

To The Honourable Claire Trevena, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

From NGOs-Trails B.C and Arbutus Greenway Improvements Society (AGIS)

Re Submission on Active Transportation April 2019

Thank you for the invitation to participate. We two Non Government Organizations are advocating for the Great Blue Heron Way (GBHW)-a 80km walking and cycling trail from the USA/Canada Border at White Rock to Downtown Vancouver. While over 50% of the trail has now been completed the remaining portion requires further effort from the Municipalities of Surrey, White Rock, Delta, Richmond, the City of Vancouver, The Tsawwassen First Nation, Metro Vancouver and the **Province of BC**. Our rationale for submission and the requests embodied therein is, perhaps, best answered through the three questions the ministry has posed to the public.

First -what does active transportation mean to us and how does it fit into our lives?

The sections of the GBHW trail that have been completed are highly beneficial to our health and community building. We are advocating for continuity along the various sections thereby allowing easy access without resource to loading bikes onto car bike racks or waiting for public transportation to access the more rural sections. We see the GBHW as also providing physical trail continuity between First Nations along the route-the Semiahmoo, Tsawwassen, Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil Waututh-a concept that is being explored by Trails BC as part of the the Great Trail-Sentier Transcanadien-formerly the Trans Canada Trail.

We also see the GBHW as a huge cultural game changer in a car centric world. If young people can become early adopters of walking and bike riding lifestyle modes we see hope for a greener low carbon economy and a head start in the fight against obesity and diabetes.

Second-what challenges prevent us moving forward with active transportation modes?

We accept that “we can’t always get we want” and that there are fiscal restraints. However the current allocation of funding to walking and biking facilities seems to be held close to partnerships between Translink and municipalities with little public input beyond a small coterie of cycling enthusiasts. While this process has greatly assisted dedicated cyclists in their daily commutes and substantially reduced risk to them it hasn’t really addressed recreational trails. It is really the recreational trails, that are safe for the very young to learn to ride, and they, the empowered children in turn become the cycling commuters of tomorrow.

Another challenge is that the municipalities generally install improved cycling and walking infrastructure only when a developer funds a close proximity trail or

contributes to a development cost levy. And sometimes that is also tied dependently to Translink funding. The result is a patchwork of unconnected trails that will, at the current rate, remain unconnected way beyond the 2040 BC Clean Transportation targeted date for substantial greenhouse gas reductions.

So, challenges. Firstly-Crossing Highway 17(SFPR) with children on bicycles from Tsawwassen Town to Tsawwassen Mills to gain access to the newly installed trails. Secondly -Crossing the DeltaPort highway to regain access to the waterfront dyke leading to Brunswick Point and Ladner. Thirdly-Crossing the Moray Bridge over the Middle Arm Swing Bridge utilising the “bike lane”. It would be a challenge for most recreational cyclists but also for any of the potential employees at YVR to use this route on dark and wet November night at rush hour. It falls in the gap between jurisdictions-Richmond Lulu Island and YVR Sea Island with MoTI as owner. Fourthly-The gap between Vancouver’s Spanish Banks seaside route and the cycleable paths in Pacific Spirit Regional Park further up the NE Marine Drive hill to UEL. This is an easy fix and should be addressed urgently.

Third-what is the most important action that government can take to promote active transportation?

Empower regional highway authority staff to engage with the public-the public beyond pressure groups and lobbyists. This means adequate staff to listen to NGOs like ourselves on issues around closing the gaps in cycling infrastructure.

What is unique in our region is that we have the opportunity to build an interconnected trail system within the Greater Vancouver metropolis that connects with the Trans Canada Trail right across Canada. A trail system that connects First Nation communities and encourages neighbour to neighbour reconciliation interactions. A trail system that fosters active transportation among the 8 to 80 year demographic. Plus, the trail is unique due to the tangible tourism benefits derived from the critical mass of tourist amenities within the Vancouver metropolis that will encourage both homestay as well as international visitors.

In conclusion, we would be so pleased if we could have the opportunity to present our case for improving and closing the gaps, on the four MoTI items mentioned, in much greater depth. Once again-

The Highway 17/52nd St Interchange in Tsawwassen

Crossing of the DeltaPort Highway barrier.

The Moray Middle Arm Swing Bridge between Richmond and YVR including the approach roads.

Lower section of NE Marine Drive from UEL to Spanish Banks

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