car-free modes to the same degree as cars. Why then did Winnipeg feel different?

I came to realise it was more than an infrastructure issue; it was a question of culture. This recognition formed the basis of my thesis.

## **1.2 Outline**

There is a real car culture to Winnipeg. Driving is so much the norm here that other travel modes seem to most to be simply odd. Even the bus is considered by many to be a place for “other” people – students, the elderly, the marginalised. The culture is a self-perpetuating cycle: if everyone normally gets around in a car, then plans, resources, infrastructure and regulation are sure to follow, in which case people will continue to drive, and so on, as other options fall off the table. Of course, not *everyone* drives; not even everyone who could drive, drives. Although car culture is very prevalent and powerful, there may be room in Winnipeg for “car-free culture”.

This study examines the experiences of those who choose to use other transportation modes, beginning with a description of the local transportation environment and a review of the literature about culture as related to transport. A popular local radio program was reviewed to present the prevailing, driver-based travel discourse; then, in-depth interviews were conducted with individuals who choose to live car-free. These two discourses were analysed, interpreted and compared, drawing out the perspectives of non-drivers to construct a profile of car-free culture in Winnipeg. The profile is used as a basis of discussion with policy-makers about the potential role of the concept of car-free culture to both inform and be supported by city planning policy, helping to break the cycle of car dependence described above and instead creating a more diverse transportation system, where cycling, walking and taking the bus are simply normal.

### ***1.3 Purpose***

The purpose of this thesis is to fill a gap in transportation planning research: car culture has been studied widely in a variety of disciplines, as have methods to encourage use of other, more sustainable modes; but the idea of car-free culture remains relatively under-examined. The goal of researching this topic is to understand more deeply the perspectives and experiences of those living car-free, and to present this information in a way that will usefully contribute to comprehensive and inclusive city planning. This inquiry will address the following research questions:

- What are the perspectives and values embedded in the prevailing transportation discourse in Winnipeg?
- What are the perspectives and values embedded in the discourse of Winnipeggers living car-free?
- Based on the perspectives and values revealed in car-free discourse, can there be a profile created of car-free culture in Winnipeg and if so, how can this profile be described?
- What policy directions do the findings suggest would better support car-free culture?

### ***1.4 Context of the Study***

Seven aspects of Winnipeg are presented to describe the context of the study: background information about the city; infrastructure provision; regulation and zoning as they relate to transportation; the position of planning policy in transportation; funding for



transportation; marketing of sustainable modes; and, recent developments in local sustainable transportation. A concluding section summarises the context.

#### **1.4.1 Background: Winnipeg**

The research field is Winnipeg, a city with a population of 633,451 spanning approximately 465 km<sup>2</sup>, and a density of 1,365.2 persons per square kilometre (Government of Canada, 2006a). This density is about mid-range compared to other major cities in Canada.<sup>1</sup> The population is growing slowly: between 2001 and 2006 the increase was 2.2 per cent (Government of Canada, 2006a). Little of the growth over the past fifteen years has occurred in the inner city (City of Winnipeg, 2009; Government of Canada, 2006a).

The climate in Winnipeg is extreme: summers are hot and at times very humid, and winters are very cold with a lot of snow. Average annual temperatures range from 26°C in the summer to -23°C in the winter (Government of Canada, 2006b). Since the city is located at the fork of two rivers on flat land with heavy clay soils, flooding is common in the spring. Due to these factors, infrastructure is not always in top condition: multi-use paths can be flooded or snow-covered and many roads, lanes and sidewalks require annual repair.

The dominant mode of transportation in Winnipeg is the private automobile, with transit, walking and cycling lagging behind (City of Winnipeg, 2005a, p. 75). Based on calculations using Statistics Canada numbers, approximately 77% commute by personal motor vehicle for work trips (Government of Canada, 2006a). Infrastructure and regulation, each flowing from policy, both direct and respond to the conditions reflected

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<sup>1</sup> Data taken for “Winnipeg City” from the 2006 Census. As a comparison to other cities, Edmonton is 1067 persons/km<sup>2</sup>, Regina is 1508 persons/ km<sup>2</sup> and Toronto is 3972 persons/ km<sup>2</sup>.

in the statistics, which in Winnipeg creates an ideal environment for car culture.

However, a scan of transportation statistics for modes to work shows that, of the prairie cities, only Calgary has a greater proportion than Winnipeg of people travelling to work by modes other than a personal motor vehicle, at 24 per cent and 22 per cent respectively (Government of Canada, 2006a).

#### **1.4.2 Infrastructure**

Transportation infrastructure in Winnipeg is built to primarily serve the automobile, with other modes fitted in afterwards. Public transportation vehicles use the same road infrastructure as cars because Winnipeg Transit operates only buses. The inner city street layout forms a grid pattern with very few interruptions from freeways, offering relatively good connectivity and easy transit access. However, there are very few dedicated bus-only streets or high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes. There is no light rail service and no infrastructure to provide it.

Bicycles mostly share the road with motor vehicles as there are few separate bicycle lanes in the city, and most trails are disjointed and follow the winding rivers, serving more as recreational paths than as commuter routes. Car parking space is widely available throughout the city, even in the core. According to the Downtown Business Improvement Zone, there are 32,000 parking spots available in the central business district – used as a selling point for downtown in a brochure. Bicycle parking is much less common.

Back lanes are widespread throughout the inner city and are used by all modes. While lanes informally contribute to the active transportation network, they are intended as utility routes, so active modes are not invited by, for instance, restricting cars or

posting low speed limits. Further, their use is limited to older neighbourhoods as back lanes are much less common in newer areas.

Sidewalks are present in most inner city neighbourhoods, but are not present in some suburban areas, such as Charleswood, or in parts of new neighbourhoods, such as Royalwood. Most residential roads are not designed to remind the driver that the street is to be shared with pedestrian traffic, playing children or cyclists by way of signage or traffic-calming measures. Walkable areas characterised by high density, a mixture of land uses, and buildings built to the sidewalk are almost non-existent in new developments and one of the most popular pedestrian destinations, Osborne Street, is slated for widening so as to better facilitate the flow of motorised traffic. Transportation infrastructure in the city indicates that movement of motor vehicles is the top priority.

#### **1.4.3 Regulation and Zoning**

Regulation influences travel behaviour which, in Winnipeg, also favours cars. There are specific policies to accommodate the needs of cars, such as clearing the streets of snow and debris (City of Winnipeg, 1993), yet such policies do not exist for cycling. There are no requirements for bicycle lanes on roads and no standards for snow-ploughing which specifically accommodate bicycles in the winter.<sup>2</sup> Rules are in place for snow-clearing on sidewalks (City of Winnipeg, 1993), yet low-priority sidewalks are never cleared, making winter walking very difficult in these areas.

Segments of some residential streets, such as Wolseley Avenue and Wellington Crescent, are closed to automobile through-traffic on Sundays and transformed to active transportation streets for leisure purposes. These roads are equipped with signs to remind

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<sup>2</sup> Documents examined were the City of Winnipeg's *Traffic By-Law* (1977) and Policy on Snow Clearing and Ice Control (1993), showing no snow-clearing requirements for bicycle traffic.

cyclists that cars have a right to use the street (see Section 3.3.2 and Appendix A for an analysis of this particular sign). However, no signs exist on any street to remind motorists of cyclists' rights. The *Highway Traffic Act* (Province of Manitoba, 1985) does not allow bicycles on sidewalks, yet some fast or heavily-congested roads offer no safe alternative due to the lack of bicycle-friendly infrastructure, forcing cyclists to choose between unlawfulness and peril.<sup>3</sup>

In some areas, skateboards are not allowed on the sidewalk, and they are never allowed on streets anywhere (City of Winnipeg, 1977) because they interfere with other traffic, yet a large SUV, itself arguably an interference to cyclists and pedestrians because of its size, noise and emissions, is permitted on any road. Regulation that is not consistent with the needs of other travel modes betrays a lack of understanding of these needs and is ineffective at supporting car-free culture.

Zoning regulation in Winnipeg sustains single land uses primarily and there are no minimum density requirements. There is also no growth boundary around the city. Over the past fifteen years, the density of the city has shifted from a peak of population concentration in the centre to a flatter pattern, as people have moved from the downtown to the outskirts (City of Winnipeg, 2009; Government of Canada, 2006).

#### **1.4.4 Planning Policy**

The physical and regulatory features of the local transportation system described above stem ultimately from policy. While the municipal development plan, *Plan Winnipeg 2020 Vision* (City of Winnipeg, 2001), does propose a multi-modal system, the

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<sup>3</sup> The underpass at Jubilee Ave and Pembina Hwy, the Osborne St Bridge, and Confusion Corner are examples of very car-dominant environments with high speeds, narrow shoulders, heavy traffic volumes and no cycling provisions. Such an environment is not conducive to safe cycling.

intention has become diluted on the ground. For instance, the plan is committed to transit improvements (City of Winnipeg, 2001, p. 35): this is visible in the central business district and surrounding neighbourhoods, areas well-served by public transit. However, as population density thins beyond the core, so too does transit service.

The development plan also calls for a network of integrated transportation, highlighting pedestrian safety and comfort, and accommodating cyclists on roads and multi-use paths (City of Winnipeg, 2001, p. 35). However, infrastructure and regulation, which should follow the plan, are unsupportive of these ideas.

Finally, according to the development plan, the area of top priority is the downtown, yet there is relatively little redevelopment there; the outer edge of the city is where most development is occurring, characterised by low population densities and large tracts of land zoned solely residential or commercial and connected by wide, fast roads. This type of development gives little consideration to the needs of cyclists, transit riders or pedestrians.

Waverley West serves as an example of the inconsistency between policy planning and action. Although located 13 km from downtown, this 1,300 hectare subdivision presented an opportunity to put multi-modal policies into practice from the start. However, the *Waverley West Area Structure Plan* (City of Winnipeg, 2005b), the guiding document for the area, does not treat sustainable modes equitably with cars: while there will be some multi-purpose paths in the greenspaces, neither bicycle lanes nor sidewalks are required. The distance from the city centre and the conventional land use patterns will make transit less practicable than if development were closer to or within the core, or if the design were mixed-use and at higher density. This kind of development

may be profitable and in-demand, but the community planning and design behind it is short-sighted and does not accommodate the needs of those who either cannot or do not want to drive.

#### **1.4.5 Funding**

Funding complies with policy, and so is a key determinant of the kind of transportation system in a city. Plans to provide bus rapid transit along Pembina Highway, a major corridor, were shelved in 2004 and the funds moved elsewhere (CBC, 2006). Then, in September 2008, a plan to revive rapid transit was announced, with \$305.6M over six years for Winnipeg Transit in the 2009 capital budget, and supported by all levels of government. However, property taxes have not been raised in over a decade, yet bus fares have increased eleven times in as many years,<sup>4</sup> placing the financial burden on transit users and doing little to expand ridership.<sup>5</sup> This funding scheme shows that civic commitment to transit is hesitant.

Newly added in 2008 was a line in the City of Winnipeg budget for active transportation, the direct result of lobbying from advocacy groups, with \$2.5M allotted to support active transportation for 2009. While an improvement, compare this figure with the allowance for streets, which is \$96.69M, and it is clear where the priorities lie. In her book on car dependence, Lynn Sloman (2006, p. 108) measures a City's commitment to supporting sustainable transportation by the amount spent per capita on these modes:

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<sup>4</sup> Full cash fare increased from \$1.45 in 1997 to \$2.30 in 2009. All other fares, regular and reduced, were raised to a similar degree. Data courtesy a key informant from Winnipeg Transit who participated in the Questionnaire.

<sup>5</sup> Following a period of decline, transit ridership stabilised from 1995 onward. In 2000, the EcoPass program was introduced, a partnership between Winnipeg Transit and employers offering employees transit passes at reduced rates. Ridership increased 45% over the two-year pilot program showing that fares do have an impact on ridership (see Transport Canada: <http://www.tc.gc.ca/programs/environment/utsp/ecopass.htm>).

Winnipeg will spend \$3.95 per person on active transportation in 2008. Compared to other places, particularly in Europe, this is very low.<sup>6</sup>

#### **1.4.6 Marketing**

Very little marketing of sustainable transportation is done in Winnipeg. Winnipeg Transit's marketing budget has been in decline since the mid-1980s.<sup>7</sup> Other marketing of sustainable modes is generally done by local non-governmental organisations. The city's first and only community-based travel marketing project (see Section 2.7), which was funded by the federal and provincial governments as part of the WinSmart showcase (see Section 1.4.7), was administered by Resource Conservation Manitoba, a local non-governmental organisation.<sup>8</sup> Marketing of any sustainable transportation is relatively unexplored at the municipal level in Winnipeg.

#### **1.4.7 Recent Developments**

Since 2006, local awareness of the importance of sustainable transportation has increased due to fluctuating gas prices, a greater understanding of climate change and other environmental issues, and strong local activism, all of which may be leading Winnipeg towards better facilitation of sustainable travel modes. The *Zoning By-Law* was reviewed in early 2008 and incorporates some policies that ensure other travel modes are considered in planning and development, such as minimum parking standards for bicycles in new developments. The conversion of some unused rail lines to trails, such as the Marconi Line, stretching 6.7 km from the city centre to the north-eastern edge, will provide more active transportation infrastructure.

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<sup>6</sup> Frieberg, Germany spends \$7.50-\$13.00 per person on active transportation (Sloman, 2006, p. 108).

<sup>7</sup> Information courtesy a key informant from Winnipeg Transit who participated in the Questionnaire.

<sup>8</sup> This program was very successful in achieving travel behaviour change in a targeted area of the city. Final report to be released in 2009.

An Active Transportation Coordinator position was created at the City of Winnipeg in 2007 to consult with the Active Transportation Advisory Committee of public servants working with representatives from local grassroots organisations advocating for provisions for cycling, walking and other active modes. This group developed the *Active Transportation Action Plan*, proposing cycling routes throughout the city (City of Winnipeg, 2008a). The City's development plan, *Plan Winnipeg 2020 Vision*, is under review and an extensive public engagement strategy is in progress under the banner "SpeakUpWinnipeg".<sup>9</sup>

There has also been some support at the provincial and federal levels for sustainable modes. The WinSmart Showcase, a tri-level government program aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector, had eight small projects to improve cycling, walking and transit including downtown signage, a park and ride station, improved transit technology, a section of a cycling path, and a community-based travel marketing project (see Section 1.4.6). These projects wrapped up in early 2009.

As previously mentioned, bus rapid transit development is being revived (see Section 1.4.5), with support from all levels of government. The current funding scheme will construct a route from downtown to Jubilee Avenue parallel to Pembina Highway. Ultimately, it is hoped that a second phase will extend the line as far as the University of Manitoba. These initiatives are positive responses to a growing interest in sustainable transportation.

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<sup>9</sup> See [www.speakupwinnipeg.com](http://www.speakupwinnipeg.com) for a sense of the City's current approach to citizen engagement during the development plan review process, which will be complete in the spring of 2010.



## 1.5 Conclusion

While *Plan Winnipeg* does state a commitment to a multi-modal transportation system, in actuality the infrastructure, regulations, zoning, funding and marketing do not necessarily support this vision sufficiently for it to be realised. The inconsistency between policy and practice results in development patterns that are unsupportive of a variety of modes. A pattern of compact, mixed land use would be conducive to walking, cycling and transit use, and the development plan promotes this; subsequent zoning and funding less so. Recent and current development are still characterised by sparsely populated, coarse-grained, single-use tracts of land connected by major roads with little consideration for the needs of cyclists, transit riders or pedestrians. In this kind of development, the auto is well-accommodated and so considered by most to be more practical than any other mode. Most funding therefore is directed towards mobility by car, further strengthening a car-centred travel culture.

Steps are being taken locally to improve regulation and infrastructure so that they can better facilitate all modes, but they remain fragmented pieces rather than a planned, integrated vision of multi-modal transportation. There remains a long way to go before sustainable modes are balanced with the auto. Meanwhile, the car continues to dominate the city: in addition to car-centred infrastructure, funding and regulation, Winnipeg is host to the Sunday night cruise along Portage Avenue and various car rallies; the downtown feels like a sea of surface parking lots from a pedestrian point of view; and, the *Winnipeg Free Press* has two sections devoted entirely to autos on Fridays. Sidewalks are scarce in new developments and roads continue to be widened in spite of a growing infrastructure deficit. Local media and politicians focus strongly on pot holes,

car theft and the price of parking, and citizens continue to drive alone. It seems that to be a Winnipegger is to drive a car.

Despite that, there are Winnipeggers who choose to walk, cycle, take the bus or otherwise travel around the city car-free. This study explores their views, in an attempt to delve more deeply into the question of car dependence than a simple lack of infrastructure. This information will be used to identify leverage points to challenge traditional transportation assumptions in Winnipeg and shift local discourse away from the car to a more balanced understanding of what transportation means.

Following this introductory chapter is the literature review establishing the theoretical framework behind the study and exploring culture and transportation – primarily car culture. Chapter Three presents the methods of research and analysis applied in the three phases of the study. Chapter Four contains the analyses of the three research phases, with discussions of each. Chapter Five identifies recommendations for policy and concludes with an exploration of areas for further research.

## **Chapter 2      Review of Literature on Transportation and Culture**

### ***2.1 Introduction***

The most common way to travel in any part of the developed world is by car. Subsequently, most of the literature available about the link between transportation and culture relates to the car. The car offers a convenient, flexible, fast and often enjoyable means of getting around, but to think of the car as merely a tool used to transport oneself is to grossly underestimate the depth to which cars are integrated into personal and collective life (Maxwell, 2001, p. 203; Sheller, 2004, p. 230). From cultivating a personal image to caring for loved ones, from expressing societal values to fulfilling political agendas and fuelling the economy, the car is embedded in all levels of society, and around it has developed a certain car culture.

There are many drawbacks to a car-centred society, including social inequality (Guiver, 2002), negative impacts on public health (Featherstone, 2004), accessibility limitations (Litman, 2009c), deteriorating urban centres (Litman, 2009a), high infrastructure costs (Litman 2009c), environmental degradation (Litman, 2009c) and unstable international relations (Gilroy, 2001). The first two of these points are explored in some detail in Section 2.5.1. While these drawbacks cannot be ignored, so far they have not been enough to inspire a mainstream modal shift in most developed nations. Dant (2004), in studying the driver's experience, describes the level of integration of cars into society this way: "[t]he use of cars is not then simply functional, a matter of convenience, nor is it reducible to individual, conscious decision... [rather it is] a feature

of the flow of daily social life that cannot simply be removed or phased out” (pp. 74-75). Sheller (2004) declares that it is vital to understand this before we can begin to think about shifting away from car dependence.

When considering the concept of transportation culture, car culture immediately springs to mind. That “transportation culture” even sounds awkward is illustrative of how alien the concept is to other modes, or to transportation in general. Countries that are very supportive of cycling, such as Denmark, will have a bicycle culture, but otherwise, culture seems to be the exclusive abode of cars. Particularly in North America, car culture is the way it is, it is “reality”.

Section 2.2 scrutinises the concept of reality – arguing instead for a collaborative planning framework based on multiple realities – then describes the relevance of this framework to transportation culture. Literature on transportation culture is then reviewed, of which the focus is car culture as that is what has been studied the most. Car culture is presented in three realms – the personal, social and ideological. This exploration of car culture in a study about car-free culture is intended to build a broader background of transportation and culture before exploring the local context. This will also construct the basis for research on culture that may exist locally around living without a car. The chapter concludes with the planning implications of the supposed reality of car culture, current means of facilitating modal diversity and a discussion of the literature review in the context of the present inquiry.

## 2.2. *Reality and Culture*

The theoretical framework of this research is informed by post-modern sensibilities of multiple realities which are socially learned rather than a single, inevitable truth. Two major influences are the works of Leonie Sandercock, who specialises in participatory planning in multicultural cities, and Patsy Healey, who focuses on linking collaborative planning theory to practice. Sandercock (1998) acknowledges that cities have “multiple publics” (p. 30) whose worldviews and ways of expressing knowledge differ from one another. There is no one way of knowing or doing; no single truth or reality. As linguist Norman Fairclough (2001) argues, social practice determines and shapes reality, resulting in a world which is predominantly a human creation. “‘Reality’ is whatever we decide it to be; it is a human phenomenon, and therefore nothing is simply ‘the way it is’” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 31).

Central to this research is the notion of culture. Sandercock (1998) defines culture as “the creation and expression and sharing of stories that bond us with common language, imagery, metaphors, all of which create shared meaning” (p. 188). Culture is socially created and socially relevant. For Healey (1997), culture suggests:

the systems of meaning and frames of reference through which people in social situations shape their institutional practices. This conception of culture takes us beyond notions of values as ‘individual subjective preferences’. Instead, values are seen to derive from models of thought. (p. 37)

Culture defines what is normal behaviour, and even opinion, in a given context.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Healey (1997) recognises “cultural communities” (p. 37) in contrast with place-based culture. For the purposes of this study, culture refers to these cultural communities, specifically based on the way people travel locally, and not to place-based culture.

### **2.2.1 Collaborative Planning Framework**

Healey's (1997) collaborative approach to planning, based on communicative theory, draws on ideas from a range of planning theorists. This approach offers a useful theoretical framework for the research. Presented below are the integral points of the collaborative approach.

First, knowledge is entirely socially constructed; it is not gained and understood by individuals in isolation. This is true also of interests and opinions; individuals learn about their preferences not independently but in social contexts, so even very subjective concepts are social constructions. We are raised in an environment where things are done in a certain way. This shared way of living contains cultural values which we very rarely assess or question because everyone is doing them so they appear normal (Edensor, 2004, p. 102). Therefore, it can be hard to distinguish one's own habits, thoughts and feelings from the cultural norm.

Second, there are many shapes which knowledge can take. Healey cites rational systematic analysis and storytelling as examples. Further, knowledge is communicated in a wide variety of ways, through such media as music and images, and not just words. These expressions of knowledge will vary depending on context and culture (Healey, 1997, p. 29).

Third, there is a diversity of interests in society, many of which are oppressed by assumptions that exist in power relations; those in power will subvert the interests of the less powerful not only overtly but more importantly in understated ways. Power itself will not always be visible; rather it may be ingrained in culture and modes of thought (Healey, 1997, p. 112). A situation that serves those in power will be passed off as just

being reality, inevitable, and therefore not even up for discussion, when in fact it may be quite changeable. In the book *Rationality and Power*, Bent Flyvbjerg (1998) states that power often escapes the need for rational argument; power substitutes rationality with rationalisation, and will even go so far as to define reality outright (Flyvbjerg, 1998, pp. 37, 229). It is important to be aware of the insidious ways in which power works when considering other ways of knowing and being.

Fourth, policy-makers who manage shared spaces – planners, for example – must draw from the varieties of knowledge, not simply knowledge of the powerful.

Sandercock's arguments support this position (1998, p. 30), urging planners to use creativity to access the many different forms of knowledge and their expressions in any given community.

Fifth, culture is built through collaborative consensus: communicating the ideas presented by different forms of knowledge will make new kinds of social activity possible. New cultures then emerge. This approach helps to uncover alternatives to the norm (Healey, 1997, p. 30).

Finally, the everyday practice of planning is closely embedded in its social context. Therefore, the very approach used in planning practice will have an effect on whether or not social change is effected.

Language, socialisation and process play important roles in collaborative planning theory. To summarise the above points:

1. knowledge is social;
2. knowledge has many forms;
3. power uses assumptions to oppress less powerful forms of knowledge;

4. planners must see through these acts of power to all forms of knowledge;
5. culture is built through collaborative consensus; and,
6. planners can instigate change through their approach.

### **2.2.2 Relevance of Reality to Transportation Culture**

If cultural realities are created by socialisation and not inevitable, then there is a difference between what is not possible and what is just culturally not practiced. If a community accepts this position, it is open to other possibilities. In looking for examples of other ways of living, both locally and elsewhere, a community can try a new activity, see it is possible and in the process, construct a new reality.

Take driving as an example: Edensor (2004), in his study of car culture, finds that the “car has become part of our ‘second nature’” (p. 103). Most people drive without thinking about it – driving simply is. However, if knowledge is socially learned, and power maintains the status quo by taking for granted the inevitability of that status quo, therefore discouraging questioning and the development of alternatives, then perhaps the car as our second nature is not as simple as “the way it is” but is something we have created. Further, if culture is built through communication and consensus, then alternatives using different models of thought and ways of knowing can be built where travel is not centred on the car. Living car-free is real for some; it is just not the norm therefore not appreciated or understood by many. The concept of multiple realities built collaboratively forms the framework of this present study.

Turning to the current reality of transportation culture, the literature review explores three realms in which car culture functions: the personal, social and ideological,



followed by the planning implications of car culture as reality and concluding with means to facilitate modal diversity.

## **2.3 *Personal Realm***

When choosing a car, drivers look for something which suits not only their needs, but their level of interest in driving and even their images of themselves. This is much more than a monetary investment. This section explores the personal perspective of the motorist at various levels: the experience of driving itself and the relationship the motorist develops with the car; self identity as expressed through car ownership; and, perceptions of time and space as a result of driving. These personal experiences serve to inform discourse with other motorists.

### **2.3.1 The Experience of Driving**

Driving a car is a multi-faceted experience, stretching from the mundane to the profound, resulting in everything from enjoyment, to rage, to providing an opportunity for the driver to bond with others who have had similar experiences. This common ground builds culture.

The act of driving is something that many people enjoy, and being in control is part of that enjoyment (Featherstone, 2004, p. 9): control of temperature, route, passengers, volume of the stereo and especially, speed. Speeding can be fun (Featherstone, 2004, p. 15), even sensuous (Urry, 2000, p. 60) and as such, the car can be used in dangerous and even life-threatening ways by those caught up in the thrill of moving fast (Carrabine & Longhurst, 2002, p. 183).

In spite of top speeds, both Maxwell (2001) and Carrabine and Longhurst (2002) found in their studies that people feel safe in a car, particularly at night. With a kind of shield surrounding them, they are protected from the elements of the city which are beyond their control (Carrabine & Longhurst, 2002, p. 190).

Another part of driving which people especially like is the opportunity to listen to loud music (Miller, 2001; Bull, 2001). Bull (2001) conducted a study on the car as a soundscape, and found that the stereo provides much of the enjoyment people get from driving. Loud music of one's own choice transforms the car into a space of one's own, the last refuge in a world bombarded by other people. A driver might even move the car according to the music on the stereo, accelerating as the music becomes especially intense (Bull, 2001, p. 198).

Dant (2004) describes the physical properties of driving to which the motorist grows accustomed, which are read as cues to help in the act of driving. The sound of the engine, the feel of the wind coming in through the windows, the resistance of the brakes, accelerator and steering wheel and the vibration of the road all emit signals when driving, so one is not just using eyes to drive but the whole body. The visual signals match these other physical properties (Dant, 2004, p. 72). According to Michael (2001), these experiences cause the person who is driving to mesh with the car into a form that is greater than the individual and the object, a phenomenon which Dant (2004) labels the "driver-car". This title acknowledges a closeness between the person and the object which takes on an identity of its own.

Eventually, driving becomes a totally unremarkable activity (Dant, 2004, p. 74). Experienced motorists are not really challenged unless faced with an unusual situation,

such as driving in a foreign country (Edensor, 2004, p. 112). As driving moves away from initial excitement to perpetual habit (Carrabine & Longhurst, 2002, p. 193), the focus shifts onto other aspects of the driving experience: the remote automatic starter, luxurious upholstery, interior mirrors, GPS, elaborate sound system – none of which is critical to actually driving the car – rendering driving more of a leisure activity than work (Gilroy, 2001, p. 96), an opportunity to multi-task rather than to get somewhere safely (Featherstone, 2004, pp. 8-9). While driving requires concentration, once learned it is done by rote, and other features and activities capture at least some of the motorist's focus away from the road.

Finally, road rage is a common experience. Bull (2001, pp. 197-98) asserts that drivers feel separated from other people on the street to the point that these others do not even seem real. Encased in a capsule, the motorist feels a false sense of empowerment and insulation provided by the car. This feeling of power paired with the everyday repetition of driving and its frustrations commonly leads to road rage (Michael, 2001, p. 62).

An important point, and one that is central to Michael's thesis, is the downplaying of the role of the car itself in road rage. By drawing on historical accounts of anger between carriage-riders in pre-car days, for example, road rage as we know it is seen as a logical development in the evolution of transportation. Michael (2001) questions this because it eliminates the car from the equation, which ignores how complexly the car is entrenched into society (pp. 65-67). If driver and car do indeed act as one, it is important to include the car in road rage (Michael, 2001, p. 75-76).

These experiences are peculiar to driving and have an effect on how we interact with our environment and with one another. Lilleor, in an essay dated 2008, equates the motorist with the social deviant because, encased in a shell and surrounded by distractions, a person is prevented from using all her or his senses so cannot act like a fully-functioning, moral human being. The motorist requires very specific rules, guides and treatment to function because of the inherent inability to respond to the environment in a socially-responsible way. Lilleor labels this “motorism”, a condition from which many suffer but for which there is no cure, only prevention – by not getting into the car in the first place.

### **2.3.2 Self Identity**

A car can be used as a tool to craft a person’s image, an expression of and a complement to one’s individuality (Featherstone, 2004, p. 7). This image presents a clear message to the world about who the driver is and what he or she represents. Sometimes the car itself is more readily identifiable than the person. Miller (2001, p. 19) studied car culture in Trinidad and found this to be true.

Advertisers are well aware of the links between commodity, self-image and group membership, so they exploit these tendencies by identifying certain market groups then presenting a car in a light that appeals to that group, providing a means for the observer to construct an identity (Williamson, 1978, in Pearce, 1999, p. 86): the mini-van has been associated with the errand-running mother, the sports car with the young professional who is always on the go. To each group is targeted a certain car which, in its physical features, represents the values and mindsets that the group is purported to have so that the

driver and the car come in a complete package relaying one consistent message about the self. The market group reinforces the individual image (Edensor, 2004, pp. 106-07).

The image of the teenager illustrates this point. O'Dell (2001) studied driving teens in 1950s Sweden. By the end of the decade American cars had become far too ostentatious for general Swedish society and were rejected by the general public. This rejection by the majority, and the subsequent drop in price of used cars, prompted those on the fringe to desire and purchase these cars, decorate them to their personal tastes and use them as an expression of their own values. It was not just young men who were travelling in these cars but women, too. The car became linked to rebellion, freedom, sexuality, shifts in social structure and over-consumption, all while offering both physical and social mobility. The car allowed these values to be displayed flagrantly, which also went against the mainstream. Individually, teenaged drivers rejected the status quo in favour of something unique, and in the process ensured their membership in a group of other like-minded teenagers. While a car can be a means of individual self expression, at the same time it is the basis of a common bond based on that "individual" image.

### **2.3.3 Perception of Time**

As technology develops, our perception of time changes (Urry, 2000, p. 106). We live now in an environment that Urry (2000) calls "instantaneous time" (p. 129), meaning that events occur instantly and simultaneously twenty-four hours a day, resulting in a blurring of distinctions between opposites and a quick, temporary quality to everything. To wait today is an unfamiliar concept (Urry, 2000, p. 125). Guiver (2002), whose research on modal choice questions the status quo, claims this concept of time to be a

result of capitalism, which has shaped perception of time into something more valuable now than it was in the past.

Because it is flexible and fast-moving, the car works well with instantaneous time. A car does not adhere to restrictive schedules (Urry, 2000, p. 190). In a car, one can come and go as one pleases. Other modes, such as the bus, are more limiting. Guiver (2002) conducted research on bus riders' perception of time and found it to be different from that of a motorist. A journey on the bus is generally longer and more rigid than in a car; the rider has little control over the length of time of the journey and waiting is to be expected. For the bus rider, time must be organised around an external schedule and lost time cannot be made up by speeding, for example. However, the bus rider anticipates this so will prepare by planning ahead to find the optimal route, or by finding an activity to occupy time spent waiting. This is a contextual view of time – how one spends one's time is part of a whole and not a means to an end (Guiver, 2002, p. 47).

Further, Guiver (2002) says that to live sustainably, time must be perceived as continuing beyond one's own lifespan (Guiver, 2002, p. 47). This is intergenerational time, and the car is intergenerationally inequitable due to its consumption of non-renewable resources.

#### **2.3.4 Perception of Space**

Perception of space has also changed drastically with technology, most notably the car. With a car, space seems to shrink (Urry, 2000, p. 126): places that were otherwise unreachable are today within one's grasp. To cross Canada in the past would have taken years; now it is only a matter of days. With the ability to traverse vast distances in a fairly short time, space is perceived as something conquerable.

Another important dimension of space with relation to the car is that the car itself becomes akin to a dwelling (Urry, 2000, p. 193), offering the chance to create and control one's own intimate, personalised space in an otherwise impartial urban environment (Featherstone, 2004, p. 9). This is mainly due to the components of a car which detract from actually driving it, as discussed in Section 2.3.1. The interior environment of the car shelters the motorist from the people and the sensations experienced outside, over which the motorist has no control (Featherstone, 2004, p. 9).

## **2.4 *Social Realm***

Sandercock (1998) and Healey (1997) assert that the social realm is where culture is built. Discourse built on shared personal experience, such as that explored above, forms the basis of a culture. Central to both personal relationships and to a person's place in society at large, the car plays very significant social roles in our society, reinforcing car culture and its normality. This section explores the social realm of car culture, considering personal relationships and social standing.

### **2.4.1 *Personal Relationships***

The meaning of the car is variable: while it is associated with personal image and individual satisfaction, it also features prominently in the social world. The car is often central to relationships, particularly family life, used as a tool to fulfill family duties and enabling helpful gestures of care and love (Maxwell, 2001, p. 215). Anything from running mundane errands to escorting a loved one to the hospital gives the motorist a role in the family (Garvey, 2001, p. 149). Car ownership also relieves others from the burden

of having to provide a ride (Carrabine & Longhurst, 2002, p. 189): the motorist feels both useful and independent.

Carrabine & Longhurst (2002) studied how teen social relationships are affected by the car. From the perspective of family life, it is not the particular car but the act of driving which determines a sense of social inclusion (Carrabine & Longhurst, 2002, pp. 192-93). The car is “situated in the ‘lived experience’ of the individual and the ability to participate in car culture” (Carrabine & Longhurst, 2002, p. 192). It is the opportunity for social activity provided by the car which these people (in this case, young women) seek in driving, not the status symbol of a pricey commodity. Garvey (2001) reached a similar conclusion: the car can lead to social opportunities, taking a person from isolation to situations that are social in nature. Maxwell (2001) even found that, contrary to much of the literature, driving is not a wholly individual activity and that the car can provide shared social experiences when driving with a passenger. In situations where friends and events are more easily accessible by car, driving allows for a better social life (Maxwell, 2001, p. 214).

Just as people feel connected by a bond based on common consumption choices, having the same experiences will also help people to relate to one another and ensure group membership. Experiences, both positive and negative, are shared widely amongst motorists. Exchanging common stories builds empathy, which forms a basis for a popular culture of driving (Edensor, 2004, p. 113). Other references, such as films where the central focus is a car, give more opportunities for participation in car culture, further entrenching a person in the group (Urry, 2000, p. 62). The car and associated references enable and maintain social networks; to drive is, for many people, simply part of



citizenship today, so to not have a car means to be left out of being a full participant in western society (Carrabine & Longhurst, 2002, pp. 192-93; Urry, 2000, p. 191).

#### **2.4.2 Social Standing**

Another role of the car is to display one's social standing. An accumulation of personal goods indicates wealth and with wealth comes status. As a major commodity, conspicuous and mobile, nothing quite indicates affluence and social status as the car. In India and parts of Africa, where many people do not drive, the car is a status symbol and the owner earns the respect and envy of others (Edensor, 2004; Verrips & Meyer, 2001). In wealthier parts of the world, cars continue to remain status symbols, even in their ubiquity. Gilroy (2001) studied the car in contemporary African American culture and found it to be a significant indicator of status, making the owner appear wealthier, prouder and more respectable than his or her peers and competitors. Although the car is very common in the developed world today, it continues to be used as a status symbol because it is such a major commodity.

Even if one does not have a very expensive or distinguishable car, at the very least, one is expected to have a car of some kind. In turn, this has led to other expectations. Maxwell (2001) conducted focus groups with motorists and one participant articulated that there is an expectation that one will arrive at work looking a certain way, which may not be easily achieved if walking or cycling (p. 214). The image portrayed by one who arrives at work after a long bicycle ride is not on par with that projected by the driver who arrives without breaking a sweat, although there may be no difference in the quality of their work. Such social expectations, generated by car culture, simultaneously reinforce car culture as the sole norm.

## **2.5 *Ideological Realm***

Car culture dwells at the local level, but above and beyond the individual's personal life and social circle is a system of politics and economics in which the car is fundamentally entrenched. The car keeps the world, as we know it, going. This section reviews the ideology that upholds car culture as the status quo.

### **2.5.1 Ideology**

Transportation systems are reflective of the ideology of the time and place, lining up politics with the economy and public policy. Pucher (1990) discusses this in depth by comparing Eastern Europe's extensive train systems with North America's roads, the first representing socialism and the second, individualism. Any acts which indicate a move from an individualistic system towards a more public one, such as increased investment in transit, may be considered by citizens to interfere with independent action as this is what driving has been socially constructed to mean (Guiver, 2002).

The close links between transportation, externalities, cost and political climate maintain the car as the status quo (Miller, 2001, p. 14). Gilroy (2001, p. 83) points to global petroleum manipulation by corporations and governments, and the lobbying of oil companies and car manufacturers against public transit, as the sources of today's car-centred societies. The resulting economy is interwoven with car dependence. Not only is land designed to accommodate the car, but jobs and whole industries depend upon existing car-based transportation systems (Guiver, 2002). As such, Wachs (2000) finds that transportation planning decisions are often made for political reasons and not based on research.

Many of the values espoused in capitalist democracies, such as individualism, power and freedom, tend to encourage or are associated with car use and discourage other, more sustainable modes (Guiver, 2002). However, the individualistic model purported by the car, which facilitates choices and values that are self-interested (Sloman, 2006, p. 43), is not as sustainable as the model of collectivism, responsibility for others and equity. Such views are generally representative of the less influential members of society, including women, the young, the old, and the poor (Guiver, 2002). As argued in the theoretical framework, those holding positions of power will undermine the interests of those who are less powerful, often in subtle ways. Sloman (2006), in her research on car dependence, claims that it is in the best interests of the powerful to maintain the status quo of car culture and to pass it off as “an immutable fact of modern life” rather than acknowledging it is a result of decades of policy decisions favouring the car (p. 13).

Driving is treated more as a right than a responsibility (Miller, 2001, p. 15; Sloman, 2006, p. 43-44). The issue of road safety illustrates this point, displaying the significance of ideology and, again, of the systemic entrenchment of the car in society. While cars have become increasingly safe for motorists, the risks have been externalised onto those outside of the car (Urry, 2000). Pedestrians and cyclists in particular are very vulnerable to cars and their chances of survival if hit at speeds over 30km/h are slim (World Health Organization, 2004, in Featherstone, 2004, p.3). Collisions are normalised and any societal or even individual responsibility is downplayed by simple use of the term “accident” which attributes no blame, turning instead to fate (Featherstone, 2004, p. 16). Road death is an unavoidable fact of car culture, hardly even worth reporting unless there is a dramatic story attached (Featherstone, 2004, p. 16). As Guiver (2002) points

out, if anything else caused as much destruction, compounded by environmental and economic costs, it would be stopped immediately, but because of the way driving is seen as an expression of individualism and freedom – both a necessity and a right – and because it is so tightly entwined with political ideology, the economy and other existing systems, we are willing to endure the detrimental effects. These strong links between driving and just about everything else allow us to make concessions for the car that we would not make for anything.

Like Lilleor (2008, referred to in Section 2.3.1), James (2000) also uses the term motorism, but to describe a societal rather than a personal affliction. Where Lilleor concludes that an individual chooses to get into a car and become inflicted by motorism, James states that “[i]f we recognise motorism as an ideology rather than a popular choice, we are in a position to discard it” (James, 2000). Motorism, whether individual or collective, is not inevitable.

## **2.6    *Planning Implications***

Car culture, born of a certain ideology and systemically perpetuated, has direct planning implications. In his book *Sprawl: A Compact History*, Bruegmann (2005) offers a proponent’s perspective of low-density development patterns. He considers land use which facilitates increased car dependence to be a natural evolution, a beneficial one because it opens the door to increased mobility, privacy and choice. He insists that humans naturally want to spread out and to try to prevent this is to obstruct freedom, so planning should support this natural tendency. Gordon & Richardson (2001), in their study on sprawl and its relation to economics, share this viewpoint. They also disagree

with planning that interferes with free market mechanisms; to force compact, mixed land uses to reduce car dependence in the name of equality or environmental sustainability is unfounded if these patterns are not supported by the market anyway.

However, these arguments underestimate the systemic support of automobiles by both the public and private sectors over the past five decades. Cars require plenty of space and investment to function – that is, public space and public investment. Many of the costs associated with car dependence, including infrastructure, congestion, air quality degradation, greenhouse gas emissions, obesity, and deaths and injuries, are externalised. Society as a whole absorbs these costs. Instead of a user-pay system, driving is largely subsidised through taxes by all citizens, creating price distortion (Litman, 2009c). To devote such a significant amount of shared space and resources for the purpose of individual time saving indicates a weakening of collective authorities (Guiver, 2002, p. 48).

Gilroy (2001) refers to the private car as “an index of hegemony” (p. 86). Public transport has not enjoyed the success of private cars, highlighting the individualism of our society which has effectively destroyed the notion of the common good (Gilroy, 2001, p. 86). Transportation planning then becomes a political issue as decisions made will depend upon on the planning theory upheld, which is closely related to one’s politics (Benveniste, 1990): to paraphrase Pucher (1990), do we fundamentally uphold freedom of the individual and free markets, or equality and the collective good? The answers will map out differently on the landscape.

Governments are reluctant to be seen as stifling something that represents personal freedom and choice, so they use discourse which assumes current conditions

will continue, in the process maintaining the status quo. This is what Vigar (2002) labels the “predict and provide” approach in his analysis of politics and transportation: the traditional method of projecting traffic demands into the future and planning to provide the necessary infrastructure to meet that demand. What this ignores is the freedom of accessibility and of choice between modes (Vigar, 2002, pp. 86-89). For the majority of people, the car is too integral a part of their daily lives to even consider alternatives. As such, the promotion of sustainable modes as a solution to today’s congestion problems, for example, does not come across as viable. In our society, which values individualism, to stifle car use would be interpreted as an obstruction of freedom. Urban and transportation planning, at least traditionally, have taken this standpoint.

## ***2.7 Facilitating Modal Diversity***

Todd Litman, Executive Director of the Victoria Transport Institute, claims that vehicle ownership per capita reached its peak in 2000 and predicts that other modes are going to be in greater demand in the coming years (2009b). Baby Boomers are retiring and will be driving less and requiring more services closer to home (Litman, 2009b, p. 12). Further, while mobility has been the focus of transportation for decades, that is, movement of people and goods, the focus is shifting towards accessibility, which measures the ability to reach opportunities. Accessibility encompasses mobility and land use, therefore taking into account location of opportunities and means of reaching them. A transportation system that is multi-modal offers the greatest accessibility (Litman 2008, p. 5). The rational response to these trends is not to improve mobility by personal motor vehicle, but to diversify modal split.

There are many ways a city can accommodate a variety of transportation modes. The provision and maintenance of infrastructure for cycling, walking and transit are requisite because without them, individuals will always have a reason to continue driving. Rail lines, high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, bicycle paths and sidewalks are some of the most basic ways to facilitate other modes. This infrastructure requires planning and funding that is balanced to accommodate all modes, and must be supported by the appropriate regulation and zoning.

The cold Winnipeg winter offers an excuse not to commit to sustainable transportation. However, Meagan Henke (2006), in her City Planning practicum about winter liveability, presents very plausible arguments for supporting active transportation and public transit through the winter months and lists extensive design guidelines for how to do this that are specific to Winnipeg.

There are additional initiatives cities can take beyond basic infrastructure provision which may be just as important for a truly diverse transportation system. Design concepts such as *complete streets*, where all modes share a road that is safe and welcoming to every user, flatten the hierarchy established by conventional streets where the automobile subverts all other modes.<sup>11</sup> Compact, mixed-use development patterns as envisioned by *smart growth* principles aim to be more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly than recent conventions in suburban design of single-use tracts of land and *culs-de-sac*.

Programming aimed at behaviour change can effectively increase the use of other modes. Managing the demand for driving infrastructure rather than increasing supply is one way, known as transportation demand management (TDM). TDM can provide more

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<sup>11</sup> See [www.completestreets.org](http://www.completestreets.org) for more information.

ways of accessing goods and services (e.g. by making improvements to cycling infrastructure rather than widening a road) or discourage car use (e.g. by increasing parking rates rather than making more parking available).<sup>12</sup>

Community-based social marketing (CBSM) is another way to guide people to choose other modes. CBSM is a method of promoting sustainable behaviour by identifying barriers and applying behaviour change tools to facilitate a personal change (McKenzie-Mohr, 2009, p. 5). Behaviour change tools assume that people will change in response to direct appeals from others. These tools can take two forms: either they elicit a commitment from a person to undergo a certain activity, or they develop community norms that encourage sustainable behaviour so that individuals will go along with what is done around them – a cultural shift, essentially (McKenzie-Mohr, 2009, pp. 5-6). CBSM has successfully increased the uptake of sustainable modes in cities such as Perth, Australia and Boulder, Colorado.

Despite such efforts, having spent money on a car, one is likely to want to use it, no matter how appealing the lures towards other modes. Policy-makers choosing to diversify modal split traditionally focus on reducing car *use* rather than car *ownership* (Gilbert & Perl, 2008, p. 86), but is widespread individual car ownership necessary or even desirable? Having no car at all is something that politicians and policy-makers do not tend to promote, though it easily solves the conundrum of car dependence (Gilbert & Perl, 2008, p. 86). Without a car, car-sharing, carpooling, renting and borrowing are workable options, should a car be needed on occasion.

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<sup>12</sup> See Online TDM Encyclopedia, Victoria Transport Policy Institute: [www.vtpi.org/tdm/index.php](http://www.vtpi.org/tdm/index.php) for more information.



Considering how entrenched the car has become in daily life, facilitating modal diversity is challenging and requires real creativity. Two-way communication between a municipal government and members of the public about the costs and benefits of existing and proposed transportation options is a necessity (Vigar, 2002 p. 200). The collaborative planning approach (see Section 2.2.1) supports such dialogue. By introducing the concept of car-free culture at these early discussion stages of planning, could planners facilitate more modal diversity and more inclusive transportation?

## **2.8 Conclusion**

The literature reviewed in this inquiry – about the concept of reality and its relationship to transportation culture, collaborative planning, and the characteristics of car culture in the personal, social and ideological realms – indicates it is myopic to accept car culture as simply human nature, the way the world would go no matter what the programs, interests or politics of those with influence or power. There are policies in place to ensure a predominant discourse of the car prevails. This discourse spills into the social and personal realm of individuals' lives, creating a culture where driving is easy, normal, natural and inevitable.

However, the negative effects of car culture listed in Section 2.1 can no longer be overlooked if a transportation system is to be sustainable. Car culture is *a culture* and, as impossible as it may seem in this regard, culture can change. Cities have many options to reduce car dependence, but most individuals will continue to drive as long as the car

remains not only a convenient and seemingly cheap means of travel,<sup>13</sup> but also a mechanism of self-expression and a ticket to group membership. Further, few governments have incentives to support and promote sustainable modes to the extent that the car is supported as long as the car remains a major economic driver and culturally very popular. Fundamental shifts require systemic changes. These changes – to our infrastructure, regulation, policy, funding, marketing, individual lifestyles, ways of socialising, and ideology that are centred entirely on the car – could be instigated by planning.

What is the role of the planner? As in the collaborative planning framework described in Section 2.2.1, this study starts with discourse. To instigate a new discourse, and eventually effect change, the planner must look beyond current “normal” behaviour and instead seek other assumptions and behaviours on which to base policy. The next chapter explains the research methods and analysis to be applied in this study which flow from the ideas explored in the literature review.

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<sup>13</sup> As explained in Section 2.6, driving appears much cheaper than it is because of price distortion due to subsidisation. While parking in a big box development may be billed as “free”, there is really no such thing.

## Chapter 3      Methods of Research and Analysis

### *3.1 Research Methodology*

The nature of this research is qualitative. Neuman (2003), a social scientist with expertise in research methods, deems qualitative research to be less standardised and theoretically less abstract than quantitative research. Data are interpreted as having multiple meanings, from which are developed explanations or generalisations. Rather than proving a universal truth or making unconditional statements, this approach aims to “create a picture of social life and stimulate understanding” (Neuman, 2003, p. 419) by differentiating between what is conceivable from what is unlikely. The multiple interpretations made possible with this approach complement the theoretical framework of collaborative planning, described in the previous chapter, and the goal of the study, which is to seek understanding of a certain perspective. Rather than a general survey, the study seeks the roots of the issue; an interpretive approach enables inspection for some deeper meaning of car-free discourse, similar to how car culture has been studied.

The methodological approach of this study is interpretive social science, defined by Neuman (1997) as:

the systematic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct detailed observation of people in natural settings in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social worlds. (p. 68)

The worldview of interpretive social science has characteristics which differentiate it from other approaches, such as positivism. The interpretive approach understands the nature of social reality to be defined by human interaction and to always be in flux, and that humans are social creatures who impose meaning on their worlds. Common sense

for an interpretive social scientist consists of the theories which ordinary people regularly use but which are very powerful. An explanation will be seen to be “true” when it resonates with the people being studied, evidence of which is embedded in the context of fluid social interactions. Finally, a value-free environment does not exist in interpretive social science; values are seen simply as an integral part of social life, none right or wrong, only different (Neuman, 1997, p. 83).

### **3.1.1 Constructivism**

Research was conducted using the constructivist approach, based on Guba & Lincoln (1989), which is characterised in four parts: first, the study is to be pursued in a natural setting; second, the instrument to be used is the human, which includes both the researcher and the participant; third, the methods will be those that come most easily to the human instrument, that is, use of the senses; and finally, tacit knowledge, which is valuable to this approach, is considered (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p.174-177).<sup>14</sup>

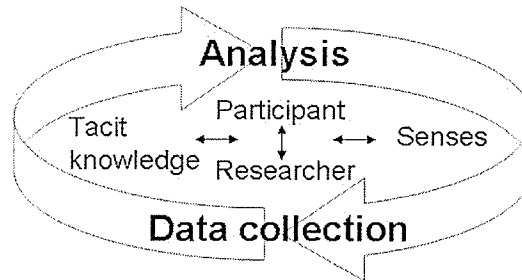
The process of the constructivist inquiry is hermeneutic and has four main interactive elements:

- the sample to be selected will provide a broad scope of information;
- likewise, inquiry begins broadly and is tuned more finely with each respondent so that the research continuously builds on itself;
- analysis and data collection proceed simultaneously to ground the findings which emerge in the constructions of the respondents so that it is both the researcher and the respondent conducting the analysis; and,

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<sup>14</sup> Tacit knowledge is that which is understood but cannot be explicitly articulated, such as the meaning of a concept.

- the research culminates into a case report representing the joint construction which resulted from the hermeneutic dialectic process (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, pp. 177-181).



*Figure 1: The constructivist research process, based on Guba and Lincoln (1989).*

### **3.2 Methods of Research**

The research consists of three phases: a media review, in-depth interviews and key informant questionnaires. The media review serves as a representation of the prevailing transportation discourse to supplement the literature review with local data. The in-depth interviews explore different transportation discourses. The key informant interviews study policy-makers' responses to the findings and present the discourse of those in positions of influence. Findings from the literature review and from each phase serve to inform the following phase.

#### **3.2.1 Media Review**

The first phase of research is to review a locally-broadcast morning program on public radio for four weeks covering two seasons, and to gather and analyse the program's transportation content. The purpose of this media review is to give local representation of the prevailing transportation discourse to then compare with other transportation discourses.

Media content is tightly woven with the ways in which people think and act, generating a process of exchange (Mirchandi & Chan, 2007, pp. 22-23). This is more than a simple relaying of facts. Mirchandani and Chan (2007) declare that “the media are able to take an issue, intertwine it with ideological beliefs and portray ideas in ways that make them appear “natural” or common-sensical” (p. 22). This research phase seeks what is “natural” about local transportation, which will have an effect on local culture.

Fairclough (2001) says of the British media that “the balance of sources and perspectives and ideology is overwhelmingly in favour of existing power-holders” (p. 43). Since access to media is worldwide today (Mirchandi & Chan, 2007, p. 24), this statement can be said to apply to Canadian media also. A local morning radio program, vying for as many listeners as possible, will tend to appeal to the widest audience; for local transportation issues, the majority of that audience consists of motorists, since most people in Winnipeg drive. Motorists, as the majority, are the power-holders in the context of transportation, so the discourse is anticipated to be from their perspectives.

A public radio station is chosen to avoid any commercial interests which may bias the study towards a particular discourse. The review period is four weeks because the sense of power imbalance is only made prevalent over time; sound bites from a single day would be insufficient (Fairclough, 2001, p. 45). The four weeks are divided over winter and spring to obtain a more thorough review since seasonal variations in weather and road conditions in Winnipeg may have an impact on transportation discourse and travel behaviour.

### 3.2.2 In-Depth Interviews

The next phase of research is semi-structured, in-depth interviews with eleven individuals choosing to live car-free in Winnipeg. The interview sample is modeled after Maxwell (2001), who held interviews for a study on car culture with a group of average citizens rather than prominent figures or activists. For this inquiry also, average citizens are sought as interview participants, not representatives from a special interest group or employees of transport-related professions with technical knowledge. Instead of gaining insight into the refined arguments of an activist, or expert professional opinion on local transportation issues, the interviews are designed purposely to learn the tacit knowledge and experience of an average, but non-motoring, citizen. Also, this sample is chosen with the idea of car-free culture permeating beyond the fringes into the mainstream.

The interview process follows the steps outlined by Zeisel in his book *Inquiry by Design* (1981), which explains the procedures of a variety of research methods. The process consists of asking questions under seven main themes stemming from the literature review: personal realm, social realm, time, space, ideology, experience and implications. Questions are crafted based upon the literature review and findings from the media review. Specific questions within each theme are used as prompts when necessary (Appendix C). Questions are deliberately open-ended to allow the participants to speak freely. Further, the purpose of the study is explained at a very general level to prevent participants from trying to say what he or she perceives the researcher may otherwise wish to hear. This semi-structured approach was used by Carrabine and Longhurst (2002), who conducted interviews with open-ended questions for a study about youth consumption experiences across a range of activities. The type of analysis applied

and insights gained as a result of this approach are similar to the level of depth which this inquiry seeks.

Each interview builds upon previous interviews, as illustrated in Figure 3.1, and as such, questions and themes evolve as the research progresses and more knowledge is gathered.

### **3.2.3 Key Informant Questionnaires**

The third phase of research is an email questionnaire directed to five local city planners and policy-makers. Questions are crafted based on findings from the media review and in-depth interviews with participants (Appendix D). Questionnaires are administered by email rather than in person in the interest of participants' professional time and to give a chance for reflection in responding. The purposes of this phase of the research are to gain professional insight and acknowledgement of findings so as to add to the findings' value; to learn new ideas not considered that will supplement the recommendations that I would have made on my own; and, to identify any limitations which may be expressed in the discourse of these individuals who have some influence over policy.

## **3.3 *Methods of Analysis***

This inquiry applies a qualitative method of analysis, which is further informed by critical discourse analysis. These analysis methods are consistent with the approach and methods of research discussed above.



### **3.3.1 Qualitative Analysis**

As stated in the introductory section of the chapter, the nature of the research is qualitative, and analysis follows the same line of thinking. The media review, in-depth interviews and key informant questionnaires are analysed on three levels: literal, interpretive and reflexive (Neuman, 2003, p. 422). Explicit statements are explored through the literal reading, paying attention to the words used, the sequence of interaction between the interviewer and participant, and the structure of dialogue. Meaning and representation of the data are inferred in the interpretive reading, and the reflexive reading, which locates the researcher in the process of gathering, analysing and interpreting data (Mason, 2000, p. 149), is embedded throughout. Adequate reflexivity will help to overcome criticisms that the interpretive reading is only an expression of the researcher's voice (Bevan & Bevan, 1999, p. 25).

### **3.3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis**

Throughout the media review, in-depth interviews and key informant questionnaires, discourse is carefully examined. Discourse refers to the patterns of meaning which emerge from symbolic systems that we use to understand and be understood by one another (Parker, 1999, p. 2). Burr (2003) describes discourses as such:

...discourses, through what is said, written or otherwise represented, serve to construct the phenomena of our world for us, and different discourses construct these things in different ways, each discourse portraying the object as having a very different nature from the next. Each discourse claims to say what the object really is, that is, claims to be the truth... claims to truth and knowledge are important issues, and lie at the heart of discussions of identity, power and change. (p. 65)

Discourse manifests in text which can take many forms, including speech, a picture or a building (Burr, 2003, p. 66). A text is anything meaningful that is significant to the

reader (Parker, 1999, pp. 3-4). Wherever there is meaning, there is discourse to be studied (Parker, 1999, p. 1).

As in Mirchandani and Chan's study of welfare representation in a national newspaper (2007, p. 25), critical discourse analysis (CDA) influences the process of analysing the three phases of research in this study. CDA aims to uncover power inequalities and ideologies as represented in language. Discourse both expresses and creates social structures, including power inequality. The structure of a text (such as radio dialogue or responses to questions) can be analysed to uncover how the ways people speak, and the widely available narratives we choose to draw from to express ourselves, can often say more than what is at face value. These expressions and narratives convey an underlying set of assumptions which may coincide with the status quo. By continuously drawing from and communicating narratives which express these assumptions, existing power relations are maintained and reinforced as truth. The purpose of CDA is to uncover those power relations and understand how they are embedded and being continuously built up in discourse (Burr, 2003, pp. 170-71). Since power plays a role in local urban planning, development and transportation, CDA does inform the analysis for the three phases of research, however, the thesis focuses more broadly than power relations so CDA is not the only form of analysis to be used.

See Appendix A for a sample critical discourse analysis of a local text.

### ***3.4 Limitations and Assumptions***

The study is limited in several ways. The literature on counter-cultural movements or activities, such as culture jamming,<sup>15</sup> is not explored; this is because the study is trying to move away from seeing car-free as a subcultural or counter-cultural concept and instead approach car-free as part of the mainstream culture, as something normal. The research itself is also limited. The media review is of a single program and spans only two seasons. Specific recommendations are not made for media as this would be out of scope: the purpose of the media review is only to illustrate car culture. Questionnaires are limited to five key informants, all of whom are public servants: no planners in other sectors are involved, nor are any politicians.

The in-depth interviews have a small sample size and narrow focus, so are not representative of all the car-free population of Winnipeg. The sample is neither ethnically nor socio-economically diverse – this is by chance of those who responded to the call for participants. Only those who choose to live car-free are interviewed, so the perspectives of others who may not have a car, including those who do not but wish they had and those who do but rarely use their vehicle, are excluded. This was intentional, to give the study a finer focus and to provide the opportunity to go more in-depth into participants' responses. Motorists themselves are not interviewed, either; the points of view of motorists and car culture are prevalent in the literature. The interview sample is limited to Winnipeg, making it difficult to draw broad conclusions. Finally, the study is conducted over only two seasons (winter and spring) so may not be representative of views and behaviour of a full year.

Assumptions of the study are that the media will express the prevailing discourse of transportation in Winnipeg and that non-motorists will generally express a different point of view from that of the media, though they may not acknowledge this. The study also assumes that the results will form a basis for useful recommendations for city planning, and that key informants will be able to verify and supplement the recommendations, augmenting the validity of the findings.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This chapter described the methodological approach of this thesis, the three phases of research and the type of analysis, and also presented limitations and assumptions. Every effort has been made to align the research methods and analysis with the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter Two. The following chapter presents the analysis of each of the three phases of research – the media review, in-depth interviews and key informant questionnaires – in ways that are congruent with the ideas presented up to this point.

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<sup>15</sup> Naomi Klein, in her 2000 book *No Logo*, defines culture jamming as “the practice of parodying advertisements and hijacking billboards in order to drastically alter their messages” (p. 280). The process is a means of countering mainstream culture, particularly corporate culture.

## **Chapter 4      Analysis**

### ***4.1    Introduction***

Having described the Winnipeg context, reviewed the literature available on transportation and culture, and explained the methodology applied, this chapter presents the analysis of the research. The chapter is divided into three major sections, each for one of the three research phases: the media review; in-depth interviews; and, key informant questionnaires. The data from each phase is analysed thematically with efforts to link the themes back to those established in the literature review. The analysis of each phase is summarised in individual concluding sections, with a discussion of the overall analysis provided at the end of the chapter.

### ***4.2    Media Review***

The program reviewed for analysis was “Information Radio” on CBC Radio One, a local news show which airs from 5:30 to 8:37 each weekday morning on 89.3 FM and 990 AM in Winnipeg. The show covers local and provincial issues primarily, with broader stories generally reserved for national news reports each hour. As it is not a commercial radio station, there are no advertising interests represented, but being a local morning show, it is competing for listeners from a relatively small group when compared with nationally-aired programs. It seems therefore that the program tries to cater to what is perceived to be average Winnipeg interests.

The program was reviewed over two periods: the last two weeks of January 2008 (Jan. 21-25 and Jan. 28-Feb. 1) and the last two weeks of April 2008 (Apr. 21-25 and

Apr. 28-May 2), spanning winter and spring. The program was recorded and played back, and all transportation-related discourse was transcribed. Transportation issues, themes and content emerge in discourse throughout all segments of the program, including local and national news, weather, music, interviews, business reports, informal conversation between hosts, the Question of the Day,<sup>16</sup> general interest stories ranging in topic from the environment to the economy to personal tragedy and, most prominently of all, traffic reports. This media review focuses specifically on transportation-related discourse that is local; such discourse amounted to approximately ten pages transcribed, or fifteen minutes per day, on average.<sup>17</sup>

Within all local transportation discourse, the most widely represented viewpoint is that of the motorist. By taking this stance, the program reveals an inherent perspective of car culture at its core. Expressions of car culture surfaced in many ways, four of which are focused upon in this analysis: directly addressing the listener as a driver; regular, detailed traffic reports; coverage of problems shared by motorists; and, discourse on alternative modes. These four themes reveal the personal, social and ideological realms of transport and culture as outlined in the literature review.

This segment will address the first research question: What are the perspectives and values embedded in the prevailing transportation discourse in Winnipeg? Quotations are attributed anonymously as Host (H1, H2...), Guest (G1, G2...) or Caller (C1, C2...) and all are dated 2008.

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<sup>16</sup> Listeners are invited to call or email their responses to a question related to a current news item.

<sup>17</sup> This includes all mention of transportation, from offhand comments regarding the drive to work, to interviews with cyclists. It does not include air time devoted to national or international stories related to transport, of which there were many. For example, stories about gas prices in Alberta or a transit strike in Toronto were not included in the study, so would have supplemented the content analysed had they been incorporated.

#### 4.2.1 Directly Addressing the Listener as Driver

The program is laden with assumptions that the listener is a driver, so commentators will speak as though everyone listening can directly relate to driving references. These are not made in a deliberate way; rather, they are embedded in the flow of reporting:

I know you're out there. I know there's [*sic*] some quirky people in your car. Wanna hear who they are [...] thanks for being with us today. Hope your drive in is great and your day is, too. (H2, Jan. 21)

Hey, guess what? You actually have suspension back on your car this morning, you know, when it gets warmer. The ride feels a lot softer as you're coming in today, it's those warmer temperatures, and I notice, boy the heater, I had to turn it down! (H1, Feb. 1)

H1: Hey, you're going to be doing the mad dash from the house to the car, I'll tell you [*laughs*]. You're definitely not going to be sleepy when you get into the car because it's basically going to really wake you up out there.

[...]

H3: And [H1], if you didn't plug the car in last night because it was mild when you parked it, it's frigid this morning.

H1: Oh, it's a square tire morning.

H3: So you might want – if you're heading out in the next hour or so – you might want to plug the car in a bit just to kind of warm up the oil.

- Jan. 29

Clearly, driving conditions are vital pieces of information to get any morning listener going. The assumption of shared experience in this language is an appeal to the idea that the average, normal listener is driving so can immediately relate to the described experience.

Unscripted chatter between hosts about other topics also implies the normality of driving, relaying common situations to which we can all supposedly relate. A conversation about reusable shopping bags expresses this:

H3: The trick is training yourself to bring these with you. That's the hardest step that I found. Keep them in the trunk of the car, if you drop in, and remember to bring them into the store with you.

H2: Have you got like a rotating supply then, because that's my issue too.

H3: I always keep about a half a dozen in the trunk.

H2: And then you unload your groceries and remember to put them back.

- May 1

This does two things. First, the language falls short of directly stating that the car is simply no more or less than a normal part of daily life; the listener easily infers this. Second, it is a personal anecdote to which the listener can relate, which offers a basis for social bonding. Shared experiences, as Edensor (2004) points out, form the common ground on which culture is built; the kernels of an undisputed reality.

News reports and the Question of the Day are crafted to look for ways in which current events might affect the listener:

Now this shooting may affect your morning drive to work. (H4, Jan. 24)

Is that going to be the limit for you? What are you going to do to cope with another dollar a litre? (H5, Apr. 25)

However, these do not speak to the listener who is cycling. That seems unimportant because the shared story is told from the motorist's point of view.

In analysing representations of welfare in print media, Mirchandani and Chan (2007) note that the language used to describe welfare recipients "reinforces a particular moral universe" (p. 25). By continuously referring to the listener as a driver and integrating references to the car with waking up, weather, shopping and other parts of a supposedly average day, the program is reinforcing, if not a *moral* universe, certainly a version of reality that is indisputably natural. This is not a calculated effort; the program is entrenched in the discourse itself. Hosts are not trying to get people to think that driving is natural; they are just talking the talk of the average Winnipegger because that is who they represent. Failure to notice that discourse is an active part of the cycle of expressing and reinforcing a particular culture only perpetuates that culture further. An



awareness of how embedded cars are in other aspects of living, and of how easy it is therefore to assume that everybody out there drives, will help to prompt questions about how transportation is discussed, which could ultimately lead to changes in action.

#### **4.2.2 Regular, Detailed Traffic Reports**

One of the more obvious displays of car culture is the traffic report. There are eleven traffic reports throughout each three-hour program, and they are almost exclusively about driving. The segue which one host commonly uses to introduce the traffic report – “[H1], how’s the drive?” (H2, Jan. 28) – sums up the perspective of these segments: the mode-specific term “drive” easily replaces the broader “traffic”. Sporadic references are made to other modes, such as to cycling on a windy day or to re-routed buses due to an incident where a section of a road is closed, but for most traffic reports, sustainable modes are overlooked entirely.

As a morning show, the program appears to cater to the listener who is only tuned in for a short period, so segments are cyclical and tend to be repetitive. These regular updates seem to coincide with the idea of “instantaneous time” (see Section 2.3.3). Because traffic updates are scheduled in whether there is something to report or not, the result at times is an update where no useful information is conveyed. An example:

Pretty steady traffic, but it is moving well. I’m not seeing any or hearing of any big problems out there, so if you’re in a line-up I’d love to hear from you. The only line-up that I’m seeing, of course, the usual Bishop Grandin but it’s not too bad this morning; same thing with the south Perimeter, just seems everything is a little lighter than you would normally expect. Northbound Osborne, as usual, still lined up and but [*sic*] not too heavy. It is moving along well, every now and then you do get that traffic light by the Co-op and that tends to slow things down but it does move through there fairly good [*sic*] [...] and oh yeah, Jubilee heavy as well. (H1, Apr. 21)

There is virtually nothing reported of value, but because a time slot has been devoted to the topic, words must be spoken. This is a lot of air time devoted to cars where nothing is actually said.

Traffic reports are frequently treated as entertainment: the announcer wants a phone call because there is nothing to report during a dull, collision-free period; or, the listener is urged to stay tuned to hear all the necessary details of the morning commute:

This hour of the show we're going to have the specific details coming up straight ahead about the weather, school closures, and yes, your drive to work. (H2, Jan. 29)

In the event of something relatively unusual, such as a major collision, traffic reports are used as a selling point to entice listeners to remain tuned in:

We're going to go to [H6] first because she's on the scene of the biggest traffic story of the morning. As we heard in [H4's] news, Winnipeg police are investigating an early morning shooting on Chief Peguis bridge... (H3, Jan. 24)

What often stands out from a car-free perspective is what is *not* said, generally done again in a non-deliberate manner. Because the listener is assumed to be a driver, a great deal is left out about other modes. For example:

In the city – eastbound Portage Ave. at Good Street – again, those two right-hand lanes are still closed, that's going to squeeze everything to the two left-hand lanes. (H1, Jan. 22)

When car traffic is reduced from four lanes to two, it is newsworthy, but the fact that bicycles are still not accommodated is just not a news item. There was never a lane exclusively for bicycles to begin with so the issue is simply not brought up.

Incidentally, this report is from a day where no mention was made about cycling conditions, buses running late or the state of sidewalks – no mention of other modes at all. Sustainable modes tend to be referenced on days when there is little happening with

“real” traffic, but on “traffic-busy” days like the one above, there is, of course, no time for talking about anything other than driving.

By featuring traffic reports in such a prominent way on the radio, the listener is reminded that traffic conditions are, like welfare fraud in print media, “an important social issue that requires attention and solutions” (Mirchandani & Chan, 2007, p. 38).

#### **4.2.3 Coverage of Problems Shared by Motorists**

The problems that motorists share help to reinforce the reality of car culture when visited repeatedly. This section discusses four problems which are almost exclusive to motorists and which were often referenced in the period of review of the radio program: collisions; car theft; rising gas prices; and, traffic congestion.

##### *4.2.3.1 Collisions*

Collisions are reported as expected from the literature review – from the perspective of car culture. As discussed in Section 2.5.1, Featherstone (2006, p. 16) notes that traffic collisions are often referred to as “accidents”. This is frequently the case on this radio program:

We have some follows to, of course, that accident that’s leading our news, the accident that happened yesterday morning where a City worker was struck on north Main. By the way, at last report that worker is in stable condition. (H2, Apr. 23)

In an “accident”, responsibility does not lie with the motorist.

Often, responsibility for a collision or other occurrence resulting from negligent driving is placed on external factors, particularly weather conditions, and not on the actions of motorists:

I do have one report from the North Perimeter near Highway 6 there is a car in the ditch because it is icy out there, especially on the highways around the city of Winnipeg. (H1, Jan. 28)

The car being in the ditch is attributed to the weather, an external factor, and not to anything inappropriate that the motorist may have been doing, such as driving too fast for those conditions or otherwise being preoccupied. Listeners will sympathise with this perspective.

A collision is reported most days; some days, there is more than one. Almost every day there is a report of some driving mishap. However, unless the circumstances are very unusual or someone is badly injured or killed, the report is made in the context of traffic flow, not as a story unto itself. Nowhere is a collision presented as a reflection of the possibly problematic situation of car dependence.

Alright, well there's [*sic*] a few problems out there now. There's been an accident on southbound Main St at Templeton and that's really, really squeezing things down there. And also another accident at Salter and McRae, and that's slowing things down as well. (H1, Apr. 30)

Accident on Marion and Taché, it is closed right at the moment as they sort of get the occupants out of the vehicles there, I'm looking at it down from high atop [the] traffic cam and it is a little slow through that area so you'll have to get around that, so – but fortunately it is eastbound traffic so it's not going to cause a big problem. (H1, Jan. 21)

With occupants needing assistance to get out of the vehicles, this sounds as though it could be a major collision, but the concern is not with the possibility of injured people and their safety, but of the stalled commute. Treating collisions as simple facts to accept and work around indicates a numbness towards them. They are too banal to be explored in depth.

That crash, Marion and Taché, involved three cars. You can get through there and it is eastbound so it's not a big issue in terms of the morning commute. (H1, Jan. 21)

There is no mention of whether the crash is “a big issue in terms of” anything else. Two days later is another collision at the same intersection:

... it's been sort of a good morning, been a few problems out there but they're all cleared up. Normal commute pretty well everywhere else; great traction. (H1, Jan. 23)

Left out of this report is the fact that a pedestrian had been hit earlier! The omission reduces pedestrian collision to an ancillary event, not even considered noteworthy here. Collisions occur frequently enough that their shock value is diluted, so they will often not make the news in and of themselves.

Motorists, as Sloman (2006, p. 34) insists, are in control of a potentially dangerous machine and therefore carry a burden of responsibility. However, the onus is often put on the pedestrian to be responsible for his or her safety. The following is an excerpt from an interview with the President of a union representing City of Winnipeg workers, after a worker was struck:

H3: So what are you asking from the public at night when they see workers on the streets?

G1: I think that anytime that people are working out at night, out on the streets, whether it's in the winter or the summer or the fall, they have to be very cognisant of what's around them.

- Apr. 22

By immediately bringing the issue back to the worker, the interviewee looks to the pedestrian rather than the driving public for safety. This sends the message that the onus is on the person outside of the car to act in a safe and defensive manner. It is indisputable that pedestrians must guard their safety, but that responsibility does not lie solely on them; as someone who has been issued a licence to operate a machine, the driver bears much of the responsibility, but there is none of that information in this language.

Analysis of a car collision often involves the differentiation between us and them, as though collisions only occur because of a particular kind of driver, especially one who is breaking the law, but only certain laws. The rest of us are not the same. Another

interview, this one with a car enthusiast about a collision which resulted from street racing during the Sunday night cruise held weekly along Portage Avenue, makes the point:

Well, what the judge said is that not only, obviously, can you not go and drive your car and smash into someone while you're racing down the street in a street race, but that you are different from other people who are out just cruising around in their car, and that I think the really big deal, because it did occur, the accident did occur on a Sunday night, we were all kind of concerned that this individual be painted as a Sunday night cruiser and what the judge did is distinguish this individual differently from the rest of us. (G2, May 2)

Never mind that no mention is made of the fuel-wasting, air-polluting celebration of car culture that is cruising. Those who cruise up and down the avenue for fun and those who cruise to race other drivers are different: those in the first category would not cause a collision. This language maintains the status quo: that person is different from us, and as long as a concrete discrepancy is established, we can simply carry on driving without a worry because collisions are caused by other people who are in some way bad. However, bad behaviour on the road – street racing, drinking, car theft – is not a necessary prerequisite to a collision, though it certainly helps; simple negligence will do. Everyone is prone to this, so the fine line between “dangerous them” and “safe us” is fine.

Perhaps the street racer is not so different from everyone else. As discussed in the literature review, speed is an enjoyable part of driving (see Section 2.3.1). Safety will often be overlooked in favour of such enjoyment, or of time saving or talking on the phone. Are these more reasonable driving activities than racing? This double standard allows members of the general public to accept negligent behaviour, but in the case of a collision, a differentiation must be made. Once the line is drawn, the cruisers can return to the streets on Sunday knowing that they have nothing to worry about because they are

different. Meanwhile, collisions are not discussed in the context of a socially-created reality in which all citizens participate.

The radio program, however, does at times present alternative views of collisions. One guest, from the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, says this in an interview about a worker being struck by a motorist on the job:

No, I think what we need to do is constantly remind motorists that they have a responsibility when they're behind the wheel of a car, and that includes not drinking and driving, that includes obeying traffic signs, it includes obeying signs that alert people to the fact that there's either construction or road work ahead. (G3, Apr. 23)

These plain solutions are a good start to changing the way we think about driving and road collisions. In one interview, the father of a road worker who was killed in a collision in 2007 also poses some possible ways to prevent future collisions:

Well, I'd like to see the charges at least go up into the thousands of dollars, not this little couple of hundred dollars, maybe pull their licence for a couple of months. (G4, Apr. 23)

This language moves towards more responsibility on the part of the driver. Including it in the discourse on collisions contributes towards shifting collective thought about driver responsibility.

#### 4.2.3.2 *Car Theft*

As Winnipeg has one of the highest rates of stolen vehicles per capita in the country (Government of Canada, 2007), car theft is a major topic in local news. During this period of review, there had been instances reported of auto thieves purposely seeking to hit pedestrians with the stolen vehicles. In a fashion similar to distinguishing the speed racer from the cruisers, the car thief, particularly one behaving dangerously, is clearly distinguished from other drivers. This Question of the Day is illustrative of this point:

So we're talking this morning about the disturbing level of violence among car thieves. And we're asking you, do you think there should be special penalties for car thieves who endanger police? (H3, Apr. 30)

And one caller's response:

Why single out car thieves that are a danger to police specifically? Car thieves that are a danger to anybody should be singled out, not just if they're a danger to police. (C1, Apr. 30)

The Question of the Day focuses as much on the fact that the vehicle is stolen as it does on dangerous driving. The respondent is quick to note that the question singles out police, but not that car thieves have also been singled out. By focusing on the stolen aspect of the car, the thief is distinguished from other drivers regardless of whether others may also behave dangerously behind the wheel.

Ironically, large, fast cars and the aggressive images they project are marketed and valued in our society, yet to take that message literally is not acceptable. Of course, no one should take those messages literally, but why are they projected by advertisers and embraced by media and consumers in the first place if we are going to distance ourselves from those following through? This limited discourse does not spark a deeper debate into the source of the problems, but the stories capture the attention of callers.

City of Winnipeg Mayor Sam Katz called in to respond to the Question of the Day with a tone that summarises a commonly-expressed attitude towards car theft, from the perspective of car culture. The program aired his comments the following day:

I hate to be redundant and repetitive [*sic*], but I think I've been saying this one for a few years now, you know. We've called it the revolving door policy, we've made the statement that the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* has to be changed, we've talked about the *Criminal Code*, and I just pray that it doesn't take another death before there's a change being made. And I mean it's difficult enough to put on a uniform of a Winnipeg police officer and go to work without having to think about young punks using cars as weapons now, and that's happening more and more and with no disrespect to others who have different viewpoints, there doesn't seem to be a great deal of remorse or even concern for the human beings that are being hurt, or let alone the property damage, and I'll tell you what, that



scares me and I think it's time that we get much tougher. When they came out with the ankle bracelet for these Level Four offenders and the way they're cutting them and just going out and repeating, if that isn't the message to somebody, I don't know what is. It's got to change. The time is now. I don't want them to have to wait for a member of the Winnipeg Police Service to be killed by some punk who's going for a joyride and playing a game with human lives. Enough is enough. When are people going to open up their eyes and see what's really going on? And they don't care one bit. And that to me is the saddest part of it all. (C2, May 1)

The expression is one-sided. The thief, driving dangerously, is responsible. This is true, but it is also restricted. First, no mention is made of collisions caused by sheer carelessness, as discussed in the previous section. Second, the Mayor does not call in to the radio show saying "enough is enough" and demanding change because bicyclists, pedestrians and other drivers have been hit simply because of poor driving, ignorance of road laws or a lack of decent infrastructure.<sup>18</sup> Finally, this discourse does not acknowledge that cars are strongly promoted and embedded into economic, political and social life, so the possibility that car culture may play a role at all, however small, is not entertained. Discourse such as this is too narrow to even allow questions about the nature of car culture and its impact on events such as auto theft and deliberate collisions to enter the debate.

The Mayor expresses an appetite for change. If the behaviour of "some punk who's going for a joyride" can be changed, perhaps the behaviour of the rest of our car-dependent society is also susceptible to change.

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<sup>18</sup> Pedestrian and bicycle injury and death statistics are available on the City of Winnipeg's website at: [http://winnipeg.ca/publicworks/InformationAndResources/TrafficData/TrafficData/traffic\\_collision\\_data.asp](http://winnipeg.ca/publicworks/InformationAndResources/TrafficData/TrafficData/traffic_collision_data.asp)

#### 4.2.3.3 *Rising Gas Prices*

Rising gas prices are a major point of discussion in this time frame. This excerpt is typical:

Actually guys, you were chatting earlier about gas prices and how much more expensive it is to put gas in your car. Here's a good one, I filled up my car yesterday for the first time ever, I hit over the \$50 mark. Fifty-two dollars! (H1, May 2)

The soaring cost of gas is spoken about with an element of crisis; often followed, ironically, by a segment on traffic or a story implying the normality of driving, as though things are going to continue on as-is forever. Connections between car dependence and rising gas prices are not made, and real, forward-thinking solutions are not presented. On April 25<sup>th</sup> the Question of the Day is: What are you going to do to cope with \$2.25 a litre? That same day, one of the major stories is the proposed expansion to a bridge used heavily by commuting motorists. How is expanding the capacity for motor vehicles helping anyone to cope with \$2.25 a litre?

Similarly, on April 28<sup>th</sup>, a reporter is stationed at the gas pumps giving air time to those wishing to vent their frustrations at the rising cost of gas, but there is no one out at the bus stop inquiring about how fares, which have been rising steadily for over a decade (see Section 1.4.5), are affecting riders. Such discourse is still considered alternative, so to leave it out is not really noticed. The motorist is the predominant listener.

#### 4.2.3.4 *Traffic Congestion*

Just as weather conditions reportedly cause collisions or put cars in ditches, so too is traffic congestion beyond the driver's control. Where there is congestion, the blame is put on external factors and not on the large numbers of single-occupant vehicles (SOVs).

Lots of problems out there in terms of traffic... Slow train [at] Dugald and Plessis, slowing things down there. (H1, Apr. 24)

...the barricade [at] Portage Ave. eastbound around Balmoral it's supposed to be out of there today. It's on the City's list, it says "out after today", so hopefully it'll be gone. It is causing a bit of a backup now. (H1, Jan. 21)

Going to be a busy morning out there, the stalls are now coming in, here we go: stall, northbound Dunkirk before Fermor, right curb lane, causing a long line up.... Going to be a busy morning, folks, with long line-ups because of just the cold weather. (H1, Jan. 30)

As well, Lagimodière, there's [*sic*] big traffic light problems at Regent and Lag, do watch out for police directing traffic and further up around Maginot as well, problem with the lights and that's actually causing quite a back up. (H1, Apr. 24)

Congestion is something caused by trains, barricades, stalled cars, cold weather or traffic lights, not SOVs. The problem identified is the block, not the nature of the flow, so the possibility that SOVs may be inherently problematic themselves is never even raised.

In a manner similar to Guiver's (2002) findings in her study of drivers and bus riders in the UK, congestion is something that one suffers from in Winnipeg also, and not something one contributes to:

... the problem there for Chief Peguis Trail. Eastbound is open so if you want to escape this big line up on Main Street you might want to head down Henderson Highway which isn't so bad (H6, Jan. 24)

Thousands of single-occupant drivers heading in one general direction are bound to cause problems, only to be compounded by an external factor such as a barricade, yet this language skips over the nature of the system entirely, jumping straight for the block and identifying that as the culprit. If the solution is to avoid the block, it is no wonder then that Winnipeggers continue to predominantly drive solo<sup>19</sup> when the problem is understood in this way. This discourse reinforces such assumptions and will not lead most to consider using other modes or carpooling as a solution. The response is to

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<sup>19</sup> 59% of the Winnipeg workforce drives to work in a single-occupant vehicle (Government of Canada, 2006a).

continue to drive and complain, never addressing how this behaviour only contributes to the problem.

The following excerpt addressing the issue of congestion during construction periods illustrates the transportation paradigm in Winnipeg where mobility of the private automobile takes top priority:

The City of Winnipeg hopes to minimise traffic disruptions this summer by offering incentives and penalties to contractors [... G5] manages traffic and engineering for the City. He says it will be worth it for contractors to use the accelerated construction methods and to work more in off-hours. “For instance, on the Fort Garry twin bridges project, it’s \$10,000 a day if they go over the completion date. On the other hand, they can make that back if they can find ways to minimise the disruptions to traffic and finish earlier.” (H5, Apr. 30)

Congestion is identified as the problem with the solution being less road construction during peak hours. This appears logical at first because driving is embedded in our culture; but it is based on a model that is archaic due to its limited scope. The “predict-and-provide” approach (Vigar, 2002, see Section 2.6) gives priority to the movement of SOVs. An alternative would be to identify the high dependence on SOVs as the problem and transportation demand management (described in Section 2.7), such as increased parking rates or transit improvements as a solution. These would omit congestion from the equation entirely; however, these suggestions do not appear in the discourse at all.

#### **4.2.4 Discourse on Other Modes**

While the focus in local transportation is on cars, and from the point of view of the car owner and driver, the program does make space for other viewpoints. Generally, this is much more deliberate because sustainable modes are not perceived to be so embedded in daily life, thus remain outside of mainstream discourse. These snippets are the exceptions proving the rule that driving is normality and other modes are just a little bit odd. Car culture, as the standard, sets the contextual backdrop.

The omission of candid mentions of other modes is partly related to the weather. The program seems to assume that people are doing what they can to avoid exposure, such as surrounding themselves with a vehicle. This excerpt is a discussion of a blizzard that had happened a few years previously:

H2: It was really one of those unifying things where you had to walk; you couldn't drive anywhere, so everybody was out. Even a couple of years ago on New Year's Eve.

H3: Then there was the flood-of-the-century blizzard.

H4: Yeah.

H3: I skied, I cross-country skied downtown on that one.

H4: Did you really? In the middle of the blizzard?

H3: In the middle of the blizzard. I was doing one of these – there was a telethon going on at the Convention Centre.

H2: And you got there on skis?

H3: On skis, yes.

H4: Oh nice.

H2: It shuts down the city in an interesting way.

- Jan. 28

Skiing as a means of transportation is presented as odd, when actually in a winter city it makes perfect sense. The same goes for skating. In talking about the skating trail marked along the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, nothing is said about skating as a viable means of transportation; instead it is treated as strictly a recreational activity:

...before you go, don't know whether you've heard, Winnipeg – speaking of climate things, completely off the subject of greenhouse gas emissions – we have the world's longest outdoor skating rink. (H3, Jan. 28)

In fact, the skating trail could well be on the subject of greenhouse gas emissions because, unlike driving, skating emits no greenhouse gases. However, the skating trail is not considered a transportation path but a means of recreation. Even in this winter city, there is a very limited idea of what transportation can mean.

Cycling, which has served as a means of transportation since the 1800s, is now on the fringes of transportation talk. References to cyclists are made in a context of the

individual being unusual, which helps to perpetuate the myth that cycling can only be done by a small minority of people, particularly in winter.

If you're cycling in, if you're brave enough this morning, wind south-east at 26.  
(H1, Feb. 1)

After two weeks of observations, this is the first mention of cycling in a traffic report during the period reviewed. The reference is acknowledgement that cycling is an actual form of transportation, even in February, but it seems conspicuous. There are people cycling all winter: why are they brave? Although we live in a winter city, we still make a big deal out of spending time outdoors.

...this won't seem like much of a stretch today because we're talking about how mild it's going to be but imagine being on a bicycle year-round. Nearly year-round, nearly every day, and travelling 30 km – 30 km, can you believe that? – that's what one local man does on his bicycle and he just might be Canada's Ultimate Commuter. He's going to join us in the next hour and talk to us about his daily jaunt. (H2, Jan. 25)

Again, it is strange to cycle a long distance to work in inclement weather. This particular story was part of a Canada-wide competition to find the most extreme commute, told alongside stories such as flying a plane to work. Incidentally, there was no story about using a three-tonne, six-passenger, four-by-four truck<sup>20</sup> to transport oneself a few kilometres through paved city streets, alone – is that not “extreme”? Cycling long distances in winter is not particularly common, but acting as though it is practically impossible does not indicate openness to its plausibility. Even though this story gives exposure to another modal choice, it is told in the context of car-culture discourse: a cyclist is being interviewed, but the interview is not quite from the point of view of the cyclist, who might not think it odd at all to cycle long distances in cold weather. The

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<sup>20</sup> The 2009 Ford F-250 SD Crew Cab is an example.

driver is the gauge and will decide the parameters of an extreme commute. The cyclist's perspective is different:

H3: But there are lots of people who do ride in the winter.

G6: It's amazing how many people you see out there. There's [*sic*] couriers who run back and forth and there's [*sic*] people that just do it for their health and other good reasons.

– Jan. 25

Both agree that many people do ride bicycles in the winter, but there it is, in the context of the extreme commute. To talk about other modes is, unlike the car, deliberate.

During the latter two weeks that the program was reviewed, the City of Winnipeg hosted charrettes to gauge public opinion on potential designs for the expansion of part of the Disraeli Freeway, a major commuting route, which includes a bridge over a rail line.

The options for consideration, from least to most expensive, were:

- a) a widened curb lane in both directions marked with a sharrow,<sup>21</sup> to be shared by cyclists and motor vehicles, and a widened sidewalk on one side;
- b) as a), but with sidewalks on both sides; and,
- c) as a), but with even wider curb lanes and a wider sidewalk.

Discussion around the expansion was covered in the news as follows:

It is one of Winnipeg's most popular commuter routes, and rebuilding the Disraeli Freeway will cost at least \$125M. The City will soon begin public meetings to see what people would like the new freeway to look like. [...] the answer may depend on whether you're a pedestrian, a motorist or a cyclist. (H4, Apr. 25)

The final phrase implies that modes are competing, when really they all just need to be accommodated so that everyone can get around safely, regardless of mode. To show how including cycling and pedestrian infrastructure increases the cost is misleading because

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<sup>21</sup> A sharrow is a bicycle symbol painted in a lane to indicate that the lane is to be shared by cyclists and motorists.

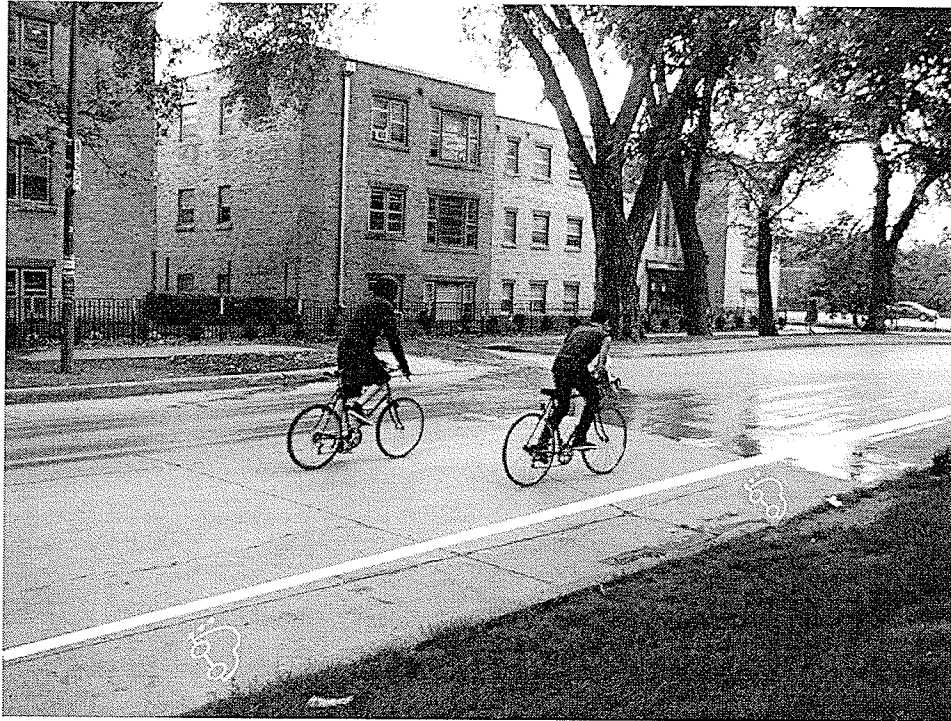
overall, provisions for cyclists and pedestrians cost much less than those for motor vehicles. The story continues:

...and access for pedestrians and cyclists will determine the final price tag. The cheaper plan, with the sidewalk on one side, will cost \$125M. The more expensive options with improved sidewalks and more room for cyclists will cost \$160M, and that gets [G7]'s vote. She is with the Northwest Commuter Cycling group. She says dedicated bike lanes would be ideal but this will have to do. 'That's the absolute safest option and if they were going to build a brand new bridge, that would be something we should be pushing for. But in the case of a rehabilitated bridge like this one, no, I mean you have to be realistic. This is certainly an improvement on what we have at the moment, so I'd be happy with that.' (H4, Apr. 25)

While it was a cycling representative who was interviewed and presenting the alternative discourse, she remains influenced by car-centred language. Even she is willing to settle for little, because it is an improvement to what is currently there, which is nothing at all. Why is the bare minimum considered progress when it comes to transportation options? In light of climate change and rising gas prices, this seems particularly short-sighted. Simply making available the option to not accommodate cyclists and pedestrians at least as well as drivers sends the clear message that bicycle and foot traffic are far less important than cars, lining up again with Vigar's (2002) "predict-and-provide" approach. The top priority is moving motor vehicles, which is consistent with Winnipeg's built form and financing priorities, though not with its long-term planning goals.

Note that there is, of course, no option featuring less space for cars – which is a consideration and long-term goal in some cities. Seoul has removed a freeway running along the river in the centre of the city. Vauban, a suburb of Freiburg in Germany, is virtually car-free. In Winnipeg though, the idea portrayed below is simply not entertained:





*Figure 2: Car lane concept: Bicycle Alliance of Washington. Photograph and rendering: K. Walsh.*

The discourse about sustainable modes on the radio is promising, but this discourse remains solidly within the parameters of car culture, which diminishes the importance of other modes in and of themselves. Alternatives are starting to be normalised, but a fundamental paradigm shift is a long way off. Even my own use of the term “alternatives” is itself an indicator of that.

#### **4.2.5 Conclusion: Prevailing Transportation Culture in Winnipeg**

Section 4.2 addressed the first research question: What are the perspectives and values embedded in the prevailing transportation discourse in Winnipeg?

An analysis of the discourse of this program confirms the prevalence and depth of car culture in Winnipeg, similar to that described in the literature review, with themes of speed, control and time-saving being raised. Appeals to car culture are made in the

personal, social and ideological realms throughout the program. Individual listeners are lured in by the entertainment value of traffic reports and stories of shared problems on the road. Hosts relay their own car-related experiences in back-and-forth banter, to which listeners can supposedly relate, stories they might well tell themselves. And, while the program has room for transportation discourse related to other modes, the discourse is conspicuous, the exception that proves the rule: cycling in winter or skiing to work are a big deal, done by unusual people or in extreme circumstances. Mixed with this is the ideology which distinguishes good drivers from bad and externalises the problems associated with car dependence, with no opportunity for consideration of a socially-constructed reality. Repeated daily, this perspective sends the unequivocal message that the car is the norm, leaving little room for a deeper debate

It does not appear to be the hosts' intent to send out such messages – it is possible that they use sustainable modes themselves quite regularly. Cars penetrate at a level where the hosts of the program do not seem to notice – a fact of life, like breathing – which itself shows the entrenched nature of car culture.

A local morning radio show may be neither the start nor end of car culture, instead acting as a gauge were a change to occur. However, as a medium with a wide audience across the city, local radio may be an appropriate place to begin a renewed transportation discourse so that collectively citizens might start to ask more fundamental questions about current assumptions, and to approach transportation and all related issues more broadly. Radio could be a platform from which to initiate new conversations using language based on different sets of assumptions. Collaboration between planners and media may open doors to new ways of popular thinking.

Meanwhile, new conversations could begin where the radio program left off: with those whose perspective is more like that of the winter cyclist than of the Sunday night cruiser. What do they have to say on the topic of living car-free in a place as car-friendly as Winnipeg? Seeking these other ways of knowing is an effort to take a collaborative approach to planning. This is the next phase of research. The analysis is presented below.

### **4.3 *In-Depth Interviews***

In-depth interviews were conducted with eleven people in Winnipeg who live without a car. Questions were compiled and pilot-tested with two individuals for timing and effectiveness, then refined (Appendix C). Interviewees were then recruited through word-of-mouth and advertisements on public notice boards (Appendix B). Each interview was conducted in a place agreed upon between the participant and interviewer and lasted approximately one hour. Participation was voluntary with no compensation provided. Each interview was taped and transcribed word-for-word. All interviews were held in March and April of 2008.

Participants were mostly Caucasian and middle-class, living generally in central areas of the city, and ranging in age from 18 to 60. Three were men and eight were women. One participant was a parent with small children at home. Of the eleven participants, nine did not have a car in the household and three of these nine did not have a driver's licence. The remaining two did have a car in the household but did not have a driver's licence. The common factor between all participants, and the important one for this study, was that none had immediate access to a motor vehicle.

Findings of the interviews will address the second and third research questions: What are the perspectives and values embedded in the discourse of Winnipeggers living car-free? From that, can there be a profile created of car-free culture in Winnipeg and if so, how can it be described? Below is a summary of the findings, with an in-depth analysis to follow.

#### **4.3.1 Summary**

Most people interviewed said they use several modes to get around. The deciding factors are seasonal or weather conditions, and destination – modes are adjusted depending on whether one is commuting to and from work, and also depending on the distance to be traveled.

Although I assumed participants have a driver's licence, like many assume others have a car, five people interviewed in fact have never had a driver's licence. Those same five have had no car in the past and so have been car-free all their lives, though all have lived with someone who owned a car at some point, and two are currently living with someone who owns a car. Of the remaining six, most said they were inclined to use their car infrequently when they did have one.

Most participants stated several reasons for living car-free, from cost savings to not having a licence. The environment was mentioned most frequently, though it is not necessarily the top reason of those who cited it. Also, there are varying degrees of deliberation when it comes to being car-free: some very consciously think about living car-free and link this to many other things they do; others just get along car-free as casually as anyone who drives.

The vast majority of participants mix with a social circle of people who primarily use the car as their main mode, so they do not necessarily need to be surrounded by others who travel as they do. It is unsurprising then that most said they do not feel a strong sense of community as a result of being car-free; having such a thing in common with another person is not generally enough to form a bond, though some participants did say they feel some affinity towards others who do not drive.

Six participants feel their social lives are affected in some way because they do not have a car – that is, it is difficult to connect with some people, particularly those who do not live nearby, and as a result they see one another less. The remaining five indicated that their social lives are not affected.

Most people reported experiencing a reaction from others upon expressing that they do not have a car. Most commonly this is surprise, particularly for those who do not have a driver's licence.

While all participants could think of instances in their lives when a car would be useful, such as when doing a lot of shopping or travelling beyond the city limits, they do not feel inconvenienced overall, and generally find ways to work around these instances, such as planning shopping trips in advance or taking a bus out of town. Also, with the exception of certain circumstances, such as waiting for a bus in winter or long-distance walks, very few expressed that time spent travelling is time wasted.

A slight majority of participants believe that not having a car does send out a message to others about them, as an outward expression of their attitudes and values. The others feel it does not mean anything at all.

Participants had more positive than negative comments about their experiences walking, cycling and taking the bus in Winnipeg. Direct contact with the surrounding environment was often mentioned or alluded to, and exercise was commonly stated as a bonus to walking and cycling, even though it was not listed as a reason to not have a car. When talking about experiences, participants frequently referenced safety – safety on the road as a cyclist, and safety from others as a pedestrian or when waiting for a bus. The most frequently cited problem with taking the bus was buses arriving early, indicating that schedules are not always reliable.

When asked about the future of living car-free in Winnipeg, most expressed concern that there will not be improvements due to the existing built form or because of a lack of political will to make changes. The two who felt optimistic linked impending change to rising gas prices. All but two participants had suggestions for the question of what could be done to improve life without a car in Winnipeg, from rapid transit to education that would instil in people, at an early age, a sense that it is normal to take the bus. Suggested changes seem to be linked to reasons for not driving in the first place – those who associate being car-free with a larger worldview see significant change as necessary, whereas those who simply do not drive are less inclined to see a need for improvements. Most participants drew comparisons between Winnipeg and other cities in Canada and Europe. This seems to help shape their views on what is possible in car-free life and to inform their suggested improvements (see Section 4.2.5).

More detailed analysis begins with an interpretive reading into the discourse of the three dimensions established in the literature review: personal, social and ideological. Quotations are attributed anonymously as Interviewee (I1, I2...).

### 4.3.2 Personal Realm

The personal realm of transportation from the point of view of individuals living car-free is presented in this section, following the categories developed in Section 2.3. Here, discourse is explored that relates to the experience of walking, cycling and riding the bus; self identity; time; and, space.

#### 4.3.2.1 *Discourse on the Experience of Walking, Cycling, Riding the Bus*

Non-motorists have varying experiences walking, cycling and riding the bus, from feeling unsafe on the road as a cyclist to enjoying the patches of natural landscape as a pedestrian. Many mentioned the added benefits of getting exercise, reading, meeting other people, or, like driving, listening to music while travelling.

The common thread running through these experiences is a raised awareness of surroundings, not only of the natural and built forms but also of what is happening in those environments – the weather, motor vehicles and people nearby. This makes sense as the cyclist and pedestrian are completely out in the open and moving relatively slowly – as is the person waiting at a bus stop – and the bus rider sits among other members of the public. Enclosed in a car, the motorist tends to be comparatively sheltered from the environment, experiencing it only as filtered through the vehicle. A cyclist, bus rider or pedestrian is exposed to the possibility of unanticipated events, both threatening and benign, not afforded those inside a vehicle. As such, when participants talked about their experiences walking, cycling and riding the bus, they tended to refer to what happens around them more than what happens inside their heads. One participant described walking in this way:

...you're more viscerally experiencing your environment when you're walking, so the way the road feels under your feet, the temperature of the air, what people look like today, what the, how the sun is shining, what the buildings are like,

what posters are up on the light stands that day, where you have to watch where you step [*laughs*]. (13)

Dant (2004) referred to the physical aspects of driving in a similar way, but for the pedestrian the feeling is more immediate and more egalitarian. There is less a desire to control than to maintain balance. For this person, there is a strong connection with the surrounding environment:

I see more about what's going on. I feel more connected to the social and natural environments that are in the city. When you're in a vehicle, you're kind of driving through the environment, you're not really, you're kind of a bit divorced from it, I find. I feel more, I definitely feel more connected to the community, for sure. (18)

The pedestrian partakes rather than dominates. Information is absorbed without a buffer, used to guide the person away from danger, including any that may be posed by cars:

I'm still again cautious as a pedestrian because I know that, I've watched drivers be very distracted and so I'm kind of aware of that and I think I have a pretty good understanding of kind of the areas and places where I'm feeling more careful than others. (17)

Cyclists interviewed described themselves as behaving cautiously and remaining very aware of the immediate environment of a road shared with fast-moving motor vehicles. Some participants avoid cycling altogether due to the perceived danger:

No, I don't ride a bike in this city, I'd be terrified to get out on the streets with some of the nutcases out there sometimes (110)

"Nutcase" behaviour has a major impact on the experience of the cyclist and pedestrian.

The individual above holds drivers singularly responsible for a personal fear of cycling.

For another participant, it is Winnipeg drivers in particular:

I just don't feel comfortable on the street, like I'm a bit of a nervous cyclist. I don't think Winnipeg drivers are really used to cyclists like some other cities where drivers are more aware (16)

Drivers' attitudes and subsequent behaviour towards cyclists will affect how welcome cyclists feel on the street. There is a major power imbalance between the two road users



because of the speed, power and size of a motor vehicle compared with a bicycle.

Behaviour of the individual behind the wheel will either subdue or intensify that power struggle:

...one time when I was biking down St Mary's Rd, which is really bad because it's fast, someone threw a bottle at me. It didn't hit me, it missed me but on that stretch of road, I still, I don't feel particularly safe, and actually I don't even ride on the road anymore, I more often ride on the sidewalk (19)

Seated on a fast-moving platform and encased in a protective shell, a motorist can do something rash such as throw a bottle at a cyclist and speed away, without any repercussions. The cyclist is left behind, exposed, with no recourse. This is a blatant expression of power and not the insidious kind described in the third point of Section 2.2.1.

Because of unsafe or aggressive driving, compounded by infrastructure that is not sufficiently built for pedestrians' and cyclists' safety, some avoid cycling altogether, such as the individuals quoted above. The person above chooses to bend the rules in favour of feeling safe, as does this individual:

...cycling is something I would like to do, but I would not do for the life of me because you're not supposed to cycle on the sidewalks, which I can understand, you don't want to run someone down, but you don't want to *be* run down on the street. So I'll cycle in my neighbourhood, but going onto Osborne? Absolutely not. Like I mean even sometimes they have a blue line saying this is where cyclists should be compared to the curb and this is where cars should be? That's still too close to me. I don't want to be that close to a moving car. On the sidewalk you've got so much room. (12)

Infrastructure designed without the cyclist in mind gives the cyclist virtually no option.

Though unlawful, no cyclist mentioned getting ticketed for riding on the sidewalk: law enforcement seems to turn a blind eye, and why not? The cyclist is acting reasonably.

However, the outcome is that cyclists continue to make do with what little is there, and the roots of the problem – infrastructure design that maintains the massive discrepancy of

power between road users, and which can actually facilitate aggressive motorist behaviour – are not addressed.

Literature indicates that the false sense of empowerment which motorists feel due to being encased in a vehicle (see Section 2.3.1) is part of what contributes to road rage, something which cyclists and pedestrians also experience:

I've heard of pedestrians, like a friend of mine was in the Exchange District and someone in an SUV ran over her foot, just as a pedestrian. Winnipeg drivers are horrible. [...] I get more frustrated as a pedestrian with drivers because I see them running stop signs [...] I have often wished I had rotten tomatoes to throw at drivers [*laughs*] I just get so irate. Like this one, recently I saw a guy run a stop sign and it's just like, I don't hesitate to yell at people because I just get really irate when I see like really bad driving, but actually I notice it more as a pedestrian than cycling. (15)]

The power struggle here is very uneven. There is virtually no recourse when a motorist drives over a pedestrian's foot. The injustice which cyclists and pedestrians feel in these situations is due to the lack of empathy on the part of the motorist, enabled by the vehicle itself. While it may seem that an inconsiderate driver has never experienced walking or cycling, this behaviour is likely more a manifestation of Lilleor's motorism (see Section 2.3.1).

Considering the dangers, it is no wonder pedestrians and cyclists stay aware of their surroundings on the road. A heightened sense of awareness also characterised pedestrians and those waiting at bus stops when they are downtown at night. People, women included, generally had positive things to say about this:

I walk downtown on Portage a lot and often after 9:00 at night, and I think to myself... why are there not more people here? This is perfectly safe, I don't feel threatened, nobody's bugging me, and I sometimes wish that more people, and particularly more women, would be out after dark on the streets because there's nothing, as far as I can tell, to be afraid of. I'm out a lot, I've had various problems but nothing serious [...] and you know who I do see out late at night, like on the bus, it's often little old ladies. If little old ladies are out here why aren't people my age? (19)

I have often wondered the same thing. Not all participants said that they are willing to go downtown at night, however, and even those who do go remain alert:

Waiting for the bus [...] makes me feel a little bit like a target. I generally don't have a lot of trouble with people approaching me and asking for money and that sort of thing, but if it's going to happen it'll happen at a bus stop. So I prefer to keep moving. (I9)

Like cyclists, bus riders adjust their behaviour or their patterns if they feel they are in jeopardy. Perception of safety will determine certain behaviours.

The bus is another place where participants regularly encounter other people whose behaviour cannot be predicted. All are very accepting of this:

For people who are used to driving everywhere, they never have to sit beside someone or come into close contact with someone who is acting, is what we would consider, "irregularly"! [*laughs*] So they just kind of get more and more uncomfortable with it, whereas when you're taking the bus, someone comes in and is talking to himself, that's okay. He's not really disturbing anyone, he's just talking to himself. As long as he's not offending anyone or attacking anybody. (I11)

As the participant points out, car culture does not expose people to one another, so a motorist's boundaries of tolerance are never challenged. This leads to many misconceptions about the bus. However, for participants of this study, the bus is something else entirely:

...you don't have to think about driving. I find it really relaxing. In the wintertime in particular, we have a, there's a bus that comes into our neighbourhood just for a couple of hours in the morning and a couple of hours late in the day and so we only have to walk a block and then you can get on to that bus and it will take you right downtown. And so you get on it and it's like warm, really cozy and it feels like you have your own chauffeur actually. It feels very, it almost feels privileged to be on the bus (I9)

This portrayal of the bus is very different to that in the world of car culture, which would present the bus as a place of strange or antisocial people. To participants, the bus is quite a social environment, an opportunity to observe and talk with other people:

I find [riding the bus] relaxing, actually. Nobody bugs you. I'm a people-watcher. I like to observe all the people on the bus [...] and sometimes you strike up a conversation. (110)

The bus, like the rest of the public realm, is also a place for surprise events.

Several people told stories of a chance encounter or a glimpse at something unusual. One person described the stimulating environment of the bus in this way:

Because on the bus I think about, this is kind of a weird thing, but if you sit at the back of the bus, especially in the morning, there's a lot to see that's just really beautiful. Like just trees and, depending on the season, like flowers in bloom and that sort of thing and even if you sit on the bus, it can, this is kind of weird, but everyone's hair from the back, with the sun streaming in and, you know, it's really just like beautiful and it's not a view of the world that you would have any other way. You can really actually stare at a lot of things – people and buildings and the detail in buildings up high, because you're not looking at the road because you're not driving so you can look at all this stuff around you. That's on the bus though. (19)

Overall, people's experiences walking, cycling and riding the bus are positive.

The physical aspects like those felt when driving are compounded by the immediacy of the surroundings, which people really seem to appreciate. Safety, however, is at the forefront of their minds.

To make cyclists and pedestrians feel more welcome on the road, driver attitude is very important. Drivers must be very aware of the power imbalance that is inherent in the different modes and know that their actions can exacerbate or subdue this situation. Also important is regulation which fits the accompanying infrastructure so that those currently cycling are safe and those who may consider cycling will not feel apprehensive. The existing mismatch between infrastructure and regulation is a liability for everyone and turning a blind eye to those breaking the rules simply ignores the larger problem. The rules themselves need to be addressed. Finally, pedestrian safety and even perception of safety are essential if people are going to consider walking as a means of travel. *Plan Winnipeg* puts the downtown first, a goal which supports pedestrian safety.

With a greater human presence downtown, particularly at night, pedestrians will have a more comfortable experience.

#### 4.3.2.2 *Discourse on Self-Identity*

Self-identity featured very prominently in interviews. People constantly link transportation to their sense of self, even those who claim that there is no link between their modal choice and their attitudes about themselves or their self images. Unlike with the car, however, it is not the specific mode or the brand of bicycle, for example, that builds identity; rather the fact that the person is not a motorist.

As discussed in the literature review, the car offers a range of images with which one can associate. Those interviewed do not live car-free for the purpose of building identity, but having no car definitely allows for some expression of self.

I don't have much stuff really, I dress kind of funny, I always seem to buy the stuff that nobody else wants, I go out of my way to buy strange foods, I think it's just a general, I've always been attracted to sort of alternative ways of doing things. (13)

I guess in my case it's certainly, it's a bit unusual, but I've always felt that there's a little bit of me that is a little bit of a non-conformist. There are other things that, like there are other things about me that are, you know aren't very traditional [...] So, I guess there's part of me that is reluctant to make choices simply because I'm expected to make those choices. (17)

Standing out in their choice of transportation mode is part of a bigger picture of the self for these two people; they do most things differently, so they are not uncomfortable with appearing out of the ordinary in personal transportation.

Others want to detach themselves from certain activities, particularly shopping in big box stores. Not driving helps them to be that person with whom they identify.

Well, I don't actually go to those places [big box stores...] But more, I'm a person who goes downtown. (11)

I'm not a huge shopper but when I do need to get something I will go there [to Polo Park], typically by bus (12)

I'm not much of a mall person, generally, so it doesn't really come up very much that I have to go down to St Vital to the suburbs or anything like that. (13)

I'm not a huge fan of big box stores in general, I think it's more and more of a trend that exists that is obviously totally car culture, because it's not very pedestrian-friendly at all! So, but I do occasionally go to them, especially a specialty store like Michael's that doesn't really exist in a mall or something like Polo Park, I would go to a big box store, but normally I wouldn't go to those types of stores. (16)

Shopping, big box stores and malls represent themes from which they want to distance themselves, whatever the theme may be (e.g. large-scale materialism, anti-union policies, goods that are not locally-sourced). Their choice not to drive is part of something bigger, spanning out to where and how they shop, like the driver in a certain type of car. This consistent "package" – be it a person who consumes little or a non-conformist – is something the individual can accept as valid and consistent and not hypocritical.

...trying to limit our carbon footprint, that's what we're really up to. Whatever way we can. That applies to sort of a broad range of activities that we do – trying to buy food that's fairly local, if possible, try to avoid buying things that are from New Zealand for example. (18)

Making this conscious choice matters more to some participants than to others, for whom the link is less a deliberate lifestyle choice and more simply part of normality, like driving is for the supposed audience of the radio program. Living car-free is not really anything special or noteworthy:

If I wanted it to be a statement, it could be, but it's not so much a statement as just part of the way I live my life. I don't feel the necessity to drive, like I can basically get around otherwise so it's just kind of how I live as opposed to: "I *refuse* to drive because of this, this and this reason", or things like that. I'm conscious of the environment, but not to the extreme point. (12)

For this participant, not to drive for the sake of the environment would be going to an extreme. Being car-free is simply an effortless way to live, but even this nonchalant attitude could be connected to a certain self-image.

The difference between those who are deliberate in their decision not to drive and those who are less so is that the first group would avoid driving even if it were totally inconvenient. However, those who do it because it feels normal and easy may not be tied to any ideal version of themselves, at least not with respect to transportation, showing that life without a car may not be as inconvenient as car culture implies.

The auto industry capitalises on negative associations with sustainable modes, particularly the bus, but this does not seem to concern participants or make an impact on their self-images. Most simply do not take such advertising tactics seriously. Others dissociate themselves from other non-drivers, much like motorists separate themselves from certain groups as explored in the radio program. This is one response to being shown a provocative car advertisement featuring derogatory terms used to describe bus riders:

“Loser cruiser”, yeah. Unfortunately, it is true that sometimes when you get on the bus there are people on there you wish weren’t on the bus with you but that’s the nature of living in the city and you’re going to sometimes have days when there are people [...] running into you that you wish weren’t running into, so that’s sad. (11)

Rather than taking the message personally, this person interprets the message as being directed more towards other bus riders. However, not all people interpreted the advertisement this way:

I would say it’s offensive, but it plays on stereotypes again I think some people have about people who ride the bus, right? But yeah, actually I think it’s kind of an offensive ad just because obviously I ride the bus and I like to think I’m not a creep or a weirdo [*laughs*]! So again, not very tasteful. (16)

This person sees that the target might be his or her own self. While acknowledging the ad to be offensive, neither interpretation stops these individuals from taking transit.

There is a connection between living car-free and self-identity, but the meaning varies between individuals. There is some indication that living without a car is actually very easy and works even for people who are not trying to make a major statement about the environment or consumption. This information counters commonly-held assumptions that other modes are inconvenient or odd, and may be useful in promoting the idea of living car-free.

Even this approach to promoting living car-free would still face challenges. The auto industry has successfully exploited negative associations and perpetuated myths about sustainable modes to sell its products in ways that may be threatening to an individual's self-identity. Identity is clearly very important and people tend not to want to be associated with an uncomplimentary image no matter what the mode. Both motorists and bus riders will dissociate themselves from negative images; however, most non-motorists simply dismiss any negative connotation based on mode choice as a marketing tactic. For motorists to switch to other modes, these pejorative associations would have to be eliminated. Marketing that focuses on the positive aspects of sustainable modes, particularly community-based social marketing (see Section 2.7), could help to sever those associations and make sustainable transportation something with which motorists could identify. Winnipeg has already explored this approach successfully in the WinSmart Showcase (see Section 1.4.6).

#### *4.3.2.3 Discourse on Time*

With the exception of certain circumstances, such as waiting for a bus in winter or very long walks, most participants expressed time travelling without a car as time well spent. The quality of time was described differently by those living car-free when



compared with the literature about time for motorists: there is not that same sense of urgency as is prevalent in car culture. This person describes what time may be like for friends who have cars:

I think, so in terms of time, so maybe like both parents are working full-time and the kids are in daycare and so they live a very busy life where they have to leave early, drop this person off, drop that person off and get to work on time and they have jobs that aren't very flexible and so I really sympathise with that because if you're in that situation, you both want to work full-time, drop the kids off and that kind of thing, it is a lot more difficult to do without a car (I11)

This is neither good nor bad, but it is not the only way to exist. Car culture promotes a compacting of time, a separation of events, more than a flexible, layered concept of time, or what Guiver (2002) refers to as "contextual" (p. 47). Compare the above with the description of the participant's own lifestyle:

...where the number of times I've walked to the Forks pulling the kids in the wagon, just tonnes of times, and then it means that the whole process of getting there is a whole event in itself, because once you figure, hey, it's going to take 45 minutes/an hour to walk there, so okay well maybe we'll time it so we'll stop for coffee somewhere on the way, and then we'll stop and play at this park at the Legislative buildings on the way, and then finally we'll get there and we'll do whatever we want at the Forks and then we'll have to get back, and so getting back is a whole process, so [...] it's a lot more process-oriented. (I11)

Without a car, time is less under the agents' control which seems to lend a certain freedom to the lifestyle. By not needing to control time, people let go to some degree. Participants like the above indicated that they learn how long an activity takes, accept it and make the most of it creatively. Travel is not a nuisance; it is simply a part of life, worked into the day like anything else, and can even be, as above, an opportunity. Many others indicated enjoyment of the time spent travelling:

No, I love walking. I get lost in my head a lot. Not really thinking about anything in particular or maybe thinking about something in particular but I like that, I like the time to reflect. (I2)

I find that the time I spend getting to and from work, whether I'm biking or walking, is really, it's a good down time for me, it's a good chance to unwind

from work. I really look forward to it. It's like, yeah! Especially the walking. I find it's, I find it very calming. (17)

Walking is a chance to think and reflect, a point in the day that a pedestrian appreciates.

In this way, time is similar to that inside a car. Motorists use the time behind the wheel to think and reflect also. Another similarity with motorists is that, when a faster option is available, a pedestrian will take it:

So when I need to get anywhere fast when it's nice out, you know, I take my bike. (13)

...when summer comes around and I can get on my bike [...] everything is so much easier. Everything is so much easier because you know when I can go from one place to the other (11)

Walking in the summertime I often think I wish I had taken my bike because it's just a lot faster. (19)

The speed and lack of rigid scheduling makes time on a bike similar to that at the wheel of a car. The bus, however, requires planning, but this does not seem to be a problem most of the time for participants, who do not indicate feeling restricted by the schedule:

Yeah, yeah, so it's close to work. I just go there and then there's a bus stop across the road. So I make sure to check when the bus comes and I time coming out of the grocery store for then. (13)

However, this changes if things do not go according to plan:

Yeah, like if a bus said it was going to be there at that time on the bus schedule and it's too early and you missed it, or it's too late, it's kind of a bummer at those times. In that sense you kind of live on that schedule (14)

Bus riders do live by the bus' schedule, however, it is a misconception to think that without a car, spontaneity is not possible:

...if I was doing something spontaneous and I wanted to go from my house in Osborne downtown and it's like, oh, let's go see a movie, and we're just rushing out the door, and it's a spontaneous kind of thing where it's not planned out, like the way my work transit is all planned out, it's a little bit more different [*sic*] then because you don't have a plan, a set plan, but again as I said there are so many buses in the area that I don't normally have to wait more than five minutes to get something to go downtown. (16)

Spontaneity is actually more dependent on where one lives and the modes accommodated than on the mode chosen. This misconception that the bus restricts impulse is compounded by the idea that everything is faster in a car. One benefit to living car-free, as one participant pointed out, is the time spent *not* in a car:

I find I save time because when I had the car, I would be driving around looking for a parking space or going into the parkade and driving around there looking for parking and I also find that I don't waste a lot of time in the wintertime going into the garage and getting the car warmed up and plugging it in and unplugging it. (I9)

These activities are downplayed or ignored completely in car culture when actually they do take a lot of time, and arguably that is time that most people, on consideration, would deem is poorly spent.

Weather affects perception of time, particularly when walking, cycling or waiting for a bus, because one is exposed. During the winter months, trips and waits can feel much longer than in summer.

No, my family moved out of the area [Charleswood] but I definitely, you know, it really, so often when I think you know about waiting out for a bus for one whole hour, for a bus to turn up or whatever, I mean in the summer it was wonderful, in the winter it was... awful. (I1)

In general, though, people are accepting of the time it takes to get from *a* to *b*. The chance to do other things while walking, cycling or riding the bus helps:

No, I don't, well with Telebus now it's so easy. I don't go out too long ahead of time and, no not really. I usually have a book with me, so I read. (I10)

So, it would be like a half hour either way and half an hour is you know not bad in terms of a commute [...] if you're biking you're getting exercise at the same time so it's like a good workout so I don't mind the half hour each way that I spend commuting. (I6)

Commuting is commuting and it is going to take time no matter what, but the bus offers the added benefit of reading and a bike ride is an opportunity for exercise.

Sustainable modes follow a more integrated concept of time than cars, with benefits along the way. The lifestyle that accompanies this might be useful information for a marketing campaign to promote other modes. While generally accepting of time spent travelling, on very cold days or long trips, one senses time dragging out – bus shelters, posted schedules, and cleared, walkable routes are critical. Overall, participants' experiences with sustainable modes indicate that assumptions dictated by car culture – such as that spontaneity, flexibility and time-saving are only possible in a car – are misconceptions.

#### 4.3.2.4 *Discourse on Space*

Winnipeggers travelling car-free seek to negotiate rather than conquer space, looking out for ways that feel safe and, if possible, stimulating, where they might feel a part of their surroundings. Space that primarily accommodates the car, however, is characteristic of Winnipeg, something of which participants are all too aware. One individual points to the prairie nature of the city as the reason for this:

I find that the difference with prairie cities and western cities [from eastern cities] is there's lots of space, so everything is spread out, and it's spread out in a way that makes an assumption that everybody is going to be in a vehicle, so there's no worry about how far away you're going to put something from a core area, makes no difference. (I7)

An assumption of mobility via a certain mode has influenced present development patterns.

Space has a quality to it. In Winnipeg, some of that space is plainly hostile towards certain modes. In this interviewee's experience, Polo Park shopping mall is unwelcoming to cyclists:

You can walk on sidewalks within the developments, but to get to the developments there are no sidewalks. So – there definitely are no bike paths – so it sort of precludes accessing them in alternate ways. And I'm seeing, well I have

relatives living in – what’s the name of that place, a new development, Linden Woods – and there we go. You have to take your vehicle and I’m not even sure, there’s got to be some bus up there but I don’t know what it is, and it’s like driving down the highway to get out there. And again, we don’t have, there aren’t alternatives to get there. I don’t think that’s a good thing at all, that really is like saying, ‘you don’t matter’. When I go to Polo Park, why should I spend my money there when, if I’m walking in, I don’t matter enough that you have a decent bike stand for me? And why should I spend my money there when the emphasis on the lot is so much on where you’re going to put the cars [...] So that’s one of the reasons that I don’t go to Polo Park. Why should I? (11)

Though Polo Park is well-serviced by bus, the lack of infrastructure and accessibility for cyclists is a deterrent, sending a negative message which this participant interprets as saying she is insignificant. Such built form establishes a clear hierarchy with the motorist at the top. This preference is expressed in the maintenance of infrastructure as well:

Well [Pembina is] first of all very isolated. You rarely pass anybody else when you’re walking. It tends to be, the sidewalks won’t necessarily be cleared in the wintertime because the assumption is that there’s just not going to be very many people walking, it’s not worth the effort, especially for stretches that are really sort of heavily car-traveled and there’s a bus to take so I guess the thought is that anybody that’s going along this route is not going to be walking so let’s not bother. So you’ve got cars roaring by and it’s just not as nice a walk. (17)

This is another situation of an assumption guiding design. Pedestrians like to see other pedestrians, not heavy motor-vehicle traffic or a snowy sidewalk that is not ploughed.

These aspects create an intimidating environment with the message that cars and pedestrians do not mix, when in fact they can (see *complete streets* in Section 2.7).

In a similar way to making up rules (see Section 4.3.2.1), cyclists will alter their routes in favour of spaces which feel safe. Using cues such as volume and speed of traffic, they gauge the level of safety and act accordingly.

I know it’s a little bit riskier. I’m very cautious because I know that if I get into an accident with a car that I’m going to be the worse, I’m going to incur more injuries than the car is, so it is a little more dangerous and because of that I tend to choose routes that are not so high-traffic. (17)

I’m nervous about taking [my children] with me on my bike and them on the road because they’re still really little, and so there are only certain places where that would be safe, so we wouldn’t be able to do that everywhere. (111)

The surrounding environment indicates how safe a person using a certain mode can expect to feel, which in some cases is not very safe at all.

There are pockets of space where participants say they feel welcome and stimulated, particularly as pedestrians. These places make them feel connected to what is happening around them, a part of their surroundings. I asked participants to compare walking down two very different streets: Corydon Avenue, a small-scale commercial street in the middle of a dense residential area with sidewalk cafes, shops and several marked crosswalks, and where there is a lot of both pedestrian and vehicular traffic; and, Pembina Highway, a six-lane divided road used as a major artery by motor vehicles and bicycles and lined with mid-scale commercial development. Average weekday motor vehicle traffic over a 24-hour period along Corydon ranges from 14,000 to 20,000 vehicles; along Pembina, it is 48,300 to 65,400 (City of Winnipeg, 2007b).<sup>22</sup>

Participants' expressions of the different senses of place between the two streets were similar:

...It's a, the feeling is you feel like you're in more of a community walking down, like a small community, walking down Corydon whereas Pembina highway just feels like you're in a wasteland [*laughs*] and you feel really anonymous, I feel anonymous walking down there whereas you feel like you're, I feel divorced from people down there whereas Corydon I feel more connection. Just perception, I guess. It's a warmer feeling as opposed to a cold, desolate feeling. (18)

This may be more than perception because everybody said the same things about Corydon Avenue, although some are unsure how to articulate exactly what it is about the street that makes it a stimulating, welcoming place to be as a pedestrian. From the above description, it is clear that space has an impact on a person's feelings and on relationships

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<sup>22</sup> Corydon measured between Confusion Corner and Kenaston Blvd.; Pembina measured between Confusion Corner and Bishop Grandin Ave. Pedestrian counts unavailable.

to other people, even strangers. Compact built form, slower-paced traffic and other pedestrians are concrete, measurable factors that create more than a perceived liveliness:

Well, Pembina's not much to see but Corydon's got all kinds of neat things to look at: neat shops, there's [*sic*] so many people there, so it's nice [... Pembina is] just a busy street. Well, so is Corydon, but there's a lot of different people, a lot of restaurants, a lot of, you see a lot of everything down there. (I10)

This participant acknowledges that Corydon Avenue is busy, but it is busy with life; a bustling rather than a racing environment. One person summed it up very well:

I think pedestrians actually help to make cities a vibrant place [...] if there are not enough people walking on the streets and using the streets as pedestrians, people don't feel safe, and so the area is diffuse and they're trying to address that by MTS Centre and bringing people into the downtown but ultimately I think what really makes cities vibrant is people walking around on the street just enjoying life [...] when I think of what makes cities really vibrant and amazing, it's those sort of core pedestrian areas that really stand out (I6)

Pedestrians do seem to like to see other pedestrians. The urban form will draw or repel them.

I asked participants to show me the routes they travel through the city by tracing over a map. Participants indicated that they remain within a fairly small area bound by where they live and work or study. For most participants, their version of the city is therefore much smaller than the city itself, as indicated by common comments such as:

...my little hub that I've established for myself. (I9)

My corner of the city. (I2)

While no one stated this as a problem, some indicated that maybe they might be missing out:

...not owning a car actually, one thing I will say is I don't really have a good feel, especially since I'm not originally from Winnipeg, of the city. There's still many parts of the city that I just haven't gone to because I haven't had a need to go there and because I don't have a vehicle there's no, I wouldn't go out of my way to go somewhere that's quite far off. (I6)

Generally, though, participants find what they need in the areas of the city they occupy. This is more difficult in some parts of the city than in others, and participants likely chose their neighbourhood with proximity to amenities in mind.

...my neighbourhood is in here and I'm free to go wherever I want, I don't need my mum to drive me eight blocks to my friend's house. (I2)

Space is an important component to being car-free and that which is safe and stimulating will be frequented by pedestrians and cyclists. Places that are welcoming to all modes are deliberately designed that way: slow speeds and mixed use invite a human presence on the street. That people can meet their needs at a neighbourhood scale in Winnipeg is promising for the concept of living car-free, showing that it is possible.

#### **4.3.3 Social Realm**

This section presents the social dimension of transportation from a car-free perspective, following the categories developed in Section 2.4. Below is an analysis of discourse concerning personal relationships and social standing.

##### *4.3.3.1 Discourse on Personal Relationships*

A car, systemically entrenched in society, is central to relationships for many people (see Section 2.4.1), so being without a car may make social life difficult. However, while participants find that living car-free does have an impact, most indicated that their relationships with family and friends, particularly those within their locality, are healthy. Seeing those who live farther away requires more effort and coordination and so relationships can suffer. The problem which participants identified, if any, is not the lack of a car but the limited transportation options:

...there are certain friends we see less often now because they live in parts of town that aren't on the best bus routes. And [...] it does add another dimension to the way we interact with people, so for example if we're going to a party, we now will catch a ride with someone else who's going to the party. And that



hasn't been a negative thing but it's just a change in the way that we interact with people. (I9)

A change in interaction, though neither better nor worse than if one had a car, could be perceived as a barrier against living car-free because social networks are limited. Car ownership would be the typical solution to any perceived mobility limitations. In the excerpt above, however, the solution is increased public transit service to some areas. This is not the prevailing discourse.

The other issue raised in the above interview response is catching a ride from someone else, which can create a feeling of dependence. This participant does not state feeling that way, but there is a possibility that the driver might infer it:

At times, at times you feel kind of dependent, if you're trying to get a ride (I5)

A simple solution to this, mentioned by a few participants, is the option of exchange:

We had a [...] community. We had, those things aren't all that far away. And they could either bus it or walk, or for [my son] and [my daughter], they would go sometimes with [her] Mum-in-law, because she drives and if it was far enough away... and occasionally I would watch her kids for her for a little bit and you know, just an exchange of favours, if you want to call it that. So it was good. (I10)

This kind of negotiating maintains the equality in a relationship. A sense of dependence is replaced with sharing.

Some people expressed that they connect with others who also do not have a car.

This is true of people they both know and do not know:

I think you kind of, you compare notes and stuff [...] If somebody is getting a ride that day then, you know what I mean, for some reason, then you make sure that the other person gets a ride as well (I1)

I guess, yeah, I think you always feel sort of a natural affinity when you meet someone who either doesn't have a car or who has a car and obviously uses it less. And I mean, because like I said, a lot of our friends have cars but they still make an effort to use other modes of transportation and enjoy using other modes of transportation so I'd say, yeah, definitely, because like I said, it reflects a whole way of living, so for example, there are some people at work who come to

work by bus or walking and we've often ended up walking part of the way home together, that kind of thing. (I11)

The walk home together is a benefit of being car-free because it is an opportunity to socialise, however, the assumption that having no car reflects a way of living that is the same for all those living car-free is not necessarily true. People have various reasons for living without a car but participants tend to impose their own reasons for this onto other people, seeking common ground. Kinship is then triggered by the assumed commonality:

I think when I see other cyclists it's more of a feeling than a, like I'm on the road and I see other people riding bikes I feel some sort of kinship with them, but not necessarily people that I know well. (I9)

I think they're all environmentalists, people on buses. That makes me feel good. Seeing other people. (I8)

A sense of commonality is felt by imposing a set of values on others, so may not be based on anything real. However, people seeking accord between one another is likely a positive force in the public realm.

As explored in Section 4.3.2.1, the bus can be an opportunity to be social. Most relationships are fleeting ones with strangers, yet people relish them:

And it's nice to watch people and see and sometimes you strike up a conversation with people. My mom always said, do you talk to everybody [...]? Well, not everybody, but mostly! Bus stop is sometimes a good place, then you can get on the bus and go! (I10)

Often, we have generally really polite bus drivers in Winnipeg. They say thank-you when you get off the bus, or have a good day. I really like that. When people acknowledge each other on the bus, I like that. Not that I want to have a private conversation with everyone on the bus! But it's kind of nice when someone walks by and makes a comment like, oh yeah, it's pretty windy out there today! Yeah. And everyone kind of nods and then goes back to looking out the window or reading, I like that. (I11)

Although encounters are brief, there is a sense of camaraderie to public transit that bus riders seem to enjoy. Cyclists experience it as well:

The contact is much more direct. People will, will talk to you when you're on a bike. If you're stopped and you're waiting to cross the street and they're there, or you're locking up your bike or you're unlocking it, that contact is there. (I7)

Human interaction is much more easily accommodated when outside of a car.

Barriers to social life, both perceived and real, could certainly hamper any efforts to reduce car dependence. Community-based social marketing (see Section 2.7), highlighting the positive aspects including sharing, exchange and commonality with others whom one does not know, will help to dissipate the perceived barriers. Improved transportation options will address the real barriers.

#### 4.3.3.2 *Discourse on Social Standing*

Participants are aware of what a car means in our society, and subsequently what it may mean to not have one, but few are bothered by this. They interpret these meanings as social construction rather than fact. One person did indicate she thought others might see not owning a car in a negative light, but this does not mean she herself cares one way or another:

I've heard [my mother] make remarks of others we know that don't have cars and it is inconvenient for her sometimes, like for example on the weekend we're going to a family get-together at a restaurant on Regent which is not really very accessible for us in Norwood, so she's coming to our house and driving us there, so I mean she's not complaining about it, she likes to see us, it's, I don't know, in a way it sort of makes you feel a little ah, [*pauses*] not grown up, really? But you know, if there was a better transportation system it wouldn't be an issue. If there was a subway here we'd just hop on the subway. (I9)

Some sense disapproval from others:

I think people have made that, "oh I don't think we can make that decision". They don't say it but you can see it on their faces. Why would you make that decision? (I1)

This incomprehension of why someone would choose to get around without a car contributes to participants' sense of feeling a bit left out or odd, as discussed in Section

4.3.2.2. For one woman in particular, because she does not have a driver's licence, she senses disappointment from people:

One thing I find weird sometimes too is I find there's a, sometimes I feel there's a little bit of a situation where people are kind of implying that by not driving somehow I'm dropping the ball for women [...] that if anything I should be really going out of my way to have that access. It's kind of like a woman who'd choose not to vote, like you know we worked so hard to get the vote and there you are, you're not voting! (I7)

By equating driving with a hard-fought right such as voting, driving is elevated to the status of entitlement. This point is consistent with the literature review which indicates that our society considers driving to be a right rather than a privilege. Here, the weight of a whole gender hangs on whether one has learnt to drive or not.

Other negative reactions are the assumed link between no car and poverty or desperation:

I mean let's face it, cars are a status symbol still in our culture and they think that it's sort of an indication that we're poor, and we are doing it to save money but I get the feeling sometimes that it's slightly unacceptable. (I9)

I mean even, even the general public, the attitude with public transit is that you take a bus if you have absolutely no other alternative, but it would be absolutely the very last option you would choose. I worked with a woman once who said, if I had to take a bus to work, I would quit my job. (I7)

I think most of them think I just don't drive because I'm too poor to have a car [*laughs*]. Because most of my friends make a lot more money than I do [...] Because everybody does here and it's just expected and I don't. And I don't have a, I don't know, it's not like I'm blind or anything, I could if I wanted to, I just never bothered. (I3)

Living without a car, and in particular without a licence, is understood to be the realm of those who are, for whatever reason, unable to drive. To choose to be car-free goes against a mainstream understanding of reality, but this is not an insurmountable barrier to car-free culture.

The most common responses to participants' not driving are surprise and curiosity, because the automatic assumption is car ownership:

Oh some people still look at you like you have two heads. You don't drive? But it's okay (I10).

I guess they're kind of curious about why, maybe the reason why. The culture is so, you have a car, right? ... I think [not having a car is] more of a curiosity. (I5)

...maybe they're surprised initially just because it seems to be such a standard thing for people to own like you know, so I would think that maybe a bit of a surprise: 'oh, you don't own a car?' kind of thing, like, but yeah, maybe that would be the sort of reaction typically you get. (I6)

The reactions described are consistent with statements made on the radio program, expressing the same assumptions. To live car-free may be a legitimate and perfectly normal option to some people, but to others it is a different way of life never before considered. The curiosity of some gives rise to the possibility of car-free culture as having broader appeal – it is an interesting, curious thing, an option perhaps never before thought about. Having been introduced to something new and seeing that it is possible, perhaps some people will try it themselves.

#### **4.3.4 Ideological Realm**

The section below explores the different ideologies as indicated by participants' expressions of assumptions. First is an examination of the language which reveals some resignation to car culture, expressing the predominant ideology of car culture as reality. Following this is a survey of expressions of different assumptions which may represent a different worldview.

##### **4.3.4.1**      *Expressing Prevailing Assumptions*

Generally, study participants do not display the same assumptions as those expressed in car culture, but scattered throughout the interviews is discourse that

expresses the prevailing ideology which supports driving as reality. Though participants do not drive (and some never have), a few did articulate at times a certain level of acceptance of reality as expressed on the radio program.

Several participants consider the car to be useful in some scenarios – travelling outside the city or making large purchases, for instance. They handle these outstanding situations by borrowing or renting a car or getting help from another person. However, some participants went further by conceding to the necessity of a car under certain circumstances in the same unquestioning way as could be expected from the radio discourse:

Oh, my parents keep telling me to get a licence, get my butt in gear, and I will, because if you're in an emergency situation then it's really good to know how to get from one place to another. (12)

There is an assumed link between driving and being prepared for an emergency. This is not up for discussion. Another scenario where one would need to have a car is with children:

...we do plan on getting a car probably when we have kids (15)

There are many people who have children and no car. The difficulty in accessing goods at certain destinations is also understood to be a situation where a car is unquestionably handy:

Plus, I like to shop at every grocery store in the city. I like all the weird, small, exotic places. They're really a bummer to get to by bus and it's almost like an expedition for me, and like those days, I always think, wow, if we had a car, I could [get] this stuff! More places I love, and pick up the things I like, instead of making it a whole after-work experience for myself. (14)

In these discourses, a car is the answer to the unpredictability of emergencies and children, and to the problem of limited access to a variety of goods. The answer to these

predicaments is to buy into the prevailing discourse, not a rearrangement of the city, which is too complicated to consider.

The association between the car and freedom remains strong even with some members of this non-driving group:

... the one thing I miss about not having a car is the freedom and how easy it is to just pick up and do something, whereas I find [...] there's more planning involved when you don't own a vehicle, so if I want to go cross-country skiing for the weekend with some friends I have to arrange to rent a car, and so it's a little bit more planning involved [...] It would only be if I sort of wanted to escape the city to do something that's more outdoorsy that I would really kind of miss not having a car, but then I can just rent. (I6)

Popular car culture themes of freedom and escape, so carefully and extensively cultivated by marketing, are difficult to shake, even by those without a car. The idea that planning compromises the freedom to do as one pleases is interesting. Why is freedom something that can only come without planning? Perhaps freedom is being confused with spontaneity.

Finally, some displayed the popular assumption that car culture is here to stay. They resign themselves to this and pass car culture off as unchangeable:

I don't think you're ever going to get away from car culture (I5)

I think that we're never going to get rid of car culture (I6)

This type of discourse assumes rather than scrutinises the inevitability of car culture, indicating an attitude of defeat before the concept has even begun to be discussed. This limits the possibilities of car-free culture. A more helpful approach would be to entertain the idea that car culture might not be permanent and go from there.

It is clear that car culture penetrates the minds even of those who have never driven. This adds a barrier to an already uphill battle to try to reduce car dependence. Saying something is "the way it is" limits the possibilities for change, but questioning

even the most seemingly obvious assumptions can begin to stir conversation and encourage people to think more imaginatively about transportation systems.

#### 4.3.4.2 *Rejecting Prevailing Assumptions*

For the most part, participants expressed a different set of assumptions that do not show an unquestioning acceptance of the supposed reality of car culture. They know first-hand that different ways of being are possible and have hope for broader change in the future.

One area where an alternative worldview was expressed was when I asked participants to suggest improvements. This lingered at times on barriers, particularly cultural barriers. Some effort to normalise sustainable modes was suggested as a means of countering car culture. One example is by parents taking their children on the bus:

I guess it needs to be a culture where people [...] know to take the bus or, but I think that's what would have to happen, like when you're younger, that they automatically learn the bus system so it becomes ingrained in them and they just naturally take the bus. (I4)

Taking transit has to feel as natural as driving a car and one way to do that is to start riding the bus at a young age. Children who are driven to school will not even experience riding a school bus, let alone public transit, and will grow up being unfamiliar with – or worse, afraid of – the bus. One participant takes two young children on the bus regularly:

And the other thing too is I've noticed that our kids are very aware of where they are because when we're on the bus, I'll often ask them, so do you know where we have to get off? Because I want them to learn bus routes, so do you know what number bus we're taking, do you know where we have to get off? You tell me when to get off, stuff like that, so I notice they're very aware of the city layout, maybe more than if they were getting driven around everywhere. (I11)

This parent uses the bus as a teaching tool for children. Regular people doing regular things like this makes the bus seem like something normal and helps to counter the assumption that children require a parent with a motor vehicle.



Another myth which some participants dispute is the direct link between a car and freedom:

...it's less costly [not to drive] and I can get around and see lots of things, do lots of things and go anywhere in the city. I don't need to stay at home because, I see some of these people even in my building, some of them are a lot older than I am, though, that they stay inside all the time and you know what, you can get around anywhere even if you don't drive. (I10)

In car culture discourse, this perspective is absent.

Even though some participants have complaints about living car-free in Winnipeg and feel cynical at times towards local politicians (see Section 4.3.5), simultaneously they are full of a sense of possibility. To them, moving away from car culture is a progressive way of thinking:

Somehow I really think [a lack of political will] has to do with fear. Oh, we're not going to get elected [...] we don't want anybody to think we're flaky. It's ridiculous. [...] "Normal" people drive, "normal" people get real. It's like you know what? You are dating yourself. (I8)

This person will not accept the status quo and instead deems car culture to be passé.

Simply because people do something does not mean that is the way it has to be. This is a helpful attitude for Winnipeg to move away from car culture, an attitude with the energy needed to question the status quo and imagine other possibilities. Another participant sees the bus as the ultimate realm of possibility:

On the bus, anything is attainable. (I4)

On the bus, in the public realm, one is amongst all sorts of people, a part of everything, and anything can happen. This is reality for interview participants; not being stuck in a traffic jam, having to deal with fluctuating gas prices, or getting a speeding ticket. With the presumption that living car-free is somehow stifling, or simply never considering it as an option, Winnipeg has barely tapped into the possibilities of what car-free culture may

offer. Participants see that the prevailing discourse presents only one choice, and that living without a car can be both possible and beneficial. How does that message reach more people?

#### **4.3.5 Facilitating Car-Free Culture: Participants' Suggestions**

I asked participants for suggested improvements in Winnipeg to make life without a car better. Some did not have any suggestions at all, either because to them all is well as it is, or because it is simply too late for anything better because the infrastructure has been built. But, of those who did have recommendations, bicycle infrastructure and increased transit frequency were most commonly cited, along with normalising other modes.

Ideas for improvements usually led to a discussion on who takes the lead and how. Some believe that change comes down to individual choices. If enough people demand more sustainable transportation options, they will be made available. For others, government policy comes first but they do not see much action at these levels. Some people expressed cynicism towards the City of Winnipeg, as though any action that may be being taken is simply tokenism:

I get the impression that a lot of people on City Council think that bicycles are kind of like toys and these little trails are these little recreational, we do this on the weekend when you're not wor[king]—you know, I think we have got to get serious and treat these things like real vehicles and put into place some real bike and walking routes. They are forms of transportation and people are, people who ride those bikes are also paying taxes. (18)

Similar to the messages received regarding the behaviour of some drivers and infrastructure provisions, as explored in Sections 4.3.2.1 and 4.3.2.4 respectively, the attitude which participants are picking up from politicians is that their concerns are not taken seriously. Politicians need to be leaders.

It actually, what goes through my head is, I swear to god, sometimes I think about whether or not someone's going to have an accident, if that's going to be what it's going to have to take for them to improve the bike routes in this city because it's just not very safe for cyclists right downtown, because they're in the bus lane, basically, most of the time and it doesn't feel very safe (19)

The Mayor has stated clearly that he will not stand for irresponsible driving (see Section 4.2.3.2), but the interviewee above has not seen a lot of evidence of leadership on the issue of cyclists' safety.

While the City has certainly indicated a recent interest in improving the state of sustainable transportation in Winnipeg (see Section 1.4.7), participants have not heard a coherent message that links small initiatives to a greater vision of a comprehensive plan for an enhanced, integrated transportation system that works for all people:

When you go down to the Forks it's kind of, it's a fun place to go and I think that, yeah, Winnipeg could use more areas like that but it would take a *lot* of planning and it would take a different vision for the city and obviously it takes investment so it's not just the planning. (16)

Rather than a different vision, perhaps implementing the one we have would result in the necessary changes to make Winnipeg more welcoming to sustainable modes. The statement above shows how the vision in *Plan Winnipeg* is not clearly communicated to the public, who do not see evidence of any vision on the ground.

#### **4.3.6 Conclusion: Car-Free Culture in Winnipeg**

Section 4.3 addressed the second and third research questions: What are the perspectives and values embedded in the discourse of Winnipeggers living car-free; and, based on the perspectives and values revealed in car-free discourse, can there be a profile created of car-free culture in Winnipeg and if so, how can this profile be described?

The interviews surprised me with the variety of responses and the range of approaches towards living car-free. The values of those living car-free were not entirely

different from car culture as presented in the radio program – they still cared about saving time, for example, and a few expressed some similar assumptions. However, overall, many values and certainly perspectives were quite different from those of car culture. Below is presented a profile of car-free culture in Winnipeg, which incorporates car-free perspectives and values, and which is representative of the diversity of those interviewed.

Car-free culture...

- *Has grades of deliberation:* Some make a very pointed effort to live without a car for a greater purpose; others simply do not drive, much like many people drive. For these people, taking the bus, walking or cycling is second nature.
- *Contributes to self-identity:* Whether being deliberate about choosing to live car-free or not, doing so is an expression of conscious choices which both form and reinforce one's self-identity.
- *Offers an immediate experience of surroundings:* Being out in the open and moving relatively slowly, those living car-free directly interact with the natural and built environments. They can feel connected to those environments or out of place in them, depending on the quality of the space.
- *Is concerned with safety:* Safety is at the forefront of the minds of pedestrians, cyclists and bus riders, whether sharing the road with cars or waiting at a bus stop. As such, they will disregard regulations or change routes to feel safer.
- *Senses the power imbalance between cars and other modes:* The size, speed and power of cars, and the way that drivers are separated by the vehicle, create a power discrepancy which can overwhelm cyclists and pedestrians in particular.

- *Is rational*: While some live car-free as part of an ideology, the choice is ultimately practical. The convenience, cost-savings, and benefits to health and the environment that come from not owning a car, while overlooked in car culture, are directly acknowledged by those living car-free.
- *Is multi-modal*: Modes used depend on season, weather conditions, distance and trip purpose. Modes will also be mixed within a single trip.
- *Makes the journey part of the experience*: The utility of a journey becomes a worthwhile activity in itself, not just because walking, cycling and taking the bus are enjoyable, but also because other benefits can be gained simultaneously, for example, reading on the bus or planning out one's day while walking.
- *Functions locally*: Those living car-free tend to choose neighbourhoods where work, leisure, shopping, bus routes and friends are close to home. Destinations and friends that are farther away are visited less frequently.
- *Requires flexibility and planning*: The car is lauded for the flexibility it offers the motorist. Other modes are more restrictive in some ways, so require more flexibility on the part of the individual traveller, which in turn requires planning. Those living car-free will trip-chain, mix modes, have good knowledge of bus routes and schedules, and shop frequently, thus avoiding a long wait at a bus stop or having to carry a heavy load. They will also think of interesting ways to meet their mobility or accessibility needs, such as ice skating on a recreational trail or pulling children in a wagon.

- *Is liberating*: While occasionally restrictive (for example, if one wants to leave the city), there is a sense of freedom that comes with walking, cycling or taking the bus and not having to drive, park, pay for or be enclosed by a car.
- *Takes place in the public realm*: Those without a car spend a lot of time in public space. They tend to feel comfortable in public spaces, particularly those where they can watch and interact with other people. They generally do not feel threatened by unfamiliar behaviour.

Car-free culture is approached differently by different people, but there are common characteristics. Since car-free culture happens in the public realm, it means feeling connected to surrounding people and environments. It is practical but requires flexibility and planning ahead, often achieved by using multiple modes and functioning best at a local level. While car-free culture can be liberating and the journey an enjoyable experience unto itself, personal safety and the power imbalance when sharing the road with cars are always a concern. Though there are grades of deliberation in choosing to be car-free, the choice tends to be linked to one's self-identity.

While there are certain common perspectives and values to living car-free in Winnipeg, missing are the adhesives that tie people who live car-free together. The social glue validating their activities and building the confidence that shows this lifestyle is neither odd nor extreme – the opportunities for really building a strong, popular and widely-accepted culture – are weak. This is because car-free discourse does not enjoy anywhere near the same level of support, either socially or systemically, as car-centred discourse: no weekly cruise up and down Portage Avenue on buses; no daily report of the morning bike to work validating reality; no roads built primarily to accommodate

sustainable modes with cars treated as an afterthought; no billboards stating that riding the bus will make a person younger, cooler and more desirable. This makes it hard for a car-free culture to really flourish and as such, it is in its infancy in Winnipeg.

The fifth point of the collaborative planning framework (explored in Section 2.2.1) claims that collaborative consensus builds culture and that by communicating different ways of knowing and doing, other activities are made possible. Essentially, other cultures can come to be. Living car-free evidently has an effect on a person's perspective. That perspective, when shared with others in the community, has an impact, by introducing another way of knowing and doing.

The final point describing collaborative planning (see Section 2.2.1) is that the very approach used in the practice of planning can trigger social change. This is where opportunities to facilitate a car-free culture lie: by taking this knowledge and using the collaborative planning approach – extensive citizen engagement and open, two-way conversations about the future of the city – changes can be effected.

The final section of this chapter is an analysis of questionnaires with key informants about their thoughts on car-free culture and the findings so far. This brings the question of possibilities for car-free culture to the level of the planner and policy-maker.

#### ***4.4 Key Informant Questionnaires***

Key informant questionnaires were administered to five public employees whose work is directly or indirectly related to transportation in Winnipeg: one at the Province of Manitoba, one at Winnipeg Transit and three at the City of Winnipeg. Questionnaires

were administered by email in June and July of 2008 (Appendices C, E). All five solicited informants responded to the questionnaire. Again, this process was voluntary and informants were not compensated.

Questions were compiled based on the analysis of the in-depth interviews and tailored to fit each individual according to which organisation the person works for and her or his role within the organisation. As such, not all questions were asked of all informants. The following is a summary of the responses to each question, with the number of policy-makers who were asked each question in square brackets. An interpretive analysis of the language follows in Section 4.4.2. Quotations are attributed anonymously as Policy-Maker (PM1, PM2...).

#### **4.4.1 Summary**

*Participants indicate they have a piecemeal understanding of what is currently happening with sustainable transportation at the municipal level. In your opinion, is the City of Winnipeg clearly communicating a cohesive vision for sustainable transportation to its citizens? If not, why not? How do you think communication of a sustainable transportation vision could be improved? [2 asked]*

While the City of Winnipeg may have a vision for sustainable transportation, specifically as contained in *Plan Winnipeg*, it is not communicated clearly enough to be realised. One of two policy-makers pointed to the conceptual nature of the document which leaves much room for interpretation, leading to implementation that is inconsistent. The other held politics responsible. Either way, the observing public is left with an unclear message about where the City's priorities lie. This confirms the point made in Section 1.4.4: that *Plan Winnipeg* has a vision of sustainable transportation but the vision is not made reality.



To communicate this or another vision clearly, the City must engage in an open discussion with the public presenting the rationale of policy decisions and the resulting costs and benefits. This is what Vigar (2002, p. 200) recommends, discussed in Section 2.7. Communication, like planning, should be seamless and the parts should form a whole, one informant recommended. The other suggested an implementation strategy complete with timeline to better realise the vision in *Plan Winnipeg*.

*Participants generally indicated that they feel as though the car always has priority over other modes. From your point of view, what mode is the top priority in Winnipeg: car, bus, bicycle, walking, other? What are your reasons for this? Do you think this is the best way to prioritise local transportation? If not, what would be the best way, in your opinion? [3 asked]*

Two of three informants agreed that the car is the top priority in Winnipeg, which is obvious from the built form and supported by financial records, indicating purpose. The third believed this is so by default only, because *Plan Winnipeg* does not state that any one mode of transportation has priority over another. One person interpreted the reason for this system of prioritisation being politicians' perception that this is what voters want. Like the traffic report on the radio program, the City is responding to an assumed demand.

One person stated that priorities should be reversed, with the car at the bottom, followed by transit and then active transportation at the top. Another suggested a levelling of priorities, focusing on public transit and *complete streets* that facilitate all modes (see Section 2.7). The third did not specify, but claimed that the priority needs to be directly stated and then supported accordingly by the budget and infrastructure. All acknowledged that current priorities limit transportation choices.

*Some participants believe that local politicians are reluctant to take bold steps in shifting transportation towards more sustainable modes in Winnipeg. Can you comment on this? [4 asked]*

Two of four agreed with the statement that local politicians are reluctant to take bold steps in shifting transportation towards more sustainable modes in Winnipeg. Another completely disagreed with this statement and the fourth did not specify a preference. Criticisms included: politicians at all levels placating the motoring public to gain their votes by providing for them without raising taxes and then claiming there are not enough resources to support sustainable transportation; reactionary responses to lobby groups leading to singular events rather than an over-arching strategy for sustainable transportation; and, unclear policy direction as a result of the vagueness of *Plan Winnipeg*. The supportive individual claimed that Council and the Mayor have done a great deal recently to accommodate active transportation in particular, but did not refer to specific actions.

*In your opinion, does the City of Winnipeg/Winnipeg Transit focus enough on marketing alternative modes? If not, why not? Do you think that alternatives could benefit from marketing techniques used in the auto industry, such as linking a product to a lifestyle or using an attention-grabbing slogan? [4 asked]*

All four asked agreed that current marketing of sustainable modes is insufficient. The roots of the problem are similar to those of communication – a lack of strong policy and infrastructure to support the message, and insufficient funds.

More and better marketing would help to expand people's options, in part by challenging the still-present idea that car-free transportation is not for regular people but for extremists, or that the bus is useful only for commuting. Three agreed that some of the promotional techniques which the auto industry uses could be effective but two added

the importance of focusing firmly on positive messages. One suggestion was to target marketing to specific audiences, such as those who are likely to stop driving once gas prices reach a certain amount. Another was to make sustainable modes, particularly transit, very easy for children to use with their families so that a culture of bus riding can be fostered at an early age and taken into youth and adulthood. The fourth informant believes that there are not enough resources put into marketing; energy has been focused lately on building the necessary infrastructure instead.

The following two questions were directed to and answered by the informant at Winnipeg Transit only:

*What effect does an increase in fares have on ridership? [1 asked]*

The informant stated that increased fares can invite public cynicism if not accompanied by visible service improvements. Without this, fare increases are interpreted as a cash-grab.

*It is very costly for a family of four to ride transit. How could Winnipeg Transit better accommodate families to at least maintain that ridership base or perhaps increase it? [1 asked]*

The informant suggested Winnipeg Transit look to other cities which have made progress in transit uptake by families. A family pass, at least on weekends, is one possibility. Also, children under 10 years of age could ride free-of-charge.

*In your opinion, would more residential development downtown help improve both the perception of safety and the overall image of downtown? Are there long-range plans to increase the residential population of the downtown core? If not, why not? [2 asked]*

Downtown residential development is a given necessity to improve safety, and more importantly, the perception of safety, two informants agreed. One suggested a role for not-for-profit organisations such as the Downtown Business Improvement Zone and

Centre Venture, a downtown revitalisation agency of the City of Winnipeg. The other mentioned a residential strategy for the downtown to be produced by Centre Venture, however the organisation has produced no such document to date.

*Do you think Winnipeg would benefit from more streets specifically designed for pedestrian/bicycle traffic? Are there long-range plans to design more pedestrian-/bicycle-oriented streets in Winnipeg? If not, why not? [3 asked]*

All three asked agreed that the city would benefit from more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly streets like Corydon Avenue and Wellington Crescent. One informant acknowledged the feeling that a space can give to a pedestrian as he or she is interacting directly with the environment, as found in the in-depth interviews in Sections 4.3.2.1 and 4.3.2.4. However, none knew of any long-range plans as of the time of the questionnaire for future development of such streets. One informant pointed to the car culture inherent in Winnipeg Public Works and Council as the cause. Another looked to the possibility of change resulting from a process of inter-departmental coordination that City administration at the time was in the process of adopting. The administration is also making efforts to protect and enhance the pedestrian quality of downtown Winnipeg. Neither of these is a political initiative, which shows the ability of the planner to take independent action amid politics.

*Most participants indicated that a car would be useful once in a while. Do you see a role for the City of Winnipeg/Province of Manitoba in a local car-sharing service? Please explain. [4 asked]*

Car sharing has the benefit of occasional car use without car ownership. None of the four informants asked saw a role for government in setting up a car-sharing service, though all saw the City or Province as supporting a community-led initiative, for instance, by providing parking space for car-sharing, or facilitating discussions with and

between non-governmental organisations. One suggested Manitoba Public Insurance could play a supportive role. Another suggested incorporating car-sharing into the transportation section of *Plan Winnipeg*.

*Participants linked transportation mode very heavily to seasons and weather. Do you think Winnipeg would benefit from a campaign to encourage citizens to embrace the winter, with the goal of facilitating more year-round active transportation? If so, what role do you see the City of Winnipeg/Province of Manitoba playing in this? [4 asked]*

Most policy-makers agreed that a campaign to encourage citizens to embrace winter, with the goal of facilitating more year-round active transportation, would benefit Winnipeg, though in one informant's opinion the benefit would be only recreational. Suggestions for action were also provided. One was to increase sustainable mode use in other seasons because people will be more likely to see themselves continuing the behaviour then into the winter. Another was to integrate active modes with transit so the bus could act as a back-up in case of inclement weather. A third was for specific government departments to work in partnership with other groups, as is done for the river trail. One individual indicated that there are more important priorities to promoting winter activity, so did not see value in this now. However, the same individual stated earlier in the questionnaire that promotion of transit and active modes is important.

*One of the things which participants said they found most difficult about living without a car was getting out of the city. Do you think it would be feasible or even desirable to increase transit service/establish a regional transit system for Winnipeg CMA to outlying areas for those without a car? Why or why not? [2 asked]*

Regional public transportation is desirable in the opinions of both informants asked. Apparently, many residents in outlying areas have been requesting transit service, but this entails complex funding schemes and extensive orchestration between

municipalities. Currently, government departments do not work closely enough together and there is neither leadership nor a community vision to move in this direction, but the desire exists on some level. Suggestions to start regional public transportation include developing a cost-sharing scheme between municipalities, targeting specific populations and routes, and measuring the willingness of residents outside Winnipeg to use public transportation. Both Winnipeg Transit and the Province of Manitoba have roles here, and potentially other transportation service providers do as well, such as Greyhound Canada and Beaver Bus Lines. Recent legislation entitled the *Capital Region Partnership Act*, which forms the Capital Region Partnership of municipalities and states the mandate, would be supportive of regional transportation.

*How useful do you think it is for the City of Winnipeg to borrow from other cities for ideas on improvements to active transportation/transit? [4 asked]*

All agreed that other cities are a good source of ideas on what can be done to improve sustainable transportation in Winnipeg. One specified looking to other winter cities for ideas.

An earlier iteration of the profile of car-free culture (Section 4.3.6) was presented to all five informants and generated the following suggestions for policy from three informants:

- encourage mixed use;
- establish urban form that supports place-making principles and permits convenient activity using many modes;
- accommodate mixed use development at transit terminals;
- make improvements to bus scheduling and fare collection;

- prioritise active transportation over cars;
- build infill developments before expanding outward; and,
- link property taxes to lot size.

One individual did not respond to the question, and another could not conceive of a recommendation based on the findings presented.

*For decades, cities have developed around the assumption of car ownership. In your opinion, is “car-free culture” a useful guideline for future planning in Winnipeg? [5 asked]*

All five saw some value in car-free culture as a guideline, though not all for the same purposes: four agreed it would be useful for guiding development and policy, and one saw it as informing a significant marketing campaign.

From a literal reading, the informants saw the idea of car-free culture as having value in reducing car dependence on some level, and they provided helpful feedback and ideas for how car-free culture might be fostered. The following section discusses some of the issues raised in the questionnaires at a more in-depth level.

#### **4.4.2 Interpretive Analysis**

Upon deeper reading of the questionnaires, I found that informants’ discourse showed they are open to the concept of car-free culture as a probable, positive force in sustainable transportation. However, some discourse was sceptical of the usefulness or applicability of car-free culture. Informants’ responses were linked to the political climate because policy-makers both advise politicians and follow their direction. This section looks at examples of informants’ discourse that was critical of car-free culture in planning; expressions of their attitudes towards the political climate in Winnipeg; and, discourse that was supportive of car-free culture.

#### 4.4.2.1 *Expressions of Criticism towards Car-Free Culture*

Discourse used by policy-makers indicates that they are generally supportive of the idea of car-free culture and its implications for planning, however one person in particular did raise critical points indicating scepticism.<sup>23</sup>

The first point is that a winter promotional campaign would have only recreational benefit. Such discourse limits the reach of transportation. By speaking of active transportation as fun and not functional because of the weather and attitudes towards the weather, entire lifestyle options are left to be explored only by extremists. This is not the case in many other winter cities, which have made efforts to offer feasible sustainable travel modes designed specifically for winter travel (see Henke, 2006).

Analysis of the following quotation raises several points of discussion:

I think [car-free culture]'s a bit reactive to guide planning overall, but it is one important consideration (of many) for a community who wants to be inclusive... I think to be truly 'planners', we should be pro-active and try to imagine what is coming / what is next [...]. I expect our desire for mobility will only increase over time [...]. I don't see soccer trips to regional facilities and quests for cheap big box deals and family vacations and desires for high quality amenities (that are only feasible at a regional scale) diminishing any time soon to the point of reversing auto dependency and the auto impact on our cities. Having said that, car-free should be a viable option for those who don't want to have a car. Right now, it is extremely difficult in Winnipeg.

This quotation raises four issues in particular which are worth scrutinising in detail because they display similar assumptions to those explored in the media review. First, that the concept of car-free as a planning guideline is reactive; second, that car-free limits mobility; third, that current development is reality; and last, that it is difficult to get around Winnipeg without a car. These points are discussed below.

The claim is made that car-free culture as an overall guiding principle is reactive,

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<sup>23</sup> The reference and quotation in this section are not attributed so as to avoid singling out this individual.



and that planners ought to instead be proactive. The car-free idea is not necessarily reactive. When considering current and emerging issues related to car dependence, such as peak oil, rising gas prices, road infrastructure deficits, greenhouse gas emissions, collisions, rising obesity (Tjepkema, 2005), an aging population and the near-collapse of the North American auto sector, how long should politicians and policy-makers facilitate the automobile primarily and still call this approach “proactive”? Todd Litman (2009b) projects less demand for private automobiles in the future since that need has been saturated (see Section 2.7). Shifting our focus to truly sustainable modes to meet our transportation needs is proactive.

The second issue to emerge in the analysis is that this informant equated mobility with the car, meaning therefore that to be car-free will limit mobility. Mobility does not have to be synonymous with the car exclusively. Car-free culture is actually supportive of increased mobility, or more importantly, accessibility (see Section 2.7). Further, the reference to accessibility issues related to regional recreational facilities, big box stores and vacation destinations suggests that if planners turn the focus towards car-free provisions they would limit the benefits of these amenities and services. These opportunities do indeed currently favour access by private automobile. However, the assumption that everyone will be using a single mode and interpreting this as reality is the factor that limits mobility, not shifting focus to favour car-free transportation. The high cost of auto infrastructure drains resources away from other modes. Development patterns which presume car ownership limit a person’s mobility, or perception of mobility, not the option to live car-free.

Under these assumptions – that the car equals mobility and that everyone is driving – I understand that car-free would be interpreted as limiting mobility. Yet if policy-makers and politicians continue to function under these assumptions, driving will continue to be facilitated above all else. For a car-free lifestyle to truly increase mobility requires a concerted effort on the part of many sectors (as discussed in Sections 2.6 and 2.7). The City would have to shift its priorities and resources to other modes so that all citizens can be as mobile as possible, and have access to as many opportunities as possible, without having to purchase a car. This requires questioning fundamental assumptions about transportation.

This is related to the concept that current development is “reality”, the third point of the quotation. A car-free lifestyle appears to limit possibilities, but only if it is accepted that policy-makers and citizens alike have no control over the development patterns of the city. These patterns can change. If Winnipeg were truly multi-modal, children would ride the bus to a soccer game, a family would take a vacation on a train, and an individual would rent a car to purchase amenities only available regionally – or, well-developed local economies would provide more amenities closer to home. Many Winnipeggers already do these activities car-free under existing conditions, but with a pointed effort to develop the city for people rather than for cars, far more people could and might pursue these activities car-free without thinking twice. Even if such activities continue to be facilitated in the way they are, this discourse does not pose the question of why car ownership is required rather than occasional car use, which could be satisfied for many by car sharing, carpooling, borrowing or renting.

The final point raised from this quotation is that it is very difficult to get around in Winnipeg without a car. Given the level of accessibility of the opportunities listed above, living car-free may indeed be perceived to be extremely difficult, but continuing with this kind of development will not improve accessibility for anyone. Further, the individuals interviewed do not find living car-free as extremely difficult. For them, opportunities such as those listed are in fact accessible car-free. The realities of the informant and of the interviewees are different. Those who do not assume that car ownership is a prerequisite to mobility and accessibility offer an alternative viewpoint from which to plan our city. The city that grows from this starting point would be very different from the one we see now.

The importance of universal accessibility was referred to in a general way by several people, but only on one occasion did an informant link living car-free with marginalised groups who do not have the option to drive. I purposely intended not to make marginalised groups the focus of this inquiry: this was in the spirit of universal accessibility. I wanted to explore the concept of car-free culture as something that anyone would choose. Anecdotally, many Winnipeggers already seem to think of living without a car as a major constraint, and therefore as a lifestyle suitable only for those who have no other choice. This is a mentality that I hope this inquiry begins question. From the interviews, we see that car-free can be liberating and can open the door to many opportunities. Car-free is not prejudiced towards age or socioeconomic status or level of personal mobility – car dependence, however, is. Being car-free is something Winnipeg could facilitate as a viable, desirable option for anyone and need not at all imply a lack of

choice. If people are choosing not to drive, then no one will be perceived as marginalised as far as transportation is concerned.

Planners, politicians and other policy-makers cannot continue to support private automobiles to the extent that they have for the past fifty years and hope to make other options more attractive and useful. More provisions for cars will drain resources, resulting in limited provisions for all else. This, along with the accompanying discourse implying that car-free is just unrealistic, limits mobility and accessibility more than prioritising car-free options.

#### 4.4.2.2 *Expressions of Attitudes towards the Political Climate in Winnipeg*

Since transportation is dependent on political decision-making, it is relevant to study informants' attitudes towards their local politicians, to gauge whether they feel the Mayor and City Council are supportive of sustainable transportation and to what extent.

Two informants expressed a clear tone of frustration that verges on cynicism towards the City of Winnipeg, similar to that of some interview participants (see Section 4.3.5):

Politicians seem more concerned with keeping taxes low and providing the absolute basic services ("pipes, pavement & police"). (PM1)

Any communication of alternative modes is done piecemeal, and there is no overarching strategy linking them. (PM1)

Part of the problem is that politicians are always thinking about how their decisions will affect the next vote. They make bold promises about cutting taxes or fixing roads. (PM4)

Municipally our representatives have been very reactionary to situations. For example when large groups were protesting the lack of bike paths in Winnipeg we suddenly go from \$400,000 in funding to several million in funding. (PM4)

Rather than sticking to an agreed-upon vision or looking to research as a basis for decision-making, as discussed in Section 2.5.1, politicians turn to opportunities that make

them look good. This is common political practise (Wachs, 2000) but does not benefit a more diverse transportation system.

A third informant does not use accusatory language, but does indicate that not enough action has been taken:

The way in which some things have transpired over the last couple of years, one might conclude that there is significant reluctance to taking those bold steps.  
(PM2)

Another generally wants to work within the existing situation while still anticipating some change:

I don't believe that the City of Winnipeg has yet focused enough resources on Marketing [*sic*] of active transportation. At this time the City is focused on building the infrastructure required to improve active transportation in the City.  
(PM3)

This person acknowledges a point where the City is lacking, but does so without laying blame. It is possible that those not pointing the finger are reluctant to question the activities of elected officials; however, I think they are genuinely supportive of current action and are trying to take a positive stance, because clearly it is not unheard of to criticise politicians.

As mentioned in the summary, one person claims that Winnipeg City Council, and the Mayor in particular, have been very supportive of sustainable modes. I agree that the Mayor and Council have made a lot of progress towards accepting sustainable modes as real forms of transportation since the Mayor was first elected in 2005 (as discussed in Section 1.4.7). This progress is a leverage point to an optimistic future.

#### 4.4.2.3 *Expressions of Support of Car-Free Culture*

All informants used language that indicates a viewpoint that the way our transportation system is now is not how it has to be, that other ways are possible. Though

some are cynical, that cynicism lies with politicians (see above) and not with the concept of living car-free. Many of the ideas presented in the questionnaire were supported and built upon:

The best example [of a winter campaign] that I'm aware of was the Assiniboine winter trail last winter which appeared to have happened in spite of government [...] It was impressive and changed many attitudes – I'm noting anecdotally. (PM5)

I suspect that if we can increase active transportation levels in the non-winter months, folks would be more likely to envision themselves continuing their active transporting with adequate winter gear when the temperature drops. (PM2)

We need to accept our climate and make the most of it. If it's -30, then maybe we should encourage people to skate or ski along the rivers to reach their destination, or should encourage carpooling instead of SOV use. (PM1)

I believe it would be highly desirable to have a regional transit system. The only option available to Winnipeggers is use of an SOV in order to travel anywhere outside the city. (PM5)

With the low floor buses that transit has in its fleet to accommodate wheelchairs, scooters, and child strollers why wouldn't you encourage families to travel together by bus, especially if it keeps them from buying an SUV or a minivan to run simple errands that could have been done by bus? (PM4)

Informants can conceive of the possibility of other cultures and some have seen evidence of this. Though a certain level of acceptance of the status quo, as discussed in Section 4.4.2.1, is present, informants seem comfortable with at least entertaining different ideas about transportation.

One individual sees sustainable modes as being practicable for all people eventually:

At present the vast majority of Winnipegger's [*sic*] believe their only viable transportation option is the car. Transit and active transportation can even now be viable modes of transportation for some Winnipeggers but these options must be better promoted. In addition, facilities that support these other transportation options must be improved in order to make them a viable option to all people. (PM3)

It is very important that policy-makers see possibility rather than simply accepting the present reality as a foregone conclusion. This attitude points to an optimistic future for car-free culture. A discourse implying possibility is more useful and has more potential to succeed than one of resignation. Getting people out of their cars in a Winnipeg winter requires a lot of creativity – limiting discourse will not help, no matter how realistic one is trying to be.

While policy-makers and politicians can conceive of other ways, they are not entirely enabling a better-developed car-free culture. This is partly due to perception of what voters want, which may be open to change. This is also due to a narrow discourse, as presented also by the media and even at times by those living car-free already. Close consideration of how discourse reflects assumptions about transportation might trigger a change about those assumptions and help car-free culture to grow.

#### **4.4.3 Conclusion: Key Informants' Response to Car-Free Culture**

Key informant questionnaires show that policy-makers are more sympathetic towards the interviewees living car-free than the media representation of transportation. While some discourse is sceptical of the possibilities of car-free culture, the overall response is that car-free culture has potential to influence, and be further developed by, transportation and planning policy.

Many messages came out of this part of the inquiry which may inform recommendations for facilitating car-free culture in Winnipeg. The following list is a summary of the most relevant feedback received from policy-makers, which will feed into the recommendations made in Chapter 5:

- The vision of *Plan Winnipeg* is not communicated well.

- Insufficient resources are put towards sustainable transportation provisions.
- The car is the top transportation priority in Winnipeg but should not be.
- Marketing of active modes in winter and of all car-free modes in general is valuable and little has been done to date. These campaigns need the support of strong policy and progressive, innovative infrastructure.
- The City and Province have supported sustainable transportation to date but more can be done.
- The possibilities of active transportation and transit to fulfill Winnipeg's mobility and accessibility needs have not been exhausted. Marketing can help to expand people's perceptions of what the bus or bicycle can be used for.
- Making a point to increase the downtown residential population would support car-free culture but is not being done.
- A concerted effort to design streets with a focus on bicycles and pedestrians is desirable.
- Government departments working with one another and with non-profit organisations is likely to better facilitate car-free culture than working separately.
- Governments do not always have to take the lead, but can play a supporting role for many initiatives. Government policy and regulation must at minimum not prevent sustainable transportation, and preferably should encourage and give incentives to community action.
- Regional transportation is very desirable and, though more work needs to be done, there are currently many things in place that could make it happen.
- Looking to other cities is beneficial, particularly winter cities.



- Car-free culture is a useful consideration for policy, and it especially has marketing appeal.

The following, final section of this chapter is a discussion of the three phases of analysis together and of how findings will lead into recommendations.

## 4.5 *Discussion*

Winnipeg's mainstream transportation discourse, as shown in the analysis of the radio program, is centred on the car and displays many characteristics of car culture as described in the literature. Car culture is prevalent enough in Winnipeg that the viewpoint also surfaces in some of the discourse of policy-makers and of those living car-free.

Analysis of the radio show and interviews shows some definite distinctions between car culture and car-free culture, which were also revealed in the literature review. For instance, car culture functions along "instantaneous" time, whereas car-free culture interprets time more contextually (see Section 2.3.3). Also different is how drivers engage frequently in car-centred story-telling, which helps to build culture. Radio hosts often told stories to one another on-air, but there were few such casual exchanges about car-free activity. That chance to develop culture through exchange of perceptions in dialogue is absent.

This is largely due to how well-woven the car is with daily life. Radio hosts do not seem to notice how frequently references are made to the car. Mentions of car-free modes or activities, on the other hand, stand out as deliberate. Car-free transportation seems to be treated as unusual in the car culture context of the radio program, but as one

moves towards other realities – such as those of the people interviewed who live car-free – it becomes evident that car culture is not necessarily the norm, but just an option. Unfortunately for those living car-free there is little reinforcement of that culture in mainstream discourse.

The problems of car culture expressed on the radio program do seem to be externalised (see Section 2.5.1). Section 2.3 mentioned the tendency of the motorist to control: external factors, however, cannot be controlled, and are often blamed for problems which may have roots in the assumptions of car culture. The car thief, pedestrian, street blockade or high price of gas is at fault, not car culture. This viewpoint is individualistic as there is no collective responsibility taken for car culture and its ensuing problems (see Section 2.5.1). While car-centred discourse overlooks the relationship between problems and car culture, possibilities of other realities are also squeezed out. Taking stock of the discourse of car culture may help to begin a broader dialogue about problems associated with car dependence.

Those living car-free experience problems that are often due to cars themselves or the lack of provisions for other modes because of a focus of resources on cars. Car-free culture has a preoccupation with safety, which is understandable considering the power disparity between cars and other road users. The separation between the motorist and other road users makes the cyclist and pedestrian very vulnerable to the behaviour of the motorist. As car-free activity occurs in public space, a strong sense of awareness of one's surroundings typifies car-free culture. The motorist, also moving through the public realm yet separated from it, will not necessarily be as aware of the surroundings, nor feel the effects of her or his actions.

The quality of driving a private car through public space differs also from riding a bus, where one shares the space of a vehicle with strangers. Bus riders, too, have concerns of personal safety which motorists tend not to consider since the latter's understanding of public space is buffered. Being in a car is an oddly private experience of public space, unlike riding the bus, cycling or walking.

While there are distinctions between the motorist and the non-motorist, the two are not entirely different. Both will experience road rage and try to multi-task while travelling; each likes to save time and tends to link the chosen mode of transportation to self-identity. That some people do not think twice about not driving, much like the radio hosts do not think twice about the car-centred discourse, indicates that giving up the car might not be as challenging as one might imagine. Such common traits with car culture could be used to promote car-free culture as something desirable yet ordinary.

Policy-makers did express some scepticism towards the concept of car-free culture (Section 4.4.2.1); this could be a barrier if it is more widespread in the public service. If policy-makers subscribe to the discourse of the radio, with little acknowledgement of car culture, then accommodation for car-free culture will be minimal. The profile of car-free culture presented in Section 4.3.6 offers another perspective from the "reality" that is car culture. This is a different standpoint from which to begin thinking about city planning, like taking into account the perspective of any other group. Most policy-makers indicated that this profile, and the concept of car-free culture itself, could guide planning so that it is more accommodating to sustainable modes, and suggested possible actions to be taken to better support car-free culture.

Policy-makers indicated that they saw the greatest value of the car-free culture concept to be in marketing. Positive characteristics, such as links to self-identity, the time-saving and flexibility of many modes, and connectivity to surroundings, could be used to promote the concept of living car-free, in addition to similarities with car culture. Active promotion would offer more opportunities for dialogue, a platform from which car-free culture could be fostered.

This concludes the analysis of the three phases of research. The final chapter makes recommendations for policy based upon these findings and concludes the study.

## **Chapter 5      Recommendations and Conclusion**

### **5.1    *Introduction***

With an understanding of Winnipeg's prevailing transportation discourse and culture, a profile of car-free culture, and insight into the findings from policy-makers involved in local transportation planning, what directions for planning policy can be derived from this information to better support car-free culture? This is the final research question.

Three recommendation themes are identified: first is to encourage the concept of car-free culture; second is to facilitate car-free culture by applying eight action items; and third is to promote car-free culture in two specified ways. No order is imposed on these themes; all could happen simultaneously. Activities from each can begin to be implemented within the next year, and some are currently underway. Below is a discussion of each recommendation theme to enable the successful development of car-free culture in Winnipeg so that living car-free is a more viable and normal option for more people.

### **5.2    *Encourage the Idea of Car-Free Culture***

If living car-free is going to be useful for anything, whether as a guideline to inform planning policy or as inspiration for a marketing campaign to urge people out of their cars, the very concept of car-free culture must be encouraged by as many people as possible. The interpretation of discourse on the radio program in particular, and in some parts of the interviews and questionnaires, shows that expressions of assumptions about

car culture – such as that driving is a normal part of daily life or that mobility and the car are synonymous – may be restricting better development of car-free culture. Those living car-free present good examples of rejection of prevailing assumptions (see Section 4.3.4.2).

Discourse has a central role in how seriously Winnipeggers will take car-free culture. By regularly checking the language used around transportation and examining the assumptions behind that language, a person can consider the meaning of words chosen. If car-free culture is spoken about as something plausible, then possibilities will present themselves that challenge and dispel current assumptions. It seems that for decades, Winnipeggers have been saying that – due to the weather, or the layout of the city, or the culture – car travel is necessary. Winnipeggers can begin by no longer using this language. Enabling the possibility of car-free culture in discourse offers a new perspective to bring to the collaborative planning platform. New possibilities can then be envisioned collectively.

Any citizens can start to do this in their own day-to-day discourse. Media are in a position to change the way transportation is represented in their choice of discourse, also. Local leaders and others in positions of influence, such as policy-makers and politicians, must pay particularly close attention to language used and the assumptions implied. The words of those in influential positions form the basis of policy, while also guiding citizens towards a particular vision. That vision could encompass car-free culture but the language must state so. These individuals can also set an example by depending on cars as little as possible.<sup>24</sup> This might help to diminish public cynicism towards politicians'

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<sup>24</sup> The vast majority of local and provincial politicians currently commute by motor vehicle (Wiebe, 2009).

commitment to sustainable transportation, as revealed to be present in Sections 4.3.5 and 4.4.2.2, and will set a new standard of what can be considered normal transportation.

If encouraging car-free culture rather than simply focusing on reduced car use seems extreme, then it is necessarily so: car culture is highly ingrained in the collective psyche. Winnipeg, like many cities, has collectively created a reality where it is perfectly acceptable to drive a modified military vehicle to a café to purchase a cup of coffee without even getting out of the seat. If Winnipeggers are willing to make this behaviour possible now, imagine the ideas that could come from speaking in the other direction. To shift towards a diverse transportation system requires an entirely new way of thinking about, and therefore talking about, transportation. Discourse should be used not to limit options but to challenge one another to expand understanding and seek new ideas.

### **5.3 *Facilitate Car-Free Culture***

Infrastructure, regulation, policy and funding that actively facilitate car-free transportation are key prerequisites to successful development of car-free culture. Below are the eight action items in this recommendation theme, each with agencies identified which could play a role in initiating the action, as well as potential opportunities for action (see also Table 1, p. 151). This will address the meagre systemic support for car-free culture, a common perception which was expressed throughout the in-depth interviews and questionnaires.

#### **5.3.1 Improved Active Transportation Infrastructure**

Infrastructure is necessary to provide accessibility for the person outside the car, but it must be safe and stimulating to be used. Infrastructure was raised in interviews

through non-drivers' preoccupation with safety (Section 4.3.2.1) and simultaneous interest in time-saving options. Improvements to active transportation infrastructure would make winter trips as pleasant as possible, reducing the perception of time dragging out (Section 4.3.2.3). Interview participants also indicated that they enjoy environments created to accommodate sustainable modes (Section 4.3.2.4). Informants agreed that more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly streets would be desirable (Section 4.4.1).

Basic infrastructure, such as providing lanes and parking for bicycles, clearing sidewalks, posting signage, installing good-quality lighting and ensuring trails are well-groomed in winter will facilitate a variety of active modes year-round (see Henke, 2006). Bike to the Future, a local cycling advocacy group, presents many useful ideas for cycling infrastructure in the final report from a 2008 public forum (Bike to the Future, 2008).

A comprehensive framework such as *complete streets* which accommodates all roads users will ensure that active transportation infrastructure is provided in a complete and cohesive way (see Section 2.7). *Smart growth* will better integrate transportation with urban form that is compact with mixed land-use (see Section 2.7). These broad concepts should be incorporated into early stages of planning, particularly the city-wide development plan and any transportation plans (such as the *Active Transportation Action Plan*).

Secondary plans offer the opportunity to incorporate and improve active transportation infrastructure at the neighbourhood scale. There are only a few examples of such plans in Winnipeg. As explained in Section 1.4.4, the *Waverley West Area Structure Plan* has weak terms for active transportation and so is not an ideal model. The



*Osborne Village Neighbourhood Plan* (City of Winnipeg, 2006) contains far more policies for active transportation and more potential to build car-free culture.

Part of the goal of the *Osborne Village Neighbourhood Plan* is to maintain and reinforce the pedestrian nature of the neighbourhood, and many policies throughout the plan support this. Examples include widening sidewalks; providing more plazas and seating areas, not accommodating auto-oriented land uses such as drive-through businesses; and, removing snow to benefit the pedestrian first. Bicycles are accommodated too, with policies to incorporate bicycle lanes on arterial streets and ample bicycle parking. The plan also includes policies to encourage river use for year-round active transportation, including non-motorised watercraft, skiing and ice-skating.

The conflict between the pedestrian nature of Osborne Street and its use as a thoroughfare is a theme throughout the plan, and both receive attention. Facilitation of efficient movement of motor vehicles and parking are included amidst the provisions for active transportation infrastructure, though the pedestrian orientation argument is better accommodated. All policies are stated as suggestions (with words such as “encourage” and “should”) and little in the way of infrastructure has changed since the plan was developed in 2006. Though not to the point of encompassing an all-out car-free environment, the *Osborne Village Neighbourhood Plan* is a good model for active transportation infrastructure that other neighbourhoods could use.

Leadership for these initiatives begins with the City of Winnipeg’s Planning, Property and Development department, which has control over the development plan and secondary plans, and Public Works, which controls transportation plans. Economic development agencies such as The Forks North Portage Partnership, and neighbourhood

organisations and renewal corporations can provide input at a smaller scale, engaging local businesses and residents. The arts community offers ideas and experience for creative design, such as the bicycle racks along Broadway Avenue:



*Figure 3: Bicycle rack. Photograph: K. Walsh.*

Opportunity lies in the current revision of the development plan and in the *Active Transportation Action Plan*, which outlines the proposed active transportation network throughout Winnipeg and is updated annually. Also, any time a secondary plan is being developed or renewed, an opportunity is presented to make improvements to transportation infrastructure. Currently only South Point Douglas' plan is being developed, but others are anticipated (see City of Winnipeg, 2008b).

### **5.3.2 Improved Transit Service and Infrastructure**

Infrastructure that facilitates transit will make transit use easier for all riders, improve at least the perception of safety, and encourage more ridership. Also, the best design will accommodate other modes as well, facilitating the multi-modal nature of car-

free culture (see Section 5.3.6). Pedestrians in particular need to be accommodated since everyone accessing transit is a pedestrian of some kind. The following recommendations would complement the acute awareness which transit riders (and other non-drivers) have of their surroundings (Sections 4.3.2.1 and 4.2.3.4) and help to address concerns raised by interviewees related to long trips in cold weather (Section 4.3.2.3) and their desire for increased transit service (Section 4.3.5). This would also offer opportunities for socialising in the public realm, helping to build the cultural component of car-free (Section 4.3.3.1). The recommendations stem from suggestions made by one of the key informants (see Section 4.4.1).

Improvements could be made to scheduling so that bus operators have more flexibility to reach destinations on schedule and not run early, a major sticking point mentioned by interviewees. Posted real-time departure displays would also help, particularly in areas where service is not frequent and there is little chance of taking an alternate route if the bus was missed because it was early.

Design is also very important to facilitate transit use and enable a modal mix. Design points to consider include:

- Buildings built to the sidewalk: Short, barrier-free distances with street-facing entryways enable easy pedestrian access from the bus to the door of a business. Car parking should be located behind the building.
- Mixed use at major transit transfer points: Coffee shops and newsstands near transit hubs such as malls will increase opportunities while using transit, making it more attractive. The more people use transit, the better the perception of safety.

- Road design that facilitates bus service: Winding roads and *culs-de-sac* are disadvantageous to bus service. New developments that are planned without the assumption of car ownership will make viable public transportation a priority.

Some parts of the city currently have these features, including Osborne Village. These areas must be preserved.

Again, a comprehensive planning concept, such as *smart growth*, offers an overarching framework for design that incorporates a variety of key factors. This helps to avoid a piecemeal response to transit needs.

Specific improvements to transit service are the responsibility of Winnipeg Transit. Leadership to initiate improvements to transit infrastructure comes from Winnipeg Transit working closely with the Planning, Property and Development and Public Works departments at the City of Winnipeg. These groups collectively are in charge of how and where the city develops, the logistics of infrastructure, and transit service provision. By collaborating with local businesses and shopping malls, opportunities for development can be identified. Also, neighbourhoods undertaking secondary plans can take advantage of the opportunity to incorporate transit infrastructure into their communities.

The development plan review and any secondary plans, particularly in new suburbs which are planned but not yet developed, offer opportunities for more carefully planned development that supports transit.

### **5.3.3 Regional Public Transportation**

One of the drawbacks to living car-free in Winnipeg is the limitation of regional travel due to the lack of public transportation. This issue was raised by some

interviewees in Section 4.3.3.1 about relationships suffering due to large distances and few transportation options. A regional public transportation system would help to break real barriers to social relationships. Recommendations are informed by suggestions made by policy-makers in Section 4.4.1.

Regional transit is a goal requiring extensive collaboration between municipal and provincial governments and citizens. Before this goal can be realised, all parties must reach consensus on cost, funding sources and schemes, service areas and routes. This requires an integrated approach involving all affected. Leadership comes from the departments of Intergovernmental Affairs, and Infrastructure and Transportation at the Province of Manitoba collaborating with the City of Winnipeg and any outlying municipalities that are interested in the possibility of regional public transportation. Potential service providers include Winnipeg Transit or private bus companies such as Greyhound Canada or Beaver Bus Lines. Extensive public input is necessary to ensure support of this venture.

Opportunities can be found in the Capital Region Partnership, whose membership includes municipalities near popular tourist destinations such as Birds Hill Park, Grand Beach and Winnipeg Beach. The Capital Region Partnership's mandate includes environmental protection, infrastructure development, service delivery, tourism promotion, and raising awareness of capital region issues, all of which are supported by regional public transportation. *Beyond Kyoto*, the Provincial commitment to reach the Kyoto Protocol of a 6% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2012, also gives the Province an incentive to pursue an opportunity such as this that supports living car-free.

These opportunities support both interview participants' interest in reaching areas outside the city, and the interest of those in outlying area in having the option of public transportation, as indicated by informants. Car-free culture helps to increase demand for regional public transportation. The less people depend on cars, the more they will look to public transportation to meet their regional travel needs.

#### **5.3.4 Regulation to Support Active Transportation**

Rules and regulations relating to transportation and enforcement of those rules were referred to in interviews and questionnaires only indirectly, and in the context of infrastructure maintenance. Recommendations in this area address several issues raised in interviews, particularly in Section 4.3.2.1, including road safety of cyclists and pedestrians, power struggles with motorists, cycling rules, road rage and driver attitude. Also addressed are the desire of the pedestrian and cyclist to have welcoming spaces that reverse the current hierarchy upholding the car, referred to in Section 4.3.2.4. Policy-makers expressed support for streets that are pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly year-round (Section 4.4.1), with suggestions that could have implications on regulation.

Regulation that prioritises sustainable modes over the car could help car-free culture to flourish because it better ensures the safety of cyclists and pedestrians on the road, a major concern identified in the interviews. Examples of regulation and enforcement which would support those travelling car-free include:

- Sidewalks that are better cleared of snow.
- Reduced speed limits, particularly along residential streets and back lanes.
- Posted speed limits throughout the city.
- Signage indicating pedestrian and cyclist right-of-way.

- Enforcement of pedestrian right-of-way at all intersections.
- Increased penalties for encroaching on pedestrian and cyclist right-of-way.
- Signage reminding the motorist to share the road with other users.

Regulations could help to foster acceptance of car-free culture, but they must be supported by enforcement by fines or revoked driving privileges. Regulation that is not enforced simply because it is so commonly broken is counter-productive to changing behaviour. The regulation becomes collectively forgotten because it is culturally not practised.

Another possibility is to expand the mandate of Manitoba Public Insurance (MPI) to be more inclusive of sustainable modes. The MPI website is very heavily focused on motor vehicles, even though the mission is “Working with Manitobans to reduce risk on the road”. By including more information on rules, regulations, rights and responsibilities of cyclists and pedestrians, MPI could better contribute to the safety of all road users, while still following that mission statement.

The City of Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba have jurisdiction to regulate road use and behaviour through the *Traffic By-Law* and the *Highway Traffic Act*. The City of Winnipeg could review speed limits and post them regularly. Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation could review the *Highway Traffic Act* from the perspective of car-free culture and pay attention to ways in which the legislation favours cars. Such changes will send a message that all modes are important, helping to address the power imbalance between the car and other modes, and improving road safety for all users.

### 5.3.5 A Cohesive Vision

Throughout the interviews, particularly when discussing downtown safety (Section 4.3.2.1) and experiences in car-dominant space (Section 4.3.2.4), or when offering suggestions of improvements to car-free living (Section 4.3.5), participants did not indicate that they recognise a cohesive vision of the city. They also did not seem to feel their needs were being met as part of an over-arching sustainable transportation strategy. Instead, they feel their needs are an afterthought (Sections 4.3.2.4 and 4.3.4.2). This was echoed by some policy-makers as interpreted in Section 4.4.1, who also offered suggestions about how to better communicate a cohesive vision for sustainable transportation. These are incorporated below.

*Plan Winnipeg* arguably offers a vision for the city that is comprehensive. Clearly communicating that vision to citizens can be achieved by generating an implementation strategy directly from the vision, and including a timeline with tangible targets, to better ensure that the plan is followed through consistently.

Each section of *Plan Winnipeg* has a vision statement followed by details of what that vision might look like. However, these details do not follow through to how action is to be taken and measured. An example of the kind of information that could be provided to extend these ideas beyond the conceptual stage is explored here.

1A-02 Encourage downtown living: The City shall encourage downtown living in existing downtown residential neighbourhoods and elsewhere in the downtown by:

- i) encouraging mixed-use residential development that integrates retail, service businesses, and institutions needed by downtown residents

-Plan Winnipeg 2020 Vision, p. 35

This would benefit from a stated goal, such as an increase in the downtown residential population by a certain percentage in a specified year. A lead agency, such as Centre



Venture or the Downtown Business Improvement Zone which currently promote downtown living and development, could be explicitly named so the public can make that link between the action and the agent responsible. Indicators to evaluate success would be valuable, including: the number of new downtown residents; the number of newly-occupied dwellings; the number and type of new businesses opened as a result of increased downtown living; and, the level of satisfaction of new downtown residents.

Clear implementation strategies, timelines and indicators will give agents an unambiguous role in realising the vision of the development plan, which will improve public support of the plan. This approach to action is also holistic, moving politicians away from singular, opportunistic “announceable” pieces.

Since *Plan Winnipeg* is a City of Winnipeg document, the City is the lead for this recommendation, in particular the Planning, Property and Development department. The Province of Manitoba, which legislates development plans, can offer support by providing financial assistance for extensive public outreach and engagement. The best opportunity is currently underway with the review of *Plan Winnipeg* through the comprehensive sustainability strategy, SpeakUpWinnipeg (as mentioned in Section 1.4.7). This collaborative approach has the potential to result in a City vision that is endorsed and clearly understood by citizens because they are invited to be a part of the process from the outset.

### **5.3.6 Coordinated Efforts between Active Transportation and Transit**

Because car-free travel is multi-modal – one of the characteristics in the car-free culture profile (Section 4.3.6) – all efforts to facilitate active transportation and transit should be coordinated. Policy-makers offered suggestions for making streets more

welcoming to pedestrians, cyclists and transit users, including the promotion of multi-modality in winter (see Section 4.4.1). Other examples include:

- bicycle parking at bus stops;
- bicycle racks on buses; and,
- streetscaping that facilitates pedestrian access to the bus.

Coordination between modes will also support the need for planning and coordination required when travelling car-free and further enhance the enjoyable experience of the journey (see Section 4.3.6).

Agencies involved are Winnipeg Transit; City of Winnipeg departments of Public Works, and Planning, Property and Development; and, local non-governmental organisations including Bike to the Future and the Winnipeg Rapid Transit Coalition, a lobby group for rapid transit. A working group of individuals from these departments and organisations formed to review any transportation-related projects, from the *Active Transportation Action Plan* to new subdivisions, will lead to more integrated sustainable transportation planning.

### **5.3.7 A Holistic Approach to Funding**

A holistic approach to funding that is linked directly to vision and policy will be comprehensive and supportive of broad-based initiatives. This addresses the lack of understanding of an overarching vision as presented in Section 4.3.5 of the interview analysis, and possibly some of the cynicism towards political support for car-free modes (in the same section). Policy-makers suggested politicians clearly communicate their intentions to the public, such as when raising transit fares (Section 4.4.1), to garner support for any changes proposed.

Funding can be tailored to support more compact development, which as the car-free culture profile states, is more conducive to living car-free than sprawl. An example of how to discourage urban sprawl is to shift tax from the value of a building to the size of the lot, which will encourage smaller lot size and better facilitate compact development in the long-term.

The Mayor and Council are responsible for the City of Winnipeg budget. There is possibly an opportunity to shift priorities and strengthen ties between vision and funding in 2010 as property taxes are likely to be raised. It is critical that all changes – whether to priorities, revenue sources or other aspects of the budget – and their rationale are well-communicated with citizens. Creating targeted funds for planned, clearly-stated purposes will indicate to citizens that the City is taking action in a specified direction.

SpeakUpWinnipeg is an opportunity for conversations between the City and the public about funding and taxation, and their impacts upon the transportation system. If car-free culture is to be fostered, citizens have to be willing to support it with their tax dollars.

### **5.3.8 Expanded Options for Transit Fares**

Transit fares were noted to be a burden to one interviewee in particular who has a family (Section 4.3.4.2). There are various ways in which transit can use the fare system to improve riders' experiences and to make transit more attractive to new users.

Suggestions were offered by one policy-maker, including:

- offering more flexible fare options which reduce expenses, such as a family pass;
- offering free fares for children under ten, which encourages ridership and helps to normalise the bus at an early age;
- making improvements to the fare collection system and structure; and,

- exhausting other options before raising fares.

Winnipeg Transit is the leader for this, in collaboration with the Mayor and Council when considering other sources of revenue beyond fares. Recent developments in transit in Winnipeg are gaining momentum, including planning for a rapid transit busway and upgrades to transit technology which announce upcoming stops on buses and display arrivals at bus stops in real time. Also, the age of the free fare for children was recently raised from four to five, a positive turn for encouraging increased ridership and reduced car dependence.

## **5.4 *Promote Car-Free Culture***

The final recommendation theme to applying the car-free concept in a useful way is promotion (see also Table 1, p. 151). Much of the data from the interviews serves to potentially inform campaigns to market living car-free. Marketing of transit and year-round active transportation will raise awareness of the possibility of these options, generating ideas of how to better facilitate living car-free. This theme entails promoting car-free as a workable lifestyle choice to raise awareness of the potential usefulness and positive aspects of car-free culture; and launching a campaign for winter, which cannot be ignored in the Winnipeg context.

### **5.4.1 *Car-Free as a Viable Lifestyle Choice***

Informants indicated that the area where the research findings are likely to provide the most valuable information is in marketing. Since very little is currently done to market sustainable modes in the city, there is substantial opportunity for improvement.

The majority of current sustainable transportation advertising is done by Winnipeg Transit (which promotes its services only) and Resource Conservation Manitoba, a non-governmental organisation which offers programming on environmental sustainability, including sustainable transportation. These and other groups can use the positive findings from the study to inform a strategic marketing plan aiming to normalise car-free living. Section 4.3.2.1 discussed the added benefits of walking, cycling and transit which supplement car-free transportation, such as the opportunity to exercise or read. Many positive images emerged from the links between car-free culture and self-identity which could promote living car-free (Section 4.3.2.2), particularly that there are grades of deliberation, as described in the car-free culture profile. This shows that living car-free can be quite easy, and is not just the arena of those committed to saving the environment, for example.

The liberated feeling that some interviewees described from not owning a car could help address some of the misconceptions that may exist about accessibility, scheduling and flexibility related to not owning a car (Section 4.3.2.3). Assumptions like those discussed in Section 4.3.4.1 of the supposed necessity of a car could be turned around by a campaign that instead encourages citizens to connect other ideas with living car-free, such as a sense of possibility, as expressed in Section 4.3.4.2.

The connections one can feel with others when not driving, such as the social aspect of riding the bus (Section 4.3.3.1), is another positive image, and people's responses of surprise and curiosity upon finding out that someone lives car-free, as described by some interviewees in Section 4.3.3.2, could be capitalised upon. That car-

free culture functions well at a local level (Section 4.3.2.4) can be linked to the promotion of local businesses or any incentives to “buy local”.

Currently, basic infrastructure needed to use certain sustainable modes, particularly cycling, is not available in all areas of the city. However, one policy-maker indicated that the vast majority of Winnipeggers believe that the car is their only feasible choice (Section 4.4.2.3); it might not be. By embedding community-based social marketing (CBSM, see Section 2.7) into policy, ideas for car-free culture can be introduced into mainstream discourse, inviting citizens to think differently about their transportation assumptions. CBSM helps to overcome such perception-based barriers.

Interviewees mentioned the usefulness of car access on occasion (Section 4.3.1) and policy-makers indicated that government support for car-sharing would be desirable (Section 4.4.1). Though it sounds contradictory, a community-based car-share program could have a very helpful role in car-free culture, providing some car access without requiring car ownership. For some who may be reluctant to give up the car entirely, the option to share a car could make otherwise living car-free more palatable, acting as a bridge between car dependence and no car access whatsoever. This also helps to address the concern of at least one policy-maker that life without a car in Winnipeg would be difficult (Section 4.4.2.1). Providing reduced insurance rates for those who share a car would address the assumed need to own a car individually. The mandate of Manitoba Public Insurance (MPI) would have to be expanded to address car dependence by providing insurance incentives specifically for car-sharing so people do not have to necessarily own their own car but have access to one on occasions when it would be most useful.

Interviewees claimed that power imbalances and the unsafe feeling on the road are major disincentives to cycling (Section 4.3.2.1). Motorists' behaviour is a large factor in the cyclist's experience. Encouraging motorists to try cycling one day per month to raise awareness of the experience of another road user, for example, could help to change perspectives and behaviour for the better, improving road safety and encouraging more people to cycle.

The greatest benefits of a marketing campaign to promote car-free culture would result from the City of Winnipeg, Winnipeg Transit, MPI and non-governmental organisations such as Resource Conservation Manitoba, Bike to the Future and Climate Change Connection, a non-governmental organisation that raises awareness about climate change across the province, working together to endorse walking, cycling, other active transportation modes and transit all as viable options. A working group could be formed to focus on such a campaign.

Some of Winnipeg's traits (see Section 1.4) can be drawn upon as strengths to promote living car-free here, including the flat landscape which is easier to cycle on than hills; the relatively small size of the city, making many destinations within reach car-free; and, the grid street pattern in the urban core and many neighbourhoods, which enables good connectivity.

There are existing opportunities for marketing campaigns: Resource Conservation Manitoba recently completed a CBSM project through WinSmart (see Section 1.4.6) and is looking to do another. Resource Conservation Manitoba also undertook a study to gauge interest in a car-share program in a Winnipeg neighbourhood. Results point to

significant interest in the possibility, and the organisation was seeking funding to pursue this at the time of writing.

Bike to Work Day and the Commuter Challenge are nation-wide programs to encourage sustainable transportation choices which could be more fully built upon and promoted more frequently. Winnipeg Transit had an advertising campaign called “Think Transit!” which featured close-up photos of bus riders of average-looking people with regular transportation needs, including a young mother and child. The successes and challenges of these initiatives provide a starting point to promote living car-free as ordinary.

#### **5.4.2 Winter Campaign**

For any integrated approach to function in Winnipeg, winter must be at least taken into consideration, if not treated as the main focus. Most policy-makers indicated support for a winter campaign for the purpose of promoting car-free transportation options year-round, offering suggestions such as increasing car-free uptake in the summer so that the behaviour carries through to the winter, and integrating active transportation with transit so that transit can act as a back-up in inclement weather (Section 4.4.1). Most of the strategies used to promote car-free as a viable lifestyle choice, discussed above, apply to a winter campaign also.

Meagan Henke’s study on liveability in the winter city investigated Spence Street at the University of Winnipeg as a case study (2006). This practicum developed a wide variety of recommendations to foster winter culture, including the promotion of active transportation and transit as very effective methods of travel during the cold, snowy



months. Key points from that practicum for the purpose of facilitating car-free culture are:

- Promotion of winter as an enjoyable time of year, with festivals, outdoor activities, tips on how to stay warm, ski and skate trails for winter transportation (Henke, 2006).
- City support of community initiatives by providing and maintaining necessary infrastructure (snow-ploughed trails for cycling; ski and skate trails) (Henke, 2006).

Interviewees described journeys during winter as feeling longer than at other times of the year (Section 4.3.2.3) and said they tend to shift modes depending on the weather (Section 4.3.1). Currently, there are few provisions for car-free modes, particularly active modes, in the winter. A campaign where Winnipeg's long, chilly winters are treated as a positive force that makes Winnipeg unique may help citizens to better embrace the winter and make the most of it, particularly if supported by infrastructure maintenance and provisions.

Lead agencies on a winter weather promotional campaign include the Downtown Business Improvement Zone; Resource Conservation Manitoba, which already promotes public campaigns such as the Commuter Challenge; and, Climate Change Connection. Assistance for such a campaign could come from the climate change division of Manitoba Science, Technology, Energy and Mines whose interest in such a campaign lies in the potential to reduce provincial greenhouse gas emissions. Support for provisions and maintenance of infrastructure must come from the City of Winnipeg. The best effort would be a collaborative one.

Momentum can be gained from current winter activities, including the river skating trail (now the longest natural skating trail in the world); the snow screen which shows short films on a large block of snow at the Forks; and, winter festivals, in particular, *Le Festival du Voyageur*. Sandercock (1998) and Healey (1997), noted authorities on culture, point out that the social realm is where culture is built (see section 2.2). By providing more opportunities such as these for car-free socialising in winter, a culture around living car-free can evolve.

Campaigns are delicate because they can backfire. The drive to promote Manitoba under the slogan “Spirited Energy” was not very popular (see Lett, 2009). A campaign needs the support of the public to thrive and make a difference; how to achieve this is beyond the scope of this study. Looking to what other cities have done successfully, particularly winter cities, is a starting point, and Winnipeg’s strong arts community could help to generate ideas.

The goal of any campaign that promotes living car-free would be to break from the assumptions that such lifestyles are for fringe groups only and to create new images in people’s minds that link the idea with normality.

**Table 1: Recommendations to Facilitate and Promote Car-Free Culture**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Audience</b>
Improved AT infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Winnipeg: PP&amp;D, Public Works</li> <li>The Forks-North Portage</li> <li>Neighbourhood organisations / renewal corporations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development plan review</li> <li><i>Active Transportation Action Plan</i></li> <li>Secondary plan renewals</li> <li>Arts community</li> </ul>	Present to 2010  2010 <i>AT Plan</i> review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Winnipeg public</li> <li>AT users</li> <li>Neighbourhood groups</li> </ul>
Improved transit infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Winnipeg Transit</li> <li>City of Winnipeg: PP&amp;D, Public Works</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaboration with local business</li> <li>Secondary plan renewals</li> <li>Development plan review</li> </ul>	Present to 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transit users</li> <li>Local businesses</li> </ul>
Regional public transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capital region municipalities</li> <li>Province of Manitoba: IGA, MIT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capital Region Partnership</li> <li><i>Beyond Kyoto</i></li> </ul>	Present to 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Winnipeg CMA residents</li> </ul>
Regulation to support AT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mayor and Council</li> <li>Province of Manitoba: MIT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By-law review</li> <li>Legislation review</li> </ul>	Present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AT users</li> </ul>
Cohesive vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Winnipeg: PP&amp;D</li> <li>Province of Manitoba: IGA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development Plan review</li> </ul>	Present to 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Winnipeg public</li> </ul>
Coordinated efforts between AT and transit	Working group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Winnipeg Transit</li> <li>City of Winnipeg: Public Works, PP&amp;D</li> <li>NGOs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Active Transportation Action Plan</i></li> </ul>	2010 <i>AT Plan</i> review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AT users and groups</li> <li>Transit users and groups</li> </ul>
Holistic funding approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mayor and Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2010 Budget: tax increase</li> <li>Development Plan review</li> </ul>	Present to 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property tax payers</li> </ul>
Expanded options for transit fares	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Winnipeg Transit</li> <li>Mayor and Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current transit upgrades</li> </ul>	Present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transit users</li> </ul>
Car-free treated as viable lifestyle choice	Working group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Winnipeg</li> <li>Winnipeg Transit</li> <li>MPI</li> <li>NGOs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RCM car-share and CBSM proposals</li> <li>Existing provincial, national campaigns</li> <li>City strengths</li> <li>Arts community</li> </ul>	Present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Winnipeg residents</li> </ul>
Winter campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Downtown BIZ</li> <li>NGOs</li> <li>Province of Manitoba: STEM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing winter activities</li> <li>Arts community</li> </ul>	Winter 2009 / 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Winnipeg residents</li> </ul>

## 5.5 *Discussion*

For car-free culture to flourish, it must be encouraged, facilitated and promoted, which can be best achieved by building partnerships, seeking opportunities and building on the city's existing characteristics. Many of the recommendations made here go beyond the capacity of local land-use and transportation planning into social and community planning, urban design and art. Because transportation is integrated, planners in all sectors have a contribution to make to improve transportation, and by forming partnerships with a variety of groups, more opportunities to facilitate living car-free could be revealed.

Each characteristic of the car-free culture profile is touched upon by at least one recommendation. Improved active transportation and transit infrastructure, and coordination between the two, will enhance the experience of the journey, better enable the scheduling required to plan a trip, improve the experience of the public realm and address many safety concerns. Regional public transportation will facilitate better connections and more social opportunities beyond the local context while enhancing the sense of liberation that comes from travelling car-free. Regulation that supports active transportation will improve safety and address power imbalances on the road while enhancing the journey and the experience of the public realm.

A holistic approach to funding can be designed to enable localised travel while providing a clear sense of the direction which the city is taking. Expanded transit fare options promotes car-free travel from a young age and engages the practical side of being car-free by making transit even simpler. A cohesive vision will tie everything together so that those living car-free feel like an integral part of the city.

The promotion of car-free culture is achievable by capitalising on the positive qualities of car-free culture while maximising the Winnipeg context. A good promotional campaign will be flexible enough to accommodate the variety of approaches to being car-free while capitalising on people's tendency to link their activities, including transportation-related activity, to self-identity.

If communicated as a cohesive, committed goal of a sustainable, diverse and equitable transportation system, citizen support for car-free modes will be better ensured from the outset. A collaborative planning approach means citizens will have helped to build the vision and the policies themselves. This requires a strong emphasis on engagement embedded in all transportation-related policy. The approach of SpeakUpWinnipeg currently being taken with the review of the development plan is a good platform for active engagement that is generating a lot of opinions and ideas.

The recommendations were both informed by the research into car-free culture and in turn will help to foster a stronger car-free culture in Winnipeg. They are also broad enough to travel beyond Winnipeg's borders to other cities. By introducing different assumptions into the current "predict and provide" approach (see Section 2.6), the cycle described in the outline of the study (Section 1.2) can begin to be broken and a new one introduced, one where car-free culture self-perpetuates and becomes more normalised.

For car-free culture to truly thrive would take many years of concerted effort. The vision of car-free as a viable lifestyle choice and car-free culture as a normal, mainstream part of life is a very long-term one, but it begins with the way all people think

and express the very idea of transportation. This is something that any individual can begin to change today.

The final section concludes the study, revisiting the purpose and research goals of this inquiry, and also identifying areas for further research.

## **5.6 Conclusion and Areas for Further Research**

Much has changed in Winnipeg since I moved here in 2005 to study city planning; less with infrastructure as with public attitudes. People are talking about transportation differently now. I still feel somewhat out-of-place on city streets, but this is a better time than ever to be in Winnipeg advocating for sustainable transportation. The changes that are happening are gaining momentum and the potential for improvements to the car-free experience is enormous.

This shift seems to be in step with activities happening across the country and globally. While car culture is alive and well, even growing in many developing countries, the drawbacks of car dependence are increasingly being addressed. Both Toronto and Vancouver have each recently restricted a lane of traffic along a major commuter route to bicycles only. New York City is testing an exchange of cars for chairs in Times Square. J.H. Crawford has released a book entitled *Carfree Design Manual*. Cities that are making more room for buses, bicycles and pedestrians are embracing Litman's (2009b) idea of the future of transportation.

The goal of this thesis was to gain an understanding of car-free culture and to explore the possibilities of this perspective for city planning that is inclusive and offers a variety of viable transportation options to all citizens. Insight into car-free culture in the

Winnipeg context reveals an emerging perspective with potential to inform policy and marketing in the interests of a more sustainable transportation system and better transportation choices for citizens.

Four research questions were posed and answered in the study. The first asked: what are the perspectives and values embedded in the prevailing transportation discourse in Winnipeg? Findings show that they match those of car culture, as described in the literature review, Chapter 2. The analysis of the radio program demonstrates how mainstream discourse is a hindrance to more sustainable transportation because it does not challenge the assumptions of car culture and so does not push the boundaries of existing policy or behaviour.

Second, what are the perspectives and values embedded in the discourse of Winnipeggers living car-free? There are some similar characteristics between car culture and car-free culture, but generally each has different perspectives and represents diverse values (see Section 4.5). The discourse of individuals living car-free therefore offers a new set of assumptions from which city planners can draw.

The third question asked: based on the perspectives and values revealed in car-free discourse, can there be a profile created of car-free culture in Winnipeg and if so, how can this profile be described? A detailed profile of car-free culture is depicted in Section 4.3. To summarise, the study found that while car-free culture is approached differently by different people, there are common characteristics. Since car-free culture happens in the public realm, it means feeling connected to surrounding people and environments. It is practical but requires flexibility and planning ahead, often achieved by using multiple modes and functioning best at a local level. While car-free culture can

be liberating and the journey an enjoyable experience unto itself, personal safety and the power imbalance when sharing the road with cars are always a concern. Though there are grades of deliberation in choosing to be car-free, the choice tends to be linked to one's self-identity. While car-free culture can be characterised, it is in its early stages as the social aspect that builds and reinforces a culture is lacking.

Finally, what policy directions do the findings suggest would better support car-free culture? Chapter 5 lists policy directions to encourage, facilitate and promote car-free culture. Being mindful of the idea of car-free culture in all related discourse and civic engagement may benefit our transportation system. By encouraging the idea of car-free culture in language; facilitating car-free culture in infrastructure, regulation, policy and funding; and, by actively promoting car-free lifestyles, new realities can emerge in Winnipeg's future where car-free culture takes on a life of its own.

This research is a small, theoretically-based component of the broad issue of sustainable, multi-modal transportation. The study points to the following areas of applied research which may be explored from here:

- Engage citizens in targeted, localised areas in a community-based social marketing program which identifies barriers to living car-free and works to remove them effectively. This could be done collaboratively with Resource Conservation Manitoba, with the findings from this study applied to help inform the program.
- Broadly survey citizens' attitudes towards winter and explore ways to increase car-free activity in winter. This would help to inform the details of a winter



campaign, including budget, approach, content, length of time, tone and target audience.

- Use a collaborative planning framework to design a series of focus groups (or other collaborative format) on living car-free with those who may not have previously considered this as an option. This would test out the theory of collaborative planning to see if and how people changed their behaviour after being introduced to the potentially new reality of living car-free.
- Research the discourse and philosophical approaches of cities which have successfully reduced car dependence. This will show the effects of language and ideology on understanding, attitude and behaviour on the topic of transportation.
- Research the specific role of the planner in implementing a car-free promotional campaign. While planners do not traditionally engage in the promotion of activities, they may play an integral role in a marketing strategy to reduce car dependence, such as informing approaches or making links to complementary infrastructure and programming.
- Design a regional transportation plan, including interviews with Beaver Bus Lines, Greyhound Canada and other interested private or co-operative bus companies for their level of interest in contributing to a regional transportation service.

These are early days for car-free culture in Winnipeg, which has a long way to go before it is a fully-developed part of ordinary society. However, now is an opportune time for car-free culture to gain momentum in Winnipeg: awareness is rising of the issues around car culture, and local initiatives are already underway that have a lot of potential

to inspire fundamental cultural shifts simply by their approach, which are true to collaborative planning. New transportation realities may be in store in Winnipeg's near future.

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## Appendix A: Sample Critical Discourse Analysis



*Figure 4: Sign on Wolseley Avenue, Winnipeg. Photograph: K. Walsh.*

This sign is located along a street that is closed to motor vehicle through-traffic on Sundays to make way for recreation, such as cycling. The sign is a good text for critical discourse analysis because it indicates several telling assumptions about transportation in Winnipeg which compound the distinct power inequality between the modes, without ever acknowledging the true nature of that power inequality. The following issues are raised upon critical discourse analysis of the sign:

1. “Vehicle traffic” clearly does not include the bicycle, but only motor vehicles.

How are bicycles neither vehicles nor traffic?

2. This exclusivity of the term “vehicle traffic” implies that motor vehicles are a more serious mode of transportation used by adults with someplace to go, and puts cyclists in their place as law-breaking individuals of leisure in the way of the



real road users. Cyclists may behave as though they have a right to use the street, but the lack of the word “too” at the end of the sentence implies that they do not.

3. The power imbalance is totally turned on its head. It is condescending to remind cyclists of the “right” of the car because the car itself, with its speed, power and sheltered driver, already asserts that. A sign reminding the less powerful road user of the more powerful user’s rights is redundant (see Section 4.3.2.1).
4. Therefore, the sign is the reverse of what it should be: motor vehicles being reminded of other road users. At the very least, a sign reminding all users to share the road, the likes of which *can* be found in Winnipeg, would be much more egalitarian and reasonable
5. Finally, to blatantly state that vehicle traffic, meaning in this case motor vehicles, has a “right” to use the street is completely inaccurate. Driving a motor vehicle is a licensed privilege (see Section 2.5.1) and a sign like this only serves to further confuse this misunderstood concept.

## Appendix B: Interview Recruitment Advertisement

### **Attention bus riders, pedestrians, cyclists...**

Do you choose to take the bus, walk, skateboard, cycle  
or otherwise get around **without a car**?  
Then share your perspective!

I am a Graduate student researching the travel experiences of  
people who choose not to drive.

If you are over 18 and interested in participating in an **interview**,  
please call 783-4035  
or email [notdriving@mts.net](mailto:notdriving@mts.net)

Approved by the University of Manitoba Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board

## Appendix C: Interview Questions

Name  
Age range  
Occupation  
Main mode(s)  
How long used

*Numbers indicate theme*

### 1. Personal

What are your reasons for not driving?

### 2. Social

How do people in your social circle (friends, family) get around?

Do you think that not driving affects your social life in any way?

*[Sense of dependence, can't offer rides, limits social interaction...]*

How do people react when they find out you don't drive/have a car?

*[assume that you drive/have a car? How do you deal with that assumption and the associations that come with it (unlimited mobility, expect to arrive looking a certain way...)]*

Do you feel you are part of a community based on the fact that you walk/cycle/take the bus?

### 1. Personal

Do you ever wish you had a car?

### 3. Time

How do you feel about the amount of time you spend travelling the way you do?

*[If have a sense of time wasted: how do you compensate for lost time? – ie, trip chain, won't go, change modes, multi-task...]*

What goes through your mind when you are *walking/cycling/etc?*

*[ie – think inwardly, or external, watching surroundings?]*

### 4. Space

*Show maps:* Can you show me and how you might get from home to work/grocery store?  
Talk about it.

*[Note: anything they would change, recommendations, reasons for taking routes they do]*

What if you were to go to [mall close to home]?

Compare *walking* down Corydon Ave to walking down Pembina

Compare *cycling* on Wellington Crescent to cycling on Pembina/Disraeli

Compare *waiting for a bus* at Graham and Vaughan to waiting for one outside Grant Park Mall

1. Personal

Do you think that not driving says something about you? What does it say?

5. Ideological

*Show car ad*: How do you feel/what do you think when you see these ads?

6. Experience

What makes you feel good when you are *walking/cycling/on the bus*?

Does anything about *walking/cycling/taking the bus* bring out negative thoughts/feelings?  
[*apprehension, frustration...*]

7. Implications

How do you feel when you think about the future of *walking/cycling/bus riding* in Winnipeg?

What would you do to improve life without a car in Winnipeg?

## Appendix D: Questionnaire

### 1. Vision

Participants indicate they have a piecemeal understanding of what is currently happening with sustainable transportation at the municipal level. Examples include:

- they have seen a hybrid bus but they have never heard of WinSmart
- they have heard rumours of some rail line being turned into a bike trail but they don't know where it is or why it is being converted
- general confusion about the City's stance on rapid transit

In your opinion, is the City of Winnipeg clearly communicating a cohesive vision for sustainable transportation to its citizens? If not, why not?

1.a. How do you think communication of a sustainable transportation vision could be improved?

### 2. Priority

Participants generally indicated that they feel as though the car always has priority over other modes, based on things like parking, funding and driver behaviour. From your point of view, what mode is the top priority in Winnipeg: car, bus, bicycle, walking, other? What are your reasons for this?

2.a. Do you think this is the best way to prioritise local transportation? If not, what would be the best way, in your opinion?

### 3. Political will

Some participants believe that local politicians are reluctant to take bold steps in shifting transportation towards more sustainable modes in Winnipeg. Can you comment on this?

### 4. Marketing

For one part of the study, participants were asked to comment on some printed car advertisements. [In a few cases, this sparked a discussion on transit marketing.] Car companies spend heavily on marketing their products in creative, unusual, even offensive ways. In your opinion, does the City of Winnipeg/Winnipeg Transit focus enough on marketing alternative modes? If not, why not?

4.a. Do you think that alternatives could benefit from marketing techniques used in the auto industry, such as linking a product to a lifestyle or using an attention-grabbing slogan?

4.b. Do you think Winnipeg Transit promotes itself sufficiently to families, youth and children?

### 5. Gas prices

Gas prices are rising to unprecedented levels. Several participants pointed to this as an opportunity for alternative modes to make some headway. Do you see rising gas prices as a useful tool in the promotion of public transit in Winnipeg?

#### 6. Cost

Participants commented that bus fare has been raised several times over the past few years. What effect does an increase in fares have on ridership?

6.a. It is very costly for a family of four to ride transit. How could Winnipeg Transit better accommodate families to at least maintain that ridership base or perhaps increase it?

#### 7. Downtown Safety

Participants generally indicated they feel quite safe downtown, some even at night, but that they would feel safer if there were more people about. In your opinion, would more residential development downtown help improve both the perception of safety and the overall image of downtown?

7.a. Are there long-range plans to increase the residential population of the downtown core? If not, why not?

#### 8. Walkability/Bike-ability

All participants said they prefer to walk on Corydon than on Pembina and some would like to see more streets like Corydon which have a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere. Do you think Winnipeg would benefit from more streets specifically designed for pedestrian traffic?/

Participants said they would rather cycle on Wellington than on Pembina. Do you think Winnipeg would benefit from streets designed primarily for bicycle traffic?

8.a. Are there long-range plans to design more pedestrian-oriented streets in Winnipeg? If not, why not?/

Are there long-range plans to design more bicycle-oriented streets in Winnipeg? If not, why not?

#### 9. Car sharing

Most participants indicated that a car would be useful once in a while. Do you see a role for the City of Winnipeg/Province of Manitoba in a local/regional car-sharing service? Please explain.

#### 10. Weather

Participants linked transportation mode very heavily to seasons and weather. Do you think Winnipeg would benefit from a campaign to encourage citizens to embrace the winter, with the goal of facilitating more year-round active transportation?

10.a. If so, what role do you see the City of Winnipeg/Province of Manitoba playing in this?

## 11. Region

One of the things which participants said they found most difficult about living without a car was getting out of the city. Do you think it would be feasible or even desirable to increase transit service to outlying areas/establish a regional transit system for Winnipeg CMA for those without a car? Why or why not?

11.a. If so, do you see a role for Winnipeg Transit/the Province in regional transportation?

## 12. Other cities

Most participants drew examples from other cities when trying to come up with ways to improve life without a car here in Winnipeg. How useful do you think it is for the City of Winnipeg to borrow from other cities for ideas on improvements to public and active transportation, such as walkable communities/rapid transit/ multi-use sidewalks (Holland) or free bicycles (Paris)?

## 13. Car-free culture

“Car-free culture” can be described like this [*please see attached CarFreeProfile.doc*]. What are three specific planning policy recommendations you could draw from these findings?

13.a. For decades, cities have developed around the assumption of car ownership. In your opinion, is “car-free culture” a useful guideline for future planning in Winnipeg?

# Appendix E: Interview Consent Form

## CONSENT FORM

**Research Project Title:** Alternative Transportation Culture: An Exploration of Non-Driving Travel Discourse and Subsequent Policy Implications

**Researcher:** Katy Walsh, Graduate Student, University of Manitoba

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

1. Purpose

The purpose of the research is to understand the experiences of non-drivers as they transport themselves around Winnipeg.

The objectives of the study are first, to recount the experiences of non-drivers and second, to develop a profile from the interviews of a non-driving travel culture in Winnipeg.

2. Procedure

The participant will be interviewed only once, in a place agreed upon by the participant and the researcher, such as a café or public library, and lasting approximately one hour. The interview will consist of six main question themes based on the literature review. The approach is semi-structured and the questions are open-ended in this way to allow the participant to speak freely. The participant will be asked to identify him or herself but may decline to do so or may give an alias.

3. Risks and Benefits

Minimal risk is anticipated. Benefits to the participants include an opportunity to share experiences and views on local transport and to have these experiences documented, which many eventually lead to improvements to transportation and to personal experiences. Also, participants who decide to read the final document may learn about the experiences of others in similar situations.

4. Recording

A digital audio recorder will be used. The participant may decline to be audio-taped.

5. Confidentiality

Only the researcher will have access to the information collected and to the identity of the participant. Confidentiality will be protected by keeping all documentation of the interview accessible only to the researcher. The participant will not be required to provide any personal information apart from that which the participant wishes to give, and anonymity will be guaranteed by using aliases in place of real names in the final thesis; anything said by a participant may appear in the paper, but no true identity will be attached to any statement. This will be stated outright at the interview. The participant may end the interview at any time and/or may choose not to answer any questions he/she does not wish to. Additionally, the participant may have the recording device turned off for all or a portion of the interview. These choices do not in any way affect their rights as a participant. Data will be stored on a personal computer and backed up on disc accessible only to the researcher in a secured residence. On or before September 2008, following submission of the final draft of the thesis, all digital transcriptions will be erased and all hard copies of transcriptions will be destroyed in a paper shredder.



6. Feedback

Feedback will be made available to the participant following the analysis of the interview if the participant wishes. This will be given to the participant by email or delivered in person by the researcher, whichever the participant prefers.

Would you like to receive feedback?      Yes      No

If Yes, please indicate how you would like feedback to be delivered:

7. Credit or Remuneration.

No credit or remuneration will be provided.

**Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a participant. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.**

**Researcher:** Katy Walsh: 783-4035

**Supervisor:** Dr. David van Vliet: 474-7176

**This research has been approved by the Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122, or e-mail [margaret\\_bowman@umanitoba.ca](mailto:margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca). A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.**

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Participant's Signature

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Date

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Researcher and/or Delegate's Signature

---

Date

# Appendix F: Questionnaire Consent Form

## CONSENT FORM

**Research Project Title:** Alternative Transportation Culture: An Exploration of Car-Free Travel Discourse and Subsequent Policy Implications

**Researcher:** Katy Walsh, Graduate Student, University of Manitoba

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

1. Purpose

The purpose of the research is to seek ways to incorporate a car-free perspective into local transportation policy. The objectives of the study are first, to use the findings from interviews with those living car-free as a point of discussion on the urban planner's role in improving local transportation systems and second, to find solutions to improve the experiences of users of alternative modes of transportation in Winnipeg.

2. Procedures

The participant is asked to complete a questionnaire stemming from interviews with Winnipeggers living car-free. The questions are open-ended to allow the participant to answer freely.

3. Risks and Benefits

Minimal risk is anticipated. Participants will benefit from the opportunity to express what is needed to improve local alternative transportation, which may contribute to those improvements directly.

4. Confidentiality

Only the researcher will have access to the information collected and to the identity of the participant. Confidentiality will be protected by keeping all documentation of the questionnaire accessible only to the researcher. The participant will not be required to provide any personal information apart from that which the participant wishes to give. Anonymity will be guaranteed by not attaching the participant's true identity to any statement. The participant may end the questionnaire at any time and/or may choose not to answer any questions he/she does not wish to. These choices do not in any way affect the participant's rights as a participant. Data will be stored on a personal computer and backed up on disc accessible only to the researcher in a secured residence. On or before September 2008, following submission of the final draft of the thesis, all digital transcriptions will be erased and all hard copies of transcriptions will be destroyed in a paper shredder.

5. Feedback

Feedback will be made available to the participant following the analysis of the questionnaire if the participant wishes. This will be given to the participant by email or delivered in person by the researcher, whichever the participant prefers.

Would you like to receive feedback?      Yes      No

If Yes, please indicate how you would like feedback to be delivered:

6. Credit or Remuneration.  
No credit or remuneration will be provided.

**Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a participant. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.**

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Participant's Signature

Date

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Researcher and/or Delegate's Signature

Date

Your response to the questionnaire indicates informed consent