

# Golden Ears Bridge great for cyclists

## Pitt bridge more of a pain for pedallers

Commuter cyclist Dave Rush figures he knows where the first death of a cyclist will occur on the new Pitt River Bridge – somewhere near where the two lanes from the Mary Hill Bypass merge on to the bridge, in the eastbound lanes.

The accident likely will happen when an eastbound cyclist is trying to save time by avoiding the circuitous ramps that take them beneath the bridge and on to its north side in order to continue across.

Instead, trying to save time, the cyclist will cut across the

two merge lanes, in order to stay on a quicker path.

Once on to the east side of the Pitt River, they'll then have to cross the Lougheed Highway to continue east.

For Rush, the benefits of the new bridge are balanced by the negatives and the extra time it adds to a cyclist's trip.

The new bridge's greater height means a tougher pedal to make it to the top of the span, Rush points out.

And the advantages of a resulting faster downhill on the other side are cancelled out by the twists and turns of the ramps the cyclists have to take to get off the bridge.

For the westbound cyclist, Rush figures the bike ramps add

about four minutes to a trip. For the eastbound, it's about another 10 minutes.

Cyclists were consulted when the bridge was being designed, but Rush said design changes complicated the bike route.

A Ministry of Transportation 2007 report on the cycling network for the Pitt River Bridge included feedback from cyclists disappointed with the final concept.

A letter from John Seinen, with the Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition, says: "we must strongly register our disappointment with the design as presented.

"This design is a step backwards from the previous design approaches worked out in last year's consultation with the cy-

cling community. It makes cycling over the Pitt River Bridge very slow for the off-road cyclist, and positively dangerous for the more confident cyclists who legitimately can and do cycle on the Lougheed Highway and the Mary Hill Bypass. This design might be appropriate if the bridge were to be used for a free-way configuration where bicycles and pedestrians are already forbidden, but that is not the case here – both the Lougheed Highway and the Mary Hill Bypass are designated bike routes on the TransLink and Port Coquitlam bicycle network plans.

"This design gives the impression that cycling facilities have been added as an afterthought rather than incorporated into

the main design to create a safe, efficient and direct route for cyclists."

On the other hand, the Golden Ears Bridge, with its more direct access for cyclists, is a definite win for Rush, who pedals to his appointments throughout the Lower Mainland as a consultant.

Cycling time from downtown Maple Ridge to Langley's industrial area should be about 15 minutes.

"People now can bike across the route for free," Rush notes.

"For free," he emphasized.

The toll bridge allows pedestrians and cyclists to cross without paying the minimum \$2.85 charge that motorists have to pay.