

Oct. 26, 2014

HUB Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows comments re final Strategic Transportation Plan

1. Public consultation inadequate

The 2014 Strategic Transportation Plan is not just an update, but a rewrite of the 2004 Plan. The draft Plan was posted on-line several months ago, but this was not publicly advertised in any way by the District (now City) as should be normal practice for any policy document during the public consultation stage as part of a transparent and open process. The two open houses, the survey and the consultation with the Bicycle Advisory Committee all took place before the actual document was put on-line without any fanfare.

This policy document is a very important one, at such a very critical time in our history - because of

- rapid population growth,
- global economic instability,
- significant climate change concerns,
- increasing congestion and decreasing livability due to our continued focus on cars as preferred mode of transportation,
- continuing development patterns (sprawl) outside the Town Core that favour the use of cars,
- the certainty of rising financial, environmental- and geopolitical costs of our oil addiction and our continued wasteful use of it for transportation purposes,
- the harmful effect of our continued reliance on cars on our health, which puts a huge burden on our health care system.

Furthermore, there's a significant on-going shift among the younger generations, who increasingly prefer alternative modes of getting around, including transit and cycling, for various reasons. Walkable/bikeable neighbourhoods are also "in" also among older generations. In order to attract millennials as well as the jobs that are needed to employ them locally, and to offer the quality of life that these types of neighbourhoods can offer to all residents, more effort needs to be made to cater to their needs and wishes.

Therefore this document deserves scrutiny by residents of Maple Ridge.

2. HUB input

As you may remember, HUB provided extensive input in May 2013.

Some of the key issues/recommendations mentioned in our input but not addressed in the Transportation Plan include:

- "The District should set cycling goals. HUB's suggestions include: 4% cycling mode share in 2020; increased number of women and children cycling, etc."
- "Cycling routes should be on streets with destinations, and frequent stop signs preventing cycling ease should be avoided." It is HUB's position that the Town Core multi-modal Transportation Plan, established in 2004, should be open for review as part of the rewrite of the Transportation Plan. We need to determine whether the plan has led to any increase in cycling by all ages and abilities (see previous point), and if a change in direction might be needed to achieve our goals. Baseline counts should be done, from which progress can be measured.
- 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;
- Making Lougheed part of the cycling network in the Town Core.
- Improved infrastructure around schools should go hand in hand with cycling education through all elementary schools.
- Putting in place a Complete Streets by-law (requires consideration of the needs of all road users when new streets are built, which is especially important for a rapidly growing community like Maple Ridge). There is no reason why we cannot use such a policy to ensure that proper cycling infrastructure is provided in all new development, where appropriate, so that we don't need to spend more later. Cycling facilities can also be included when existing roads are upgraded.
- "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.". Now that the first section of path has been completed, HUB strongly urges Council and staff to consult with cyclists - HUB could be of assistance - to determine whether with the present road configuration and path surface all types of cyclists are adequately accommodated, or certain improvements/changes are required before spending a further \$3 million out of the cycling budget to complete the path.
- "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 as planned "cycling infrastructure". 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." The risk of bike lanes between parked cars and moving cars without a proper buffer can not be over-estimated. Accidents caused by inattentive drivers are often very difficult to avoid for cyclists in these circumstances and these types of facilities

generally don't appeal to any types of cyclists and actually may provide a false sense of safety to inexperienced cyclists.

- Separated bike facilities along Lougheed east of town core to Albion. For many people in Albion this is the only direct connection when cycling to or from the Town Core and beyond. The actual speeds east of the Town Core are often significantly over the posted speed limit (at times double the speed limit or even more). Enforcement is rather infrequent and does not seem to make a difference due to the road design which encourages speeding.
- "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 development, 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.

3. Further comments regarding contents of actual Plan

Key points:

1. The bulk of (long-term) spending for cycling as proposed in the Transportation Plan seems to be shoulders along rural roads. Much of this type of infrastructure will be used by road cyclists as well as local residents on foot and on horseback, and sometimes parking, so these are multi-use (not just cycling) facilities. According to the consultant, investments in walking should be made where we can get the biggest bang for the buck. The same should be said for cycling: the primary focus should be on areas where the biggest gains can be made, which is where people of all ages and abilities can use their bikes for short trips (to school, shopping, errands, etc.).
2. The focus should be on **all ages all abilities** (AAA) infrastructure. A complete AAA network has the most potential to lead to more cycling.

Under "Strategic Transportation Goals" (page 2): Affordable Transportation System: "Provide transportation infrastructure and services in a cost-effective and efficient manner that makes best use of existing facilities and projected resources. This will include maximizing opportunities to make beneficial investments, improving existing infrastructure, and prioritizing transit." **Walking and cycling should also be prioritized**, since transit is not a door-to-door transportation mode and many people who use transit will need to/can walk or bike to complete either end of their journey.

Under **Goal #2: Transportation Choice: 2.1 Integrate Travel Modes**: "Plan for the integration and balance for all modes on most urban streets within the city." The word '*balanced*' is sometimes used to argue that further investment in cycling is not justified, since most people drive. It is HUB's position that there is a significant **imbalance** because of 1. the existing gaps in our cycling network, 2. the types of

infrastructure provided that are not always considered safe for all ages and abilities, and 3. cars generally get direct, convenient, fast, comfortable and safer routes, whereas cyclists often get indirect, inconvenient, slow, less comfortable and in certain ways not necessarily safer routes.

Further to the previous comment, HUB is of the opinion that a "level of service" (LOS) measurement should apply not only to cars, but to pedestrians and cyclists as well, since the goal is to "**Provide for safe, convenient and accessible movement of people, goods and services throughout the District.**", so not just for cars.

HUB would like to see Council to show its commitment to fully integrate walking and cycling in our transportation system by instructing staff to start work on a detailed **Active Transportation Plan**, in recognition of the fact that walking and cycling can bring many benefits to our community, as listed in the comments HUB provided to Council in May 2013 (also attached to e-mail for your convenience).

HUB would like to see **the input received from residents added as appendix** to the plan. Residents need to know whether or not their input has been considered. Through HUB, 20 volunteers have assisted the District (/City) with a thorough assessment of the cycling network in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows in 2011. Neither this, nor the extensive written input by HUB, was mentioned in the Plan, and it is unclear whether or not any of the input has been used for the Transportation Plan.

The continued focus on cars as the prioritized mode of transportation means ever increasing need for parking. There's a significant cost of providing this additional parking to businesses, the municipality and thus tax payers and consumers. Therefore a **parking strategy** should be an integrated part of the Transportation Plan.

The joint Bicycle Advisory Committee had its last meeting in June 2013, after which it was no longer operational due to Pitt Meadows starting its own Active Transportation Advisory Committee. The remaining Maple Ridge contingent was consequently no longer able to continue its work of providing input and recommendations to Council and staff. BAC members have therefore only been able to view the materials displayed at the open houses, but have not been able to scrutinize the actual Plan and provide further input. HUB urges Council to wait with adoption of the STP until the future Transportation Advisory Committee has had an opportunity to review and comment on it. We haven't had an adopted Transportation Plan for 10 years, so we can wait a few more months.

Thank you for considering our comments.