

Cycling club has prescription for out of shape, sick Maple Ridge residents

by [Phil Melnychuk - Maple Ridge News](#)

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Maple Ridge residents are fatter and sicker than the rest of Fraser Health region, with higher than average rates of cancer, heart disease and obesity-related illness.

That can all change, if Maple Ridge makes it easy to get around on two-wheeled pedal power, says Jackie Chow, with the group HUB: Your Cycling Connection.

“The very best way to get people to exercise is to build exercise into their daily lives – so they don’t even think of it as exercise,” Chow told Maple Ridge council last week.

She wants more cycling infrastructure added to Maple Ridge’s transportation, which is currently being rewritten.

One suggestion is to pass a complete streets bylaw that would require sidewalks and separated bike paths built into any new arterial road.

That would give protection and allow efficient cycling, preventing the discouraging and time-consuming detours on to side streets.

Chow also wants a 30-kilometre-per hour speed limit in the downtown, to encourage cyclists to shop and support local businesses and says cycling shouldn’t be allowed on sidewalks.

Maple Ridge is one of the few municipalities in Metro Vancouver that does that, as a means of providing safe travel on busy roads where there is no room for bike lanes.

“If you tell them to cycle on sidewalks with pedestrians, so they have to keep slowing down, they won’t even bother, and they’ll continue to drive,” Chow said.

“Cycling on sidewalks is generally a symptom of a poorly planned transportation system.”

Maple Ridge, though, has a way to go.

It’s currently ranked second to last in “bikeability” in Metro Vancouver.

The district allots \$100,000 yearly in its budget to cycling.

She said building bike lanes doesn't mean pouring money into projects for the small number of people currently on two wheels, but investing to encourage others who are thinking of cycling and may be too scared to do so.

After Portland, Ore., built bike lanes, six per cent of commuters now cycle to work in that city.

"If you see more women cycling, then you know you're doing something right."

According to numbers from Statistics Canada's 2011 census, Maple Ridge motorists have the longest commuting times in Metro Vancouver at an average 35 minutes each way.

North Vancouver city residents had the shortest commute at 24 minutes according to the National Household Survey.

But in most of Metro Vancouver, cyclists made up less than one per cent of commuters, compared to four per cent in Vancouver.

TransLink wants to get half of all commuters either walking, cycling or taking the bus or train instead of driving to work.

Council recently approved a new separated bike and pedestrian path on the north side of Lougheed Highway between Laity and 216th Street, about a million-dollar project.