

Email dated Feb. 16, 2015

To: David Pollock, Maple Ridge Engineering
cc: Michael Eng (MR Engineering), Mayor Nicole Read, Couns. Craig Speirs, Kiersten Duncan, Robert Masse, Corisa Bell

Re River Road traffic calming

your e-mail of Feb. 8

Mr. Pollock,

My apologies, I was mistaken as to the date of the neighbourhood consultation, which took place not in November 2014, but in November 2013. The Bicycle Advisory Committee has not met since November 2013, and its members were not consulted about the work on River Road, and neither was our HUB committee.

I think there may be a little (or big!) misunderstanding between the Engineering Department on the one side and the Bicycle Advisory Committee/HUB Committee on the other about what a "bicycle network" should mean. We at HUB feel that the routes that form the "bicycle network" should be considered merely to be "recommended" routes, consisting of a bare minimum network of possible routes that are considered to be good or acceptable for cycling, and routes that should have priority for improvements. **That doesn't mean that any other roads do not need to accommodate bicycles and can be given over entirely to cars.**

As I explained in my previous e-mail, **it is very important for cyclists to be able to use a fine-grained network** as the bicycle is mostly used for short trips, whereas **cars only need a coarse-grained network for higher speed travel.** It is already challenging to find bike routes in our community that are sufficiently safe, convenient and fast (not just for road cyclists, but all cyclists). If more and more of our streets and roads continue to be sacrificed for the speedy travel of the automobile, then we're moving even farther away from having a multi-modal network and we're encouraging even more people to rely on their cars for all travel.

You may recall that our HUB Committee submitted recommendations during the consultation period for the Transportation Plan. I attached them for your convenience. We recommended the following with regard to River Road (on page 3):

"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."

We did not include River Road east of Laity, as this section has long felt too challenging for the average cyclist and is difficult to improve, even for road cyclists, but this does not mean that safety is not a requirement for road cyclists who wish to use this route for

their convenience. It's great that the barriers provide local residents with better pedestrian safety, however at the same time they have made it more dangerous for cyclists. We appreciate that the Engineering Department will look into signage and sharrows as well as the potential for a bike-permeable diverter to discourage rat-running.

Unfortunately, for whatever reason, the section of River Road west of Laity was not included as part of the bicycle network in the final Transportation Plan; I know it was looked at in the draft stage.

We want to again express our gratitude to the City of Maple Ridge for the construction of the 700 meter long multi-use path along Lougheed Highway. The 117th Ave. route that this path is part of has so far only been marked as a bike route west of the path, however there is no indication where it leads to (Golden Ears Bridge and Meadowtown Mall/Pitt Meadows going west, downtown Maple Ridge going east). Signage and improvements are also still needed to the east of the MUP, so that people on bikes can find their way to the town core along this route. This, and also a bike map on the City's website as well as a hard copy version, would help increase usage of the path, and acceptance among tax payers of the use of public moneys for a facility that a.o. benefits cyclists of all ages and abilities. Road cyclists, however, most often stay on the road on Lougheed between 216th and Laity, as they are more aware of the potential dangers that the bi-directional separated path poses to them (partly due to higher speeds), with driveway crossings, and more dangerous intersection crossings. The multi-use path presently only covers 700 meters between 216th and Laity Streets, and I suspect it may be decades before the entire multi-use path along Lougheed from the town core to Pitt Meadows is completed. Even then, some road cyclists will likely continue to use the shoulder, while others will continue to use River Road as their preferred route, and they should be able to do so.

Perhaps at the neighbourhood consultation residents on River Road did not raise the option of limiting traffic movements for the simple reason that they were unaware such an option might exist. We do think that this would lower traffic volumes by reducing the potential for rat-running. It will help make River Road safer, both west and east of the traffic diverters. It would preserve the collector function of River Road, but prevent its present use as arterial, especially during rush hour. The location at Laity is likely the preferred option for a bike permeable diverter, so that access to Ridge Meadows Hospital is optimized.

As a cycling advocacy group, we always like to know what other cyclists think. If you're interested, please read the comments added below this e-mail.

With kind regards,

Jackie Chow
HUB Cycling
Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Chapter

Comments received by HUB from cyclists regarding River Road:

Dave Hardie, a past Bicycle Advisory Committee member and experienced cyclist, who lives on River Road, told us:

"I do have River Road cycling concerns and see the need for further traffic calming (elimination?) on River Road. Especially the River road and Laity intersection where we are nearby. It is a road race/road rage (lots of horn honking and yelling) intersection everyday during rush hour as the traffic avoids Lougheed Hwy and many cars run the stop signs, etc. I have cycled the new paved "temporary" pedestrian path on River Road from Darby to Carshill, but it is not overly bike friendly due to the deep set catch basins which are at least safety painted with yellow paint. It certainly provides a safer pedestrian route as we occasionally walk to the Billy Miner Pub for lunch or dinner with neighbours. I would not cycle east on the paved road any more due to the increased risk with the barriers protecting the pedestrian path. I hate riding east from home on River Road and usually ride the sidewalk on the north to Darby then through that neighbourhood to get to 216th to cross Lougheed and ride into town."

Here's a selection of some of the comments made on our HUB Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows facebook group about the barriers/River Road:

Original post by an experienced cyclist (with photos, attached to this e-mail): "I wonder how many have cycled along River Road east of 216th Street since these barriers were installed? I have gotten attitude from a few drivers recently for not using the "bike lane", even when traveling in the opposite direction. Never mind the fact that high speed commuter bikes don't mix well with driveways, strollers, pedestrians etc I was thinking are we supposed to ride through the telephone poles? Thoughts?"





"Wow, that is awesome! you should submit those to the galleries of other cities bike lane mistakes"

" I doubt that it's supposed to be a bike lane. Unfortunately, certain ignorant motorists see the barriers and then figure that all bikes should be off the road."

"It could have been a great separated bike lane (especially with the School so close on that street) for the kids."

"Yeh..sorry i wont be using that "bike lane" and dodging poles!!"

"Aren't the police responsible for traffic calming?"

"That is interesting. There is no way one can bike in there. One would hope that those poles are scheduled to be moved."

" Even without the poles, it is basically unusable. Motorists leaving their driveways do not expect cyclists coming down the sidewalk, and then you also have trash cans, pedestrians etc. Very unsafe."

" I will continue to take the lane along here which residents who cycle along here do too. Share the road. Wearing a helmet cam seems to help though, which shouldn't be the case."

"I'm on this road a lot and didn't realize the barriers were put up to create a bike lane? I thought it was just for pedestrians?" [this is a driver's comment]

" I doubt they are for a bike lane, but the problem is that a small minority of motorists see the barriers and the sidewalk and automatically figure that bikes should use that sidewalk. Even in this day and age there are still some motorists that need to be educated."

"I would be too scared to ride on that road! I don't even want to THINK about trying to fit around those poles without hitting something/someone! Horrible planning!!!"

"This road reminds me a bit of Cornwall St in Vancouver (Kitsilano): a busy road squished right up alongside expensive homes, no room at all for cyclists. It looks like the city thought of pedestrian safety, but did not give a second thought to cyclists."

"Share the Road is touted by ICBC yet so many don't realize that includes bicyclists."

"What concerns me is that River Road is the second street to have barriers installed on it recently, with a section of 132 Ave being the first. I hope this isn't a trend. These things eliminate escape routes for cyclists."

"I believe that 98% of accidents can be prevented by slowing down. It's a proven fact that reaction times are useless at high speeds, whereas they are much more effective at lower speeds. Speed kills. People need to stop thinking of themselves and realize it's not my fault or yours that they didn't get enough sleep, had to work late, slept in, etc. When I ride on River Road I take the lane whenever I feel my safety is in jeopardy, which is pretty much 100% of the time on that road. Traffic calming measures need to be implemented such as proper traffic circles, speed humps, etc. Speed kills, slow down!"

"Interesting letter and situation, but the cause of all the traffic lies elsewhere. Lougheed highway has been allowed to have so many lights that it is impractical as a car route. If i am driving through maple ridge i wont even consider lougheed or dewdney even if it's not rush hour due to how many lights are there"

"Yes, of course, traffic is like water. It'll always take the path with the least resistance. And no restrictions have been put on cars on River Road, only on bicycles and pedestrians, wheelchairs and strollers. Traffic lights on Lougheed are a necessity to allow people, whether in cars, on foot or by bike, to cross the road safely. This is what you get when you have these major highways slicing through a town, right along the whole length of it. If you want to reduce traffic on River Road, you need to put some restrictions on it. And that can be done. For the sake of local residents, pedestrians and cyclists."

"For the moment, I wonder if the City would consider painting a few of those white bicycle symbols on River Road? It is really the only east-west bike commuter route in that part of Maple Ridge, and it might educate that minority of motorists that think that bikes are toys that don't belong on the road."

"We just drove it this morning. That's the most ridiculous bandaid to date."

"The problem with the MR engineering dept runs much much deeper. They have allowed huge developments in east maple ridge without requiring transportation options to be included. There are no good bike routes, no rapid transit, spotty bus service, and only a few car routes." "Then a few bandaid solutions, but they've already pocketed their money so they don't care"

"What's funny is that my motor vehicle is a supercab pickup, and when driving River Road there is plenty of room to overtake cyclists. The lady that yelled at me recently to use the f***** bike lane was driving a little Honda."

"I think this area should have share the road signs. That might cut down on the harassment."

"I think cyclists in the area should all call the municipality and demand that Share the Road signs be put up ASAP. They broke it, so now it is up to them to fix it, before somebody gets hurt."

"Is River Road turning into a freeway?"

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Sent: Sunday, February 8, 2015 10:08 PM
Subject: Re: River Road traffic calming / barriers

Ms. Chow there was no consultation process pertaining to River Road in November 2014. The current stage of the River Road traffic calming initiative is that staff are evaluating the property and driveway impacts at the locations of the proposed traffic circles that were supported by the residents on River Road.

There was a large degree of support from residents for an interim sidewalk along River Road from Darby to Carhill and Council approved that construction in the Fall of 2014 - I am not sure of the date but likely in September. That work, including barriers to separate pedestrians from traffic, was completed by Operations crews. There has been a significant degree of support for the sidewalk expressed by River Road residents.

River Road is classified as a collector roadway. It is not identified as a bike route in the Transportation Plan, the network map that was prepared by the Bicycle Advisory Committee, which you may recall was chaired by a HUB member. The City has expended considerable funds on bicycle routes in this area, building the network identified by the BAC including the Loughheed MUP between Laity and 216.

I will have staff evaluate your requests for signage although I note we strive to ensure consistency across the City when it comes to traffic regulations. Similarly for your request for limiting traffic movements at intersections along River Road - this however, was not an issue raised by River Road residents through the public consultation.

David Pollock PEng.