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Metro Vancouver's Cycling Advocates



Dec 17, 2011

Chair and Board of Directors
TransLink

Dear Chair and Board of Directors:

Re: Deficiencies in cycling infrastructure on Golden Ears Bridge and approaches

The Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition (VACC) encourages all levels of government to make cycling a safe and enjoyable means of transportation for everyone.

We are pleased that Bob Paddon, TransLink's Vice President of Customer and Public Engagement, signed the Charter of Seville at the 2011 Velo-City Conference in Seville, Spain. The charter outlines 15 reasons why investment in cycling is such a sensible way to improve transportation. Among the suggestions are to create "safe and comfortable infrastructure for cycling" and "to prioritize walking, cycling and transit" over car-oriented transport.

We would like to acknowledge TransLink for providing cycling infrastructure associated with the Golden Ears Bridge project. The bridge has opened up an important regional cycling connection across the Fraser River. We also appreciate that off road paths were created as part of the project as these have the potential to encourage many people from ages 8 to 80 to cycle.

However, we are concerned that, contrary to our expectations, cycling access to the shoulders of the approaching roadways on the north side of the bridge has been prohibited. We are also concerned with several safety issues related to cycling access to the bridge which remain unresolved.

Before the bridge was built, representatives of the VACC and the British Columbia Cycling Coalition (BCCC) had several discussions with project staff, including Fred Cummings, Project Director, on how the bridge could best be designed to accommodate cyclists. We were promised that cyclists could use the shoulders of the approach roadways at the north end of the bridge with the exception of the northbound section between Maple Meadows Way and Lougheed Highway. You can understand our disappointment that cycling on these approach roadways has so far been prohibited, even though there appear to be no substantive reasons to prohibit cycling and we believe the roadways to be appropriate for cyclists to use. We ask that you permit cyclists to use the shoulders of the roadways in order to provide fast, efficient access to and from the bridge.

Our second area of concern is the treatment of the cycling approaches to the bridge and also the multi-use paths constructed to provide cycling and pedestrian access on the north end of the bridge.

Photographs illustrating some of these issues are appended to this letter. Starting at the south end of the bridge and moving north, our concerns include the following:

- Contrary to what we had expected, there are no designed transitions for cyclists from the roadway that constitutes the only cycling access on the south side of the bridge to the multi-use paths on the bridge structure. Rather, cyclists are channelled to a pedestrian wheelchair ramp and crosswalk.
- A set of baffles has been installed near the crosswalk. Even though they have been adjusted once, these baffles are spaced in such a way as to make passage by bicycle trailers and tandem bikes difficult if not impossible.



- A set of two bollards spaced less than 90 cm apart has been installed on each of the immediate approach and departure to the bridge sidewalks. These bollards are improperly located, spaced and marked. One of our members suffered serious bruising when crashing into one of the improperly placed bollards. We question the need for both baffles and bollards at this location. Surely one or the other, properly designed in accordance with contemporary guidelines, would suffice.



- The ramps that provide cycling access to and from the bridge paths on the north side appear to have been designed as “sidewalk crossings” (i.e., reinforced, ramped sidewalk sections designed for the passage of motor vehicles). These are less than ideal for cyclists transitioning from the bridge path to the roadway shoulder and hazardous for cyclists transitioning from the roadway

shoulder onto the bridge path due to the need to cross a raised lip at an oblique angle. This condition is known to cause falls when cyclists' front wheels are diverted by the lip.



- The multi-use paths approaching the north side of the bridge are plagued by issues similar to those mentioned above. The paths are provided with a centre-line dividing directions of travel, a welcome measure. However, bollards have been placed in the centre of each directional “lane” rather than on the centre-line. Ambiguous transitions for cyclists exist at street crossings and at a traffic circle. More guidance signing is needed and some that exists is confusing. An unusual intersection bears warning signs for path users to “watch for motorists” but no warnings at all for motorists approaching what is essentially an uncontrolled blind corner.



- Apart from the improper placement of bollards we are also concerned about the design of the bollards. All appear to have a base which is raised above the level of the path. If bollards are knocked out or removed this raised lip remains as a virtually invisible hazard.

With regard to bollard placement, recognized best practices include the following:

- Bollards and baffles should only be installed where needed. If there is uncertainty it is better to leave them out and install them later only if the need is established.
- Bollards should be installed in odd-numbered groups (preferable one, but 3 or more if needed), with one bollard on the centre of the two way path.

- The centre bollard should be marked with a yellow line on both approaches, and an elongated diamond marking should be placed around the bollard in order to guide users around it. Depending on circumstances, it may also be appropriate to mark any additional bollards with similar white lines.
- Bollards should be located well back of conflict points. Bollards constitute a potential hazard to cyclists and as such will focus their attention. While cyclists are focused on negotiating bollards they are less able to attend to other conflicts.
- There should be a minimum of 1.5 m, and preferably 1.8 m, clear space between bollards (and between bollards and other obstructions such as utility poles, railings or walls).
- Bollards that are designed to be removable should not have protruding bases (i.e. bases should be flush with the surface so as not to create a hazard when bollards are removed).

As TransLink commissioned this bridge and as the hazards noted above were created during bridge construction, we believe that TransLink should be responsible for and take a lead role in repairing these conditions. Also, please note that these conditions create a potential liability for TransLink should they result in serious injury to a cyclist. We ask that TransLink address these concerns as quickly as possible and welcome any dialogue with TransLink that could be helpful in resolving them.

We trust that TransLink will follow the suggestions contained in the Charter of Seville and facilitate safe, comfortable and efficient cycling across the Fraser on the Golden Ears Bridge and throughout Metro Vancouver.

Sincerely,

Alexander Clarkson

Director, Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition