



November 28, 2016

Kate McIntyre, 800 Robson Plaza Project Team, City of Vancouver
Dale Bracewell, Manager of Transportation Planning, City of Vancouver

Re: Proposed Changes to 800 Robson – Car Free Plaza

Dear Kate and Dale;

HUB Cycling is a charitable organization that works to make cycling better through education, events and collaboration. We are Metro Vancouver's leader in making cycling an attractive choice for everyone. The Vancouver UBC Local Committee of HUB Cycling has a Working Group of volunteers focused on Car Free Spaces, and we write today to provide input into the planning process for the 800 block of Robson (Block 51), and the plaza proposed to be constructed in that block.

HUB Cycling members are excited about the potential of the 800 block of Robson. However, we are concerned that no specific planning appears to be taking place for bike permeability through this space once the plaza is built. While this is not currently a dedicated bike route, it is an important east-west connector, particularly considering the poor cycling conditions on nearby streets such as Georgia. We note that cycling was planned for in the design and construction of the Jim Deva plaza, but that once that plaza was built conflicts arose and people on bikes have been instructed not to ride through the plaza. City workers on site have referred to the signs noting "No Vehicles" and advised people on bikes that they may not ride in this space. The time to plan for this issue in the 800 block of Robson is now.

We understand that this space is intended to be programmed for a portion of the time. If large scale events are taking place, it makes sense to us that temporary signs be erected asking people to walk their bikes. For the rest of the year, however, we think that it is better to have permanent surface signs at the entries to the plaza that note that cycling is permitted, and that people on bikes should proceed at walking speed. This is more effective than an artificial speed limit such as 15 km/hr, which is difficult to enforce. Signs referring to walking speed have been successfully used on the Ontario bikeway when the Dragon Boat festival has been on near the Creekside Community Centre.

Even with bicycling permitted at slow speed through the plaza, there will be times when the plaza needs to be closed for events. In this case, transportation planning needs to be done to create an alternate route. Detailed transportation planning referenced in the staff report of April 11 2016 from the GM of Engineering Services (RTS 11317) appears to be in process for private vehicles, and for transit, but not for cycling. This is an omission. At the least, a safe and protected bi directional All Ages and Abilities (AAA) route should be provided along Howe, and Smithe, to connect with the Hornby bikeway and to both directions of the 700 and 900 blocks of Robson.

We note that the City staff report, which went to Council, referred to closing this block to motor vehicle traffic, not to bicycles. In the 16-page report, there are many references to planning for transportation, but the only reference to bicycles is to potential changes to the vehicle parkade exit on Hornby which crosses the bicycle track. Addressing this hot spot is a positive step, but it doesn't go far enough in planning for cycling in this area.

We support the Active Transportation Policy Council (ATPC) motion on this issue, passed on March 2, 2016, and which resolved in part:

THAT the Active Transportation Policy Council urges City Council to make the 800 block of Robson Street a permanent space for non-motorized transportation after the 2016 construction is complete.

FURTHER THAT the design and activation plan ensures that all modes of active transportation are encouraged to use the space as much and as often as is feasible.

We believe that just as other aspects of the future use of this plaza are being planned, that bike permeability during low use times, and an alternate route for busy times, both need to be incorporated into the planning process.

We would be pleased to meet with both City Engineering and planning staff in regards to this planning process. We are available to answer any questions on this letter. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jeff Leigh
Chair, Vancouver UBC Local Committee
HUB Cycling