

Bike centre makes it easy to ride

by [Jackie Chow - Maple Ridge News](#)
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I often wonder why health authorities and cities are not working together more to encourage and promote active transportation, since the benefits of such, both to individuals and to society, are so clear.

Where cities provide safe and convenient alternatives to the car, individuals tend to be healthier and happier.

That means huge savings to the health care system.

More people walking and biking leads to lower health care costs both through a reduction in diseases related to a sedentary lifestyle and through a reduction in car crashes resulting in severe injury or death.

Physically active employees also tend to be more productive.

Sometimes, the health authorities get it. Last summer, my husband Ivan, chair of our HUB committee, and I were given a private tour of Vancouver General Hospital's new, state-of-the-art Cycling Centre.

Our guide was Arthur Orsini, VGH's active transportation facilitator.

The Cycling Centre, which offers secure bike parking for hospital employees.

After extensive consultation with cycling employees, the old laundry building was converted into a bike parking area with 182 spaces.

A significant amount of thought and effort went into designing, equipping as well as marketing the facility.

The Cycling Centre offers showers and lockers that are well ventilated, so that wet rain gear is dry by the end of the employee's shift.

Bike tools, bike stands and pumps are available for needed maintenance or repairs.

For those leaving the Cycling Centre late at night, a monitor by the door helps to make sure that no creeps are waiting outside the door.

Some finishing touches have proven to be quite popular. A box of Kleenex is strategically positioned by the door.

The bike lock storage rack is useful too; you don't need to carry a heavy lock back and forth between home and work.

Free monthly workshops are held for employees, such as a Streetwise Cycling Course, and various bike mechanics workshops by HUB, bike yoga, as well as bike festivals and social gatherings.

The low membership fees are flexible and cover the maintenance and operation of the facility.

The centre now has more than 180 members. Actual usage goes up and down, depending on weather conditions. Last summer, 55 members were using the facility on a daily basis. The majority of hospital employees are female, which is reflected in the majority of users being women.

We spoke with some.

Meilan, a business analyst, lives by Stanley Park. She appreciates the convenience of being able to change into her work clothes at the facility. She used to only bike in the winter because of lack of shower facilities.

As companies and health authorities clue in to the many benefits of catering to and even pampering cyclists, hopefully more end-of-trip facilities such as the VGH Cycling Centre will start popping up.

Jackie Chow is a member of HUB.

