Your Cycling Connection

604.558.2002
bikehub.ca

August 19, 2019

To:
Vancouver Fraser Port Authority <pittmeadowsroadandrail@portvancouver.com>
MP for Pitt Meadows-Maple Ridge Dan Ruimy <Dan.Ruimy@parl.gc.ca>
BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure:
Ashok Bhatti, Regional Director, South Coast Region <Ashok Bhatti@gov.bc.ca>
Thomas Chhun, A/District Manager, Lower Mainland District <Thomas.Chhun@gov.bc.ca>
Transport Canada:
Robert Dick, Assistant Deputy Minister, Pacific <robert.dick@tc.gc.ca>
Canadian Pacific Railways <community_connect@cpr.ca>
TransLink <mrpm@translink.ca>
the City of Pitt Meadows, Samantha Maki <smaki@pittmeadows.ca>
Mayor and Council, City of Pitt Meadows <Council@pittmeadows.ca>

Re: Pitt Meadows Road and Rail Improvements project;
Harris Road underpass pedestrian and cycling facilities

To whom it may concern,

Our Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Committee of HUB Cycling is pleased to take the opportunity to provide feedback with regard to the pedestrian and cycling facilities along the Harris Road underpass that are being proposed as part of the Pitt Meadows Road and Rail Improvements project.

The project has the potential to either improve the walking, wheeling and cycling experience in the city, or to reduce its attractiveness. Careful attention must be paid to the design of the underpass to ensure the former, so we have included our recommendations to optimize the underpass to maintain community connectivity for active transportation users. For now, we would like to give you our initial comments, and hope to be able to provide more detailed feedback with examples of best practices in the coming months.

HUB Cycling is a charitable not for profit organization that has spent over 20 years removing barriers to cycling in Metro Vancouver, while promoting the health, environmental, and economic benefits that active transportation can bring. HUB has educated thousands of people, motivated thousands more, and championed improvements that #UnGapTheMap to create a connected cycling network. HUB Cycling's mission is to get more people cycling more often. HUB Cycling has close to 3,000 members and more than 40,000 direct supporters. HUB Cycling has 11 volunteer committees across Metro Vancouver that encourage cycling for all ages and abilities (AAA) in their municipalities. For more information, visit bikehub.ca.

Considering that the underpass will function as a connection between both halves of the city of Pitt Meadows, it should be designed to be welcoming to people of all ages and abilities, regardless of their mode of travel.

The design of the underpass is of particular importance to vulnerable road users, such as people walking, with or without children, strollers or dogs, as well as people cycling and mobility aid users. High quality active transportation facilities for all ages and abilities are paramount.

Due to lack of frequent crossings, railroads that cut through communities generally are significant barriers, especially for those traveling on their own power. In consideration of this, the underpass should provide a high degree of functionality with regard to accessibility and mobility, especially with regard to the long-term active transportation needs.

We are pleased to see that pedestrian facilities through the underpass will be elevated, which creates more spatial as well as physical separation between motor vehicles and those on foot and also reduces the grade elevation. It is critical that these facilities be built on both sides of the underpass.

Rather than providing bike lanes at road level, we strongly suggest wider, shared elevated pathways to also facilitate travel by people on bikes of all ages and abilities. This would ensure a welcoming, comfortable, safe, and seamless experience with manageable grades for all users.

According to the City of Vancouver's Design Guidelines for All Ages and Abilities Cycling Routes, the preferred minimum width of a uni-directional protected bike lane is 2.5 meters, which allows for comfortable passing. For pedestrians, at least 1.8 m is recommended according to the Transport Association of Canada's Geometric Design Guidelines. 0.5 m should be added as lateral clearance to a fence or barrier. This would add up to 4.8 m width on each side of the road.

We understand that there may be space constraints as a result of the existing property lines. Therefore we suggest a minimum 4 m wide usable shared space for pedestrians, cyclists and those with other mobility devices. About 0.5 m will be needed for the required fence or barrier. The fence or barrier design should not be a hazard for catching bicycle handlebars.

Bike travel should be uni-directional only. Level changes should be avoided between the pedestrian pathway and bike lane. To encourage separation of users, we would suggest using different surface materials, e.g. asphalt for the 2 m wide bike lane, and decorative but flush and smooth pavers for the 2 m wide pedestrian pathway, which should allow for comfortable use for. people with strollers and walkers. Clear and frequent pavement markings should be added, showing the side for people cycling separate from people walking and wheeling. There should be signage indicating which area of the multi-use path each user group should occupy.

We would like to see all utility infrastructure integrated into the bridge design so that the pedestrian and cyclist realm is free from any obstruction.

To encourage travel by modes other than a car, the design of the shared pathway should be very attractive and invite the use of the underpass to explore it and beyond. Visual aspects such as lighting and interesting landscaping and e.g. murals or other public art should be used to encourage walking, wheeling and cycling. Rather than blind concrete walls along the length of the underpass, an active edge (see Calgary's Downtown Underpass Urban Design Guidelines, pages 26-30) can help to attract and provide interest to users.

Lighting as well as other design elements such as materials and bright colours are of importance when it comes to the feeling of safety, especially at night. Opportunities should be explored to introduce natural lighting to the underpass. This may include the integration of the following elements where structurally feasible: openings, prisms, mirrors, translucent materials. It is important that the ceiling of the pathway is not too low.

Any efforts to mitigate noise for underpass users and neighbours is appreciated, including sound absorbing materials.

As long time cycling advocates for Pitt Meadows and Maple Ridge we are pleased to provide feedback for this very important project for the residents as well as visitors of the city of Pitt Meadows. We are hoping to see a design that improves mobility and efficiency of travel for people using all modes - a key component of a liveable, sustainable, and connected community - and avoids the risk that the project will deter people from using active transportation.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Jongbloed
HUB Cycling
Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Committee
mapleridge-pittmeadows@bikehub.ca