

September 27, 2020

To:
Mayor and Council <mayorandcouncil@mapleridge.ca>

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Re: Town Center Visioning project

Dear Mayor and Council,

We appreciate the opportunity to give feedback on the Town Centre Area Plan.

This opportunity is very important to us. During the public consultation for the 2014 Strategic Transportation Plan, we asked if a thorough review could be done of the cycling network map for the Town Centre. There were many reasons for doing so. However, we were told that "much hard work had been done on that as part of the Smart Growth on the Ground process and the development of the Town Centre Area Plan a few years ago, so we are not going to open that up again".

A bit of history and context

At the time that the Multi-Modal Transportation Network map was originally being developed as part of the Town Centre Area Plan, about 15 years ago, Maple Ridge was still implementing the 1994 Bikeways Plan. This Plan was based on the "*vehicular cycling*" principle: cyclists were thought to be best off sharing the roads with cars. They were encouraged to assertively demand their rightful position on the road, and to behave like drivers of (slower moving) motor vehicles.

When it came to building a cycling network in those days, the requirements were quite minimal: at the most a white line to demarcate a shoulder or a bike lane, or just some painted bike symbols or sharrows, indicating to drivers that the road should be shared with cyclists. But mostly, all it took was just putting some lines on a map.

Below is a cut-out of the Town Centre of the cycling network map from the 1994 Bikeways Plan. This map was still used as recently as 2018 on the Maple Ridge website to "promote" cycling:



In 2011, TransLink published its regional cycling strategy, [Cycling for Everyone](#). It identified the following groups of people:

- not interested in cycling: 34%
- regular cyclists: 25% (take at least one trip per week; generally comfortable riding on the road, but most still prefer to ride away from traffic)
- **interested but concerned: 41%** (may want to cycle more; sometimes deterred by e.g. lack of time, lack of physical fitness, need to carry heavy items. Single greatest deterrent is concern about riding in motor vehicle traffic).

TransLink found that there was a significant untapped market for cycling, and determined that the interested but concerned segment was the low-hanging fruit and should be the target market.

What both regular and interested but concerned cyclists were looking for, according to TransLink, was *"attractive and well-maintained routes that are separated from motor vehicle traffic."*

So far, communities around North America, including Maple Ridge, had focussed on "accommodating" the small percentage of avid *"vehicular cyclists"*. Obviously, according to this important new TransLink strategy, the infrastructure needed to change in order to reduce conflict between people driving and people cycling and walking.

But, a much easier thing to do was to just change the lines on the map; delete the ones along higher speed and higher volume vehicle routes, and replace them with lines along quieter streets. Below is the cycling network map from Maple Ridge's 2014 Transportation Plan. It's quite different from the 1994 map, especially south of Dewdney Trunk Road:



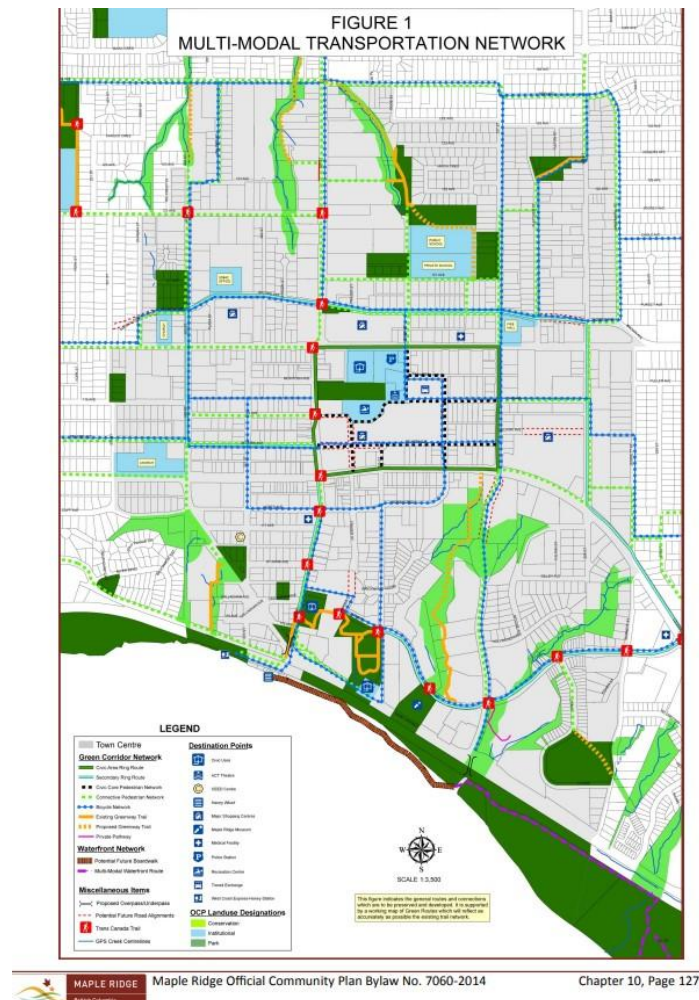
The cycling map for the Town Core shows mostly "neighbourhood bikeways" in yellow, which, according to the 2014 Transportation Plan, *"are located on local streets with lower traffic volumes and speeds, and where cyclists and motor vehicles can comfortably share the road"*. Signage and bike symbols painted on the road is all that is required.

The "existing" neighbourhood bikeways on the map have signage ("123 Bikeway" and "121 Bikeway"), and may have bike symbols painted on the road. The "proposed" ones do not.



Existing Neighbourhood Bikeway on Brown Ave., with signage

The Multi-modal Transportation Network Map was originally developed as part of the 2008 Town Centre Area Plan (see below; the blue lines are of the cycling network). For years, we assumed that we could safely rely on the cycling network map in the 2014 Transportation Plan (the previous Transportation Plan dating from 2004 was never made publicly available). We now realize we may very well have been wrong about that. Oddly, even though these maps show important differences in the cycling network, both the latest version of the Town Centre Area Plan and the Transportation Plan, including both maps, were adopted by Council in 2014.



As you can see upon careful comparison, some important lines, depicting direct, convenient routes on the cycling map in the 2014 Transportation Plan, are not on this 2014 Multi-modal Transportation Network map:

- The Haney Bypass
- Lougheed Highway east of 227 Street and west of 116 Ave.
- Lougheed Highway west of 222 Street
- 224 Street between Brown Ave. and North Ave

What's left on this Multi-modal Transportation Network map are the lines showing some circuitous routes, and routes with many crossings and stop signs. The direct routes with milder grades are not on the 2014 Multi-modal Transportation Network map in the Town Centre Area Plan, and people on bikes of all ages and abilities are left with zig-zag routes, and some longer, steeper, roller coaster- and winding routes, where the majority of adults likely need to get off their bikes and walk.

This 2014 Town Centre Multi-modal Transportation Network map likely explains why the city failed to stand up for the needs and safety of cyclists along the Haney Bypass during negotiations with the Ministry of

Transportation and Infrastructure when the Ministry was designing the intersection "improvements" along the Bypass. "The Haney Bypass is not considered a cycling route", our HUB Cycling committee was told by the Ministry. Incredulously, we pointed at the cycling map in the 2014 Transportation Plan: "yes, it is!".

We have now lost the opportunity to improve a very important, fast cycling route, which actually should be made better for all ages and all abilities by providing a high quality, protected facility. It's an absolutely critical cycling link, not only for longer-distance cyclist commuters, but also to facilitate multi-modal transportation for West Coast Express users. It's also the **only** easy and fast route for any person on a bike traveling to or from the south-east area of Maple Ridge, to bypass the town core for east-west travel, avoiding the very circuitous, roller-coaster and incomplete routes there. We were told that the Ministry may consider our feedback during phase 2 of the project, the widening of the Bypass. But the City will need to put the line back on the map first!

What's next?

So we wonder: what's next? Are we going to see more lines on the map quietly and unceremoniously removed? There aren't too many streets left to replace them with.

Obviously, the current methods used to "plan" a cycling network can not possibly be successful in achieving a larger cycling mode share.

TransLink's goal is to see 15% of trips less than 8 km being made by bicycle by 2040. Here in Maple Ridge, not surprisingly, we are not doing too well. The [State of Cycling report](#) released earlier this year - a joint project between TransLink and HUB Cycling - shows that Maple Ridge is one of only five municipalities out of 23 where cycling rates have dropped slightly between 2006 and 2016. Overall rates of commuters cycling to work throughout Metro Vancouver had increased from 1.7% in 2006 to 2.3% in 2016. Only about 0.5% **of all trips** in Maple Ridge are made by bicycle. This percentage likely includes many short trips and would be expected to be higher than the percentage of people commuting to work by bicycle. In addition, as per the report only 36% of cycling network in Maple Ridge is comfortable for most people.

So why should Maple Ridge Council care about increasing the cycling modal share in our community, and design and build a cycling network that will actually help convince more people to cycle, rather than just move lines around on a map and build multi-use paths on residential streets where regular sidewalks would do the job just fine, claiming to build these paths also for the benefit of people on bikes?

Maple Ridge Council should care for the following, most important reasons (we can think of more!):

- We urgently need to reduce our community Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Cycling has [one of the best returns on investment](#)¹ of all modes of transport and yet it suffers the most myopic planning.
- We urgently need to get people out of their cars if we don't want to increasingly get stuck in congestion
- Our over-reliance on cars for most trips has serious consequences for our health due to more prevalent sedentary lifestyle. [Maple Ridge scores worse](#)² on average than other Metro Vancouver municipalities.

¹ [Department of Transportation](#), United Kingdom, March 2015 (PDF)

² BC Center for Disease Control, BC Community Health Data

- The provision (and prioritization) of ever more space for "resting" private automobiles - commonly called "parking" - uses up very valuable real estate that could be used for more productive purposes; let's use more public space for people rather than cars!
- Continuing to plan and build our city primarily for cars seriously impacts livability, especially in our Town Core
- Last but certainly not least, our Town Centre is growing rapidly. When the Town Center Area Plan was being developed about 15 years ago, the neighbourhood was home to about 8,000 people. When it reaches build-out it is expected to have approx. 22,000. It's important that these residents are offered safe and convenient transportation options, and that includes a well-designed, and well-connected cycling network. They'll need more than lines on a map. Where right now modest single-family homes line Brown Ave. (see photo above), high-rise and medium-rise apartment buildings will begin to entirely transform the character of the street and neighbourhood in the coming years. Fortunately the City seems to have recognized that bike route signage won't be sufficient there. Let's show that on the maps!

Action requested from Mayor and Council

We trust that we have convincingly made our case for a thorough public review of the cycling network in the Town Centre, leading to updated maps in both the Town Center Area Plan and the Transportation Plan, the latter of which we understand will be reviewed next year.

With kind regards,

Ivan Chow
co-chair
HUB Cycling
Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Committee

JC/KG/MN/IC/NC/JL

About HUB Cycling

HUB Cycling is a charitable not for profit organization that has spent over 20 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 have close to 3,000 members and more than 40,000 direct supporters. HUB Cycling has 10 volunteer committees across Metro Vancouver that encourages cycling for all ages and abilities (AAA) in municipalities across Metro Vancouver. For more information, visit bikehub.ca.