

# Transportation plan key to cut carbon

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Maple Ridge Cycle has moved. For about two months now the shop been just around the corner from the old location on Lougheed, at 11771 Fraser St. It's not that easy to spot, but usually there's a red bike in front, and there's a smallish Maple Ridge Cycle sign above the window. Owner Troy has developed a reputation of having a great community bike shop and he's confident that old and new customers will find him, but I thought I'd just let you know.

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Something that I think should be of great interest, is that the scorecard for Community Greenhouse Gas Emissions for Maple Ridge, provided by the BC Ministry of Environment, was recently published on the SEE-IT online report on the district's website. The results are not surprising, but should nevertheless be alarming to residents as well as to council.

Between 2007 and 2010, community greenhouse gas emissions have gone up by six per cent.

If we were to be on track in reducing our emissions by 33 per cent from 2007 levels by 2020 – the aggressive target set by our previous council – we should have achieved a reduction of roughly five per cent by 2010.

The population increase between 2007 and 2010 was about three per cent, so we actually even increased our emissions per capita. Bad news!

The report for Pitt Meadows has not been made available yet.

Pitt Meadow's target is a more modest 13 per cent reduction from 2007 emissions by 2017.

Since 59 per cent of Maple Ridge's emissions comes from transportation, it's good news that the District of Maple Ridge is working on an update of our Transportation Plan.

The existing plan dates from 2003, and this update "will guide decision-making for transportation over the next 25 years and beyond and will recommend improvements for all modes of transportation, including walking, cycling, public transit, and vehicles," according to the district's website.

Note the order of transportation modes in the above, and the last comma, which would seem to emphasize that cars are indeed dead last on the list of priorities.

The plan is supposed to help shift towards a more sustainable future and there's no doubt we need to do more to reduce our car-dependency.

The plan is also about more than just cycling.

It's about livability and urban design. It's about sufficient densification along transportation corridors and in neighbourhood hubs to make transit, walking and cycling more viable and appealing for more people.

This sort of densification may also encourage commercial development along the corridors and in the hubs, provided zoning allows this.

Smart growth shouldn't stop with the town core. If we want to get serious about getting people out of their cars, the district will need to look at policies and regulations, and carrots and sticks, that guide our development outside the town core.

There is little potential for increasing east-west road capacity for cars apart from the Abernethy/128th Avenue corridor.

That, combined with the rapid growth in our community, makes it essential to make "alternative" transportation more appealing.

However, our "weakness" of being a long, stretched out corridor may well turn out to be our strength, if we manage to find a "made in Maple Ridge" solution. As the chair of Translink, Nancy Olewiler, pointed out at the recent Velo-city 2012 Cycling Conference in Vancouver, cycling can be a powerful way to increase the catchment area of a transit station from one- to two-kilometres (walking) to five km or more without the need to build huge parking lots.

Of course, when rental bike lockers are provided, at the same time that free car parking is available, the choice that most people are going to make is obvious. It's up to the district to provide the carrots and sticks and the safe and convenient cycling infrastructure to make it work.

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Please fill out the Maple Ridge Transportation Plan Update Survey, which can be found at [www.mapleridge.ca](http://www.mapleridge.ca). There will be an opportunity to talk to staff and consultants at the Haney Farmer's Market in Memorial Peace Park on Sept. 8, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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