

Letter to the editor in Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows News

<https://www.mapleridgenews.com/opinion/letter-deadline-to-voice-opinion-on-highway-upgrades-loomng/?fbclid=IwAR34VReBOJjFkukWLo8MsxMn4bLtvHOkYNw19ly2y7bUrr1ppQvLvm94K60>

February 14, 2021



LETTER: Deadline to voice opinion on highway upgrades looming

Ministry of transportation needs to hear from locals about dangers along rural Lougheed Highway

Dear Editor,

On July 20 of last year, an experienced long-distance cyclist who had cycled many parts of the world, embarked on a cross-Canada cycling journey from Vancouver to her hometown of Montreal.

That day would have been a perfect day to start a journey – perfect weather, maximum visibility on the road, and normal flow of auto traffic.

While she was cycling along Highway 7 [the Lougheed Highway], at Spilsbury Street in Maple Ridge, a provincial highway with a two-metre wide shoulder, the driver of a pickup truck – for some reason – failed to negotiate the curve, hit and bounced off the concrete barrier, and hit her at full speed.

The impact almost instantly took the life of the young woman and left behind bits and pieces of twisted metal fragments barely recognizable as former parts of a bicycle frame.

Exactly why the pickup truck failed to go around the curve is not yet clear, as the investigation by the RCMP is still ongoing.

What is clear, however, is that the concrete barrier – designed to protect drivers from flying off a cliff in the event of an accident – is not designed to protect vulnerable, non-auto users from high speed autos.

An intuitive design, one would think, would be to put the bike lane on the other side of the barrier.

This design flaw became all the more painfully ironic, when we learned of the Highway 7 widening project between Maple Ridge and Mission, from 266 to 287 Streets, just east of where the young woman was killed.

A key objective of this project is, as we were told, to improve safety.

The design calls for the same arrangement of putting a two-metre shoulder beside the car lanes, just like on the photo.

The response from the provincial Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI), when asked why the bike lane is not on the other side of the concrete barrier, was to maintain “consistency” with the existing infrastructure.

Consistency, as in “consistently dangerous.”

This, despite the Province’s Road Safety Strategy aiming to have their roads the safest roads in North America. #VisionZero.

This, despite the province’s wonderful Active Transportation Strategy: Move.Commute.Connect, claiming a strong commitment to improve active transportation networks to make them safer, better connected and more enjoyable.

This, despite the BC Active Transportation Design Guide, released just last year, calling for physical separation between motor vehicles and vulnerable road users where there are high traffic volumes and speeds, which is clearly the case for that segment of the highway.

TransLink, which considers Highway 7 part of its Major Bike Network, expressed the same safety concerns for vulnerable road users in its feedback to the ministry.

Both the municipalities of Maple Ridge and Mission have designated Highway 7 as part of their cycling networks.

Also, Metro Vancouver designates Highway 7 as an integral part of its Regional Greenways 2050 Plan.

Last, but certainly not least, MoTI itself designates Highway 7 as part of its primary cycling network.

MoTI can and must do better.

The Ministry of Transportation is now requesting the general public to provide feedback on this project. For more information, with a link to provide feedback, visit the [Hub Cycling website](#).

Deadline for submitting your comments is Friday, Feb. 19, at 4 p.m.

Jackie and Ivan Chow, Maple Ridge

Ivan is co-chair of HUB Cycling committee