

On cycling: The Dutch know much

EDITOR, THE NEWS:

Re: Cyclists want more bike lanes (*The News*, July 25)

I'm glad to slowly see more articles in your paper regarding the bicycle network in Maple Ridge. I have some ideas about the discussion that is taking place that I would like to share with you.

It's great that we have a dedicated group of people in the bike advisory committee who are donating their time and efforts to improve the cycling conditions in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows.

It seems though that the committee is focusing mostly on improving the connections to bicycle networks outside of Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows for commuters, which means mostly adding on-road bike lanes along the major roads.

I suggest that it should all start with getting our kids to bike.

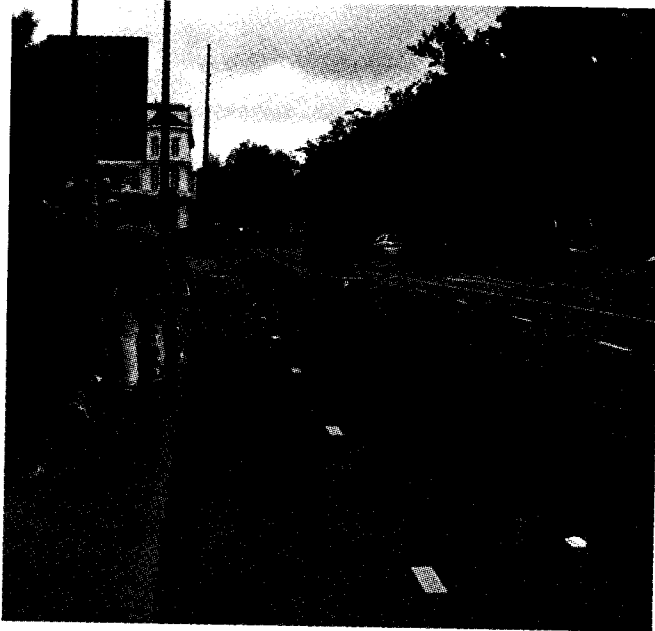
Coming from Holland, biking is part of my culture. I biked and walked everywhere. My parents never drove me to any of my after-school activities.

Now my own kids are teenagers. It's not always easy to get them to do the same, seeing their friends being taxed all over the place.

The problem with getting kids to bike here, parents often decide it's not safe for their kids to ride to school or to the corner store.

I just spent two weeks in Holland where our family thoroughly enjoyed biking around the city of Lelystad, where I lived during my teen years.

It's still a "new" city: only 40 years old. I moved there when it was only five years old, when it had about 5,000



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Cyclists in Amsterdam have separate lanes.

inhabitants.

Now, 35 years later, it has grown to 70,000 (a size similar to Maple Ridge). The bicycle network that has been created in the past 40 years is fantastic.

The planning was there right from the start. Even when there were a few thousand inhabitants, bicycle/pedestrian bridges were built across the main roads.

In Lelystad, cyclists and pedestrians have separate pathways built between the canals on one side, and backyards on the other.

That makes a peaceful, quiet ride.

Many bridges have been built across the canals, again just for cyclists and pedestrians, to improve the connectivity in the city.

We also spent a day in Amsterdam, a totally different city with a much higher population density.

But even in Amsterdam I

noticed conditions were improving for cyclists.

Both cities show, whether a city is dense or not, it is always possible to provide cyclists with a good network, as long as there's the political will to do so.

What do we have to brag about in Maple Ridge?

We have 30 kilometres of bike lanes after 14 years of hard work by our bicycle advisory committee.

This committee has to keep its goals extremely modest, because Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows don't have the motivation to do things right, and would rather build more roads.

In some cases, all that's being done for cyclists is dedicating a bit of space on the side of the road for a bike lane.

Those bike lanes are often along busy roads (e.g. Lougheed Highway, Dewdney Trunk Road). Hardly a

place for our youngsters to practise their cycling skills.

Sometimes on quieter roads, there's not even a marked bike lane. These roads can just be called "bicycle routes" and it's done!

As for off-road bike paths in Maple Ridge, all we have is the short gravel trail that crosses Kanaka Creek at the Rainbow Bridge, and a few kilometres of the Blue Heron Rotary loop dike trail.

I agree with the comments made in the above article regarding the dirt and debris on bike lanes. It makes biking more dangerous, since cyclists swerve into the traffic to avoid stones, piles of sand, etc.

It's not OK to put utility poles in the middle of bike paths/lanes.

That's what's been done on the hill on Lougheed Highway between Kanaka Way and 216th Avenue.

It's dangerous to ride your bike down that hill.

I do not think it's a good idea to put bike lanes along highways, where cars zoom past at 80 to 100 kilometres per hour, so I prefer the sidewalk.

With all the development in Maple Ridge, there's opportunity for the district to do it right.

But from what I see, the roads are just getting wider, and no pedestrian/bicycle paths are being added.

I wish more people had the opportunity to go take a look at Holland, and see what it could be like with some planning.

Finally one more observation - there are fewer problems with obesity in Holland.

Do I need to say more?

JACKIE CHOW
MAPLE RIDGE

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