

January 20, 2018

E-mail from Jackie Chow to Mayor and Council

cc: David Pollock, P.Eng.

Re: Council Workshop January 9, 2018

Cycling on the sidewalk on certain street segments in downtown Maple Ridge

Mayor and Council,

I would like to make the following comments after listening to Council members' comments made during Council Workshop of January 9 with regard to banning cycling on the sidewalks on certain sections of streets in the downtown core.

First of all, it's nice to once again hear the voice of reason: thank you Councillor Speirs, for standing up for the needs of people on bikes of all ages and abilities, and for a healthier, more livable city that works for everyone, not just for those in cars!

The topic of cycling on the sidewalks has come back time and time again over the past decade since the by-law allowing it in Maple Ridge came into force.

I'll just repeat some points that our HUB Committee has tried to explain to respective Councils over the years:

- The only effective way to solve the problem of cycling on the sidewalk is to give people on bikes a safe place on the road. Even if it is no longer allowed, people will continue to ride on the sidewalk (the majority will do so with due care and consideration) as long as they fear for their lives when riding on the road.
- Under the by-law that's now to be rescinded, cycling on the sidewalk is only allowed **with due care and consideration**. That means that the by-law already gave the RCMP the full ability to address irresponsible behaviour. There is no reason whatsoever to assume that this behaviour will change by banning cycling on certain sidewalks. The changed by-law will, however, make our downtown less accessible and welcoming for the law-abiding segment of the cycling population, as the RCMP have already stated they will now need to go after **all** people on bikes who seek refuge on the sidewalk, whether they ride with due care and consideration or not.

I sincerely hope that this will not distract the RCMP from dealing with the more serious dangers on our roads: speeding, distracted driving and otherwise irresponsible behaviour by drivers who can and do kill and maim their fellow road users.

I totally understand the concern that especially elderly pedestrians have with those riding their bikes on the sidewalks "zooming" along with no consideration for the safety of others.

However, somehow the concerns that people on bikes have about hostile, aggressive and inconsiderate behaviour of some drivers (it only takes one!) continue to be entirely ignored by the majority of

members of Council. As Coun. Speirs rightly stated: "there's a big difference between being scared as a senior and being dead as a cyclist".

A few more years and I'll be part of the senior demographic myself. I find it totally incomprehensible that my life only appears to matter as a pedestrian, but is seen as expendable when I happen to be riding my bike, senior or no senior. I've met numerous seniors who get around by bike, whether by necessity or by choice. I think they should be enthusiastically welcomed to our downtown, and they should be encouraged in their efforts to keep active and healthy for as long as they possibly can. We're making it pretty darn difficult for them sometimes!

Hopefully, now that the decision has been made, we can move on and do more to make people on bikes feel more welcome and safe in our downtown, and to improve designated bike routes in the downtown core, which are still mostly no more than lines on a map. There should be more to a designated bike route than merely directing people on bikes away from the more convenient and busier routes, and to the routes with all the stop signs, where the cyclist is almost always required to give the right of way to the car.

Safer cyclists means safer pedestrians. Dangerous road conditions for cyclists means more dangerous sidewalk conditions for pedestrians AND cyclists. Increasing density in our downtown makes cycling an increasingly viable mode of transportation, but only when and if cyclists are given a safe space.

I would further like to touch on some comments made by Coun. Shymkiw, who appears to blame bikes for congestion and increased greenhouse gas emissions due to "ripping out car lanes and replacing them with bike lanes". He's even of the opinion that bikes should be banned altogether. Some on Council may seem to find his comments hilariously funny, however, we're talking about human lives here, and I feel any comments made in a Council meeting regarding life and death issues should be taken dead serious.

I would like to point out that:

- Nowhere in Maple Ridge have road lanes been taken away from cars and given to bikes. On 203rd Street residents now have less public street parking due to the cycle track, but the available road space for moving cars has not changed. Ample street parking is still available in the area. Reduced parking on this street does not result in congestion. Cars are still prioritized above every other road user on every single road in Maple Ridge. Congestion is caused by too many cars on our roads, and a lack of viable alternative transportation options. Bikes can cause delays for cars where they are forced to use narrow road lanes, and no bike lanes, shoulders or separated infrastructure are available. The problem is poor infrastructure, not the presence of bikes.
- Community greenhouse gas emissions in our city from transportation sources are almost entirely caused by cars and trucks - not by bikes - and they're going up. Maple Ridge has committed to reducing community greenhouse gas emissions by 33% from 2007 levels by 2020, regardless of our population growth. I find it very disturbing that reducing greenhouse gasses is seen as a joke, judging from the suggestion by Coun. Shymkiw to ban bikes and push more people into cars. Scientists are overwhelmingly in agreement that climate change is for a large part to be blamed on human activity. I think that, being among the biggest emitters in the world, as Canadians we have a

responsibility to our children and to those living in the countries and regions most seriously affected by climate change, to take this issue most seriously and to offer individuals the opportunity to do their share.

- As to cyclists inhaling harmful emissions: again, the emissions are caused by cars. People on bikes tend to avoid the main roads where feasible, mostly avoiding adverse effects on their health. As our road system presently doesn't always provide alternative routes, using (sometimes sidewalks along) the main roads is not always avoidable. In future more and more cars will be electric, and harmful effects from emissions (as well as excessive noise pollution from cars and trucks) will be significantly reduced, which is why planning for fast and convenient bike routes along the main corridors makes a lot of sense. It most definitely does NOT make sense to ban the bike. The general and overwhelming consensus is that cycling provides numerous health benefits that far outweigh the negative health effects (lots of empirical evidence available, Mr. Shymkiw!).

With kind regards,

Jackie Chow
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