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Assessment Report

River Road: No. 6 Rd – Westminster Hwy, Richmond, BC

ATTN: Joan Caravan, Transportation Planner, City of Richmond
Victor Wei, Director, Transportation, City of Richmond

HUB Cycling is a charitable organization that works to make cycling better through education, events, and collaboration. We are Metro Vancouver's leader in making cycling an attractive choice for everyone and have more than 2,000 members and 38,000 direct supporters. The HUB Cycling- Richmond / YVR Local Committee is one of HUB Cycling's 11 volunteer committees that encourages cycling for all ages and abilities (AAA) in municipalities across Metro Vancouver.

1. Background on River Road

River Road is a rural country road with narrow 3 metre lanes, heavy truck traffic (between No. 6 and 8 Roads), no shoulders, and a 50km/hr speed limit that is consistently broken, with speeds frequently reaching the 80+km/h level. Although a common cycle route on the weekends- including use by many cycling clubs- River Road is unsafe for vulnerable road users and very dangerous at peak commuting times. Currently, "*Caution Watch for Cyclists*" signs are installed periodically between No. 6 Rd and Westminster Hwy. Double yellow lines have been removed where possible to allow motor vehicles to legally pass people cycling by entering the oncoming lane when safe. During peak travel times, motor vehicles are reluctant to wait behind slower moving cyclists and pass too closely without slowing down. Given a number of fatalities—including but not limited to those of people cycling--along River Road in the last several years, HUB Cycling's Richmond Local Committee deems the section along River Road between No. 6 Road and Westminster Hwy to be unsafe for all road users.

2. Assessment Ride Overview

In the Spring of 2018, HUB Richmond conducted an assessment ride of River Road between No. 6 Road and Westminster Hwy. The purpose of this Assessment Ride was twofold:

1. To evaluate the safety, connectivity, and opportunity to improve current cycling infrastructure along the aforementioned stretch of River Road.
2. To deliver the assessment report to relevant stakeholders such as City of Richmond Staff and the Richmond Active Transportation Advisory Committee (RATC).

Below are a number of observations and recommendations to improve safety for all road users along River Road between No. 6 Road and Westminster Hwy.

3. Discussion: Road Signage and Road Width

As per the validity of road signs along this section of River Road, we support Mr. Wei's comments from the March 19, 2018 Public Works and Transportation Committee Meeting, where he stated that *"signage installed along River Road...is consistent with national guidelines and standards and certain signage is appropriate given the narrow nature of River Road"* (S7i).

Our support for the road signage present during March 2018 refers specifically to the road signs that read: "SINGLE FILE CHANGE LANES TO PASS WHEN SAFE" (Figure 1).



Figure 1. HUB Richmond supports "Single File Change Lanes to Pass When Safe" signage.

We consider SINGLE FILE signs to be a more accurate and safer road sign than “SHARE THE ROAD” signs (Figure 2) for the following reasons:



Figure 2. HUB Richmond / YVR Local Committee does not support SHARE THE ROAD signs on River Road. Road lanes on this road are not wide enough to allow motor vehicles to pass people cycling with at least 1.5 metres of space.

The BC Motor Vehicle Act (MVA) stipulates that a person riding a cycle “must ride as near as practicable to the right side of the highway” (183)(2)(c). But given the right side of the highway (or roadway) often contains cracks, potholes, and slippery sections, and that motor vehicles often cause gravel, dust, and debris to collect in these same areas, people cycling may shift towards the centre line to avoid these hazards. As such, it is therefore ‘practicable’ to bicycle at least one metre from the right side of the roadway (highway). The practicability of one metre is further justified in National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) design guidelines, where the minimum distance to place ‘shared lane markings’ is approximately 1.2 metre (4ft) (see Figure 3 #7 on next page).

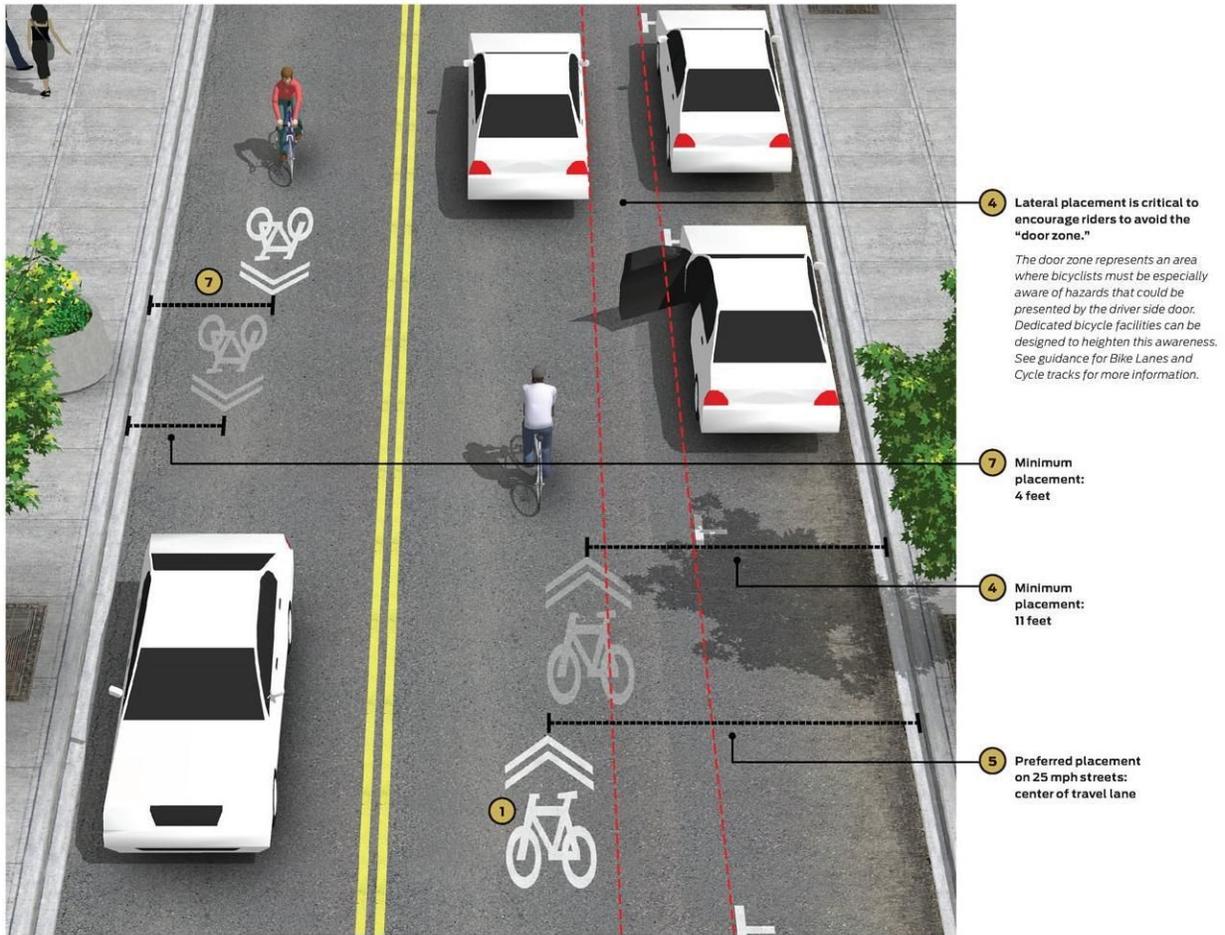


Figure 3. Point # 7 notes that the minimum distance from the edge of the roadway to apply a sharrow is 4ft (1.2m). National Association of City Transportation (NACTO) Urban Bikeway Design Guide (2014, p. 137)

Furthermore, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) encourages motor vehicles to pass people cycling with at least 1 metre of clearance between the outermost part of the bicycle to the outermost part of the motor vehicle. However, given that the lane widths along River Road are between approximately 2.9m and 3.3m (white edge line to yellow centre line), there is simply not enough width for a motor vehicle to safely pass people cycling *without* encroaching into the oncoming traffic lane. Therefore, SHARE THE ROAD side by side signs are misleading and inappropriate given the aforementioned circumstances.

4. Recommendations

The future plan for rebuilding the dyke and providing all ages and abilities (AAA) cycling infrastructure is a long-term solution. While we support these long-term measures, in the meantime, a number of short-term road safety improvements are feasible and listed below:

- 4.1 Stronger enforcement of maximum 50 km / hr speed limit.
- 4.2 Behavioural tips to both people driving and cycling on sharing space on this narrow road.
- 4.3 Installation of “Sharrows” along the entire length. Although not ideal, this would remind motor vehicles as to where to expect people cycling to be positioned on the road.
- 4.4 A continuous white edge line denoting the 3 metre or less lane edge and re-delineation of the road, where appropriate, from existing double-solid lines to a single yellow line where appropriate, so that motor vehicles can safely change lanes to pass people cycling.
- 4.5 Regular street cleaning, especially along the paved shoulders, to remove debris, so that the full lane width can be used safely.
- 4.6 Regular maintenance of potholes and spot-resurfacing when needed.
- 4.7 Rebuilding and widening road edges wherever possible to create paved mini ‘pull-outs’ for people cycling, allowing motor vehicles to pass.

5. Additional Comments

5.1 While we agree with SINGLE FILE signage along River Road (See Figure 1), as a member of the [Road Safety Law Reform Group](#), we also support a number of changes to the MVA that would ensure greater safety for vulnerable road users. Two of these amendments to the MVA that are relevant to road user safety on River Road include:

([Recommendation #8, p. 17](#)): That a motor vehicle travelling at 50km/hr or faster must pass people cycling by at least 1.5 metres. At least 1 metre safe passing laws currently exist in over 27 jurisdictions in North America (including the provinces of Ontario and Nova Scotia). There is currently no safe passing minimum outlined in the British Columbia’s MVA.

([Recommendation #16, p. 32](#)): That cycles are able to operate side-by-side where appropriate for safe cycling. Our recommendation notes that “Cycling side-by-side in a lane may improve safety where they may be easier for motor vehicles to see and to safely pass, as opposed to a longer single-file line of cycles. In cases where the through-lane is not wide enough to allow a vehicle to safely pass (as in the case of River Road), two cyclists may continue to hold their space side-by-side...” (p. 32). “In addition, cycling side-by-side provides more comfortable and safe riding circumstances to a parent riding with a child. The parent is able to monitor the child’s cycling more easily than if riding in front of the child and communicate more easily than if riding in front of or behind the child.” (p. 32)

The full suite of recommendations can be viewed [here](#).

The City of Richmond can show their support for improvements to the Motor Vehicle Act to better protect vulnerable road users by writing to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, the Superintendent of Motor Vehicles, the Solicitor General and the Attorney General, and copy Katherine.Kirby@gov.bc.ca .

We look forward to further discussions to ensure road safety for vulnerable road users is increased along River Road.

Sincerely,

Stephen DesRoches
Chair, HUB Cycling- Richmond / YVR Local Committee
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