

To: Ministry of Environment and Parks <parkinfo.gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Lawrence Mok <lawrence.mok.mla@leg.bc.ca>
Honourable Spencer Chandra Herbert, Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport
<TACS.Minister@gov.bc.ca>
Mark Halpin, Manager of Transportation, City of Maple Ridge <mhalpin@mapleridge.ca>

Re: Golden Ears Park Recreation Facility Plan; Improved and equitable access for active transportation.

Our HUB Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Local Committee is excited to see the results of the recent public consultation on the Golden Ears Park Recreation Facility Plan. It's not surprising to us to see that there was significant feedback with regard to unsafe conditions for people cycling on the one and only road access into the Park. Especially in the busy summer months, few people feel safe riding their bikes into the park, not only due to traffic volumes and speed, but also due to many large RVs, pick-up trucks and trailers with boats, and complete lack of cycling infrastructure.

Getting there - equitable access for All Ages and Abilities (AAA)

More transportation options are needed to provide more equitable access into the park, to Alouette Lake, the campgrounds and the various trails that start along the roadway. Not only for people cycling and using other forms of active transportation and micro-mobility, but also for other people who do not, cannot or prefer not to drive, and who would greatly benefit from transit and a shuttle bus for transportation into the Park.

As per the BC Active Transportation Design Guide¹, *“a physically separated bicycle facility such as an off-street pathway or an alternative quieter route may be more appropriate if the road contains a large proportion of heavy motor vehicles”*.

In recent years, the City of Maple Ridge has built multi-use paths along 132 Ave. and Fern Crescent up to Cross's Cabins Park, and there are plans for further improvements along Fern Crescent to 240 Street, to connect to the planned bridge across the Alouette River and ultimately, to Golden Ears Park. The bridge will provide much needed improved secondary (multi-modal) access to the Park as an alternative to the narrow and dangerous road along Fern Crescent.

We understand that there are calls for a second road access right into Golden Ears Park. We would caution BC Parks and other organizations to assume that this would improve access for cycling for All Ages and Abilities, as it's likely to just encourage more motor vehicle travel to the Park. Instead, we

¹ BC Active Transportation Design Guide (see D.6 Rural Cycling Design Considerations, p. D82):
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/driving-and-transportation/funding-engagement-permits/grants-funding/cycling-infrastructure-funding/active-transportation-guide-low-res/2019-06-14_bcatdg_section_d_rfs.pdf

envision access for active transportation to be entirely separate from the present road access, with the added important benefit that this active transportation route can be used for motor vehicle access for emergency purposes.

The significant and increasing growth in the use of e-bikes and other micromobility modes as well as the potential use of shuttle buses holds great potential to facilitate growth in the number of visitors to this Park during the busiest months of the year, without increasing the numbers of private motor vehicles entering the Park and thus, parking demand. This will help protect the environmental and cultural integrity of the Park while accommodating the increased need for access to nature due to population growth.

Having an entirely separate route away from the main road would make active travel into the park not only a means to safely get to the final destination, but the trip would be a more quiet, peaceful and enjoyable destination in and of itself.

Cycle Tourism

In a survey conducted by Tourism British Columbia, 10.1% (2,494,384) of adult Canadians went cycling while on an out-of-town, overnight trip of one or more nights. Cycling was the tenth most common outdoor activity pursued by Canadian Pleasure Travelers during that time. Recreational cycling as a same-day excursion was the most popular cycling activity followed by mountain biking and overnight touring.

Cycle tourism represents an incredible opportunity for local communities and provincial parks alike. Cyclists often travel to their destinations in a sustainable manner, and they tend to spend money at local businesses, such as cafes, restaurants, and accommodations, enriching the local economy. Moreover, cycle tourists are drawn to regions that prioritize active transportation infrastructure, positioning Golden Ears Park as a key destination. Promoting cycle tourism through dedicated infrastructure and policies not only increases visitor numbers but also aligns with goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and fostering sustainable tourism. By enhancing the experience for cycling visitors, Golden Ears Park can become a model for eco-friendly tourism and community engagement.

Bike parking

As part of improvements that are needed to provide more equitable access to the Park, secure bike parking will be required at various locations. You can fit roughly 6 - 10 bikes in an average parking spot and bikes can also be stacked (if infrastructure is provided) and fit in the parts of the park that don't support motor vehicle parking.

No-turn-away bike camping policy

Promoting bike camping for cycle touring visitors at provincial parks helps make these beautiful natural treasures more accessible to more people, with a smaller ecological footprint and no greenhouse gas emissions.

We encourage BC Parks to consider the needs of bike campers at provincial parks around the province, with a clearly advertised no-turn-away policy at the parks where this is feasible. It is especially important for those who are touring and camping by bike, to reliably find a site to set up their tent for the night at the end of a long day of pedaling.

With much improved and safer access into Golden Ears Park for people cycling, comes an opportunity to promote bike camping at the park. It then makes sense to have a no-turn-away policy in place for Golden Ears Park as well. Specific sites can be designated for bike campers, or they can be allowed to camp at e.g. a beach or meadow between 6 pm and 9 am. Food caches can be provided to safely store any wildlife attractants. This will go a long way to make bike campers feel welcome.

The Adventure Cycling Association in the United States has [a page](#) that explains no-turn-away policies, with a list of US states that have such policies or directives for state parks. BC provincial parks do not have such a policy. As far as we know, Ruckle Provincial Park on Salt Spring Island is the only BC park with an unofficial, undocumented practice of not turning away cyclists who don't have a reserved site. Riders get directed to an overflow- or unreserved group site.

Thank you for allowing us to provide feedback for the Golden Ears Park Recreation Facility Plan from the perspective of active transportation. We hope that this Plan will lead to more equitable and inclusive access for the many thousands of local residents and visitors who every year like to experience this magnificent natural treasure we have at our doorstep.

HUB Cycling
Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Committee

HUB Cycling is a charitable not for profit organization that has spent over 25 years removing barriers to cycling in Metro Vancouver, while cultivating the health, environmental, and economic benefits that active transportation can bring. HUB has educated thousands of people, motivated thousands more, and championed improvements that [#UnGapTheMap](#) to create a connected cycling network. HUB Cycling's mission is to get more people cycling more often. HUB Cycling has over 3,000 members and more than 50,000 direct supporters. HUB Cycling has 10 volunteer committees across Metro Vancouver that encourage cycling for all ages and abilities (AAA) in municipalities across Metro Vancouver. For more information, visit bikehub.ca.