

HUB MR/PM input with regard to the Downtown Enhancement Project Phase 4 (Lougheed Highway and Selkirk Ave. between 225th and 226th St.)

E-mail to Rachel Ollenberger (rollenberger@mapleridge.ca), cc Michael Eng (meng@mapleridge.ca), dated June 30, 2014

Please find below the comments from the Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Chapter of HUB:

We're happy to finally see some much needed improvements for pedestrians along this stretch of Selkirk Ave.

Selkirk is a bike route. What does this mean? Is the District's goal just to get cyclists out of the way of cars (1)? Is the goal to provide a safe route for cyclists (2)? Is Selkirk supposed to be safe, convenient, fast, "all ages all abilities" (AAA) cycling infrastructure that leads to destinations (3)?

The first goal - if this is indeed the goal - is achieved for a good part with the planned changes. The car lanes on Lougheed will be less safe for cycling, since the curb lane is narrower. The result is that less cyclists will use Lougheed. It's one of those measures that may actually reduce cycling participation overall. It does not allow cyclists easy access to stores, plus it takes away the choice of a faster route for those who are less fast and furious than the small segment of super-athletes in our population. Reduced cycling participation is actually also not good for drivers, because the people who might prefer to bike will then also be in cars, which means more traffic congestion and more demands on existing parking.

Cyclists are allowed to bike on the sidewalk, but we all know that some day, probably sooner rather than later, cycling on the sidewalk will be banned, as it is in most other communities. Before that happens, the District should actually work on improving cycling on all roads (not just those designated as cycling routes), especially those with destinations such as shops. Contrary to what Mr. Quinn stated during a Council meeting last year, the sidewalks will not be wide enough to "accommodate" cycling: trees, garbage cans, benches, sandwich boards

etc. significantly narrow the available space. Cyclists will get stuck behind pedestrians, and there will be conflicts, as we can see on the sections of Lougheed that have already been “improved”.

Translink (Helen Cook) is open for discussions on making Lougheed part of the cycling network. This could happen when widening of the Haney Bypass takes place. Buffered bike lanes would not only make getting around and shopping by bike more feasible for cyclists of all ages and abilities, it would reduce car speeds, and would dramatically improve the shopping experience for pedestrians. By maintaining the parking, access for cars is not reduced.

The second goal – to provide a safe route - is not necessarily achieved. Selkirk (and also other bike routes) has many 2-way stop signs. At every single intersection actually. Quite a few drivers tend to stop for cyclists to let them cross even if the car has the right of way. This can lead to very confusing, and sometimes dangerous, situations. The driver may get impatient when the cyclist hesitates, and the cyclist may feel pressured to go. Other drivers may or may not stop, and that is where dangerous situations occur. Educating drivers may possibly help somewhat, but this will remain problematic.

Any other goals (3) that should be pursued to make cycling a more attractive option for people of all ages and abilities, such as convenience, speed and comfort are not addressed in this project.

As part of this project, perhaps a small traffic circle (button) could be considered at the intersection of Selkirk and 226th, which would eliminate the need for the 2-way stop. Eventually more buttons could be added along the bike route, making the route both faster, more convenient and safer for cyclists.

We understand that this project only involves “improvements” for this one block, and that it does not involve any improvements for cycling. This particular section of the bike route has many exits from parking lots on both sides (about 8 each in this one block). Each exit can potentially present a danger for cyclists when cars exit. Bike routes should preferably not be planned on routes with many parking lot exits (and v.v.:

parking lot exits should preferably not be planned along cycling routes), which increases the potential for conflict with cars. This is something that should be kept in mind when the District-owned piece of land between 226th and 227th Streets is developed, as it should for any other development projects along bike routes.

Kind regards,

Jackie Chow
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