

# Thanks, Maple Ridge, for new paths

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Metro Vancouver is doing some major work in Maple Ridge, constructing new water mains from the pump station in the southeast corner of Meadow Gardens Golf Course, just north of Lougheed Highway by the mall.

As well, a multi-use path will be built on the south side of 128th Avenue, from 210th to 224th streets.

The district has just completed paving a multi-use path on the north side of 128th Avenue/Abernethy Way between 224th and 232nd streets.

It looks awesome.

Thank you, Maple Ridge council.

This will be a good, much needed, and definitely safer east-west route for cyclists.

This notoriously dangerous route has, until now, only been used by the most fearless cyclist commuters, to the chagrin of many motorists.

Some of these cyclists may very well continue to use the road once the multi-use path is complete, since they feel they belong on the road rather than on a path that they have to share with people walking their dogs, horses, moms with strollers and the rest of us cycling mortals.

Another project the district is presently working on is a “multi-use sidewalk” along 122nd Avenue and Mountainview Crescent, to improve safety of local residents and students of Maple Ridge secondary, and to encourage more students to walk and bike to school.

There isn't sufficient right of way to provide separated bike lanes as well as sidewalks, and it was felt that cycling students might feel safer sharing the sidewalk with those walking to school than on the road, especially during school drop-off and pick-up times.

Recently, a UBC study on [“Bicyclists’ Injuries and the Cycling Environment”](#) was published in the American Journal of Health. This study examined which types of infrastructure were associated with higher or lower cyclist injury risk. It was interesting that the study found that, whereas people's preferences and safety of certain types of cycling infrastructure, most agree multi-use paths are

preferred by cyclists, but, along with major city streets with parked cars and no bike lanes, and also sidewalks, they actually pose the highest risk for cyclists of all the types of infrastructure that were studied.

Generally, bike specific infrastructure – such as bike lanes, off-road bike paths, designated bike routes on quieter local streets – was found to significantly improve safety for cyclists.

The study found that injury risk for cyclists decreased 90 per cent on protected, or separated bike lanes, also called cycle tracks, compared to a major street with parking.

Cycling on sidewalks can cause drivers, when they make a turn, to not notice cyclists, especially when they cycle on the ‘wrong’ side of the road.

Since cyclists are allowed to travel in either direction on sidewalks on both sides of the road on 122nd Ave, this will require both drivers and cyclists to pay extra attention.

Part of the project is painted pedestrian/cyclist crossings (called ‘elephant tracks’). Hopefully this will help to prevent problems.

I suggest to parents and teachers to remind kids to cross with caution when cycling on the multi-use sidewalk, especially when on the wrong side of the road. Drivers, of course, need to learn to look for cyclists coming from both directions on the sidewalk.

The [Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Bikeways Plan](#) was put together about 20 years ago, and it is based on a kind of thinking that has led to the low numbers of cyclists we see on the roads these days, namely that of “vehicular cycling.” Cyclists were thought to always be safer sharing the road with cars than riding on separated infrastructure.

The BICE study shows that planners should mostly have listened to our gut feeling all along.

Both municipalities have decided to go it alone now. I’m hoping that this study will be consulted by city engineers and consultants for both Maple Ridge’s updated Transportation Plan and for Pitt Meadows’ Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan.

I also hope that the Maple Ridge Transportation Plan update will include a review of the cycling plan for the town core. Now that much densification is happening there, it’s making more sense all the time to improve cycle-friendliness of the area.

Have the lines that were drawn on the town core multi-modal transportation map seven or eight years ago led to an increase in cycling? I don't think so. Few cyclists know of this map or are even where they are supposed to bike in the town core.

The east-west routes, along Selkirk and Brown avenues, and 116th Avenue south of Lougheed Hwy. help cyclists avoid the highway and Dewdney Trunk Road – the flattest routes and the streets where most of the shops, restaurants and other destinations are – which is where they would actually want to go.

I understand that we can't expect to get bike lanes everywhere instantaneously, but we need to allow cyclists – eventually of all ages and abilities – access to their destinations that is equally comfortable, convenient and safe for them as it is for cars, without having to seek refuge on the sidewalks.

Part of the district's long-term plans for densification is to aim for 40 to 60 per cent of trips within the town core to be by other modes than by single passenger vehicle.

A good, and cheap, first step: lower speed limits to 30 km/h in all of the town core.

According to my calculations, driving from 222nd Street to 116th Ave. along Lougheed will take less than a minute longer if driving at 30 km/h instead of 50 km/h.

Quite a reasonable sacrifice to ask from drivers to make not only cycling safer; it will increase pedestrian safety, and it will make the town core a lot more pleasant to be for everyone who's not in a car.

*Jackie Chow is a member of the Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows Chapter of HUB: Your Cycling Connection.*