



Metro Vancouver's Cycling Advocates

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March 30, 2012

City of North Vancouver
141 West 14th Street
North Vancouver, BC
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Port Metro Vancouver
100 The Pointe, 999 Canada Place
Vancouver, BC
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Dear Mayor and Council, Port Metro Vancouver Low Level Road Project Team

Re: Low Level Road Project

The North Shore committee of the Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition is providing our feedback to the latest design iteration of the Low Level road. We note that in terms of cycling there are no significant improvements to the proposed initial design, although the grade at Neptune has been lowered and the removal of the St Patrick's overpass may have eliminated some new hills at the Western end. The design still calls for 2m at-grade cycling lanes on both North and South sides of the new road.

We recommend building a multi-use path for cyclists and pedestrians on the South side while retaining a painted bike lane on the North side.

Making Cycling an Attractive Choice

The VACC's vision is to make cycling an attractive transportation choice for everyone. This means designing cycling facilities for all ages and abilities, not just for the spandex crowd, nor for the 2% of people who are brave enough to cycle already without many improvements. Similarly, the City of North Vancouver is trying to encourage active transportation options. While the recently built Spirit Trail above Low Level Road is a fantastic addition to North Vancouver bike and trail network, it adds significant elevation gain and distance to trips. The secluded nature of the trail is ideal for recreational use, but many cyclists will not use it in the dark.

The Low Level Road project has the potential to provide a safe and direct cycling route that links Lower Lonsdale with the future Lower Lynn town centre. The Low Level Road is also part of North Vancouver's main east-west connection for cyclists.

The new Low Level road is being designed for 60 km/h. Cycling beside fast moving vehicles, especially semi-trailer trucks, can be very intimidating. Especially when traveling west, cycling on a painted bike lane between fast moving traffic and a high retaining wall would be frightening to most people.

Multi-use Path Recommendation

To improve safety for cyclists and to encourage people to ride or walk rather than drive, the VACC recommends the design incorporate a physical separation between cyclists and vehicular flow. Originally we were asking for a raised barrier – ideally something like in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1. Solid Barrier

Then we made further suggestions for separation that would allow vehicle pullover as in Figures 2 and 3 below.



Figure 2. Example of a physical barrier that allows emergency vehicle access



Figure 3. Example of a physical barrier that allows emergency vehicle access

In response Port Metro Vancouver and City of North Vancouver staff indicated that physical barriers between the cycling facility and the car lanes may not be feasible even if they allow emergency vehicle access. Today we are making the recommendation that the project combine the pedestrian sidewalk with a two way cycling path on the south side – essentially building a multi-use path for active transportation users on the South side. The South side separation could be a raised path that allows emergency pull over access (see Figure 4 below). Leave the proposed North side bike lane for the people brave enough to ride between an 18-wheeler and a concrete wall.



Figure 4 . Raised Curb with Integrated Warning Strip

Design Speed

We understand that the design speed requires a shoulder on both sides and that in essence the cycling lanes are the shoulders. Another way to alter the design to accommodate all users would be to lower the design speed to 50km/h, making the road safer for all users.

Eastern Approach and End of the Multi-use Path

The new design (Figure 5.) shows that cyclists moving from East to West along Main Street must cycle to a new 3rd Street crossing, activate the signal and cross three lanes to enter the Low-Level road moving sharply uphill. This new crossing at 3rd street is awkward and looks complicated – which can only encourage dangerous behavior. We recommend moving the crossing and the light back to Kennard Street so that cyclists can get a ‘run’ at the hill. A safer option is to cross to the South side and cycle on the multi-use path.

We further recommend that the Eastern terminus of the proposed South side multi-use path end at the Kennard crossing where the existing bike route to the North begins and where pedestrians can access the North side-only sidewalk.



Figure 5. New 3rd Street Crossing

Sidewalk

While we are sympathetic to area resident’s wishes to incorporate a wider green barrier between the laneway/Spirit trail, we believe that a sidewalk should be incorporated into the design for people who wish to walk to work at the port or walk from their workplace to Park & Tilford mall, or residents who want to move between the Lower Lonsdale and Lower Lynn town centres on foot. The Low Level Road is also frequently used by runners, even in its current state. If the new road does not include a sidewalk, pedestrians and runners will use the cycling facilities, forcing cyclists into the car lanes.

A wide multi-use path on the south side would satisfy the needs of both pedestrians and cyclists. This path, because it will be significantly flatter, more direct and less secluded than the Spirit Trail will likely see more use as a transportation (not recreation) route than the Spirit Trail.

Maintenance Costs

Above road separated paths decrease maintenance costs as far as sweeping and debris removal goes. Bike lanes have to be constantly swept to remove dirt and debris washed into the bike lane by water or moved there by traffic blowing it out of the moving lanes. Separated paths above the road surface do not have that problem. As well, separated bike lanes above road level are much drier in the rain as they do not have the water from the traffic lanes flowing into them.

We thank Port Metro and the City of North Vancouver for continuing this dialogue with the VACC and for hosting the stakeholder and public meetings in order to gather our feedback to the Gateway plan improvements to the Low Level Road in the North Shore Trade Area.

We welcome any correspondence with regard to this submission and offer our ongoing assistance in project reviews as detailed designs become available.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Heather Drugge". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Heather Drugge, Member,
Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition -- North Shore Committee

cc/

Doug Pope, City Engineer (acting)
Tony Barber, Manager, Engineering, Planning and Design
Dragana Mitic, Assistant City Engineer, Transportation
Andrew Saxton, MP
Naomi Yamamoto, MLA