

Cyclists urge district

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to boost safety

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Twenty-one cyclists braved the rain Monday and passed through a bike station for some donuts, coffee and oranges on the first day of Bike to Work Week in Maple Ridge.

The cyclists included Mayor Ernie Daykin, who borrowed councillor Linda King's bike to participate.

The week, which runs from May 11 to 17, is aimed at encouraging people to get out of their cars and onto bicycles for their commute.

Jackie Chow, a member of the Maple Ridge chapter of the Vancouver area cycling coalition, regularly bikes 14 kilometres from her home near Kanaka Creek to the greenhouse she works at in Pitt Meadows.

She said there's many reasons people should consider biking to work.

"It's good for the environment, (it leads to) less cars on the road, it improves the livability of the city. It makes a big difference on your health," she said. "It makes you feel great."

The toughest part of her commute is the steep hill up Lougheed and her favourite part is the section she gets to bike along the dykes.

The drawback is the lack of safety for cyclists.

"Safety is a big issue, especially in the downtown area," she said. "Lougheed and Dewdney are the most dangerous roads to bike on because there's no room for bikes."

Dave Rush, also a member of the coalition, is a consulting engineer and he bikes to meetings in various areas of Metro Vancouver. On Monday he was planning to bike to Vancouver General

Hospital for a meeting.

"It could be anywhere," he said.

The farthest he's ridden was to Ladner, which took him two and a half hours but he points out it would take an hour and a half to drive so it wasn't that big of a deal for him.

"There's no frustration on a bike because there's no gridlock," said Rush.

designs them with bright colours so they're highly visible and there's a storage area inside. The recumbent seat is supposed to be easy on the wrists, back and shoulders.

Schleicher enjoys the curiosity he gets from vehicle drivers who pass him.

"They mostly slow down to gawk," he said.

So far, Schleicher has sold

than in Maple Ridge.

He said when you're cycling on Lougheed Highway or Dewdney Trunk Road, "if you make a mistake you are dead."

The cyclist said he's been knocked off his bike by people opening car doors

without noticing him cycling by and was hit once by someone who ran a stop sign.

Those at the event said they will be pressuring the district to improve bike lanes and bike safety in the community.

There will be another bike station at the Pitt River Bridge people can pass through on Thursday between 6 and 9 a.m. and 3 to 6 p.m. Along with drinks and snacks, cyclists can also enter draws to win a free bike.



Amy Steele/TIMES

Steve Schleicher was at the bike station with his velomobile, a recumbent tricycle with a composite fiberglass cover.

Steve Schleicher was at the bike station with his velomobile, a recumbent tricycle with a composite fiberglass cover. Schleicher designs velomobiles for his company Rainforest Designs. The advantage of the velomobile is it offers weather protection, some crash protection, and you can go faster because it's streamlined, he said. He

about 20 of the bikes.

"I think there's going to be a small niche market for it," he said. "A lot of people who buy them seem to be commuting for long distances."

One cyclist at the event who didn't want to be named said he recently biked thousands of kilometres in Thailand and found it was safer in Bangkok, Thailand