



Metro Vancouver's Cycling Advocates

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Cycling: An Important Component of any Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Strategy

The Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition (VACC) is a non-profit society whose members work toward improving conditions for cycling with the goal of encouraging more people to ride bicycles more often for transportation, personal business, recreation, touring and for other trip purposes. Cycling facilities also benefit in-line skaters, skateboarders, and wheelchair operators.

In this submission, we outline how a strategy to increase cycling will help municipalities in Metro Vancouver to achieve their GHG emission targets while at the same time creating a more vibrant community consisting of healthier and happier residents.

According to the Provincial Government's Community Energy & Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory for Metro Vancouver, on road transportation accounted for 44.6% of all greenhouse gas emissions in 2007¹. The subgroup of cars, trucks, vans and SUVs account for almost 35% of GHG emissions. We must address GHG emissions from the transportation sector in order to achieve meaningful GHG emission targets for the communities, Metro Vancouver and the province.

Since cycling is the most efficient form of land transportation, it makes sense to work toward increasing the level of cycling in our municipalities as a way of reducing GHG emissions. In European cities like Copenhagen and Amsterdam, close to 40% of all trips are now made by bicycle. Copenhagen is working hard toward soon having half of all trips made by bicycle. Currently, in Metro Vancouver approximately 2% of trips are made by bicycle with cycling mode share for municipalities ranging from 0.5% to almost 4% for the City of Vancouver. If we choose to increase cycling mode share by only 20%, this would represent a significant reduction of GHG emissions. Not only would a strategy of increased cycling achieve GHG reductions, but all the other benefits of cycling – such as a healthier population, less air and noise pollution, less motorized road traffic congestion - would also be realized.

How can we get more people to ride bikes more often? Dr. Kay Teshke's research with the Cycling in Cities group at UBC indicates that the best way to encourage more people to consider

¹ <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/cas/mitigation/ceei/pdf/2007Metro-Vancouver.pdf>

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cycling as a transportation choice is to provide cycling facilities which are separated from motor vehicle traffic². Some other ways to increase cycling levels are:

- All new roadways must be complete streets, which provide equally for all road users - drivers, transit riders, cyclists and pedestrians
- Alter existing roadways to be complete streets
- Make routes for cyclists more convenient than routes for drivers
- Provide secure and convenient bike parking, at office buildings, shopping areas and transit hubs
- Provide other end-of-trip facilities for cyclists, such as lockers and showers
- Improve cyclist and pedestrian safety in school areas to encourage active transportation among the school communities. This would be better worded such as provide children safe cycling networks from home to school
- Provide efficient, convenient, and perceived safe cycling routes from home to transit stops and bus exchanges
- Provide a comprehensive and complete cycling network which fits the needs of municipalities, Metro Vancouver, and inter-city cyclists
- Provide more traffic calming on residential streets and add more streetscaping to make streets more welcoming to cyclists and pedestrians

The BC Government has been encouraging local governments across BC to sign on to the Climate Action Charter. Signatory Local Governments agree, in part, to develop strategies and take actions to achieve the following goal of

"creating complete, compact, more energy efficient rural and urban communities (e.g. foster a built environment that supports a reduction in car dependency and energy use, establish policies and processes that support fast tracking of green development projects, adopt zoning practices that encourage land use patterns that increase density and reduce sprawl."³

Complete, compact communities which also have high quality walking and cycling infrastructure in place will get many more people walking and cycling and thereby further reduce GHG emissions. Europe has many successful examples of this type of community.

It is never too late to change. As an example of a European country where cycling is as common for people to get around as driving, we would like to highlight the Netherlands. For several decades after the 2nd World War, the car was taking a very prominent place in the transportation system. The Dutch government came to the realization in the early 70s that it was not sustainable and started investing heavily in cycling infrastructure. Over the years they learned that cycling offered numerous benefits such as improved health, less pollution and a more pleasant urban environment. Dutch society is able to reap these huge benefits now thanks to the foresight that the Dutch had back then. We are hoping that our municipality will be willing to learn from the European experience.

² <http://www.cher.ubc.ca/cyclingincities/survey.html>

³ http://www.cd.gov.bc.ca/ministry/docs/climate_action_charter.pdf

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Improved cycling facilities can be funded through reduction or elimination of subsidies provided to private motor vehicles and by measures such as pay-parking and road user fees.

The fact that we are a growing community should not be seen as a complicating factor in achieving these targets, but as an advantage. As a growing community, we have the ability to ensure that new developments truly comply with smart growth requirements, giving residents the ability to reach most of their destinations, whether it is work/shopping/recreation, using the preferred transportation choices - walking, cycling or transit. We owe it to future generations to demand truly sustainable development.

In summary, cycling offers many benefits to the individual, the community and the planet. By encouraging more people to choose cycling as a transportation choice, municipalities can lower their overall GHG emissions. Cycling should be an important component of a GHG reduction strategy.

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