

MAPLE RIDGE-PITT MEADOWS NEWS

'A lot of work to do' to improve Maple Ridge cycling infrastructure



[Neil Corbett](#)

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1 / 2 Jackie Chow of Hub Cycling discusses biking infrastructure in Maple Ridge during Go By Bike Week June 3-9, 2024. | (Neil Corbett/The News)

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Can parents trust that their children are able to safely ride bikes to school in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows?

That should be the safety standard of the bike lanes and infrastructure in the cities, according to cycling advocates. Jackie Chow of Hub, Your Cycling Connection, offered her opinions about safe biking in "Ridge Meadows" as riders across the region mark Go By Bike Week, from June 3-9.

Chow said the cities definitely have successes to celebrate. But both she and city councillor Jenny Tan, who is also knowledgeable about safe cycling, say there is a lot of work still to do.

"The present city council is definitely the most bike friendly since we started," said Chow.

She has been an advocate for safer cycling for about 15 years, and the active Hub group meets monthly at the Maple Ridge Library.

She said transportation infrastructure in cities across North America has been centred around automobiles, and now needs retrofits to accommodate both transit projects – including the recently announced bus rapid transit lines, and for cycling and many other forms of transportation. With mobility scooters, electric bikes, and even skateboards, there are a lot of people outside of cars, but zipping around on wheels. They all need to have a safe path.

"There's so much work to do," said Chow. "For so many years you've designed for cars, and now you've got to turn it around and design for people."

Chow said cyclists are critical of past projects and existing infrastructure – like bike lanes on the left of parked cars, as on 224th Street. There is a danger of motorists opening their door for a cyclist to run into. She knows of cyclists who have been permanently injured by being "doored."

In some places and situations multi-use pathways work great, and in other places simple traffic calming measures and sharing the road work better, she said. So Hub would like to be consulted about new cycling infrastructure before plans are made – because she said they have had little pre-planning input to date.

"We would really like to be asked by the city for feedback on their ideas in the early stages," Chow said.

Chow talked about some recently built multi-use pathways (MUPs). There are MUPs on both 117th Avenue and 232 Street, but there are few driveways on 232, but there are many along 117th. Hub would like to see continuous sidewalks that prioritize pedestrians and cyclists over vehicles. Instead of stopping at a road crossing or driveway the sidewalk would continue across, with no change in grade, or ramping down. It's a visual cue to drivers that pedestrians or cyclists could be entering the intersection. They are common in The Netherlands, and have also been used in Vancouver, Nanaimo and Canmore, Alberta.

She said the Fern Crescent/132nd Avenue MUP is a beautiful path, and will provide a future connection to a bridge over the Alouette River at 240th Street.

The Hammond Road MUP is also another great path, but Chow said but Hub would like to see safety improvements to make crossings safer, particularly at 203rd Street.

Pitt Meadows has designed some "fantastic" MUPs as part of the Onni warehouse development in South Bonson, along Airport Way, connecting to Harris Road.

Right now, the east-west bike route across Maple Ridge is a maze of turns.

"It would be nice if it could be direct and easy," said Chow.

As these routes are designed, Chow said the cycling connections to transit, including coming BRT stations, will be critical.

"Transit is hugely important if you want to get people out of their cars," she said.

She would like to see some funding from development cost charges, paid by developers, earmarked for cycling infrastructure. It's the best way to ensure there will be funding for needed projects, she said.

Council's strategic plan includes an AAA (all ages and abilities) east-west bike route from 240th to Maple Meadows Station.

Hub is looking forward to future cycling lanes in the city, including the West Ridge Greenway, which will take riders from downtown Maple Ridge to 203rd Street. However, Chow fears it could take decades to complete.

Coun. Tan, who used to work for HUB, said transportation and traffic are associated with gridlock and long commutes. They can impact quality of life. And, she noted, driving brings payments for a vehicle, insurance, fuel, repairs and parking. So not owning a car can be a money saving option for residents, provided they have viable alternative options.

City hall needs to be innovative and bolder as it builds a city where being can walk, cycle, drive or take other forms of transportation safely and conveniently, but Tan allows "We're not there yet."

"We're putting more emphasis on cycling than past councils," said Tan. "But there is a lot of work to be done."



***About the Author:* Neil Corbett**

I have been a journalist for more than 30 years, the past decade with the Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows News.

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