Your Cycling Connection

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Maple Ridge Transportation Plan Update public input from May 22, 2013 Open House

Comments HUB Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Chapter:

Summary of Key Points:

- Specific cycling network comments in response to most recent display boards is listed in detail below key points.

- Vehicular cycling approach is inappropriate for Maple Ridge and is unsafe and ineffective at bringing out more people on bikes. Separation is key on roads where car volumes and speeds are too high for comfort, and convenient, direct and comfortable routes that lead to potential destinations are as important for people on bikes as they are for people in cars.

- 41% are interested in cycling more but are concerned about riding with motor vehicle traffic.

- Good land use planning is essential for increasing active transportation and growing a vibrant community.

- More cycling brings healthier local economies, better use of limited space, increased mobility for all ages.

- The municipality can and should do more to assist and provide incentives for businesses to install bike parking in strategic locations.

- Cyclists should not have to seek refuge on the sidewalk, especially in the Town Core and in and around school zones or other busy areas.

- Cycling routes should be on streets with destinations and frequent stop signs preventing cycling ease should be avoided.

- Lougheed is an integral link in the cycling network in the Town Core, providing a direct and relatively flat route that should have separated cycling facilities to allow access to Town Core amenities and jobs.

- The District should set maximum speed limits of 30 km/h throughout the Town Core to improve safety and livability.

- In a community like Maple Ridge, enhanced public transit options will significantly increase the viability of cycling by allowing multi-modal trips. Improved service and promotion of existing services are recommended.

- The District should set cycling goals. Our suggestions include: 4% cycling mode share in 2020; increased number of women and children cycling, etc.

- Increased focus on cycling safety in school zones. Improved infrastructure around schools should go hand in hand with cycling education through all elementary schools in our community.

- In view of the rapid growth of our community, HUB strongly urges the District to consider a Complete Streets by-law, that would require the consideration of the needs of all users when new roads are built, or existing ones are upgraded.

- Wayfinding for people on bikes should be improved, showing the direction and main destinations of bike routes as well as distances in kms and in time.

- Close co-operation with City of Pitt Meadows to improve cycling connections between the two communities, as well as universal signage.

- Intersection wait times for pedestrians and cyclists should be reduced.

- Well-spaced, brightly painted bollards should be used at entrances to pathways instead of staggered gates which cause challenges for many cyclists, particularly for those with bike trailers, mirrors or wider loads.

Display board Feedback on Cycling Network

Following are some specific comments regarding the display boards with map of proposed cycling network upgrades.

- Connections for cycling between Pitt Meadows and Maple Ridge:
    - HUB is looking forward to the planned connecting route through Hammond.
    - Wharf Street (connecting to Osprey Village through Katzie reserve) should also be part of the bicycle network, as this historic street along the Fraser should be included in the Experience the Fraser route.
    - Of particular concern is the connection via Lougheed Highway to Meadowtown Mall, where presently cyclists and pedestrians in both directions have to share a narrow shoulder beside 6 lanes of busy, high speed traffic.

- According to the draft map, 128th Ave. is going to have bike lanes, however, as has been clarified by the Engineering Department, this is supposed to be a separated multi-use path.
- Fern Crescent shows planned shoulders for cycling on both sides up to the urban boundary, while for pedestrians it shows shoulders way beyond the urban boundary. Which one is correct? Having shoulders extended all the way into the park would make sense. Without shoulders it's unsafe for cyclists when traffic is busy in the summer months.
- Depending on the cost involved and other competing priorities, we support in principle the proposal by the Alouette Valley Association and the Silver Valley Neighbourhood Association for a recreational roadway on 132nd Ave.
- All arterials within the urban boundary should have separated bike paths where feasible. If not, they should have at least bike lanes on both sides. This includes the arterials on the east side of Maple Ridge, which presently show shoulders. In situations where parking is allowed on the shoulder, this can create dangerous situations for cyclists and pedestrians when having to swerve onto the traffic lane in order to pass a parked car. Cyclists also risk being "doored", which can result in serious injury or death.
- Where parking is allowed and bike lanes are provided , the configuration where the bike lane is buffered from moving traffic by car parking should be considered. Where this is not feasible, a buffer between parked cars and traffic lane is important in order to protect cyclists from being "doored".
- The section of River Road between Laity and 207th Streets should be part of the bicycle network since Maple Ridge Elementary School is located along that stretch of River Road.
- Lougheed Highway is the only direct connection for cyclists between Albion and the Town Core and should be safe for cyclists of all ages and abilities. Even though the section of Lougheed west of Kanaka Way has a maximum speed limit of 50 km/h, actual speeds are on average closer to 70 or 80 km/h, and many drivers even go considerably faster than that. Enforcement doesn't seem to deter drivers from excessive speeding. Separated bike lanes west of 240th, and also narrower car lanes west of Kanaka Way would slow down cars and help cyclists feel safe.
- Planning for shortcuts for cycling and walking in areas yet to be subdivided should occur before the development stage, so that any pathways and bridges would automatically be part of the conditions of development. Connectivity in east Maple Ridge is very poor, and many opportunities exist to improve connections for cycling and walking in east Maple Ridge through paths and bridges.
- Considering the high volume of traffic along Dewdney Trunk Road between 240th and 256th, which will likely be increasing even more over the next 25 years with the addition of further sprawling development, proper sidewalks and protected bike lanes are needed in view of the presence of 3 schools along that section. Shoulders are not sufficient to encourage more walking and cycling.

- Bike lanes along 240th south of Dewdney should be completed all the way to Lougheed, preferably separated south of 104th to accommodate cycling to Albion Elementary School. A proper buffer needs to be provided where parking is allowed.
- In view of the higher density of lower Albion, the increasing traffic on 102nd Ave. east of 240th and the presence of some neighbourhood commercial, bike lanes should be provided. Shoulders often allow parking, and this poses dangers for cyclists, having to swerve into the path of moving cars and the possibility of being "doored". Once more commercial development takes place in Albion, this will provide a nearby destination for shopping trips by bike and 102nd Street will need to be safe for cycling.

Benefits of Cycling and Supporting Research

Communities around the world realize that safe, convenient and comfortable cycling infrastructure can lead to many benefits for everyone, e.g.:

- improved overall health in the community,
- improved and cheaper transportation options (= independence) and less social isolation for seniors,
- improved independence and learning possibilities as well as more social interaction for children and youth,
- improved livability,
- more equitable transportation system,
- reduced dependency on fossil-fuel-powered transportation,
- less money spent on car transportation => more money in people's pockets,
- more cycling => more money spent in the local economy,
- reduced community greenhouse gas emissions,
- reduced noise,
- reduced demand for road space and car parking,
- more eyes on the road leading to a reduction in crime,
- increased property values,
- improved appeal as cycling-friendly community for companies looking for young, talented professionals who want to live in such a community, etc.

For decades, like the majority of other cities in North America, Maple Ridge has made relatively little progress in getting more people to bike. Decades ago, many kids biked to school, while presently few still do. Much great work has been done in Maple Ridge for the past 20 years by the Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Bicycle Advisory Committee trying to encourage more people to bike more, for transportation as well as for recreation. The Engineering Department has been successful in adding more bike lanes in north south direction, and has been implementing traffic calming measures on problematic roads.

Has all the good work that has been done led to success?

Maple Ridge prides itself on being "one of the best places for cycling in all of the Lower Mainland". However, this may be true mostly for road cyclists, who like to use the quieter hilly roads in rural Maple Ridge for training rides, and mountain bikers who use the rough wilderness trails in the outlying areas, as well as people riding their bikes on the dikes for fun. It applies much less so to utilitarian trips in town: kids riding their bikes to school, people riding to the store to get some groceries, elderly people who no longer drive riding their bikes to get around, or people riding their bikes to local work places.

The proof is in the pudding. They say that women and children are the canaries in the coal mine when it comes to cycling. The numbers of women, children and seniors cycling on our roads are the best measure of success.

Our 1994 Bikeways Plan was based on the principle of "vehicular cycling", as is the 2003 draft Transportation Plan, presently being rewritten and updated. Cyclists were thought to fare best when riding on the road and behaving like a car. It was thought to be safer than separated infrastructure, even though comparing the North-American statistics with those of European countries where separation is much more common proves this premise wrong. Cyclists in North America are twice as likely to be killed, and eight times more likely to be seriously injured than cyclists in Germany. They're three times as likely to be killed and 30 times as likely to suffer serious injuries than cyclists in the Netherlands. (http://www.policy.rutgers.edu/faculty/pucher/AJPHfromJacobsen.pdf)

Much has been learned, especially over the last decade, about the types of infrastructure that are more likely to convince less confident cyclists to use their bikes more. Separation is key on roads where car volumes and speeds are too high for comfort, and convenient, direct and comfortable routes that lead to potential destinations are as important for people on bikes as they are for people in cars. Now that this new knowledge is applied more and more widely, and cycling is increasingly being valued for all the many great benefits that it offers, cities around the world are not only seeing tremendous growth in cycling, they're also seeing reduced accident and fatality rates, and they're reaping the economic benefits as well.

Our Council members and municipal engineers had a great opportunity to learn more about the types of infrastructure that will lead to more cycling through the presentation by Richard Drdul, a well renowned expert in cycling infrastructure, organized jointly by HUB and the BAC in February 2011. Council members and engineers also had a valuable opportunity to learn more from experts around the world at the VeloCity Cycling Conference last year in Vancouver. HUB hopes to see some of this new knowledge applied in our community.

Over the last 4 years HUB (formerly VACC- Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition) has heard many comments from many people in Maple Ridge who would like to use their bikes

more for transportation as well as for recreation, but are increasingly concerned about speeding cars and busy roads. Hundreds of comments received by our local committee between May 2009 and November 2010 were forwarded to Maple Ridge Council as well as BAC and Engineering staff for consideration. In summer 2011, 20 people volunteered through HUB to do assessment rides for the Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Bicycle Advisory Committee, to help determine the quality of the existing cycling network as well as to find potential new cycling routes. TransLink's 2011 Regional Cycling Strategy research identified that 41% of the region's residents are interested in starting to cycle or cycling more, but they are concerned about riding in motor vehicle traffic. It's clear that there's a considerable latent demand in our community.

A good Transportation Plan really starts with a good land use plan, which is of especially great importance for any rapidly growing community like ours. Densification and mixed use along transportation corridors and around neighbourhood hubs can help replace a good number of trips by car with trips by transit, walking and cycling. Maple Ridge's population is expected to hit 130,000 by 2041, a 70% increase from 2011. Even as recently as 2012, about 90% of all growth took place outside the Town Core, much of it in sprawling new subdivisions with few local amenities. This means that we're seeing ever more cars added to our roadways and parking lots.

There is little potential left for expansion of our east-west roadways to accommodate more cars, and we know that ever more road expansion is rarely the answer to solving the congestion and speeding problems of a car-dependent community. The few east-west connector roads are already seeing considerable congestion at rush hour, and roads that were never meant to be used for long-distance commuter car traffic are increasingly being used as rat-runs. With the ever increasing need for many people to drive everywhere, the need for parking in the Town Core increases, and more and more this need will have to be met through expensive underground parking. Cycling infrastructure comes at a fraction of the cost of motor vehicle facilities, and 10 bikes can fit in the same space as 1 car. This provides the opportunity for more efficient mobility of residents and employees in Maple Ridge as we quickly grow in population and face an ever growing demand for road space and parking for cars as well as reduced livability in many neighbourhoods.

The adequate provision of bike racks in secure and convenient locations is important. For new housing and commercial development there are certain requirements for bicycle parking. However, presently it is left up to the many existing businesses in the town core to provide bike parking, if they wish to do so, whereas car parking has always been a requirement. The municipality can and should do more to assist and provide incentives for businesses to install bike parking in strategic locations.

We don't seem to be very successful with our plans to reduce community greenhouse gasses: despite Council's resolve to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 33% from 2007 to 2020, emissions had already gone up by about 12% by 2010. About 57% of our

emissions are from transportation, and improving conditions for cycling is a great way to reduce emissions while achieving many other goals.

It's clear that our transportation policy should not be seen in isolation from other policies, plans and goals that our municipality has. A comprehensive plan will help put all the pieces of the puzzle together.

We at HUB believe that safe, convenient cycling infrastructure can offer a very cost-effective transportation alternative for many people in our community, and should be an essential component of an equitable transportation system that works for all. The needs of the many people who don't drive need to be considered: kids, youth, seniors, and others who don't wish, are unable to, or can't afford to drive, and last but certainly not least: people with mobility issues in wheelchairs and on scooters.

Our Cycling Plan should not be based on the premise that "cyclists are allowed on the sidewalk anyway, so there is no need to give them a safe place either on separated or on-road infrastructure". Cyclists should not have to seek refuge on the sidewalk, especially in the Town Core and in and around school zones or other busy areas. In Maple Ridge the Highways and Traffic By-law allows cycling on the sidewalk because some roads are not safe enough for cycling. With the continued growth and densification in Maple Ridge over the next few decades, pedestrian traffic on sidewalks is going to increase considerably, and over time pedestrian/cyclist conflicts are sure to increase. The District's goal should be to design a truly multi-modal transportation system in the Town Core, that allows cyclists, of all ages and abilities, to safely and conveniently reach their destinations without having to use the sidewalk. Cycling on sidewalks by young children should of course continue to be allowed.

The draft transportation plan for the Town Core, dating from 2003, like the 1994 Bikeways Plan also based on the presumption that cyclists are safest when cycling on the road, seems so far not to have resulted in any significant increase in on-road cycling. Lines on a map don't necessarily make people want to bike there. The east-west cycling routes in the Town Core are on streets with relatively few destinations: Brown Ave., Selkirk Ave. and North Ave. These routes also have stop signs at every single intersection. The rationale for designating these roads as bicycle routes seems to be that "cyclists don't stop for stop signs anyway, so it should work for them." Of course, it means that cyclists are basically encouraged to disobey the law. It's especially important for cyclists to be able to keep their momentum and not to have to stop too often. Another east-west route for cycling, 116th Ave. south of Lougheed, may be a more "scenic" and quieter option to Lougheed, but it's a route that only those who are doing some serious training or those who live in the area will contemplate, due to the steep hills. Everyone else will most certainly prefer to stay on Lougheed.

In order to make cycling a more appealing option, it's important to make it work well in the Town Core. Therefore we would like to suggest a gradual approach, which can be

modified over time. It is as important for cyclists as it is for drivers to have safe door-to-door transportation. Therefore, as a start, we would like the District to consider :

1. Setting maximum speed limits throughout the Town Core of 30 km/h, which will not only make the roadways safer for cycling, but will improve overall livability significantly;
2. Making Lougheed part of the cycling network in the Town Core. This section of Lougheed has numerous shops, which need to be accessible to cyclists. The car lanes can be reduced to one in each direction, while providing a bike lane in each direction (with a buffer between bike lane and parked cars), and bike boxes at intersections. Maintaining car parking (potentially providing back-angle parking, which may actually even increase parking) would not only improve safety for cyclists, but would also improve the shopping experience for pedestrians by providing a wider buffer from slower car traffic. The Haney Bypass can take some of the pressure off of Lougheed as Lougheed will become a less attractive option for those merely passing through the downtown.

Further improvements could be considered over time, as development density and cycling traffic increases. E.g. bike lanes and bike boxes could be added on some of the north-south streets as well.

A transportation plan cannot be seen in isolation from a proper parking strategy, as part of a Transportation Demand Management strategy. The available parking could be used much more efficiently by considering increasing pay parking in key areas, to discourage long-term parking. This way, less space is needed for parking and can be freed up for other uses such as cycling, added street trees and plants, more pedestrian space and outdoor terraces.

When it comes to transit service, Maple Ridge clearly receives inadequate service to be able to offer a reasonable alternative to many commuters, and it looks like expansion of service will be very slow for years to come and does not even keep up with our population growth. This is especially the case when development in the outlying areas continues to expand in a hopscotch manner , without any meaningful densification along transportation corridors and few neighbourhood hubs with less than essential services and amenities.

As recognized by Translink, combining cycling with transit can dramatically increase the service area of transit hubs in a community like Maple Ridge, where distances are most often greater than people are generally willing to walk. The District and Translink could more proactively encourage more people to combine cycling with transit and perhaps provide some carrots and sticks. Once the long-awaited bike share program is in place in Vancouver, this will become a much more interesting option for people in Maple Ridge.

Maple Ridge also needs to recognize and capitalize on the huge potential for electric bicycles. The hills in the eastern and northern parts of our community and the longer

distances need no longer be an impediment to cycling for many.

Electric bicycles can also have significant potential for improving mobility for seniors and those with physical limitations. Improved cycling infrastructure can help improve physical and mental health of seniors and disabled people, and can be instrumental in reducing the social isolation that is so common among these groups. In cycling-friendly communities the safe cycling infrastructure that's important for regular as well as electric bicycle users also enables wheelchair users to get around much more easily. In order for disabled people with wheelchairs or scooters to safely use any cycling infrastructure, bike lanes and paths need to be of sufficient width.

We at HUB feel it's important to have goals, some kind of evaluation system in place, as well as a strategy to reach our goals:

- What are the District's goals as to achieving an increase in cycling for transportation/recreation? (e.g. from 1% cycling participation today to 4% cycling participation in 2020 to 10% in 2030?)
- Are there certain groups we want to target in particular? (e.g. special focus on the "interested but concerned" group, in particular kids/seniors/women?)
- What are their concerns and how do we address these concerns?

An evaluation of how we are doing at frequent intervals would help determine whether the chosen strategy is working and if and where changes are needed.

It's important in that context to find out what kinds of cyclists we see on which routes (road cyclists, families, women, children, seniors?). E.g. if we see mostly road cyclists but not families with kids, this might very well indicate that our existing routes are perhaps more suitable for the "strong and fearless" and some of the "enthused and confident" cyclists. Subsequently we should ask ourselves if these routes need to be suitable for other groups of cyclists as well and if separation or traffic calming could be the answer.

HUB would like special attention to be paid to cycling safety (= definitely separation from cars!) in school zones. It is critical to focus on our kids and youth. Schools are places for kids and the provision of safe, separated cycling infrastructure is a basic requirement in and around school zones. If we miss the opportunity to get their generation to establish life-long habits of active transportation, it is going to be so much harder to convince the next generation to do the same. Separation for this age group is absolutely critical. Kids should never be used as traffic calming devices.

Improved infrastructure around schools should go hand in hand with cycling education through all elementary schools in our community.

Speeding on our residential roads is a problem in many neighbourhoods. Some of this may well be due to the design of our roads. Generally newer roads are fairly wide, which encourages drivers to speed, which then will require the addition of expensive bulb-

outs, traffic circles or other means of traffic calming, at the expense of taxpayers. Bulb-outs can on the one hand slow down car traffic, on the other hand they can cause cyclists to become the “traffic calming device”. Also the turning radius at intersections is often too wide, so that many drivers do not slow down as much as they should when making a turn. Initial design of roads is important, to avoid having to make costly changes later on. Properly designed roads discourage speeding, which makes these roads much safer and more pleasant for cycling.

In view of the rapid growth of our community, HUB strongly urges the District to consider a Complete Streets by-law, that would require the consideration of the needs of all users when new roads are built, or existing ones are upgraded. Bike lanes would be required on higher speed, higher volume roads - such as on all arterials - whereas properly designed local streets with slower speeds (30 km/h) and volumes would not need any special facilities. Some of our east-west collector roads are at times used fairly heavily, and bike lanes may be needed, especially if schools are located along these roads.

For a truly equitable transportation system that values cycling for the many benefits that it brings to the whole community, we feel it is important that cyclists are treated with respect, and that adherence to the hierarchy of transportation modes as recommended in the Bikeways Plan of 1994 (1 pedestrians, 2 cyclists, 3 transit, 4 cars, 5 freight) is clearly incorporated in the District’s transportation policy and Transportation Plan.

When planning for cycling, it is important to recognize that, in view of the fact that cycling is a mode of transportation that works really well for shorter trips up to 5 to 7 kms, there is a great need for a fine grained network, and door-to-door convenience is important. Shortcuts for cycling can make cycling a more attractive option than driving.

Signage for the main cycling network is very important. The name of the bike route is somewhat less important than the direction and which main destinations they’re heading for, as well as distances (preferably in kms as well as in time).

It is also important to clearly define types of infrastructure and provide adequate cycling facilities. E.g. a bikeway is supposed to follow quiet, local roads. If at times sections of these routes are very busy and/or higher speeds than the required 30 km/h are common, such as along 124 Ave., separated bike lanes should be considered. Again, this is of special importance when schools are located along the route.

The definition of some terms has seen a certain degree of degredation over time. The term ‘trail’ used by the District as well as by some other municipalities no longer seems to have the meaning of ‘a marked or beaten path, as through woods or wilderness’, but now can also mean any roadway with a significant amount of traffic on it and without a shoulder, such as 128th Ave. and 210th Street, notorious among cyclists, equestrians

and hikers alike. Not until there is a separated pathway should this section be called a 'trail'. Similarly, there is no need to use a term like 'urban trail' for a sidewalk, since the word 'sidewalk' already describes very well what it is and avoids confusion. It is important to be clear about the quality and type of our infrastructure. When distributing maps to the general public, it's important for them to know what they're dealing with. This is the case for routes used for transportation as well as for recreation.

Our HUB committee is not in the possession of copies of most of the results of the assessment rides done by HUB volunteers in 2011, which should provide much valuable information. A follow-up meeting with our assessment riders and representatives from both the Engineering Department and the consultant to go over the planned transportation strategy and some of the planned improvements would be much appreciated.

HUB would like to see continued close communication and cooperation between the District of Maple Ridge and the City of Pitt Meadows to improve and increase cycling connections between the two communities. In that respect it also makes a lot of sense for the two municipalities to use similar signage.

Recreational routes can sometimes be used as utilitarian routes and vice versa. Cooperation between and joint planning by the Engineering Department and Parks and Leisure is therefore also of importance. For example, the trail sections that are part of the Experience the Fraser project can be useful to commuters as well. This needs to be kept in mind when it comes to the surface (comfort), convenience as well as routing of the trails.

One specific comment received from one of our committee's members which in general relates more to pedestrians than to cyclists, but which is nevertheless important for all active transportation participants, is that timed traffic lights for pedestrians are very helpful, especially for the elderly, who generally need more time to cross than presently often is allowed for. Elderly cyclists sometimes also need more time to move across an intersection.

Wait times for pedestrians and cyclists at traffic lights should be reduced. LOS (Level Of Service) considerations should not only be applied to car traffic, but as much or even more so to pedestrians and cyclists. Long wait times discourage walking and cycling.

Instead of using staggered gates at the entrance to pathways, the use of well spaced, brightly painted bollards would be preferred, since they are generally easier to navigate for cyclists, especially the ones with bike trailers, mirrors or wider loads.

Thank you for your time and consideration. The HUB Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows committee is available for further consultation at any stage of the process and welcomes questions or discussion of the above points. We would appreciate the

opportunity to review the draft Transportation Plan to be able to engage more fully with the concepts and help Maple Ridge to realize the most effective, safe and inclusive transportation system moving forward.

Sincerely,

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