

## Cycling: What about closer to home?

*posted Jul 9, 2015*

It's a No. The people have spoken, loud and clear.

In Maple Ridge, more people (77 per cent) voted against the proposed 0.5 per cent increase in sales tax to pay for transit, road and bike improvements than anywhere else in Metro Vancouver.

Would that have anything to do with the fact that we rely more on our cars than anywhere else in Metro Vancouver?

In Pitt Meadows, 72 per cent of Pitt residents voted against the increase.

Voter turn-out for the plebiscite in Maple Ridge was 51 per cent, and 49 in Pitt Meadows.

Compare that to the 2014 municipal election turn-out of 31 per cent in both Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows.

Whatever message people felt they needed to give, whether to TransLink, to the B.C. Liberal government, or to their mayors, or all of the above, this vote was obviously important to them.

So the No-side won.

Now what?

The real problems – worsening congestion, lack of transit options for many and poor cycling infrastructure – are now even farther from being solved, and seem to be on track to make our commuting lives more miserable in years to come. Call me negative. I call it being realistic.

Let's also consider this: while many blame TransLink for all that's bad in the transit world, how can it be blamed for the way Maple Ridge has made many rather unwise land-use decisions in the past that now make it pretty darn difficult to provide cost- and time-effective transit for all in our area?

Somehow the powers that be should, hopefully, come up with a new funding source.

Despite the No side's victory, fought for with so much passion and dedication, many won't be so happy in the end, because they're going to get stuck in traffic.

After all, even though many thought this was just about teaching TransLink a lesson or two, we just chose the car as our solution to congestion.

In the meantime, we cycling advocates will continue to give our feedback when road construction is being planned. Life goes on.

But I am convinced that the only way a city can be successful is by being inclusive. A city should work for all, including those who can't afford a car.

A successful city should be inclusive of street people, many of whom tend to get around by bike.

Just like they need a place to live, they need to be able to get around safely, cheaply and efficiently, if those who are able to work are ever going to be able to hold a job.

Cycling facilities should not be seen as optional, as they often still seem to be today in Maple Ridge.

When a new intersection appears such as the one at 112th Avenue and Kanaka Way at 240th Street, we're told we'll just have to wait for our bike lanes until the entire area is built out, which can be many years from now.

Until then, we'll have to be content to be biking with the sharks, or stay on the sidewalks. So much for the pride our city takes in its so-called 'multi-modal' transportation system, which supposedly works for all.

Seeing so many people speak up in this plebiscite, with such passion, about whatever it is that they felt was so important to them, makes me wish that those same people would speak up with the same passion when it comes to their vision of the kind of city that they want to live in.

Although, you have to wonder, what is their vision of the ideal city?

Many people just seem to want to get from point A to point B fast, and how their speedy, and often noisy and dangerous travel affects others and our city in general seems of no concern to them.

Through our car addiction, we've created a lot of places that apparently aren't worth caring about. The way a lot of drivers speed through our neighbourhoods attests to that. They drive through them as if they don't care about them and the people that live in them.

In the end, it all depends on what we want. Here's hoping that the many people that cared so much about TransLink's governance problems and wasted tax dollars, will start caring enough about our streets and our neighbourhoods to start demanding proper funding for transit and bike lanes.