

June 1, 2023

Re: Please demand that the Vancouver Port Authority keep the Douglas Road rail crossing open, or provide an overpass for people walking and cycling at this location

Dear Mayor Mike Hurley and Burnaby City Council

The HUB Cycling, Burnaby Local Committee requests your help in preventing an active transportation closure that will affect thousands of Brentwood residents. We have already provided some feedback regarding the planned closure of the Douglas Road rail crossing, which is part of the Vancouver Port Authority's proposed Holdom Overpass project. **We write to ask that you do not approve of their proposal until and unless the Port Authority plans are changed to either keep Douglas Road open to people walking and cycling, or to build an active transportation bridge to maintain the existing connection.**

Please see this link to the full summary of the project proposal from the Vancouver Port Authority's website:

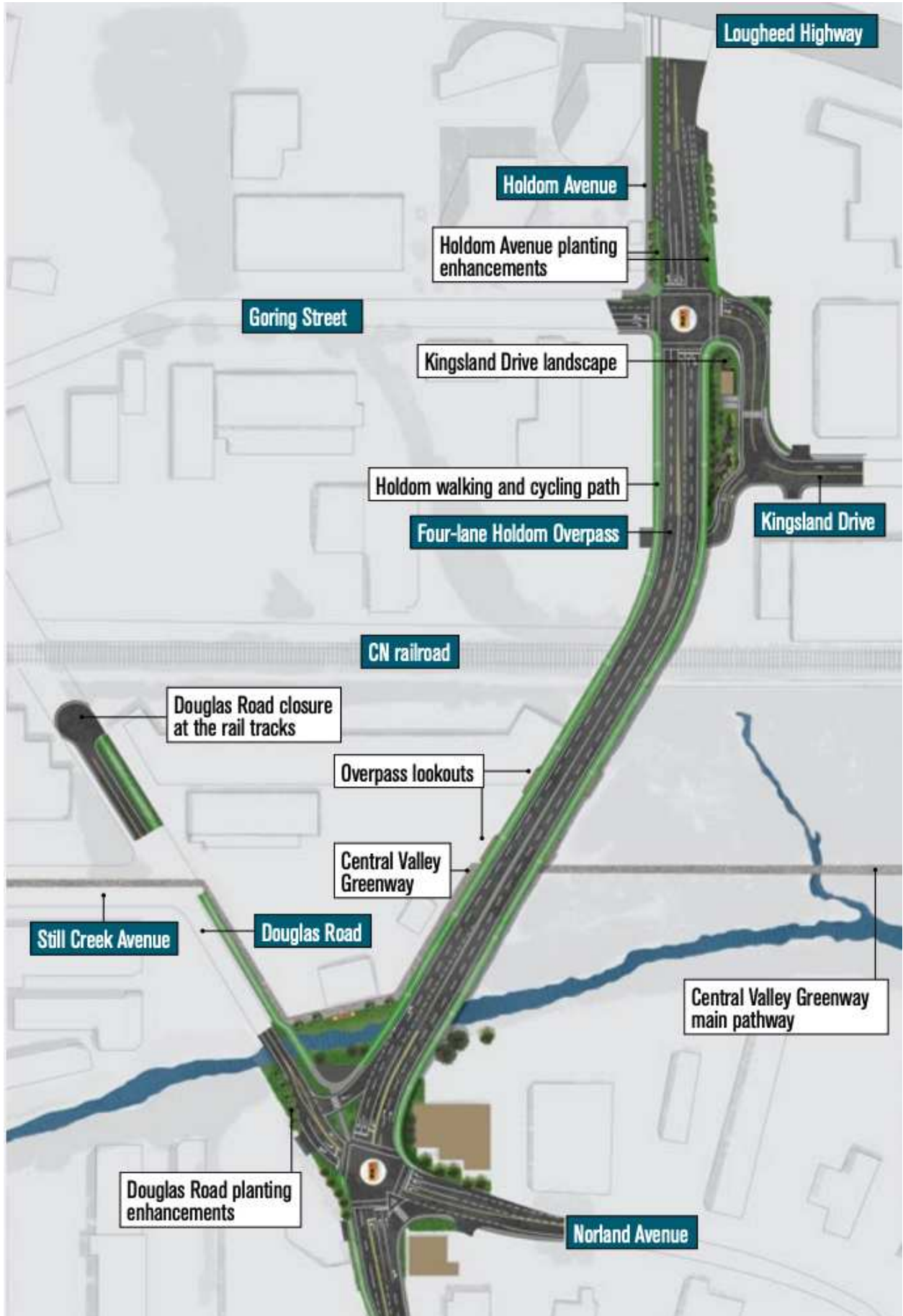
<https://www.portvancouver.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/2021-08-04-Summary-report-Holdom-overpass-phase-two-engagement-Burnaby-Rail-Corridor-Improvements-Project.pdf>

On page 13, the above report states that the Port Authority plans to close the Douglas Road rail crossing after the Holdom Overpass is complete. See the copied image below:

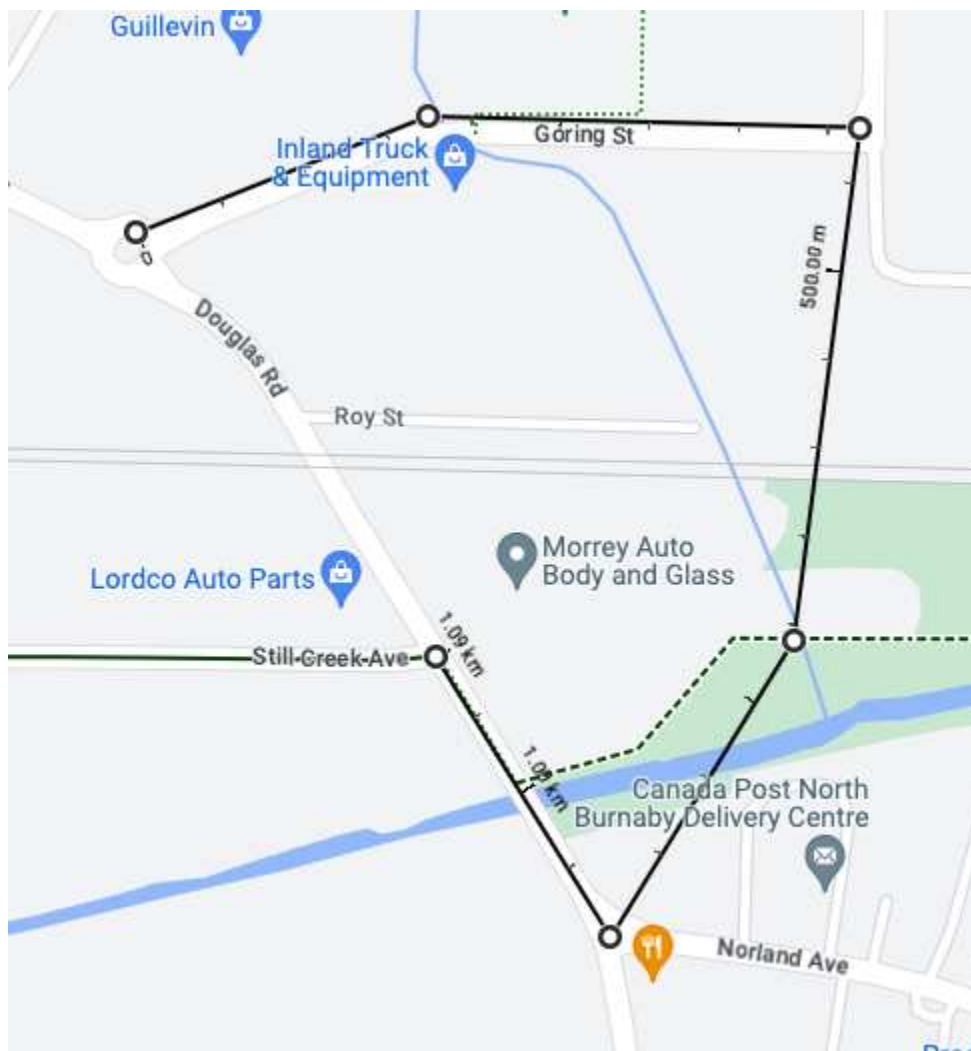


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The closure of this at-grade crossing for people who walk or cycle, without replacing it with an active transportation overpass will result in a detour for anyone wishing to travel Douglas Rd by 1.1km. That amounts to a **delay of over 15 minutes for walkers of median ability, and 5 minutes for people riding bikes**. This represents a significant impact on people who travel between the Brentwood area and the Central Valley Greenway, the region's primary active transportation corridor. It makes Costco and other amenities less accessible, and isolates North Burnaby from Central and South Burnaby areas, such as Burnaby Lake and Metrotown.



A resident walking from one of the new condos on Lougheed near Delta to Costco currently takes about 22 minutes. After the closure the trip is expected to take 37 minutes. For people cycling, a trip from one of the new towers to ride West along the Central Valley Greenway on



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Still Creek to get to the Rupert Superstore would take 20 minutes; after the closure it will be 25 minutes. The removal of this crossing would also have an impact on trips by those South of the highway. Residents wanting to walk or bike to the Amazing Brentwood from Central Burnaby will also have to deal with the additional 1.1 km detour.

Given the climate crisis and Burnaby's endeavor to embrace Triple A bike network best practices, this is the wrong direction for the city to be moving in. We should be opening up cycling and walking connections, not closing them. We should be making it faster for people to walk, bike and take transit to their destinations, not making their trips longer. This closure represents a significant increase in the daily commutes and other trips that thousands of existing and soon to arrive residents of Burnaby take every day. It is a very real and material erosion of their ability to get around without a car.

Our local committee has provided feedback to the Port Authority about the negative impact the closure will have on the walkability and bikeability of this rapidly growing neighbourhood, but the Port Authority has responded that this critical connection is unnecessary and not their responsibility to replace as part of the scope of this project. After providing our feedback, we received the following response:

Creating this new north-south connection over the rail tracks will allow the rail crossing at Douglas Road to be closed, which will improve the flow of trains along the rail corridor and provide better access and improve safety for commuters and first responders by eliminating the risk of collision between road users and trains.

We have heard that maintaining access at this location for people walking and cycling is important to the community. We have shared this feedback with the City of Burnaby for their consideration as they look to update their transportation plan, which includes reviewing several locations for new walking and cycling crossings along the rail corridor in Burnaby. The project is being designed so as not to preclude these additions in future.

The issue is that a potential bridge at Douglas is being framed as a new connection that could be added if it is a priority of the city, but the fact is that this connection exists now, and the proposal is to close the connection. We demand that the Port Authority not simply remove connections that are already in place. The Port Authority appears to see that it is the responsibility of the City of Burnaby, and Burnaby taxpayers, to prioritize and fund a pedestrian/cycle crossing at Douglas at some point in the future. As the Port Authority project is impacting existing public infrastructure, it is incumbent upon the Port Authority to first do no harm. It should not be the right of the Port Authority to remove public walking and cycling connections in our community and degrade the livability of our home.

We recognize the value and importance of economic efficiency and a competitive shipping industry. We do not oppose the project overall, but Burnaby residents who simply want to get around without a car should not pay the price. There is an enormous opportunity here to take



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advantage of the closure of Douglas Road to motorists and make the former connection a community space similar to what we see in Vancouver and what is planned for the BC Parkway.



Similar bridges and at-grade pedestrian/bike crossings are not uncommon in the lower mainland. Just a couple kilometers away there is a bridge at Sperling and Winston





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and in West Vancouver there are multiple at-grade crossings. Between Spirit Trail and Pound Road alone, there's three different active transportation connections within one block.





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And another one further West near Bellevue and Pound Road. In fact there are many more examples.



We ask you then, on behalf of all the tens of thousands of people living in the Brentwood area, or soon to live in one of the dozens of high rise towers going up, who don't have the time to write in about how this closure would affect them, to please do everything you can to hold the Port Authority to their obligation to provide equivalent pedestrian and cycling access to what currently exists, by either leaving open an at-grade crossing for those on foot or bike, or by funding a pedestrian/bike overpass.

See below a rendering of just some of the towers in the immediate crossing. Please think about all of these people who are moving to Brentwood specifically because it is a fantastic and improving neighbourhood to live a car-free or car-light lifestyle. All of them will be disappointed to have their access to amenities degraded, become less independent, and be more reliant on their cars.



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We ask that you do not approve the project as-is, and withhold your approval until such walking and cycling access is included in the plan, at Douglas Road.

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About HUB Cycling

HUB Cycling is a charitable not for profit organization that has spent over 23 years removing barriers to cycling in Metro Vancouver, while cultivating the health, environmental, and economic benefits that active transportation can bring. HUB has educated thousands of people, motivated thousands more, and championed improvements that #UnGapTheMap to create a connected cycling network. HUB Cycling's mission is to get more people cycling more often. HUB Cycling has close to 3,000 members and more than 45,000 direct supporters. HUB Cycling has 10 volunteer committees across Metro Vancouver that encourage cycling for all ages and abilities (AAA) in municipalities across Metro Vancouver. For more information, visit bikehub.ca.