

February 1, 2022

Assessment Ride Report - Ontario Bikeway

The Vancouver UBC Local Committee of HUB Cycling has identified the Ontario Bikeway as being in need of improvements. The City of Vancouver has recently improved several sections of Ontario for people cycling, and addressing the remaining gaps would make this a much more comfortable and safer route for its full length. We conducted an assessment ride in October 2021, and we present here our observations, and recommendations on how this route can be improved.

Summary

The Ontario Bikeway is a very useful north-south route from False Creek to the Fraser River. It connects to numerous east-west bikeways, thus expanding the area covered by Vancouver's cycling routes that are safe and comfortable for most people. The north end has recently been improved with additional traffic calming. The centre section is primarily residential, and is generally safe and comfortable but requires attention to several details, particularly near Queen Elizabeth Park. The south end requires significant improvements to reduce vehicle traffic volumes, and to complete the route through the industrial zone to Kent Ave.

Overview, maps

The Ontario Bikeway goes from the Community center at Olympic Village (near Science World), to the shore of the Fraser River, Kent Avenue. It runs for 7.8 km in a straight line, and the elevation gain is about 90 meters, with the maximum elevation around 39th Ave near Queen Elizabeth park.

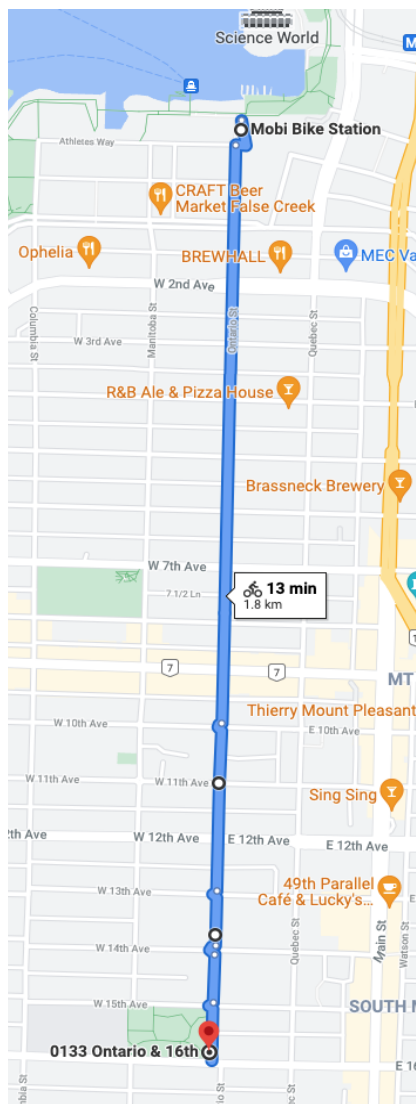
The following notes address three segments, with different characteristics and issues.

1. False Creek to 16th Avenue (1.8 km)
2. 16th Avenue to 49th Avenue (3.8 km)
3. 49th Avenue to Kent Avenue (2.2 km)

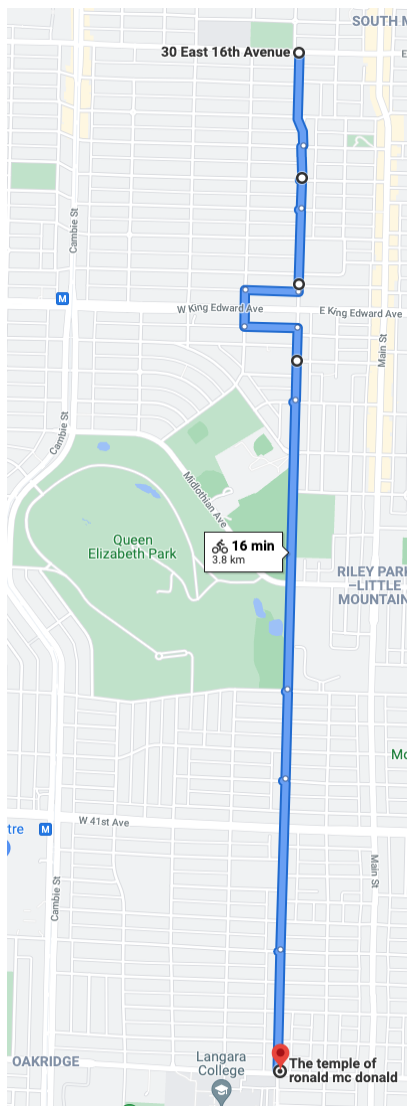
Segment 1, from False Creek to 16th Ave, is the most built up, and has the highest volume of users. Recent improvements at 5th, 7th, and 16th have made it much safer for people cycling. Further improvements are understood to be planned for the intersection at 1st Ave.

Segment 2, from 16th to 49th, is primarily residential, with parks and a destination sports stadium. Vehicle diversions have been installed and greatly reduced vehicle volumes, leaving this section feeling safe and comfortable for the most part.

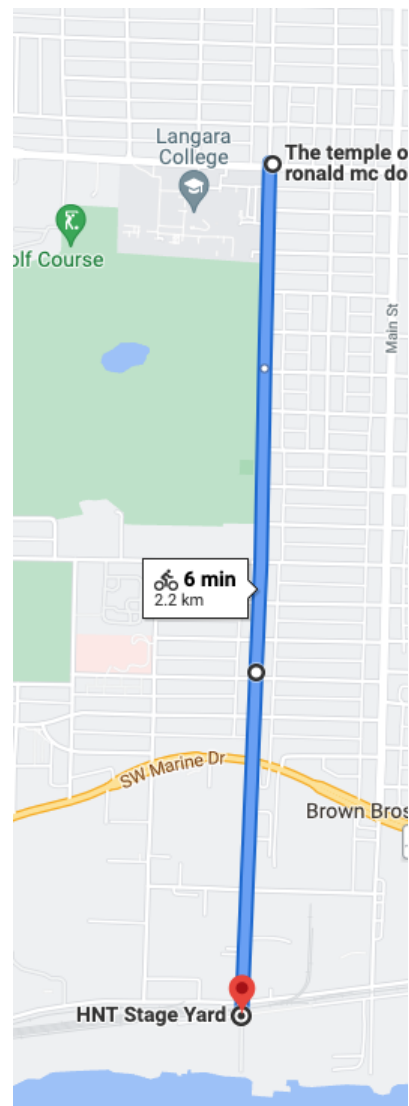
Section 3, from 49th south, passes Langara College, with increased vehicle traffic. This segment does not have diversions to reduce vehicle traffic volumes, and is wide. It appears to be used as a high speed shortcut by some drivers. South of SW Marine Drive, it is industrial and there are conflicts with heavy trucks.



False creek to 16th Ave



16th Ave to 49th Ave



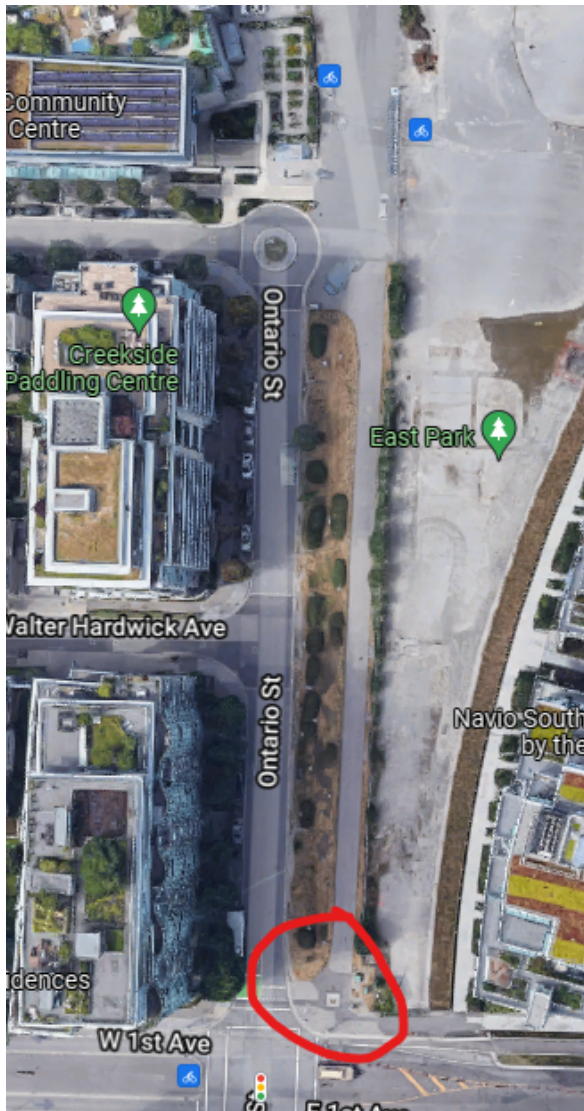
49th Ave to Kent Ave)

Assessment Ride Notes

Segment 1 - Between False Creek and 16th Avenue

From Athlete's Way to 1st Avenue

On the east side, there is a shared-use path for walking and cycling. This is understood to be planned to be changed as the development is completed immediately east of the path, and East Park is completed. Better separation is required between people walking and people cycling along this section. At the 1st Ave intersection, there is a jog to the right to rejoin Ontario St. This intersection is understood to also be scheduled for improvements, and this is welcomed. As the bikeway on 1st Ave is extended west from Ontario towards the Cambie Bridge, the intersection will become ever more important.



1st Avenue to 2nd Avenue

It is recommended that protected bike lanes be installed on this block due to the volume of vehicles accessing the lanes and businesses. In combination, this block could be made one way for vehicles, and parking restricted.

2nd Avenue to Broadway:

This section continues to see significant vehicle traffic volumes, despite the diversions installed at 5th Avenue and 7th Avenue. It is recommended that vehicle volumes be monitored to determine if additional calming is required at 8th Ave.

Broadway

The alley immediately south of Broadway is often busy with turning vehicle traffic. It is understood that the section of Ontario from Broadway to 10th is the subject of ongoing investigation as to potential traffic calming measures.



Intersection with 10th Avenue

The intersection of the 10th Avenue Bikeway and the Ontario Bikeway is busy with vehicles and people on bikes. The roundabout is not considered a benefit, but more of a danger.

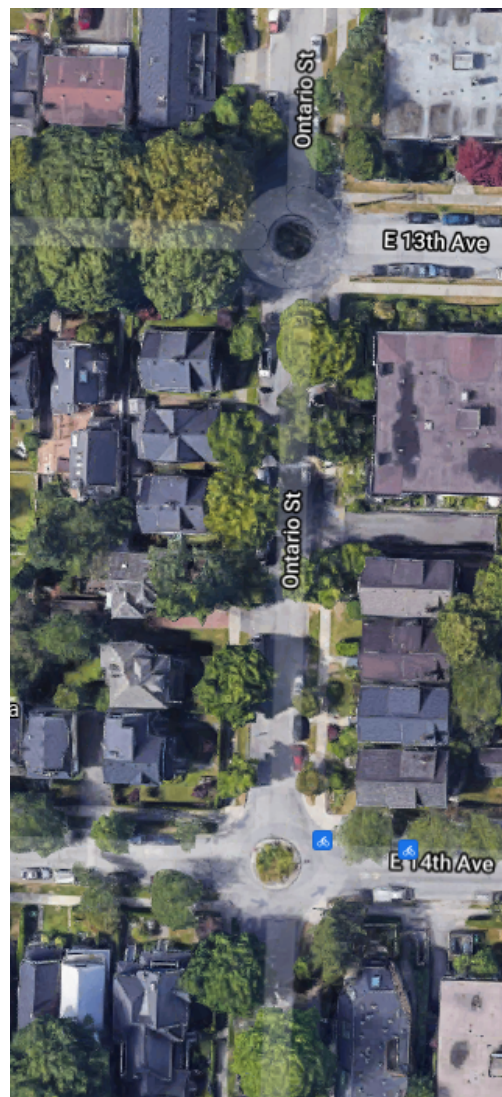


11th Avenue to 16th Avenue

Vehicles were observed to not stop at the stop sign at 11th Avenue when people on bikes were traveling south and emerging from the path on Ontario. Drivers have limited visibility of people on bikes crossing in front of them. The installed traffic circles from 13th to 15th appear to provide little in the way of benefit and should be reevaluated. In the interim, vegetation and signage on the traffic circles should be kept low to improve sightlines. The recent improvements to realign the Ontario Bikeway at 16th Ave are a welcome addition.



Poor sight lines at 11th and Ontario



Traffic circles at 13th and 14th

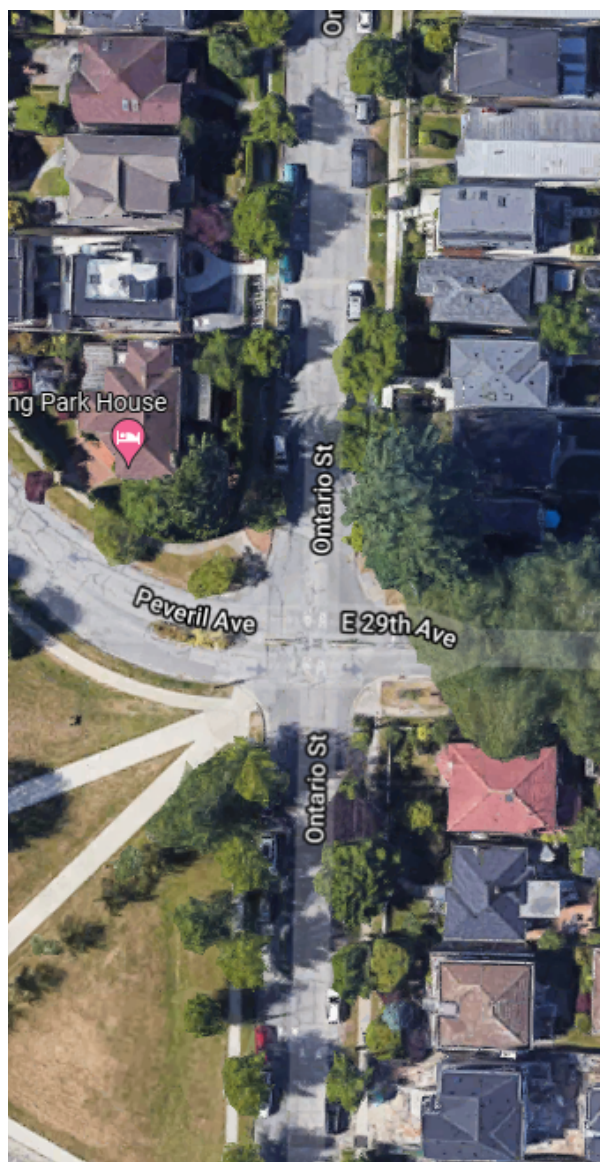
Segment 2 - From 16th Avenue to 49th Avenue

16th Avenue to King Edward Avenue

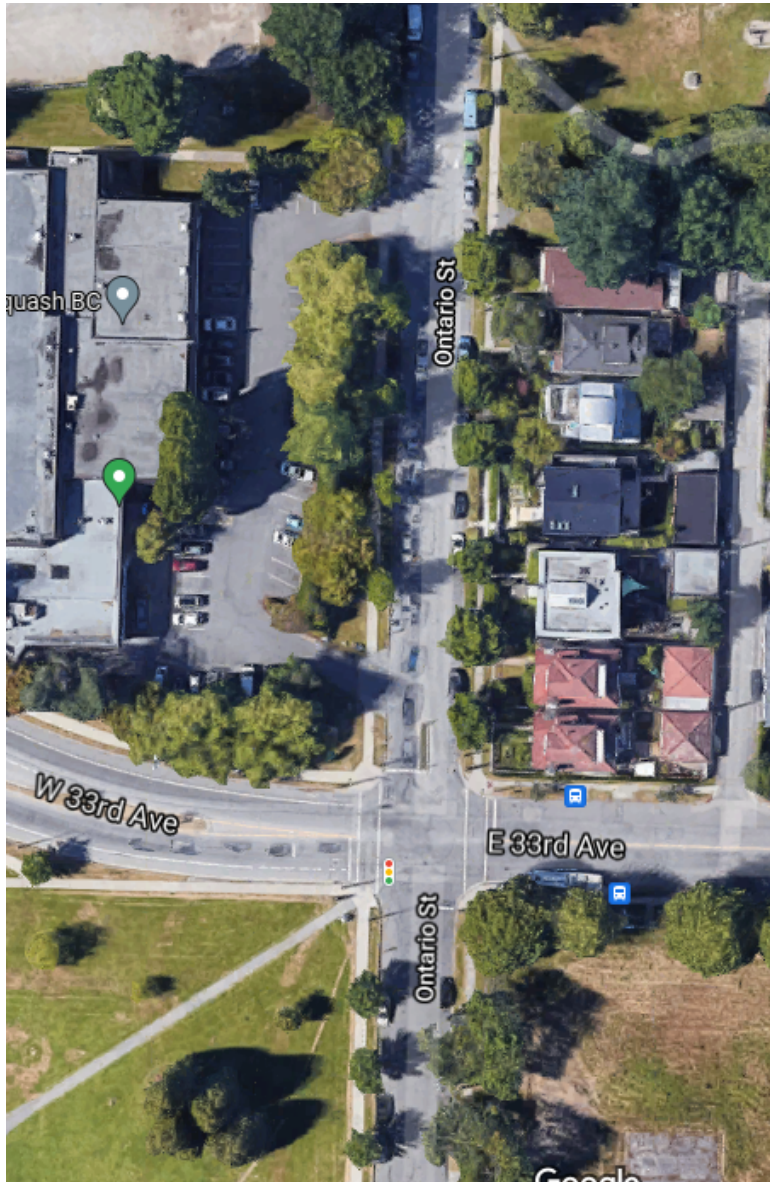
There is a traffic diversion at 16th, and a diversion at King Edward Avenue. Vehicles can drive freely along Ontario between these points. There are traffic circles at 19th, 20th, and 21st that should be evaluated similarly to the traffic circles from 13th to 15th.

King Edward Avenue to 33rd Avenue:

The longstanding safety issues associated with vehicle operators not stopping at the 29th Ave intersection appear to be greatly reduced with the implementation of new diversions between 29th Avenue and 33rd Avenue.



At the racquet club near 33rd Avenue, both the north and south entrances of the parking lot are bi-directional. To make it safer for people on bikes on Ontario street, consideration should be given to making one access point at the north end an entry, and the access point on the south end an exit.



33rd Avenue to 37th Avenue

This section runs along Queen Elizabeth park, is overly wide, and was observed to frequently have vehicles traveling at higher speeds. The speed bumps that are installed here do not appear to be effective in addressing this issue. Consideration should be given to closing this section to through vehicle traffic. Alternatively, protected bike lanes could be installed. This section appears to be used as a feeder for vehicle operators to use 37th to connect to Main and Cambie.

At 37th Ave, there is a busy traffic circle, with vehicles and people on bikes coming from four directions. This is the intersection with the Midtown/Ridgeway Bikeway. Visibility is reduced because of a retaining wall on the south-west corner. There is a steep descent to the roundabout along 37th from the west. This intersection is flagged as a dangerous and uncomfortable one for many people, but there are no clear resolutions apart from reducing vehicle traffic with diversions so as to reduce the likelihood of a person on a bike meeting a vehicle in the roundabout.



Between 37th Avenue and 49th Avenue:

The traffic diversions installed at 41st reduce vehicle volumes and thus increase comfort and safety for people cycling. Consideration should be given to replicating this style of diversion at additional points along this route.

There is a School Streets pilot program in place at Van Horne Elementary, between 42nd and 43rd. It is hoped that this will become permanent, as the synergies between the School Street and the Ontario Bikeway can lead to greater success and user volumes for both.



From 43rd Avenue to 49th Avenue, including the connection to the 45th Avenue Bikeway, Ontario is residential, with relatively low observed vehicle volumes.

Segment 3 - From 49th Avenue to Kent Avenue

49th Avenue to 57th Avenue

From 49th Avenue to SE Marine Drive, vehicle operators encounter only one stop sign and two curb bulges. The first portion of this route, south of 49th, runs alongside Langara College. The street is wider here. As a result there are many vehicles which appear to be cutting through the neighbourhood, that are often traveling quickly. The only nearby alternative for people cycling north-south is Cambie Street, which has no protected lanes along this section, relatively high vehicle volumes, and heavy truck traffic.

Intersection with 49th Avenue



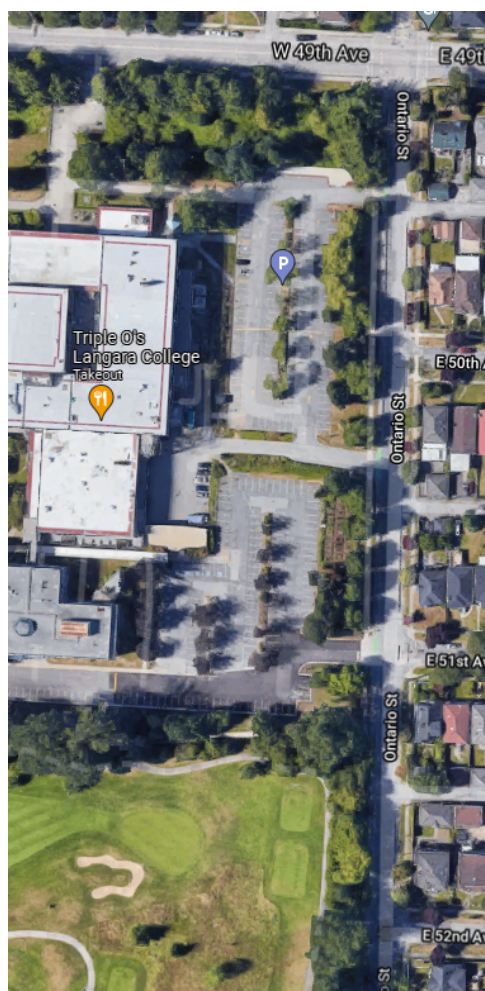
The vehicle diversion at 49th results in lower vehicle volumes north of 49th, but does nothing for the section south of 49th. All vehicles traveling north along Ontario are required to turn at 49th. This includes vehicles leaving the Langara parking lots. These turning movements create conflict with people cycling who are typically traveling straight through.

From 49th Avenue to 52nd Avenue:

Along this section, there are narrow unidirectional protected bike lanes on either side of the road. The concrete gravity barriers are frequently shifted from vehicle tire contact, marking the narrow lanes even more constricted. Lack of sweeping and maintenance is an issue, especially with the large number of street trees. As a result, many people cycling were observed to choose the vehicle lanes.

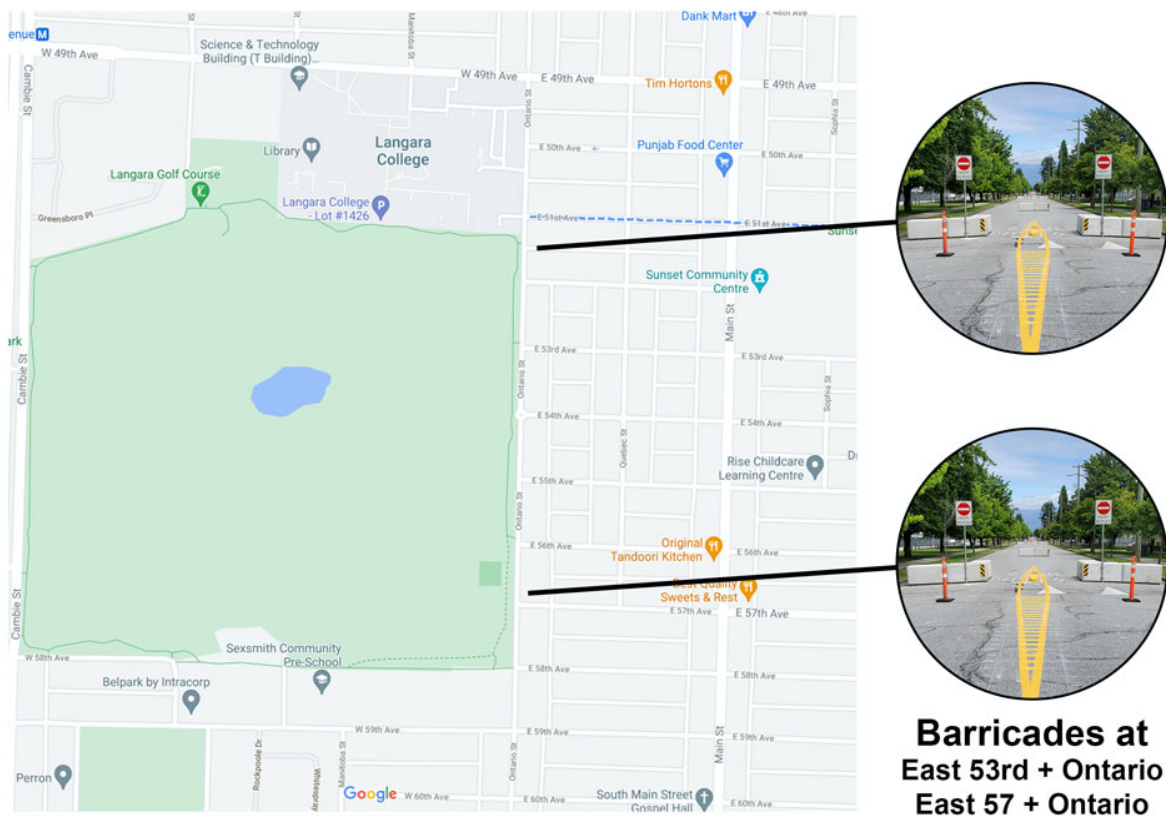
The southbound bike lane ends right at a traffic circle, with little opportunity to merge with vehicle traffic. As a result, a portion of those people cycling who did choose the protected lane came out into the vehicle lane early, at the driveway entrance. This is effectively a desire line for people cycling. Vehicle operators were observed to accelerate towards the traffic circles, in an effort to arrive before the person in front of them on a bike. This is dangerous.

Consideration should be given to making one access point to the Langara parking lot an entrance, and the other an exit. Now, bidirectional vehicle traffic to and from the lots is crossing a bidirectional bike lane.



From 52nd Avenue to 60th Avenue:

Additional vehicle traffic calming is required here. Vehicle operators cutting through the neighbourhood on Ontario were observed turning at 57th, using this second local street bikeway as a connector to Cambie. The photo below is simply a suggestion of one potential design, using the same style of diversion as was deployed farther north along Ontario. It is recommended that vehicle count data be gathered at multiple points along Ontario and compared to the results for Ontario Street farther north, including at Riley Park.



Intersection with SW Marine Drive

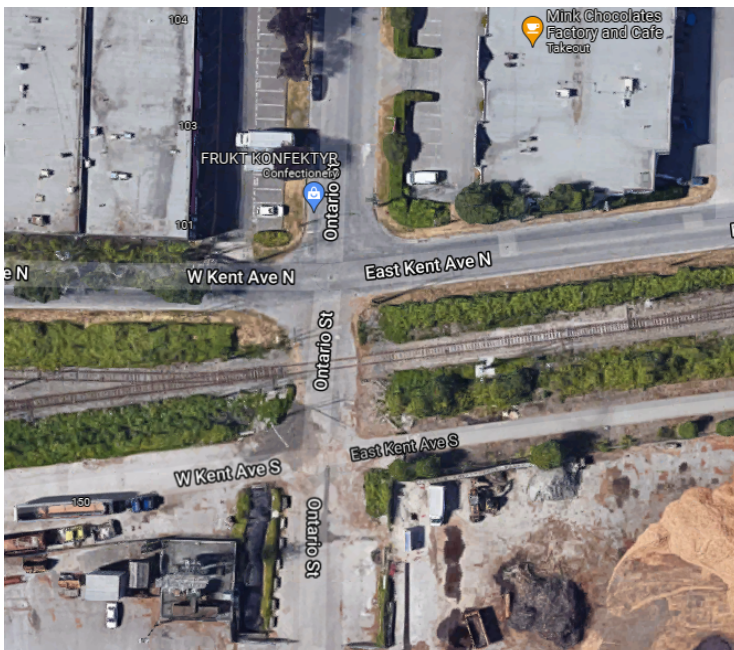
There is a signalized crossing at SW Marine Drive. Due to the issues with cycling on Ontario St south of SW Marine Drive, and the lack of safety improvements along Kent, people cycling typically cross to the west at 57th, and at 63rd, both being local street bikeways, to avoid the south end of Ontario St.

SW Marine Drive to Kent Avenue

The protected bidirectional bike lanes running south from SW Marine Drive end at 69th Ave. There are no improvements for cycling south of this, although Ontario is designated a local street bikeway through to Kent Ave South. Motor vehicle volumes (and truck traffic) should be investigated along here to determine the need for additional improvements for cycling comfort and safety.

The intersection of the Ontario Bikeway at Kent is complicated by it being a double intersection with Kent Ave and Kent Ave S, as well as an uncontrolled at grade rail crossing that is little used, as well as the off street Kent Ave Bikeway path heading east from Ontario St. There are no stop signs on Kent Ave N or Kent Ave S, making crossing north and south difficult. Consideration should be given to installing a signalized crossing, possibly as part of Kent Ave Bikeway improvements included in the current Capital Plan.

For those people cycling who did reach Kent Ave, there is a connection to the off street path heading east, but no safe or comfortable connection heading west, despite the proximity of the Canada Line bridge for people heading to Richmond or the airport.



Summary

The Ontario Bikeway is a very useful north-south cycling route from False Creek to the Fraser River. Recent improvements at the north end have made it even better for people cycling. There are additional details to address to complete this work. At the south end, from 49th Avenue through to Kent Ave, traffic calming measures and intersection improvements are required to allow this route to achieve its full potential. Improvements to the Ontario Bikeway were included in the most recent Capital Plan and we urge the City of Vancouver to improve all of it, both to provide a connection to points south, and to address equity issues for those living, working, and traveling by bike on the south end of the City of Vancouver.

For more Information, please contact: vancouver@bikehub.ca

About HUB Cycling

HUB Cycling is a charitable not for profit organization that has spent over 22 years removing barriers to cycling in Metro Vancouver, while cultivating 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 45,000 direct supporters. HUB Cycling has 10 volunteer committees across Metro Vancouver that encourage cycling for all ages and abilities (AAA) in municipalities across Metro Vancouver. For more information, visit bikehub.ca.