

# Seaside Greenway South - Assessment Ride 2

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## Executive Summary

The HUB Vancouver UBC Local Committee *Seaside South Working Group* identified the Seaside South Greenway and Seaside Bypass Bike Route as important cycling routes in the City of Vancouver. Indications were given by the City that parts of these routes would be considered for improvements in the near term, and the Working Group decided to perform an assessment of the routes in order to be able to provide constructive feedback to the City and Park Board through the redesign process.

The routes were broken into smaller segments to make management of the assessment easier. The second segment, which is the subject of this report, considered the route from Burrard Bridge to Trafalgar Street, a length of about 3.5 kilometres. Five HUB members participated in an assessment of this segment on 5 March 2016.

The major issues identified include:

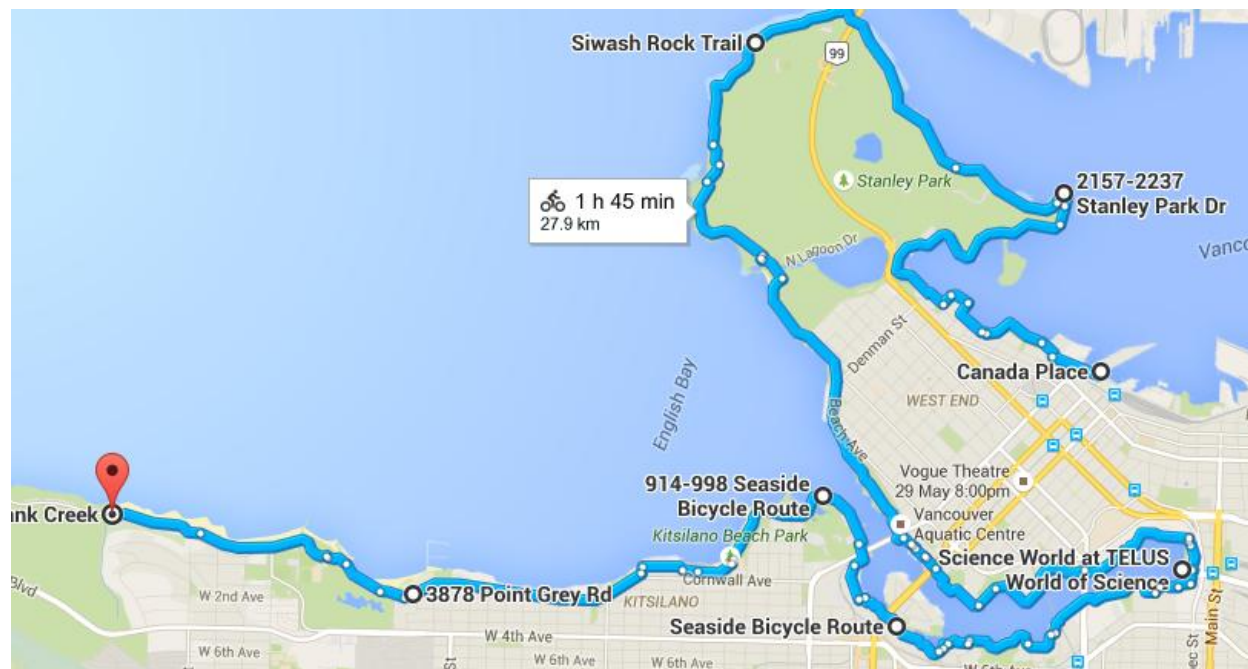
- Barricades placed across desire lines that people on bikes and people on foot have created to increase their own safety. These barricades should be removed immediately, recognising that desire lines reflect bad design, not bad behaviour.
- All Ages and Ability (AAA) facilities should never run through parking lots. The Greenway runs through two busy parking lots, which is incredibly uncomfortable and unsafe.
- Narrow mixed-use paths without separation and markings indicating where to walk and where to bike lead to confusion and conflict.
- In many locations the path is too narrow to adequately handle the volume of combined pedestrian and bicycle traffic.
- There are insufficient way finding signs, indicating points of interest, destinations, other bike routes, how far they are, and how to get to them

## Introduction

Vancouver's Seaside Greenway is a diverse 28 km cycling and pedestrian route that traces the shoreline of Stanley Park, downtown Vancouver, False Creek, and the south shore of English Bay. It consists of many sections of varying age and quality. Some sections are fully separated All Ages and Abilities (AAA), and some sections direct cyclists on to roadways or through parking lots. Generally speaking, those sections of the Greenway around Stanley Park, along the north side of False Creek and around the downtown peninsula are of much higher quality

than the older sections along the south side of False Creek and leading west along the south shore of English Bay.

The Seaside South Working Group planned a series of assessment rides along these older sections of the Seaside Greenway in south False Creek and south English Bay to evaluate areas of concern for people of all ages and ability on bicycles. This second assessment was conducted along a 3.5 km stretch of the Greenway from Granville Island to Trafalgar Street, the start of the recent separated cycle track heading along Point Grey Road.

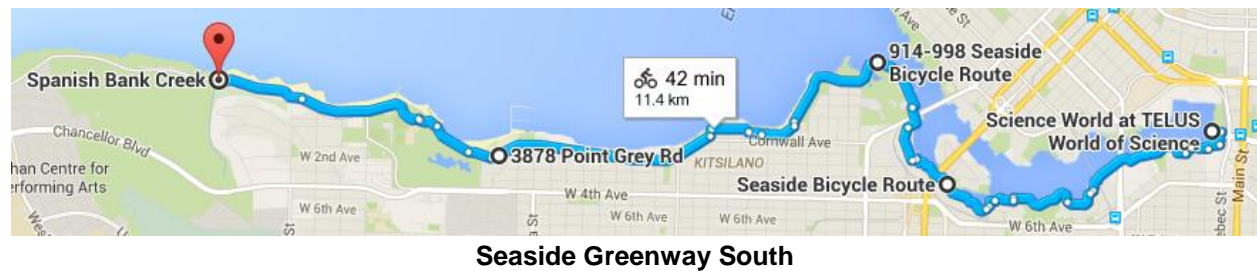


**Seaside Greenway in Vancouver**

## Background

The Seaside Greenway is one of Vancouver's longest and most diverse bike routes. It begins at Canada Place, and follows the Seawall around Stanley Park (in one direction only), along English Bay, along the north bank of False Creek, around Science World, then along the south bank of False Creek past Granville Island, through Vanier Park, past Kitsilano Beach, through Jericho Park, and right out to Spanish Banks Park.

Most of the Seaside Greenway is separated from vehicular traffic, and many portions of it have separated bicycle and pedestrian paths. In particular, the portion from Canada Place, through Stanley Park, then along the north bank of False Creek past the West End and Yaletown is off-road and separated, a true AAA bike route.



The portion of the Seaside Greenway west of The Olympic Village along the south bank of False Creek, however, does not meet the same standard as the section on the north bank. We are very pleased that Council has approved improvements for the south shore as far west as the Burrard Bridge, which we believe will make biking and walking much safer and more delightful. However, the Seaside Greenway route west of the Burrard Bridge to Trafalgar Street is not currently slated for improvements and almost all parts of this route are unsafe and uncomfortable for both pedestrians and people on bikes.

Immediately west of the Burrard Bridge, cyclists are forced to ride through the Burrard Civic Marina parking lot and then to choose to continue along the road system on the Seaside Bypass or along a packed-gravel multi-use path (MUP) along the edge of Vanier Park.

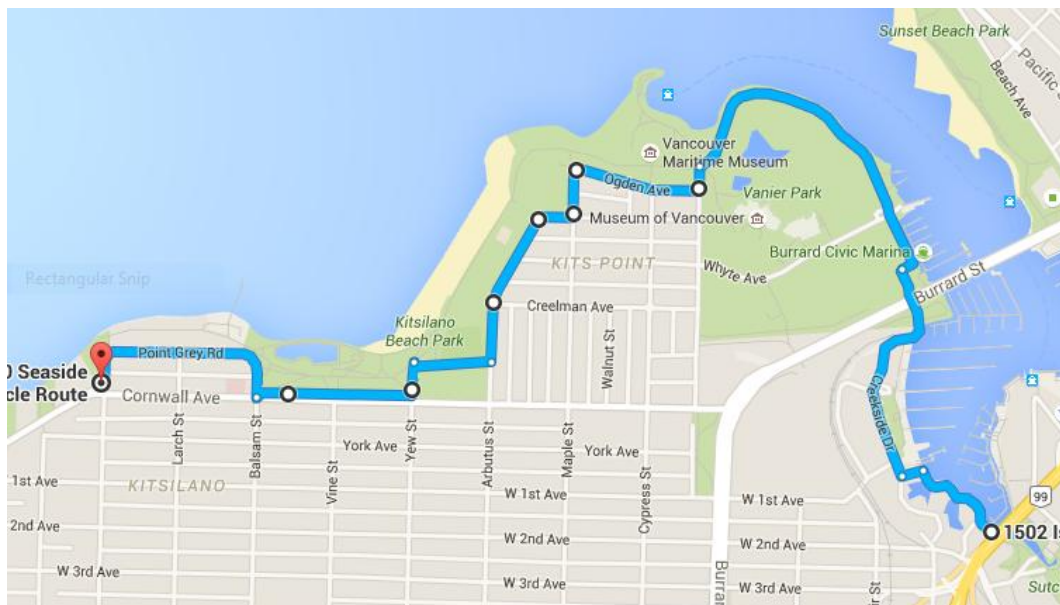
East of Vanier Park, a sign indicates that cyclists should follow the Greenway on the road system, beside Hadden Park and then beside Kitsilano Beach Park and through its parking lot. It is possible to use the narrow MUP through Hadden Park near the Vancouver Maritime Museum, and indeed the Vancouver Bike Map indicates it's permitted, despite the sign. The narrow, seasonally very busy MUP runs through Kitsilano Beach Park, by the concession stand, where people biking must dismount in the busy season, and ends at Balsam Street, where cyclists are once again returned to the road system. In fact, the intersection of the MUP and Balsam Street is a very difficult one for people biking in either direction as there is no logical and safe way provided to move to or from the MUP and Balsam Street. The route continues along Balsam street which then becomes a relatively quiet section of Point Grey Road for a few blocks, until it reaches a fully separated bicycle track that runs two blocks from Trafalgar Street to Macdonald Street. Then the Greenway runs along the traffic-calmed Point Grey Road west to Jericho Beach Park.

At Jericho Beach Park, cyclists once again have a choice to use the Seaside Bypass along the road system (the busy 4th Avenue in this case) or along the crushed-gravel path traversing Jericho Beach Park. West of Jericho Beach Park, cyclists are diverted through another parking lot, servicing the beach, some tennis courts, and the Jericho Sailing Centre.

West of Jericho, cyclists can continue along a crushed-gravel MUP along Spanish Banks Beach, or along the Seaside Bypass on the roadway (Northwest Marine Drive).

## Scope

The complete Seaside Greenway is almost 30 km from end-to-end. The older, less well designed section from Science World along the south bank of False Creek out to Spanish Banks Beach Park is almost 12 km long. In order to manage the effort involved with assessing this section, it will be assessed in smaller segments. The second assessment considers only the section from Granville Island west to Trafalgar Street, approximately 3.5 km.



**Seaside Greenway South Assessment Ride 2 Scope**

## Details

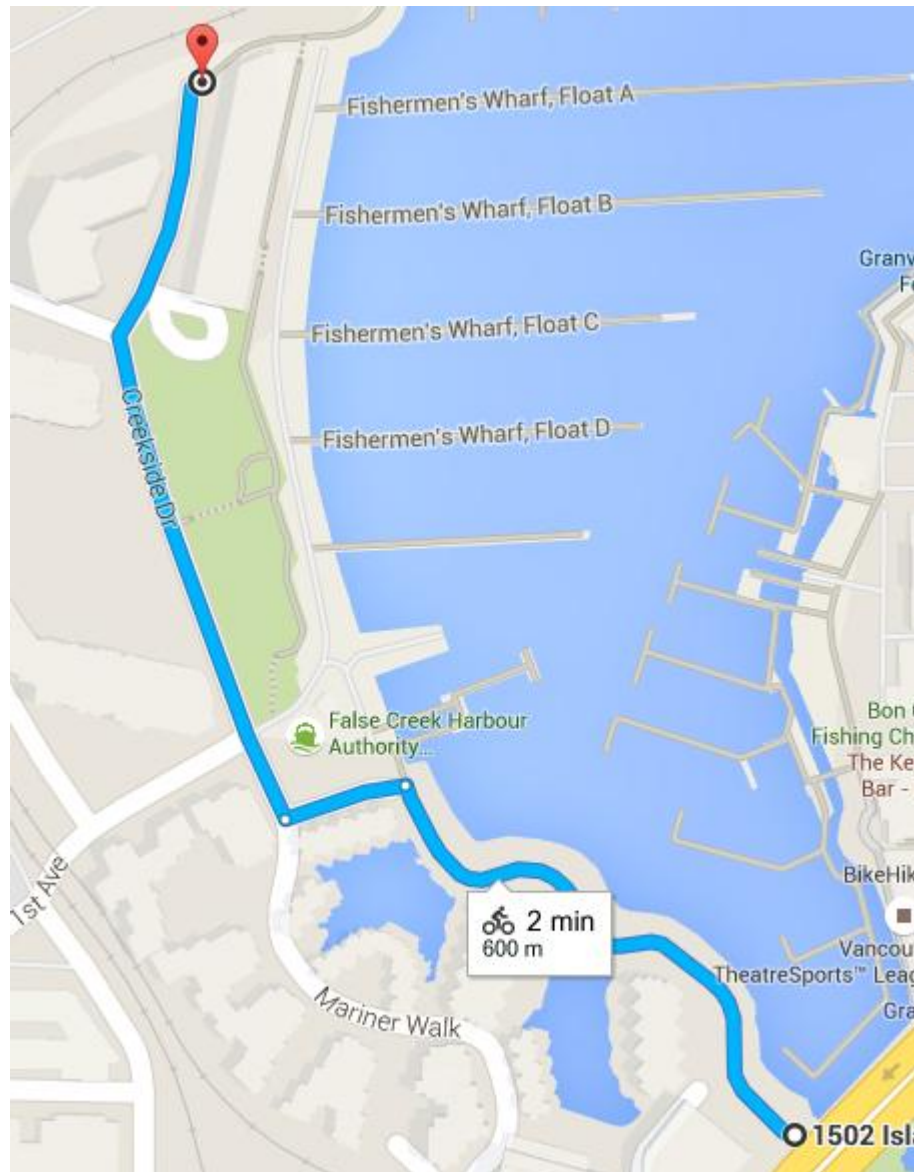
The Seaside Greenway South Assessment Ride 2 occurred on the morning of March 5th, 2016. It was a sunny spring day, but early on a Saturday and Seawall usage was lighter than it was later in the day or on a typical mid-summer day.

## General Comments

Overall, riding the Seaside Greenway between Granville Island and Trafalgar Street is a “mixed bag”. The views are stunning and the route connects a number of important destinations. The large volume of both pedestrians and people on bikes on the shared multi-use path creates a considerable amount of confusion as to where the safest places to walk or ride are. Large groups of users, whether cyclists or pedestrians, tend to obstruct the path creating conflicts. Sections of the route force people on bikes along roads, through parking lots, and even briefly on the sidewalk. At places where people on bikes and people on foot have found safer alternatives, obstructions and barricades have been used to prevent use of those routes. Way finding and other signage along the path is poor and confusing. Access points to connecting routes are poorly indicated, poorly marked, and generally not known by a large portion of Seaside Greenway users.

The issues on each of the three sections of this route are discussed below.

## Granville Island to Creekside Drive





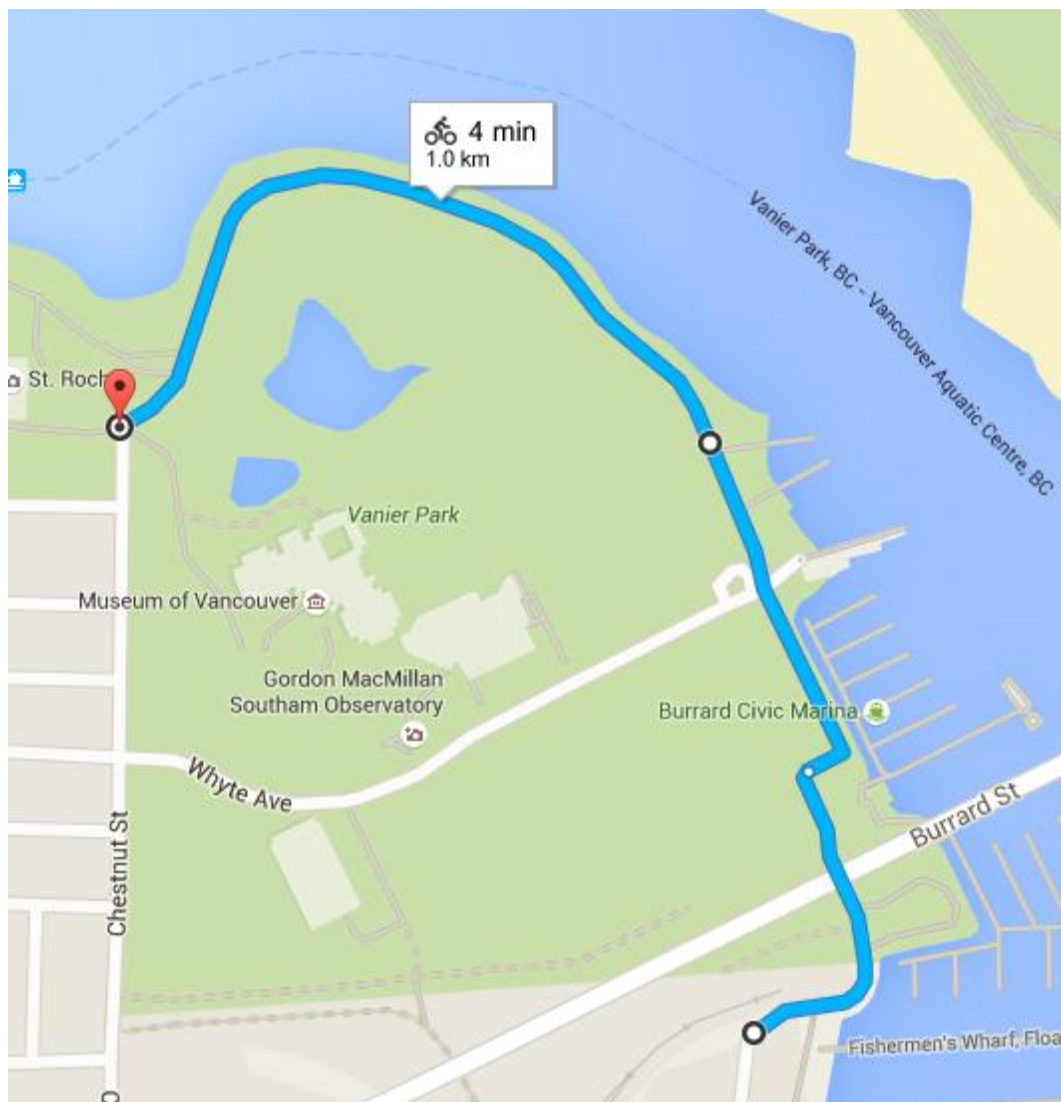


**Seaside Greenway Westbound along Creekside Drive**

The City has recently approved plans to upgrade this section of the Greenway as part of upgrading the Seawall from the Cambie Street Bridge to the Burrard Bridge. The improvements will include painting a line on the multi-use path to separate pedestrians and people on bikes, making the pinch-point corner better by widening the corner and removing some vegetation, and creating a separated bicycle track along Creekside Drive. These measures will address most of the issues we identified along this section.

Like all sections of this segment of the Greenway, way finding is poor. There are no signs indicating destinations, distances, or points-of-interest. In particular, it would seem important to indicate how to get to other major bike routes like the Seaside Bike Route, the Burrard Bridge, and the York Avenue Bike Route. Further, there are few “destination” signs indicating distances to common destinations, and those that do exist are not cycling friendly.

## Vanier Park



This segment of the Seaside Greenway consists of three distinct parts: the multi-use path near the Burrard Bridge, the ride through the Vanier Park parking lot, and the gravel multi-use path along the perimeter of Vanier Park.

The multi-use path near the Burrard Bridge is narrow, and the adjacent blackberry bushes are often left to grow into the bicycle lane, narrowing it even further. In particular the transition from the road to the path is extremely narrow. The high volume of pedestrians and people on bikes make this section one with occasional conflict, but the signs and small median do a good job at separating the modes.



**Narrow but separated path on the east side of the Burrard Bridge underpass**

Immediately underneath the bridge through to the gravel path along the edge of Vanier Park, people on bike need to navigate a narrow pinch point obstructed by bollards, vehicles turning into and out of the adjacent boat storage area, and moving through the Burrard Civic Marina parking lot

The bollard-obstructed pinch point makes no sense at all. The bollards are in the middle of the path, narrowing it further and creating collision hazards. When there are high volumes of people on bikes and pedestrians, this is a location of constant conflict.



**Dangerously located bollards on narrow section on underneath Burrard Bridge**

This section should be widened, the small median continued, and the bollards removed. After passing through the bollards, people on bikes are required to navigate a confusing and narrow section. There are bollards, painted lanes, concrete barriers, turning vehicular traffic, occasional people moving boats, and pedestrians. Fortunately the section is short, but it has no redeeming qualities at all.





**Confusing and dangerous transition just west of Burrard Bridge**

After navigating the transition, people on bikes are supposed to ride in a two-way paint-separated lane. As shown in the photo below, however, bikes, pedestrians, joggers, dogs, and vehicles essentially ignore all traffic control in this area. The confusing and poorly indicated directions end up being useless.



**Parking lot west of Burrard Bridge. No indication of where to go, leading to people everywhere**

Further, at the end of the short lane, people on bikes (who chose to actually use the lane) are faced with a dangerous transition that requires them to cross vehicle traffic from a non-standard location. There are no signs indicating where bikes should go, or even what options are available.

A better solution for this section would be to immediately route pedestrians and bikes to the north side of the parking lot. This would allow vehicles to turn into the boat yard without crossing the bike path, and it would put the cyclists on the proper side of the road. Ideally, cyclists should be then directed to a separated bike path along the waterfront, parallel to the existing pedestrian path, avoiding the need to proceed through the parking lot at all.

After crossing through the stop sign at Whyte Avenue, people on bikes are left to their own devices. They need to navigate a parking lot for Vanier Park and figure out how to transition on to the gravel multi-use path. The parking lot is relatively busy with vehicles, often towing boat trailers; pedestrians; people walking boats to the boat launch; and vehicles using the boat launch. It is, frankly, chaotic. It violates every principle of an AAA facility. Note that the Vancouver Bike Map labels the whole Seaside Greenway as AAA



**Parking lot, boat launch, no clear route for people on bikes**

This dangerous situation could be avoided by clearly routing people on bikes to the north side of the parking lot, parallel to the existing narrow gravel pedestrian path, as soon as they pass under the Burrard Bridge.

Once cyclists have found the gravel multi-use path along the perimeter of Vanier Park, they must contend with the issues already described with respect to MUP's as well as the gravel on the path. The gravel is frequently quite thick and loose, causing safety problems for less able cyclists. The gravel is an issue for all wheeled users, including strollers and wheelchairs. Ideally this would be a paved path and, if that is not feasible, would conform to the highest standards for gravel surfaces for wheeled vehicle safety. Signs along the path are confusing, seemingly directing bikes or at other locations, pedestrians, on to the grass. The intent of the signs should be to keep pedestrians on the north side of the MUP and people on bikes on the south side, but very few people take these suggestions.



**Unclear sign. Bikes ride where?**





**Unclear sign. Pedestrians walk where?**

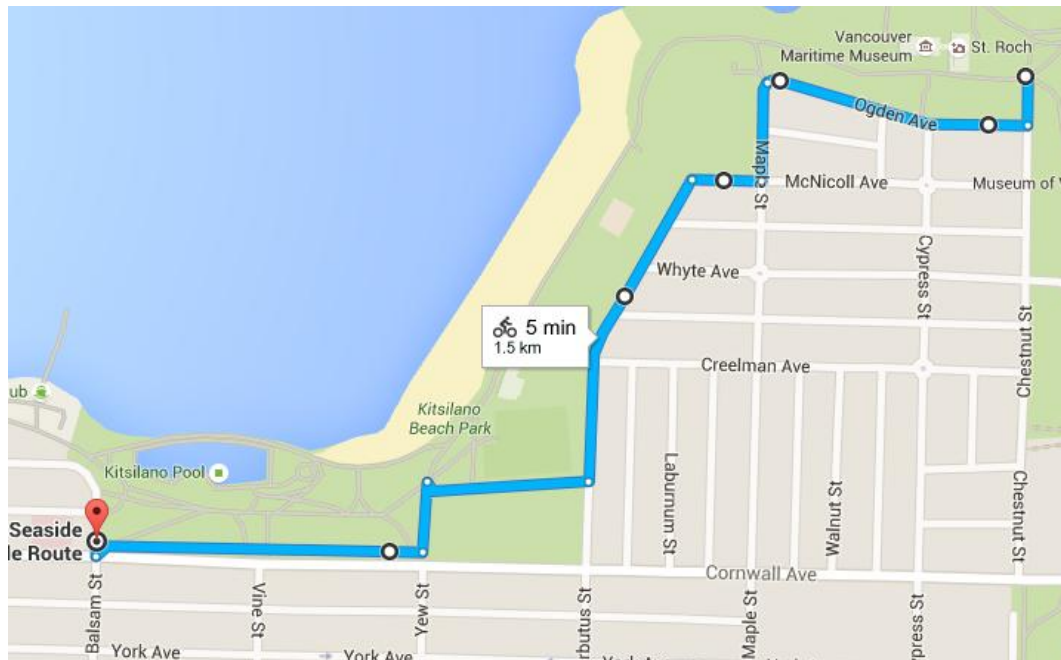


**Signs aren't understood by many users; pedestrians and bikes all over the place.**

A better solution to separating the modes is to have distinctly separated paths, either by creating a parallel cycling path, or by creating some barrier or median in the existing path to visually remind users about the preferred positioning.



## Hadden Park and Kitsilano Beach Park



At the end of the gravel path is the Maritime Museum and Hadden Park. There are some way finding signs here, but they are not large enough for people on bikes, and they are positioned high and out of the line of sight.



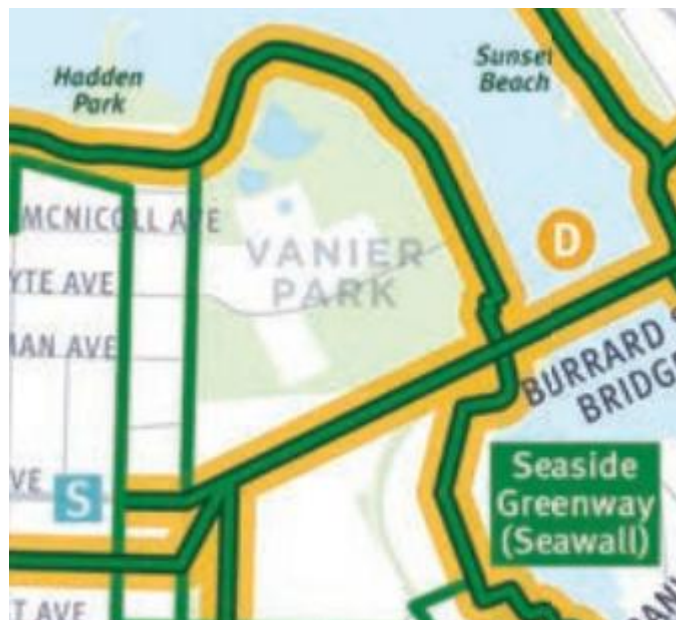
**Way finding signs at west end of Vanier Park**

The end of the gravel path crosses Chestnut Street, which serves as a driveway for the Maritime Museum. A sign at the end of the path directs people on bikes up Chestnut Street. The transition is a small curb cut-out and it puts cyclists and pedestrians into a crosswalk. There is not enough room for two-way bike traffic to use the curb cut.



**Sign indicates bike route goes up Chestnut Street**

The official Vancouver Bike Map, however, shows the bike route continuing, separated, along the shore. There are several problems with this. The reality indicates no such thing. The path which some people on bikes do use is very narrow and full of pedestrians and people walking dogs (there is a nearby dog park).



**Bike map indicates bike route continues through park**

There are constant conflicts on this path. In fact, the path is so narrow and there are so many conflicts that a cycling and walking desire line has developed parallel to the paved path. This is not an AAA facility.



**Multi-use path through Hadden Park with parallel desire line**

The alternative to taking this narrow path is following the signs and going up Chestnut Street and along Ogden Avenue. Riding along the road here is a good alternative during the off season. When traffic volume is low, the road is wide, and there is only parking along one side of the street. Traffic volumes would need to be monitored in the high season and likely there should be a protected path along here to create a true AAA facility.



**On-road alternative to bypass Hadden Park**

Transitioning from Hadden Park to the eastern part of Kitsilano Beach Park requires either following the narrow path down the hill to continue along the even-more-crowded beachside narrow path, or to ride along Maple Street and Arbutus Street. Neither of these options are good or AAA. The beachside path is too narrow to support the volume of pedestrians let alone a significant number of people on bikes. In fact, during the summer, temporary signs are erected along a portion of this path prohibiting people from riding bicycles.

Travelling along the road here can be frightening and dangerous. Vehicles are parked on both sides of the street, and are often pulling in or out of parking spots as people visit or leave the beach. Drivers searching for parking do not seem as careful about looking out for people on bikes. Drivers pulling out of parking spots do not seem very careful about checking for passing bikes.





**Driver squeezes past cyclists at an uncomfortable speed only to cut right to the curb (in front of just-passed cyclists) when an available parking spot is visible.**

Further along Arbutus Street, the people on bikes using the Greenway are directed by a sign through the extremely busy Kitsilano Beach parking lot. It is incomprehensible how any person on a bike, let alone children or inexperienced cyclists, should be expected to feel safe on this portion of the AAA Seaside Greenway. The dangers in having all cyclists driving through this extremely busy parking lot cannot be overstated.





**Sign showing bike route through parking lot**



**Riding on the Seaside Greenway through another parking lot**

In an effort to avoid the parking lot, some pedestrians and people on bikes had been taking a more convenient off-road path north of the parking lot. When the assessment ride occurred, two large logs had been staked into the ground across this desire line. It was interesting to note that the logs do not serve any purpose whatsoever (we observed joggers, pedestrians, and people

on bikes simply going around them) and the damage caused by the heavy machinery in placing the logs was far greater than the damage of the desire line.



**Desire line used to avoid dangerous parking lot route dangerously barricaded, decreasing safety for people on bikes and pedestrians**

The solution to these problems is to create a separated path for people on bikes. The volume of foot traffic along the beach is too large to safely support cycling. The volume of vehicle traffic along the road is too large to safely support all ages and abilities cycling. A separated facility, running parallel to the road, out of traffic, avoiding the parking lot, is a good solution.

Once in the southern part of Kitsilano Beach Park, the Greenway continues along narrow shared paths, leading to the busy intersection at Yew Street, and along the north side of Cornwall Avenue.



**Major conflict point at Yew Street intersection where pedestrians and people on bikes cross at a narrow pinch point**





**Narrow, limited-visibility MUP along south edge of Kitsilano Beach Park**

At the western end of the park, this narrow MUP ends at the Balsam Street/Cornwall Avenue intersection. The path becomes sidewalk at that point. Getting on the path eastbound requires crossing the north side of the intersection in a manner that vehicles don't expect, with quite a bit of danger from unaware vehicles turning northbound on to Balsam, and causing conflicts with vehicles already on Balsam. The danger, real and perceived, at this intersection leads to a lot of conflict and sidewalk riding.

To avoid this dangerous, poorly thought-out intersection, many people on bikes as well as pedestrians and joggers have created a desire line path. In the fall of 2015, the Vancouver Park Board erected a fence to prevent use of this desire line, and put up a sign commanding cyclists to use the dangerous path (overlooking the fact that the desire line was being used by joggers and pedestrians too).

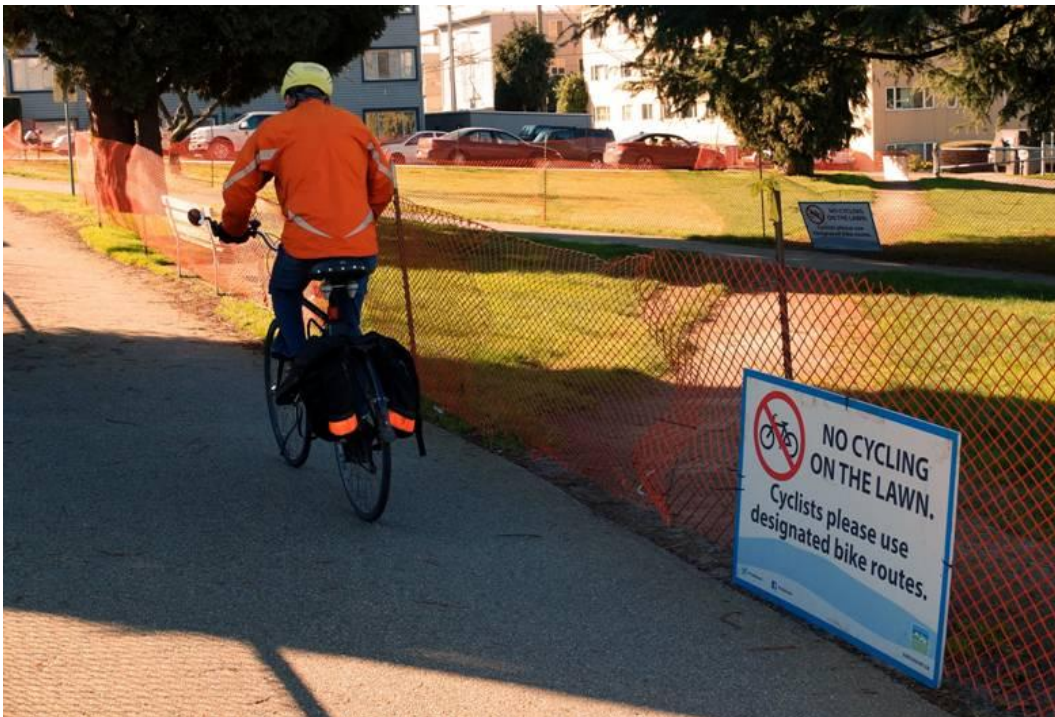
At the time of this assessment ride, persons unknown had removed the fence, and the desire line was used by people on bikes and people on foot.





**Desire line used by people on foot and people on bikes to avoid dangerous Balsam Street intersection**

A week after the assessment ride, the fence and sign was back in place, and confused, dangerous riding resulted.







**Dangerous fencing barricading use of desire line**

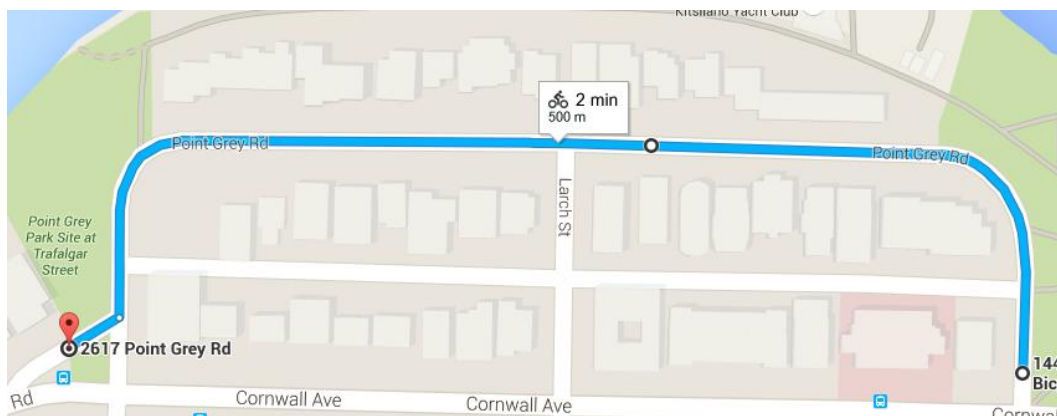




**Desire line barricade leads to high risk behaviour, decrease in safety, comfort**

The fence should be removed. Impeding access to the desire line significantly increases the danger to people on bikes, people on foot, and drivers. The desire line path has existed for years and should be formalized. Desire lines reflect bad design, not bad behaviour.

### Point Grey Road, Balsam St to Trafalgar St



The small section of Point Grey Road between Balsam Street and Trafalgar Street is another on-street stretch of the Greenway. In the original plans for improving the Point Grey Road stretch of the Seaside Greenway in 2014, a separate bicycle track was indicated for this stretch of road. In the final implementation, however, the separate lane was not built. In fact, this section of road saw no improvements at all.

The road is characterized with low traffic volume, and wide lanes, but with parking on both sides. It is not up to AAA standards, but the low traffic volume makes the road feel reasonably safe. Given the width of the road, and the low traffic volume, this section of road is a perfect candidate for a separated cycle track.



**Point Grey Road; wide, low traffic volume, with parking on both sides**

## Summary

In general, the Seaside Greenway from the Burrard Bridge to Trafalgar Street has a significant number of sections with serious safety concerns. The route purports to be built to All Ages and Abilities standards, but forces people on bicycles through two busy parking lots. The parts of the route that are not on the road or in parking lots are narrow multi-use paths with no separation or signs indicating the preferred travel paths. Conflicts between people on bikes, people on foot, and vehicles occur along almost the whole length of this section. At Kitsilano Beach Park, it seems that measures have been purposefully taken that actually decrease safety.

The major issues identified include:

- Barricades across desire lines that people on bikes and people on foot have created to increase their own safety. These barricades should be removed immediately, recognising that desire lines reflect bad design, not bad behaviour.
- AAA facilities should never run through parking lots. The Greenway runs through two busy parking lots, which is incredibly uncomfortable and unsafe.
- Mixed-use paths without separation and markings indicating where to walk and where to bike lead to confusion and conflict.
- In many locations the path is too narrow to adequately handle the volume of combined pedestrian and bicycle traffic.
- There are insufficient way finding signs, indicating points of interest, destinations, other bike routes, how far they are, and how to get to them