

Dear Mayor and Councillors;

As you are aware the social distancing measures adopted in the Covid-19 public health emergency have brought significant changes to life as we knew it in West Vancouver. Today's District appears transformed as we enjoy cleaner air, uncongested roads, less traffic noise and more bird song, and fewer traffic accidents – goals at the heart of the OCP. Moreover, there is a noticeable increase in walking and cycling in our community – a powerful demonstration of our residents' commitment to better health outcomes despite the limited safe public exercise space available. Physical distancing seems likely to become a new way of life for the foreseeable future. This emergency is a unique opportunity to take steps to solve long-standing systemic issues, such as the lack of safe space for active transportation.

As concerned residents of West Vancouver and supporters of active transportation modes we the undersigned urge Council to consider ways and means to preserve and enhance the significant social benefits that the emergency has brought about. BC's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr Bonnie Henry, is encouraging people to walk and cycle outdoors, and is supportive of the creation of more safe spaces to do so. Walking and cycling have the least risk of contagion; serve those that cannot or do not wish to drive; and support physical activity crucial to building individual capacity to resist disease.

We draw your attention to the swift actions numerous cities throughout Canada and the World are taking during the pandemic to make better use of their under-utilized road and street networks as safe, livable public spaces. As London's Lord Mayor, Sadiq Kahn has stated, "London's road to recovery cannot be clogged with cars. It has to be one that Londoners can walk and cycle down as part of a greener, cleaner, healthier future." Closer to home we note the City of Vancouver's strategy to create a safer, greener and more enjoyable local street network (see overview at [https://thetyee.ca/Analysis/2020/05/12/Vancouver-Could-Save-Money-On-Sewage-With-Swales/?utm\\_source=daily](https://thetyee.ca/Analysis/2020/05/12/Vancouver-Could-Save-Money-On-Sewage-With-Swales/?utm_source=daily) and also the motion concerning 'Reallocation of Road Space to Support Shared Use During Pandemic' referred by the City Council for consideration by its Standing Committee on Finance and Services, for which see <https://council.vancouver.ca/20200513/documents/cfsc4.pdf>).

We submit that West Vancouver also should act swiftly to increase access to safe spaces for active transportation. Public space in our community road and street network is typically dominated by moving and parked motorized vehicles. The emergency has revealed just how little public space is required for essential journeys by car. Options for more equitable use of under-utilized space for Council to consider could follow from a two phase approach: firstly, urgent implementation of actions that could serve as pilot demonstrations of the feasibility and desirability of reallocating scarce public space for safe access by walkers and cyclists, and secondly, objectively support longer-term measures that could become part of the District's upcoming Transportation Strategy update and implementation action plan:

With respect, we submit that Council should consider taking immediate steps to:

1. Close off selected local streets to through traffic in various parts of the District in order to create and/or increase safe neighbourhood spaces to enable active exercise and thereby avoid the need to travel to the waterfront for that purpose
2. Create temporary walking and cycling lanes along Bellevue Avenue between 24<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Streets, which would help facilitate required physical distancing on the popular Seawalk and the Waterfront Park, as well as contribute to much needed traffic calming on Bellevue.
3. Establishing a 'Ciclovía' tradition in West Vancouver - as famously held in Bogota since 1974 and more recently in many North American cities, including Los Angeles, Ottawa and Toronto (see <https://www.openstreetsto.org/>) - by closing some sections of roadway to traffic for a few hours on, say, a

Sunday or during a public holiday. A potential Ciclovía route, for example, could be the abovementioned Bellevue Ave section which would connect the Ambleside and Dunderave business districts and/or Farmers' Markets for walkers and cyclists, and could support food service in cordoned outdoor areas, including the proposed 14<sup>th</sup> St "Festival Street" between Bellevue and Marine. A Ciclovía event could be a safe alternative to the annual festivals at Ambleside Park and along the waterfront that are not possible due to Covid-19.

**Short to Medium Term Actions** by West Vancouver in the second phase could include:

4. Funding safe cycling education in our elementary and secondary schools to equip future generations as skilled, confident bike users
5. Upgrading the current multi-use walking and wheeling network to improve safety and accessibility to shops, schools, and services, together with end-of-journey facilities
6. Proceeding with implementation of protected bikeways along Marine Drive: (i) between 25<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> Streets; and (ii) between Taylor Way and the District boundary with safe links to the Park Royal and Ambleside bike networks. These links would include: (iii) completing the separated cycling lane on the Spirit Trail between 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Streets; and (iv) creating a bypass to the busy section of Spirit Trail between the Park Royal Mall south perimeter road and the Ambleside dog walk where physical distancing can be difficult to maintain. Consideration could be given in this latter case to using the Mall perimeter road and car park, and the BCSPCA access road to reach 13<sup>th</sup> St
7. Creating 'Village Bike Loops' to encourage safe multi-generational, family-oriented recreational cycling in Ambleside, Dunderave and Horseshoe Bay neighbourhoods, and re-establishing signage along the former Village Walk pedestrian route (developed by DWV and ADRA in 1986)
8. Actively promoting safe electric-assisted bike usage in the District as a convenient alternative to using cars and to help allay concerns over cycling on the District's hilly terrain

We believe Council's leadership in adopting urgent actions and low-cost measures such as the foregoing could contribute significantly not only to a benign outcome to the emergency but also to achieving the OCP goals and, in the process, help bring new vitality to West Vancouver and its businesses, and enhance its attraction as a tourism destination as well as its reputation as a great place to live.

Yours sincerely;

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