

Elephant feet allow cyclists to keep riding



Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows pavement markings called "elephant feet" have appeared in recent years.
— Image Credit: Contributed

by [Jackie Chow - Maple Ridge News](#)
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At several locations in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows, some new pavement markings called "elephant feet" have appeared in recent years. I suspect that few people know what they mean.

The markings are confusing, and so is the name.

Sometimes they're called "crossbike crossings," which makes their purpose somewhat clearer.

Normally, when cyclists ride on an off-road multi-use path, or a sidewalk – as is allowed in Maple Ridge, according to the City's website – cyclists are required to dismount when crossing at a pedestrian crossing.

When the crossing has elephant feet markings, they don't need to.

The markings can be placed either on each side of a pedestrian crossing, in which case the crossing is shared with pedestrians, or on one side of it, so that pedestrians and cyclists each have their own crossing.

In Maple Ridge, shared pedestrian/cyclist crossings can be found: along 122nd Avenue and Mountainview Crescent, by Maple Ridge secondary; along Abernethy Way, between 224th and 232nd streets; and in Pitt Meadows, crossing Kennedy Road near Ferry Slip Road, close to the Pitt River Bridge.

The one in Pitt Meadows is painted green, which helps provide clarity that it is a cyclist crossing.

Elephant feet are used for the convenience of cyclists. Having to get off your bike at every intersection is inconvenient and discourages people from biking.

Imagine having to get out of your car at every intersection and having to push it across.

All road users need to be aware of safety issues with these types of crossings.

Most collisions between cars and bikes occur at intersections, and the danger increases when cyclists do not bike on the road.

Drivers don't expect cyclists to enter an intersection from a sidewalk or off-road path.

Often, drivers also underestimate the speed of a cyclist.

Both drivers and cyclists need to slow down, and look out for other traffic nearing the intersection and potentially crossing their path, whether going straight or turning.

All the elephant crossings in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows are along bi-directional multi-use paths, which means that drivers need to be extra cautious and look out for cyclists coming from both directions.

Of course, the same goes for drivers entering or exiting driveways that cross a multi-use path.

Maple Ridge also has its first "bike boxes," at the Laity Street and Lougheed Highway intersection. A bike box is a painted green space on the road with a white bicycle symbol inside it. They allow cyclists to position themselves ahead of cars at an intersection.

They are meant to reduce collisions between right-turning cars and cyclists going straight, and it also makes it easier for cyclists to make left turns.

They increase visibility of cyclists, as well.

What I like about them is that you don't have to wait behind a car, breathing in its exhaust fumes.

Motorists should stop behind the bike box. It's safest for cyclists going south on Laity St. to continue riding in the middle of the lane once past the intersection, until they pass the narrowest section of roadway, so they don't get squeezed against the curb when a car passes too close.

Drivers, please be aware that cyclists riding in the middle of the lane most often do so to stay safe, so your patience and courtesy would be much appreciated.

Jackie Chow is a member of the Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows chapter of HUB Cycling.