

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE Charleswood – Tuxedo Ward

Kevin Nichols

1. Public transit was identified as the most important issue facing Winnipeggers in the 2019 budget consult, followed by active transportation and roadway construction and maintenance. In your opinion, why is public transit deemed the number one priority?

Transit has an aging fleet of buses and one of the big issues is to either purchase diesel or electric. My stand on this is to bring the City into the 21st Century and purchase nothing but electric buses. While they are more expensive initially, in the long run they will pay off in many respects.

One of the first questions I get asked is a question on the rate of return when purchasing an electric vehicle. What I ask is, what is the rate of return on a fossil fuel powered vehicle? It is estimated that the extra cost for an electric bus will pay for itself in 7 years. With increased use of an electric over diesel, that rate of return will be realized in less than 7 years.

It is my understanding that Transit is looking to get 28 new buses, I would push for the next purchase to be all electric. While they are approximately \$100K more than diesel buses, they will not be impacted by an impending carbon tax. They are also much quieter and reduce pollution in the city. The Transit budget can also be managed better without taking into account the fluctuating fuel prices.

We also have to deal with declining ridership. In order to achieve this we should reduce fares to \$2/ride to start in an attempt to regain ridership. We already know that with every increase in fares, a proportional decrease in ridership ensues. Having a full bus with reduce fare riders is a much better rate of return than having 3 full fare riders on one bus.

These are not my opinions but facts in which I base my decisions upon.

2. If you could give Winnipeg's transit system an overall letter grade, what would it be? What do you feel is holding the current transit system back from getting a better grade? If you could sum up your vision for the future of Winnipeg's transit system what would it be?

I would give Transit a C+

The reason for this grade is due to the fact that Transit has not advanced enough in technology and innovation. A City such as Toronto has had Hybrid buses in their fleet for many years now and we are just now toying with the idea of electric.

We need some Made in Manitoba solutions to our lack of use of the current Transit system. Many have stated the weather being a factor, and some the cost to ride, some state the time it takes to get from point A to point B. These issues are nothing new and yet we have failed to come up with a plan to increase ridership. What I propose is the introduction of Transit Hubs, a place for a park and ride like we have for Bomber games but instead of malls/restaurants; we have a "Municipal Hub". These can easily be incorporated in new developments where people can leave their bikes or cars in a secure place and ride the bus from there. These can be incorporated into a municipal building housing a community police station, fire/paramedic station and Transit. As the current plans sit, we build new areas and run a bus through it during peak hours only with limited service. This leaves anyone working late to either take their car or hike from the nearest transit stop on the main line.

3. Safety is an increasing concern for transit riders and drivers, alike. What do you feel contributes to the lack of safety in the current system? How would you improve safety?

During my employment at Transit, rider and driver security has been an issue. As a Safety professional, the security of the drivers is paramount as they are responsible for the safe operation of the bus and the passengers.

I was/am not against the idea of having cameras installed in the buses, but this is a measure that only records what already happened and is not a preventative measure, I stated this when they were introduced and I stand behind it today. One possible solution to the security problem and safety of the bus occupants is to provide Transit Constables that ride the bus with the drivers. Another possible preventative measure is to have Cadets ride the bus with the drivers. The underlying issue is that city departments are lacking in cooperative efforts for problems that plague the city; this is but one issue among many.

4. If you could sum up Winnipeg's current transit system in 3 words, what would it be?

Antiquated, underutilized, unimaginative

5. Cities like Ottawa and Edmonton contribute over \$220 million to their transit networks, while the City of Winnipeg contributes just \$65 million. To match these other cities in per capita terms, Winnipeg should be contributing \$170 million. How will you fight for more funding towards transit?

Throughout many debates while running, one theme keeps popping up and that is the need to grow. While people insist we need to grow, we also need to ensure we are maintaining services at an even pace while growing. While the city grows, so should Transit and other services. If we take the example given on a per capita basis, Transit is falling way behind. I would push for more funding to bring our Transit system into the 21st century and be a world leader in public transportation. This can be accomplished in many different ways, starting with increased ridership as stated above. Also, we must petition the Federal and Provincial governments for increased funding directed towards our transit system. This can be accomplished easily using Green initiatives, already in place, such as those used for the purchase of buying electric buses, as stated above. Putting infrastructure in place can be a collaborative effort with Hydro since the more electric buses we buy, the more they make in the long run.

Bonus question: What is your favourite Transit App and why?

I personally don't use a Transit App as I require my car for work purposes but would encourage updates to any apps currently developed by Transit to enable ease of use for all those that do use these Apps.

As a bonus answer, for those that would disagree about buying an electric bus because they won't work here, I drive an electric vehicle and it works just fine.