



December 4, 2020

Ivan Chow, Co-Chair, Maple Ridge / Pitt Meadows HUB Committee  
Jeff Leigh, Chair, Regional Advisory Committee, HUB Cycling  
c/o [mapleridge-pittmeadows@bikehub.ca](mailto:mapleridge-pittmeadows@bikehub.ca)

**Re: October 16 Letter in Reference to Highway 7 Widening Project – 266<sup>th</sup> Street to 287<sup>th</sup> Street**

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Dear Ivan and Jeff,

Thank you for your letter forwarded to the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure's (MoTI) by Jackie Chow, Co-chair, Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows HUB Committee on October 16, 2020.

We appreciated meeting with you and hearing your concerns during our engagement meeting for transportation and mobility stakeholders on September 22, 2020 regarding the Highway 7 – 266<sup>th</sup> Street to 287<sup>th</sup> Street Widening project in Maple Ridge, BC. We thank you for providing your detailed comments that outline your concerns and recommendations regarding the integration of active transportation facilities within the project, as well as generally within Maple Ridge and regionally. We would like to address your concerns and recommendations formally.

The detailed design approach for Highway 7 between 266<sup>th</sup> Street and 287<sup>th</sup> Street endeavors to balance all modes of transportation, as well as numerous other competing objectives, to the best of what is achievable given the specific constraints of the project. While there may be some minor adjustments during design refinement, we want to explain the scope development and our decision making process that brought us to the facility type in the detailed design, and better explain why we are not able to accommodate active transportation beyond the acceptable minimum facility. We would be happy to have a further discussion about what measures could be feasible based on current project constraints and scope.

### **Detailed Design Approach & Specifications**

We understand your concern about the design approach and your perspective that it is focused solely on motor vehicle safety as opposed to pedestrian or cyclist safety. A key objective for the project is to increase capacity to better accommodate the high volume of motorized traffic representing commuters and goods movement which was reflected in the design. However, this does not mean that other modes of transportation are not being considered during design development. We considered active transportation early in the design process and consulted the applicable guidelines to incorporate appropriate facilities within project constraints.



We acknowledge your concern that you feel that the proposed 2.0m wide shoulder is not wide enough to ensure pedestrian and cyclist safety, particularly with posted speeds. The 2.0m wide shoulder was determined based on the specific physical constraints for this project including the CP Rail right-of-way and Kwantlen First Nations land. Further acquisition of land is not possible at this time due to pre-existing agreements and need to balance the needs of other parties who also operate in this area.

The project team is concerned about providing higher standard cycling amenities on just a short portion of a larger route which would create a condition where users would not be able to effectively judge their comfort or capabilities in response to a sudden change in road design. Highway 7 is a proposed Rural Arterial Divided (RAD) classification. The project is the last remaining segment to be upgraded of an ongoing program to widen a larger corridor over a long-term transportation planning initiative. The aim for consistency has been fundamental throughout the process to provide the highest level of function.

We are confident that Highway 7 meets current design specifications in the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) Supplement to TAC Geometric Design Guide, and that we have considered related technical documentation including the British Columbia Active Transportation Guide. It is important to note that the guide states that both local context and engineering judgement play critical roles in determining if a cycling facility is appropriate.

In developing the design, we considered the local context of Highway 7 as a semi-rural area as opposed to a more urban area where there may be higher volumes of cyclists; the recommended widths for active transportation facilities based on road classification, design speed, and traffic volumes; and the significant physical constraints on either side, including sensitive environmental features, that present challenges for additional widening. While the guidelines indicate that a physically separated facility would be preferred, the 2.0m bicycle and pedestrian accessible shoulders provided in the detailed design represent an acceptable minimum width active transportation facility, given the exceptional right-of-way constraints, based on engineering judgement.

### **Active Transportation Plans and Policies**

We acknowledge there have been many policies developed in recent years to improve active transportation facilities and safety for cyclists in BC, including those stated in your letter. We support this progress, and we look to these policies and plans as guides when undertaking infrastructure development. We have also been coordinating with key stakeholders. We recognize active transportation initiatives are long-term processes that require wide, systemic change and can sometimes be difficult to achieve on site-specific projects. To that end, we work to support continual improvement on projects where technical analysis supports the integration of measures, and we assist with funding programs that support active transportation in BC.



## Recommendations

We appreciate receiving the recommendations outlined in your letter and will consider these as we move forward in the detailed design process.

- ▶ **Design from an Active Transportation Lens:** As noted above, MoTI strives to integrate active transportation measures within project scopes with consideration to site-specific considerations and constraints as well as budget, technical analysis, demand based on statistics, and public and stakeholder input. The process can often be complex, but we work to effectively evaluate all considerations to provide the best-balanced design that meets project objectives. Where it is determined that certain guidelines cannot be achieved, we apply professional judgement.
- ▶ **Plan & Build Safe Cohesive Cycling Infrastructure in Maple Ridge and Regionally:** Community land use and design, as well as transportation planning and design, play a part in providing people with choices for active transportation. While MoTI has jurisdiction for Highway 7, further collaboration with other parties, including local municipalities and Metro Vancouver, would be necessary to develop facilities that connect into a safe, cohesive network of cycling infrastructure. This includes the development of a direct east-west route as part of a regional cycling network as identified by TransLink's and Metro Vancouver's strategic planning documents.
- ▶ **Cost-Efficiency:** With regards to the suggestion that it would be more cost effective to upgrade walking and cycling facilities now rather than later, an overall plan would need to be developed first to ensure that active transportation facilities address needs and are consistent with an overall vision. There is a risk that any ad-hoc higher standard cycling facility included within this project could consume available MoTI budget without providing any significant additional cycling benefit to the region.

We hope the above information clarifies our thinking process and helps understand our detailed design decisions for this segment. We believe the design provides the best possible solution to improve capacity, reliability, and safety while factoring in constraints and balancing competing needs. That said, we are happy to discuss potential minor adjustments that may be feasible within the current scope of the Highway 7, 266<sup>th</sup> Street to 287<sup>th</sup> Street project.

We understand that to make transportation safer and easier for cyclists, there is a need to rely on investment in cycling facilities within planned or existing infrastructure. We want to emphasize that although more preferable options for cycling are not possible within this current project, MoTI as an organization fully recognizes the benefits of active transportation and will continue to look for opportunities to advance active transportation initiatives to help people move, commute, and connect.



We believe that continued collaboration with the City of Maple Ridge, Metro Vancouver, TransLink, and other interest groups is necessary to facilitate change over the longer-term so clear actions and timelines can be developed. We hope your input will start a larger conversation with these organizations so that we can collaborate in the coming years to continue to improve active transportation in BC.

Finally, we do want to acknowledge your important role as both volunteers and advocates who continue to shift the focus towards more sustainable, healthier modes of transportation. Your work brings many community benefits and is greatly valued to help improve within the transportation and mobility network. We want to emphasize that not only does this work help to continually improve planning and project development, but it also helps improve the engagement process and working with the communities in which we operate. We value these relationships significantly and welcome further discussions to move forward broader objectives outside the scope of this project.

Thank you again for taking the time to write and provide your comments. All comments received for the Highway 7 process are recorded and become part of engagement record – not just Highway 7 but general future transportation planning. We will follow up with you within the next month to discuss the opportunity for further discussion.

Yours truly,

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