



## Assessment of Bute Street

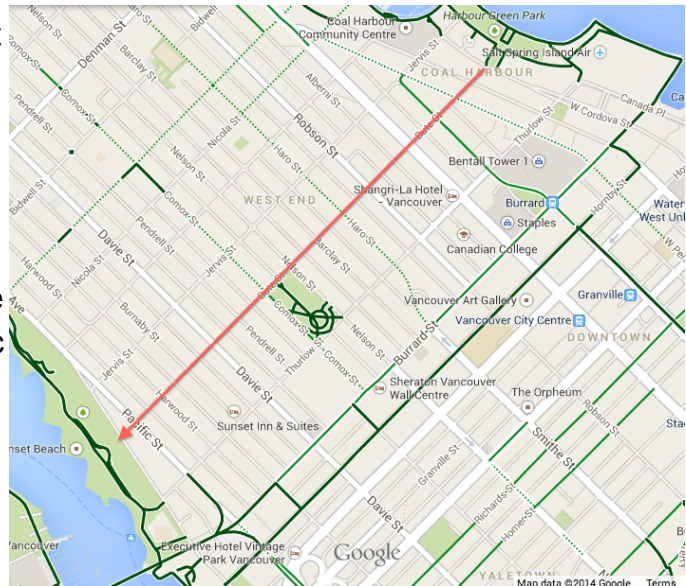
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

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Bute Street is a quiet street that provides an excellent cycling route for cyclists riding from the West End across the Burrard Bridge. It is also useful for people who want to shop or socialize on Robson and Davie streets, and could potentially connect the north and south seawalls. With some minor improvements this could easily become a great official bike route.

When people are cycling from downtown Vancouver to the Burrard Bridge, there are a lack of north-south official bike routes west of Burrard Street. The next north-south bicycle route west of Burrard is Cardero, which is six blocks west. The next bicycle route east is Hornby, one block east of Burrard, but for a person located west of Burrard who wants to cross the Burrard Bridge, using it would require crossing Burrard Street twice. Burrard itself has a painted lane for cycling heading south. However, the street is very busy with fast moving traffic on both sides of the bike lane, and cyclists are often squeezed in between two buses, or driven off the bike lane by motorists that do not respect the markings on the road - in short, it is a dangerous route, and many cyclists avoid it for this reason. Cardero and Hornby are 1100 metres apart which would make Bute Street, located almost exactly between them, an ideal choice for a new cycle route.



Bute Street is located just two blocks west of Burrard, and offers a potential bike route that

could connect the northern seawall with the southern seawall, as well as connecting to several other official cycling routes: Melville, Comox, Haro, Pacific and the Burrard Bridge separated bike lane. It crosses two of the main entertainment and shopping streets of the West End: Davie and Robson, as well as crossing the main thoroughfare of Georgia.

Due to previously implemented traffic calming measures along Bute, most of its length has low traffic volumes and legal parking only on one side, leaving ample room for both bicycles and cars. Nevertheless, on a careful assessment of the length of Bute conducted in May 2014, we found several areas that could be improved, and which are detailed below. In brief, the section north of Haro has high traffic volume; the centre is fairly good already; the section south of Harwood is hilly. In the mini-parks the separation of pedestrians and cyclists could be improved. Signage along the route (both for directions and for safety) is lacking.

While having a route from Seawall to Seawall would be ideal, the section between Haro and Burnaby is the most useful segment to focus attention on since it is flat and already for the most part, nice to cycle on.

This document includes three sections:

1. Detailed Assessment
2. Suggested Solutions
3. General Comments and conclusion

## **1. Detailed Assessment (North to South)**

- **North Seawall Connection and Cordova St.**

Bute starts on a terrace above the level of the seawall. Cyclist accessible ramps exist on both the east and west sides, but we did not see signage (for north-bound cyclists) indicating that the ramps lead to the seawall.

- **Cordova to Robson St.**

This section is busy with relatively high traffic volume, and is relatively narrow. There is a painted bike lane on Melville (one way, due west), which at the moment leads to a difficult crossing at the corner of Jervis. The crossing of Georgia is a major crossing, and it is necessary to allow cars on the north side an easy way to turn west onto Georgia, while protecting cyclists at the junction.

- **Robson St. to Haro St.**

Robson is a busy shopping street with many restaurants, which a Bute bike route would make more accessible for cyclists. Haro is a bike route that the Bute route would connect to. Bute is blocked to motorized traffic just south of Haro to the alley. Many people walk through here and there is a fountain which people both walking and cycling must swerve around. Also there is no indication of where is the best space to cycle or to walk.

- **Haro St. to Comox St.**

From Haro to Comox, Bute is a quiet residential street, with very low traffic volume, with legal parking only on one side and lots of space for bicyclists. At Comox, the Bute bike route would cross the Comox-Helmcken Greenway route, providing another useful east-west connection. There is a large park and playground along Bute, just north of Comox, that is popular with families with kids who could benefit from a safe route to the park.

- **Comox St. to Davie St.**

Bute is blocked to cars at the corner of Pendrell. We noted that the curb is unattractive, with plastic orange markers. It is inconvenient to cycle from the street up to the sidewalk and back. The angles of the ramps (for bicycle use) cause someone cycling to have to make a difficult S-curve to get through it. The steering angles can confuse pedestrians who must try to guess which way the cyclists will head. On both sides of the blockage there is a curve in the road and cars come around it at high speeds. Just north of Davie, to the next alley, there is often fast traffic with cars looking for parking, turning around, or pulling into the alley, and traffic calming may be necessary. Between the alley and Davie, the motor vehicle traffic is often too fast.

- **Davie St.**

Davie is a busy entertainment and shopping street that deserves better cycling access. There are stores on Bute near the corner of Davie, including a fruit store, a liquor store and a coffee shop, which the Bute bike route would allow easy access to. South of Davie the road has been blocked to cars with a temporary blockage for the last year or two and there are picnic tables there. Signs asks cyclists to dismount and walk their bikes, but this is rarely necessary and is often not followed by cyclists passing through the park. For cyclists crossing Davie heading south, they might end up yielding to pedestrians while having to wait on the roadside in the path of cars. In addition, this intersection is pedestrian controlled (using buttons at the crossing), but there are no buttons for cyclists. There is some bicycle parking but not enough.

- **Burnaby St. to Pacific St.**

At Burnaby, there is a bike-permeable cul-de-sac. There is a small bicyclist stop sign at the corner of Burnaby and Bute, which could be moved back. The crossing itself is awkward, allowing very little space for cyclists to squeeze on both sides of a yellow pole blocking motorized traffic. It is difficult and unsafe to cross Pacific at the moment, due to fast motor vehicle traffic and a lack of visibility (especially looking east).

- **Connection to Burrard Bridge and South Seawall**

From the proposed Bute bike route, it is expected that many cyclists would connect to the Burrard Bridge separated bike lane. This could be done by turning left onto Pacific. Pacific suffers from high volume, fast motor vehicle traffic and cycling on it from Bute to Thurlow is dangerous at the moment. Another option for connecting to Burrard is to direct cyclists along Drake St. or Harwood St. for two blocks, until they would meet up with the Burrard St. separated bike lane. Ideally both of these options would be implemented. The crossing of Beach Ave. to the South Seawall could be improved, but there is good cycling access to the seawall from there.

## **2. Suggested Solutions**

- **North Seawall Connection and Cordova St.**

The crossing of Cordova would be improved by green paint on the road and a ramp allowing easier passage from the road to the sidewalk (and the seawall beyond) and vice versa.

- **Cordova to Robson St.**

Ideally a separated bike lane could protect cyclists (at the cost of parking spaces), but at the minimum a painted bike lane is needed, possibly between the parked cars and the curb.

- **Robson St. to Haro St.**

Bute is blocked to motorized traffic just south of Haro to the alley. There are many pedestrians using this mini-park so it would benefit from having a marked and separated path for cycling.

- **Haro St. to Comox St.**

There should be a sign at Bute and Nelson informing people of the Comox Greenway just ahead. There is a large park and playground along Bute St., just north of Comox, that is popular with families with kids who could benefit from a safe route to the park. We had an idea of extending the park to the area between Comox St. and the alley

north of it, along Bute St., creating a nice pedestrian/cyclist zone and further calming motor traffic along Bute.

- **Davie St.**

It would be straightforward to mark cycling lanes in both directions and add signage instructing cyclists to yield to pedestrians. In fact, we noticed that the picnic tables which were once scattered around are now positioned to leave strips of road on both sides, implying that two one-way cycle tracks on each side are the “desire lines” for cycling through this new park. This would allow people to cycle through more easily. It’s unreasonable to expect someone to dismount 100% of the time, even at night in the winter for example. The rules should fit the reality which is that most of the time cycling through here is not a problem. Defining priorities (what mode yields to the other) and delineating space on the ground will probably work better. We also suggest to move the east-west pedestrian crossing on the south side of Davie further south making a space to wait and yield to pedestrians without blocking an east-west travel lane. Add cycle push buttons or make it into a timed intersection. Add more cycle parking.

- **Burnaby St. to Pacific St.**

There is a small cyclist stop sign at the corner of Burnaby and Bute, which could be moved back. Perhaps a button with a yellow flashing light would help, as well as marking on the road and perhaps disallowing a parking space or two.

### **3. General Comments and Conclusion**

- **Cyclists heading north**

We anticipate this route being used in its entirety mostly by cyclists heading south, but the section north of Burnaby St. should be equally usable by cyclists going in either direction. The southern section suffers from a steep uphill (when cycling north) which is repeated in neighbouring streets, which might deter cyclists from connecting to it from the seawall - and for this reason we anticipate it not being used in the north direction for this section.

- **Signage**

We anticipate the need for good wayfinding signage at the connections to the seawall, to the other bike routes, to Davie and Robson Streets and especially to the Burrard Bridge.

- **Additional alternatives**

Because Bute Street south of Burnaby is steep, we suggest also that more gradual streets be designated as well to feed into Bute from the west. Two obvious possibilities would be Burnaby Street and Harwood Street from (at least) Cardero. No special treatment might be needed but having a designation would mean they would appear on a map and then be chosen when people are planning a route (and they appear to be quiet streets).

In conclusion, we believe that the Bute bike route would be an excellent official Vancouver bike route, due to the many connections it offers to other routes and important thoroughfares; the fact that it crosses the West End from north to south; the distance and spacing from Bute to alternative north-south bike routes on Cardero and Hornby; and the quiet and peaceful cycling along most of the route. We think that the improvements proposed would be relatively inexpensive considering the potential benefits.

The HUB Vancouver-UBC Committee would be pleased to discuss this assessment further if any questions arise. Thank you for your consideration of these improvements.

Sincerely,

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