

# Help for students cycling to school

Throughout Metro Vancouver, HUB provides cycling training programs at elementary schools.

For example, in New Westminster all sixth-graders receive cycling education, and Surrey provides training for all fourth- and fifth-graders over two years.

In Maple Ridge, HUB wheeled out a successful Bike to School program at Albion elementary in 2011.

“I thought the program run at Albion two years ago was great,” said Albion principal Ron Lanzarotta. “We had a lot of parents and students participating, and the level of engagement was very high. Albion does not have a lot of students biking to school, because there is such heavy traffic flow on 240th and surrounding main streets.”

Not only should cycling training be part of every child’s education, kids should be able to regularly put into practice what they’ve learned instead of being strapped into a car seat every day. After all, it’s one of the best ways to learn about traffic rules and to – from a young age – improve the important skills needed to safely participate in traffic.

Of course, it’s not just about education and practice. As at Albion elementary, the traffic chaos and lack of a safe place to bike around certain schools are issues that need to be dealt with.

Parents, school officials and municipal engineers need to work together to decide what can be done at each school in a cost-efficient and effective manner to make biking to school safer.

It can be helpful to look for best practices in places where cycling is popular among all ages (HUB may be able to provide some examples).

A Danish study released last year showed that kids who bike or walk to school perform measurably better than kids who are transported to school by car.

The benefits of going to school on their own power lasted for up to four hours. Not only does cycling to school give kids an advantage when it comes to being more alert and learning better, it helps them stay in shape physically. For those kids who don’t even like exercising, it’s a great way to be active without even thinking about it as exercise.

Our local HUB committee would love to see more kids biking to school. Interested parents can talk to school officials, and schools can contact the District of Maple Ridge (Michael Eng, engineering

department, [meng@mapleridge.ca](mailto:meng@mapleridge.ca)) or the City of Pitt Meadows (Ike de Boer, engineering department, [ideboer@pittmeadows.bc.ca](mailto:ideboer@pittmeadows.bc.ca)) to enquire about funding for cycling education at their school.

To give kids a taste of how much fun biking to school can be, HUB and HASTe (Hub for Active School Travel) are promoting Bike to School Week, May 27–31 (same week as Bike to Work Week).

It would be great to see schools getting organized with enthusiastic team leaders, as it would to get some friends together to bike to school as a group, or to have some quality time with just mom or dad.

To make streets safer for people of all ages and abilities, the B.C. Cycling Coalition has put together a cycling strategy, proposing an increase in investment in cycling infrastructure to \$75 million per year, improved maintenance standards on roads and paths, improved cycling education, and the implementation of a cycling tourism strategy.

Various studies concluded that investment in cycling infrastructure is repaid multiple times over through savings in health care, reduced congestion, air and noise pollution, energy consumption and roadway costs, which can be said of few other investments made with public money.

Ask your candidates about their position on this strategy and go vote on May 14 – on your bike.

*Jackie Chow is a member of the local chapter of HUB.*