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*Metro Vancouver's Cycling Advocates*



Friday, July 29, 2011

Dear Mike Anderson, Paul Krueger, and the Transportation 2040 Planning Team,

Thank you for presenting at our meeting on June 22 regarding the preliminary planning efforts and ideas currently being discussed and considered for Vancouver's new long-range transportation plan. In addition to our individual survey responses, members of the VACC's Vancouver/UBC Advocacy Committee have collaboratively compiled the attached document, designed to share ideas constructively with the City of Vancouver.

While we recognize that this document has no formal status within the consultation process, we would be happy to elaborate on recommendations, share further ideas, and/or receive feedback on the material contained within at any point during the Transportation 2040 planning process. Some of the ideas and recommendations contained here may be valuable at this stage in the process, or may be more useful at a future point - or in other planning exercises.

On behalf of our executive and committee of volunteer researchers, route assessors, and everyday cycling advocates, I would like to thank you for reaching out to the cycling community and making active transportation a key part of Vancouver's transportation future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Gould".

Brian Gould, MCP  
Chair, Transportation Plan Subcommittee



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## **Preface**

As the most energy efficient mode of transportation, cycling has an important role to play in reaching Vancouver's Greenest City goals. Infrastructure costs and time-frames limit transit's near-term potential, while developable land within walking distance of downtown is restricted. The current lack of a high quality network for people of all ages and abilities is a hindrance, but also an opportunity in that it suggests a great potential for cycling - especially as compared to the great cycling cities of the world and their happy, healthy populations.

While health, both through personal fitness and pollution reduction, is a benefit of cycling, safety is largely a separate phenomenon. Safety is key to increasing cycling, and increasing cycling leads to safety in numbers. Actual and perceived safety for many untapped demographics relies on reducing motor vehicle speeds and sizes and/or separating cyclists in high-quality facilities. Injury and fatality rates must be dramatically addressed with the eventual goal of no deaths or serious injuries on the streets of Vancouver; the onus must be on drivers of heavy and fast vehicles, rather than solely on the vulnerable road users they threaten.

## **Land Use**

Land use planning must support and complement active transportation and transit networks. Corridor planning (e.g. Cambie, Broadway), neighbourhood plans, and decisions for infill and new developments must support mixed use, compact, and complete communities that permit short trips to work and for daily activities. Vancouver's dwindling industrial land base and unaffordable housing must be addressed to avoid forcing people out of the range where cycling is a viable option.

Access to bicycles and transit should be prioritized over access to motor vehicle parking, while city-wide economic incentives should promote living and working in ways that don't require cars (e.g. location efficient mortgages, mandated unbundled parking, maximum parking requirements, permits to allow conversion of existing parking to storage units). Large development sites should be oriented to keep car traffic off of nearby bicycle routes, with cars kept to the periphery of the development where possible. Density should be shaped to ensure high levels of bicycle commuting; while rapid transit relies on concentrations at stations, cyclists are free to travel the grid but prefer shorter distances. Public services should be located to support these goals, with community facilities such as schools providing high-quality parking and end-of-use facilities for staff.

## **Walking**

When sidewalks and pedestrian paths have poor surfaces and are cluttered with obstacles, people will walk or wheel along the adjacent bicycle path or separated bike lane instead (e.g. the path by the new convention centre). Saw-cut concrete should be preferred, with any blocks set in concrete so they don't move and become uneven. Signs, poles, benches, garbage cans, newspaper boxes, bicycle racks, patios, and trees should be organized to maintain sufficient usable sidewalk width. Some suggestions include signs and lights attached to buildings, painted curbs to indicate stopping/parking restrictions, and bicycle corrals/parklet patios using road space rather than sidewalk space.

Pedestrian and cyclist goals are sometimes seen to conflict, but this is often artificial and avoidable. Curbside traffic lanes (e.g. Nelson/Smith) put cars too close to pedestrians on sidewalks, but these can be buffered with bike lanes to access the Cambie Bridge. The east sidewalk on the Burrard Bridge should be returned to pedestrians by providing a northbound bike lane, with crosswalks restored. The current pedestrian half-signals create confusion as cross-traffic follows the pedestrian signals and ignores the stop signs, while pedestrians fail to observe the red light. Concentrating stings on bicycle routes rather than addressing universal issues can seem discriminatory.

## **Cycling**

Vancouver should plan for a dramatically expanded cycling network, with separated lanes on arterials, striped or separated lanes on connectors, calming on residential streets, and car-limited greenways. To maximize impact, utility, and ridership by multiplying possible connections, the cycling network should be expanded as quickly as



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possible - in 3 to 5 years, following the example of successful cities.

This network would extend through parks, reach every school, and provide city- and region-wide safe routes for cycling through governmental cooperation. It would be filled with the help of a city-wide bike share program (helmet-optional, recognizing the safety of these new routes and convenience). All commercial and multi-family buildings providing off-street automobile parking would have quality parking for bicycles.

In addition to a comprehensive network along city streets, all water crossings should be bicycle friendly. Granville, Second Narrows, and other bridges are unacceptably poor for both cyclists and pedestrians. A northbound lane should be added to the Burrard Bridge, and connections improved. Connections to the Cambie path are circuitous or dangerous, and should be addressed. Where room cannot be found for cyclists and pedestrians to cross waterways and tracks on existing bridges, new bridges may be required.

### **Education and Encouragement**

The Transportation Plan should include a section on education and encouragement measures aimed at helping people cycle. In North America, many adults and children have never received any form of bike training, which is leading to a growing population of people who are unable to cycle safely and respectfully. Education measures should start at an early age with bike training included as part of the school curriculum and a program similar to what children receive should be offered to adult Vancouver residents. Current efforts aim to create a standard for cycling education in BC, and the City should support this.

Education around new - and existing - infrastructure is key to both motorist and cyclist understanding of innovative features such as bike boxes and cross-bikes, as well as the rights and responsibilities both groups share on the road. Encouragement is also critical in this phase of city cycling and a multi-stakeholder promotional campaign is needed to support cycling growth and safety. This campaign could be similar to the WorkSafe BC "Slow Down" campaign.

### **Street Network**

A fine grained street grid for walking and cycling should be maintained and expanded where possible, especially during redevelopment projects, to make trips shorter and more varied. Alleys can be upgraded and animated, with mid-block crossings, and pedestrian/car-free zones created. Two-way bike lanes can mitigate detours caused by one-way streets. The Georgia and Dunsmuir viaducts should be replaced with an at-grade street grid without reducing the quality of the bicycle connection to downtown.

Partial street closures are easily and commonly defeated, treated as chicanes, while diagonal diverters and mini-parks are more successful. Speed limits on bicycle routes/greenways should continue to be reduced to 30 km/h as a matter of policy, with a city-wide assessment of appropriate limits for all users' safety as a companion initiative. Physical interventions to support this limit should improve safety in other ways (e.g. "daylighting" for crosswalks with bulb-outs).

### **Public Spaces**

The City should implement parklet and 'Pavement to Parks' projects, as in San Francisco and New York City, particularly near transit stops and cafes. These projects can be used as traffic calming along bicycle routes; street "closures" should, of course, be bicycle-permeable. Greenways should have widened sidewalks and limited car access. Businesses that activate the greenway can be allowed to share the public realm with amenities such as cafe seating and planters.

The seawall should continue to be extended, ultimately to all city waterways. Older sections should be rebuilt to new "best practice" standards, providing separation and visual clarity between bicycling and pedestrian lanes. Cooperative agreements with the Parks Board should extend bike routes through parks where applicable and beneficial.



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Public spaces can benefit from transportation nodes, such as Waterfront Station. This regional transit hub could have a plaza on its west side (replacing the parkade), bus bays on its east side, a new transit galleria on its north side, and extensive bike rental and bike-share facilities.

### **Transit**

Transit and bicycling are complementary modes of transportation. Cycling is an effective solution to the “last mile” issue, and increased cycling can also help reduce peak loading issues with transit service. Unfortunately, major transit projects, such as the Canada Line, have missed opportunities to build on this relationship. Particular attention to integrating cycling and transit along the Broadway Corridor should be paid; the opportunity to provide any kind of bicycle lanes along Broadway would likely be precluded by LRT or BRT, and the current study has not taken this into account.

To capture the synergies of the two modes, integration is key. It is therefore critical to ensure safe and easy approaches to transit stations, as well as room for bicycles at stations and on transit vehicles. Current bike racks on buses do not always satisfy demand, and SkyTrain passengers, with or without bicycles, would benefit from vertical bike racks. Secure and covered parking at and around transit stations/major bus stops, as well as bike share stations located near stations, can help lessen the demand for limited space for bikes on transit.

### **Demand Management**

Employers that provide mileage reimbursement for work related travel should be required to do the same for those employees that choose to cycle. At those workplaces where a parking space is provided, employees should have the option to cash-out of their spot. In addition to simple fairness, this would provide an incentive to encourage people to find alternative commuting options.

Currently many residential and office buildings in Vancouver do not allow bicycles inside or offer anything other than the bike racks and sign poles available on the sidewalk. Due to the high degree of bike theft in the city, as well as the toll rainy weather takes on a bicycle, many people are not comfortable leaving a bicycle locked up outside. It should be required that all buildings allow bicycles full access to elevators and that restrictions to bringing bicycles inside offices and residences be lifted, as has been similarly implemented recently in New York City.

### **Low-carbon Vehicles**

Lighter, smaller, and slower motor vehicles should be encouraged for their lower emissions and increased safety for drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians. The batteries required for smaller, lighter electric vehicles are affordable today. Parking for small vehicles should be prioritized - less expensive and/or more convenient - and located near intersections to improve visibility and thus safety for drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians.

The overall size and weight of motor vehicles should be reduced through parking policies and other measures such as vehicle levies with higher costs for heavier and larger vehicles. On streets where wide vehicles cannot park without encroaching on the bike lane, they should be banned. At the same time, careful consideration must be given to the status of electric scooters marketed as bicycles with removable pedals, and to ensuring that riders are neither endangered by fast automobile traffic, nor are allowed to endanger cyclists in bike lanes.

### **Goods and Service**

Freight movement plays a critical role in our economy. However, the large vehicles frequently used in moving goods can pose a threat to the environment and to the safety of cyclists. In order to minimize these joint threats, the Transportation Plan should include a commitment to increase creative alternatives to large trucks for freight movement. As a first priority, the City should encourage the use of cargo-cycles and other human-powered goods vehicles. Smaller vehicles are appropriate for Vancouver's narrow streets and high pedestrian densities.