

Cyclists try to get message out

Consider biking for short trips

By Phil Melnychuk
Staff Reporter

There always will be the hardcore commuter cyclist who braves the elements and the pathological cellphone packing motorists in order to get to work in an eco-sustainable way.

According to a Trans-Link study from last year, about 10 per cent of the general population rides bikes somewhat regularly (with fewer than five per cent commuters), while about 60 per cent of the population only pedals periodically.

Thirty per cent of the population isn't interested in cycling at all.

It's the largest percentage that Ivan Chow and the Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition want to reach.

"The single biggest problem that I can see ... is they want safer infrastructure.

"Biking on Lougheed, biking on Dewdney Trunk Road just won't cut it except for the bravest," Chow said Monday at a display kicking off Bike To Work Week.

He helped form the Maple Ridge chapter of the coalition a few months ago and was one of the handful of cyclists peddling their cause Monday at the display on Dewdney Trunk Road and 224th Street.

Chow says the goal is to



Simone Ponne/THE NEWS

(From left) Dave Rush, Rick Halas and Fred Walter, from the local chapter of the Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition, participate in Bike to Work Week on Monday.

get people to start thinking about cycling when the considering short errands. Instead of hopping into their SUV to drive a few blocks to the video store, perhaps biking would be easier and quicker. Maybe a short trip to grocery

store could be better done on two wheels. The focus is on encouraging short trips within a few kilometres of the downtown. About 40 per cent of all car trips are just to do those quick errands, he pointed out.

"I think there's a lot of

latent demand in here."

Chow said the District of Maple Ridge has made good progress in creating bike lanes that can be alternatives to the east-west corridors of Lougheed and Dewdney. And work is continuing on such corridors,

he pointed out.

A study of the future use of Lougheed Highway is currently underway.

Chow said one recent success is the separate bike path, shared with pedestrians, the district built between 248th and 232nd

streets, north of Dewdney Trunk Road.

But there also needs to be better signage along bike routes generally, so motorists and cyclists can both recognize the paths.

"They need to let people know about it. People feel a lot safer that way."

Rick Halas, who lives in Maple Ridge and bikes to work in Port Coquitlam, echoed Chow's thoughts. Most of his cycling is done within Maple Ridge. He'll often ride with his kids to get to school and hopes others might think of doing the same thing.

"We're new and we're just trying to get idea of maybe looking at doing something else instead of the pickup truck."

More people would cycle if they felt safer with better roads and had more respect from motorists, he said.

"We're not here to turn Dewdney Trunk Road in a cycling [route].

"Right now, Maple Ridge is the domain of the automobile almost exclusively."

Halas said one possibility is for cyclists and pedestrians to share a path, which each having their own space.

He suggested that for 232nd Street near 128th Avenue, which the district is currently rebuilding, although it's too late to incorporate that into designs.

But that already happens on the Stanley Park seawall, he pointed out.