



Your **Cycling** Connection



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Re: **Maple Ridge Master Parks, Recreation & Culture Plan**

We are pleased to see that Maple Ridge is developing a new Master Parks, Recreation and Culture Plan. Please find below our comments.

Cycling for all ages and abilities; towards an inclusive, equitable and more sustainable city

Roads and off-road trails are important for people cycling, both for recreation and for transportation. Recreational and utilitarian/commuter cycling routes need to complement each other to provide more opportunities to improve cycling connectivity.

Our road network is complete and connected for cars, but there are a lot of gaps for all ages and abilities for cycling. Especially in east Maple Ridge, connectivity for cycling is very poor.

The off-road trails network in Maple Ridge consists for a large part of horse trails, most of which do not accommodate all ages and abilities cycling.

The need to reduce car travel and achieve modal shift is more urgent than ever. We need to deal with issues like greenhouse gas emissions, increasing congestion, our sedentary lifestyle and related health issues, as well as the significant inequities in our transportation system. First the pandemic and now also the skyrocketing gas prices demonstrate how critically important a good, well connected cycling network is.

To accommodate cycling for all ages and abilities, as well as the rapidly increasing use of e-bikes, significant improvements of the recreational and transportation cycling networks are needed, whether it's connecting pathways between neighbourhoods, separated infrastructure along busy or high speed roadways, recreational pathways through and around neighbourhoods away from the busier roads, or rural greenways and connections through greenspaces.

The rapidly increasing popularity of e-bikes deserves special attention by policy makers and planners. In areas like ours, where distances and hills can be more challenging, there is huge potential for e-bikes - as well as e-scooters - to transform our transportation system and reduce our reliance on private automobiles. It requires systematic change, vision, and political will and courage to make the necessary changes in planning and road design.

What have we achieved over the past 10+ years?

In February 2010 we gave feedback¹ for the 2010 Master Parks and Recreation Plan. Much of that feedback continues to be relevant, and the need to adapt to the reality of increased urban development, further encroachment of lower density development into rural areas, as well as other pressing issues as mentioned above, is now even more urgent.

When it comes to the **transportation cycling network**, which falls under the responsibility of the Engineering Department, a fair bit of progress has been made. We've seen more separated infrastructure built (122 Ave./Mountainview Cr., 128 Ave./Abernethy Way, some sections of 240 St., Lougheed Hwy between 216 St. and Laity St., and last but not least 203 St. between Dewdney and Golden Ears Way - our very first cycle track!). At the same time though, traffic has increased significantly, and many routes without adequate cycling infrastructure have actually become more dangerous for cycling.

The following maps show the progression of the plans:

¹ HUB Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows feedback for 2010 Master Parks, Recreation and Culture Plan, Feb. 2010: https://wiki.bikehub.ca/sites/committees/images/b/b4/MRPM_2010Feb_Master_Parks_Plan.pdf

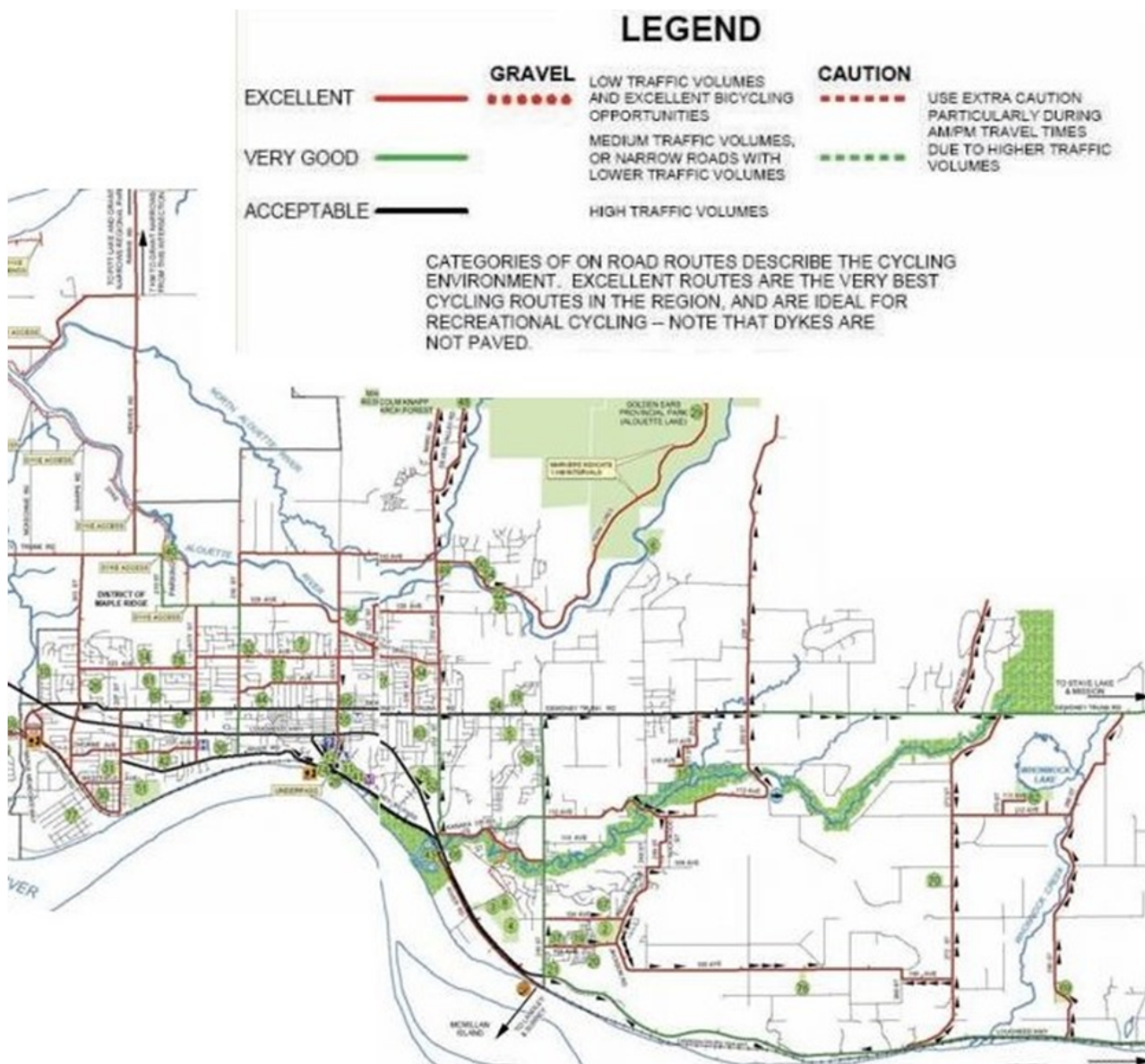


Figure 1 - Cycling network map from **2005**: routes were mostly classified 'excellent' (red). Green ('very good') routes include Hwy 7 east of 240 St., and Dewdney Trunk Rd. east of 256 St.

Map 24: Long-Term Bicycle Network

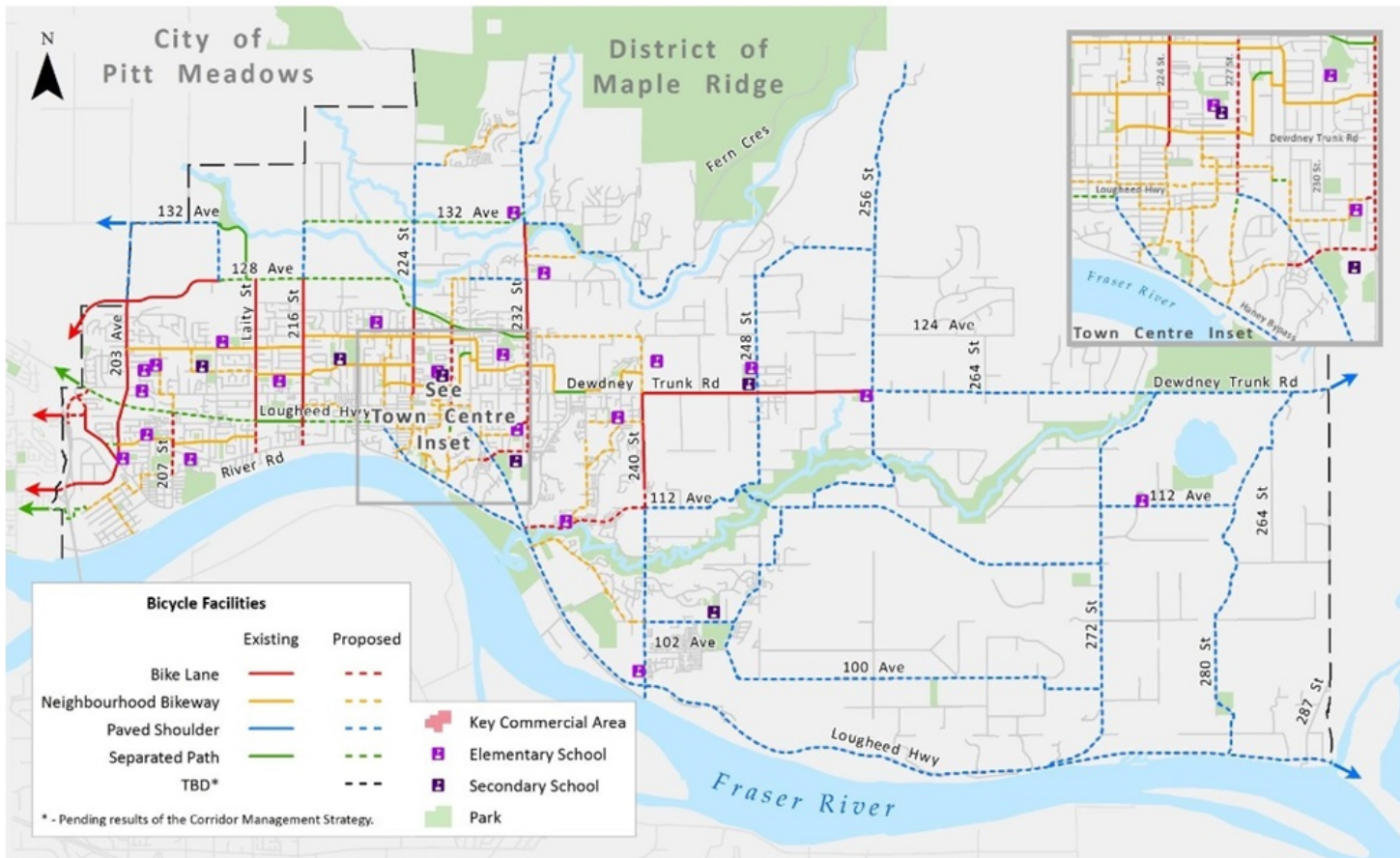


Figure 2 - Cycling network map from **2014 STP**. This map looks very different and shows some (mostly north-south) routes with bike lanes, 'neighbourhood bikeways' (i.e. mostly just bike symbols painted on the road) most of which run east-west, and many proposed 'bike facilities', mostly shoulders and neighbourhood bikeways

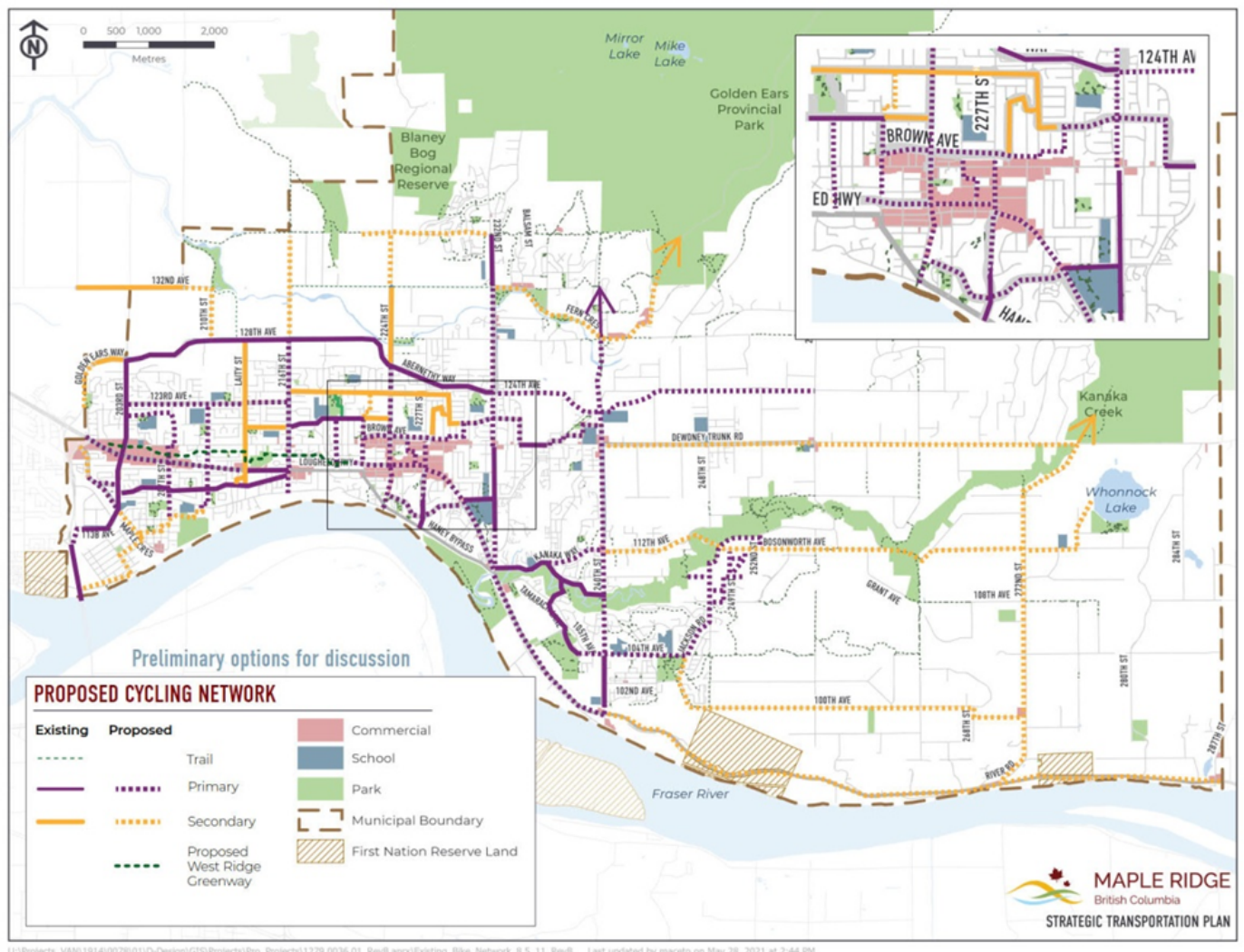


Figure 3 - Proposed cycling network map for future Transportation Plan. Some important routes are proposed to be removed (e.g. Haney Bypass, Lougheed from 216 St. to 222 St., 256 St.), and some routes are being added.

As is evident from these maps, most of our cycling network was considered 'excellent' just less than 20 years ago. Since then, quite a few routes have been reclassified as 'proposed', and some routes are simply disappearing off the map altogether.

In 2011, 20 HUB volunteers and Bicycle Advisory Committee members participated in an exercise to assess the designated transportation cycling network (Maple Ridge only), under the guidance of the BAC staff liaison. Unfortunately, the City informed us afterwards that the data that was gathered during that exercise was no longer available. There was no follow-up at the time.

As to **recreational trails for AAA cycling**, we have the good fortune of having Pitt Meadows with its dike trails as our neighbour. Other than the TransLink bike map, the bike routes featured on Maple

Ridge's website are almost exclusively of trails/routes in Pitt Meadows. Many people love cycling along the dikes. The recreational "trail" system for AAA cycling in Maple Ridge consists mainly of roads, some multi-use pathways, and bits and pieces of equestrian trails, with many gaps.

In Maple Ridge, the focus has been on horse trails for decades, due to the fact that the City was able to rely on the horse community to do much of the work of building trails in Maple Ridge, which is why we have a very extensive horse trail network. Maple Ridge also has its share of mountain biking trails. There are numerous walking trails around the City, some of which can be incorporated in bike routes.

Maple Ridge is growing rapidly, and not everyone rides a horse or is into 'roughing it' with mountain biking or challenging hikes. 25% of people in Metro Vancouver already ride bikes for recreation or transportation, and 41% want to cycle more. We need more safe and pleasant places to do so, without having to put our bikes on the car to drive elsewhere before we can get on our bikes. We would love to have our own "PoCo Trail", or "Fort-to-Fort Trail" right here in Maple Ridge.

According to the State of Cycling Report (2020)², Maple Ridge is one of four municipalities where cycling rates (for commuting to work) have dropped, from 1.1% in 2006 to 0.5% in 2016. The average rate for Metro Vancouver in 2016 was 2.3%.

Only in very recent years, we started seeing signs that the realization was setting in that a new approach was needed. The needs of certain groups were not being adequately considered, such as people of all ages and abilities looking for opportunities for recreational cycling and rolling.

The most significant of those 'signs' was that in 2014, the equestrian trails map that had been embedded in the Official Community Plan was quietly renamed 'Long Term Multipurpose Trail Plan', as a "minor housekeeping amendment". As far as we know, this significant change happened without any public consultation and it caught even the Haney Horsemen by surprise.

The problem is that you can't simply change the designation and expect these equestrian trails to work for hiking, mountain biking and recreational cycling. Many horse trails have water crossings without a bridge, and steep or rough sections and other barriers, and therefore are not suitable as bike trails for all ages and abilities.

In 2013, a multi-purpose trails map had already been published and distributed. Our HUB Cycling Committee provided numerous suggestions for improvements³. We are not aware of any improvements that were made as a result of our recommendations.

In the Fall of 2021, our HUB Committee did an assessment⁴ of the "operational" segments of Metro Vancouver's Regional Greenways trails network in Maple Ridge, which was submitted to both the Parks Department and the Engineering Department. These trails are supposed to be for walking and cycling. We hope to see improvements as a result of our assessment.

² State of Cycling report:

https://hub-intellectsolution.netdna-ssl.com/sites/default/files/hubtl-cyclingreport-2020-02-27_v5.pdf

³ HUB Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows suggestions for trail improvements, 2013:

https://wiki.bikehub.ca/sites/committees/images/8/82/MRPM_2014Jan_Multipurpose_trails_map.pdf

⁴ HUB Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows assessment of operational Regional Greenways network in Maple Ridge:

https://wiki.bikehub.ca/sites/committees/images/3/3f/2021_2021Oct_Metro_Van_Greenways_assessment.pdf

So far, it appears that all the challenges with the trails network listed in the joint Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows [2010 Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan](#) (page 46 and 47) continue to be challenges to this day.

Trail classification and standards

While Pitt Meadows has a trail classification scheme, Maple Ridge does not yet have one, as was already noted in the 2010 Plan. It's very important to have a good trails classification scheme so that people know which trails are suitable for walking, mountain biking, recreational biking and horse back riding, for various levels of ability.

We would also encourage the City to take a look at the trails standards that are presently being used, to ensure that the needs of the various users are considered for 'multi-use trails' (i.e. for all defined classifications of 'trails'), both on- and off-road. The BC Active Transportation Design Guide gives good guidance.

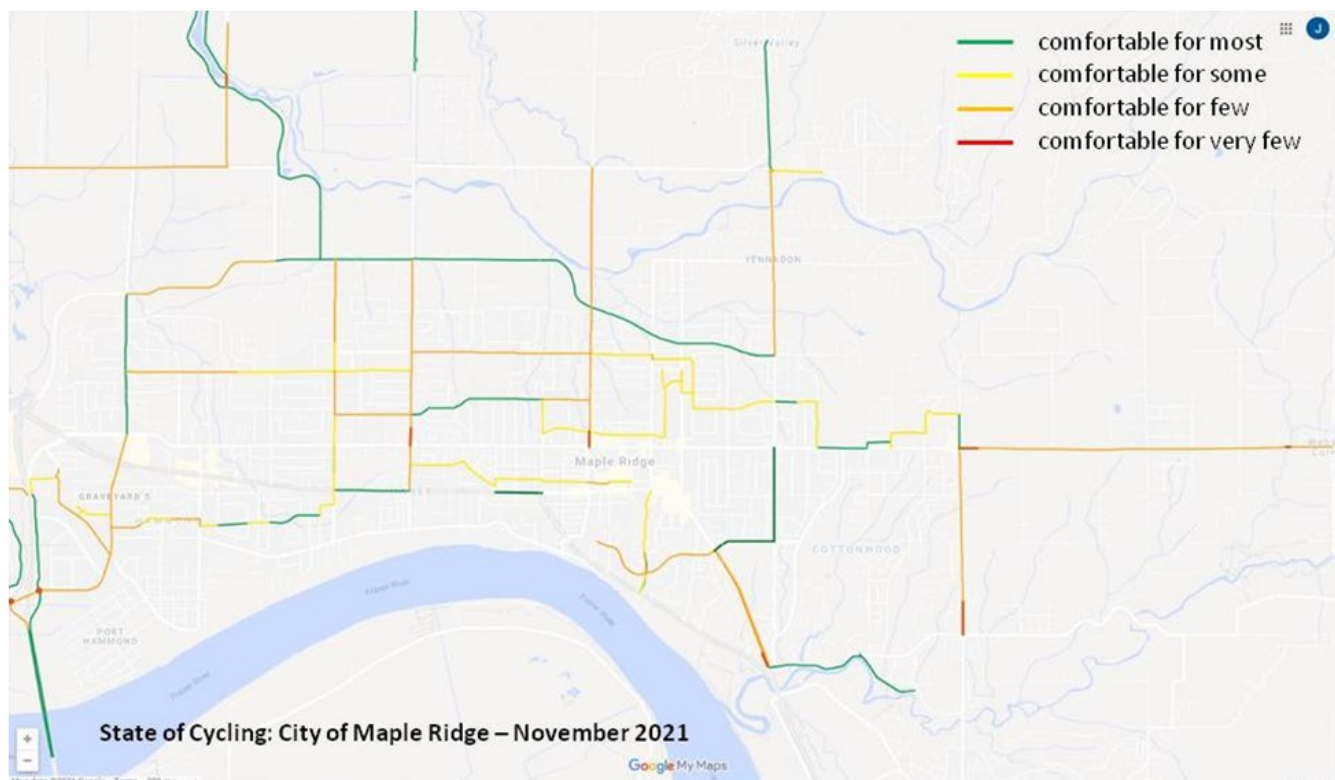
Road "trails"

In Maple Ridge, quite a few 'trails' are along road corridors. Few roads have separated paths. Often these roads do not have shoulders, or sometimes only a shoulder on one side. Some of these roads may have low traffic volumes and are pleasant for biking and other uses, although not always accessible to those who are trying to get to these roads via off-road (equestrian) trails. As the road network for cars in east Maple Ridge gets better connected by new road connections (e.g. 124 Ave. at the Hinch Trail west of 248 St., and 112th-108th Ave. connector), car and truck traffic on those quieter roads will increase, and walking, cycling and horse back riding will no longer be safe if no improvements are made.

Some of the so-called on-road 'trails' are clearly unsafe for any vulnerable road user (e.g. 272 Street; 210 St. between 128 Ave. and 132 Ave.; 132 Ave. between 210 St. and Neaves Rd.).

In 2019, local HUB committees throughout Metro Vancouver participated with the State of Cycling⁵ project, a joint effort by HUB Cycling and TransLink, to determine the extent and quality of bikeways in each municipality.

⁵ State of Cycling: <https://bikehub.ca/research/the-state-of-cycling-in-metro-vancouver>



Cycle Highways and e-bikes

Cycle highways⁶ are the highest quality bike routes, covering long distances (5km+) and providing regional connections between major destinations. They are direct, paved, protected, lit, of ample width, and with intersections prioritizing people cycling. This, along with clear signage, branding, and regular maintenance, ensures cycle highways are safe, comfortable, and easy to use for people of all ages and abilities at all times of the day and year.

E-bikes and other forms of micromobility are massively increasing in popularity. E-bike firms are experiencing a sharp uptick in sales in the past two years, ranging from 100-500% growth. Cycle highways pair perfectly with e-bikes, helping to capitalize on their popularity while reducing the number of people driving and fitting in with our regional climate and transportation goals.

Cycle highways can be used to access major parks (i.e. Golden Ears Park) and other recreation destinations, and reduce congestion and parking issues there.

Regional Greenway trails

The Metro Vancouver Regional Greenways 2050⁷ report points to a growing demand for comfortable cycling facilities.

⁶ Cycle Highways in Metro Vancouver report, HUB Cycling, May 2022:

<https://www.bikehub.ca/research/making-the-case-for-cycle-highways-in-metro-vancouver>

⁷ Regional Greenways 2050, Metro Vancouver:

<http://www.metrovancouver.org/services/parks/ParksPublications/RegionalGreenways2050.pdf>

*“Regional Greenways 2050 is the region’s shared vision for a network of recreational multi-use paths for **cycling and walking** that connects residents to large parks, protected natural areas and communities to support regional livability...*

...As regional greenways are intended to be off street routes, they create opportunities for residents to choose more active modes of travel and avoid unintentional injury due to motor vehicle collisions. Regional Greenways 2050 provides an opportunity for Metro Vancouver, TransLink, municipalities and other orders of government and their agencies operating in the region to focus their efforts on filling gaps in and improving the comfort of the recreation and transportation cycling networks.”

To get an idea of the quality and accessibility of the Regional Greenways in Maple Ridge, in Fall 2021 our HUB Cycling Committee did an assessment⁸ of the network in Maple Ridge, as far as marked "operational".

According to Metro Vancouver, these trails are meant to be primarily suitable for walking and cycling, and, where possible, for horses. Obviously, since many of our trails were originally built for horses, it's often the other way around.

Whonnock Lake is one of the wonderful destinations in our municipality that can be made much more accessible for people cycling. In recent years the municipality has focused significant efforts to develop the park at Whonnock Lake, but for the most part it continues to be only accessible for people who drive or ride on horseback. Improvements are needed to several sections of the Regional Greenway trail to make it all connected. It's great if we can make the journey itself part of the experience!

We are looking forward to learning more about planned improvements to the Regional Greenway trails to make them accessible and comfortable for people walking and cycling.

Municipal trails

Municipal trails are included in the draft map of the proposed cycling network for the new Transportation Plan that's being developed. Many of these trails were developed either as horse trails or as local walking trails, and may not be suitable for AAA cycling. We would welcome the opportunity to participate in assessment of these trails to determine suitability for utilitarian and recreational cycling, but we feel that it would be best if this would be initiated by the City, and it involves all potential user groups.

Trails built by developers

Some of the (horse?) trails along residential subdivisions that were built by developers are not usable. This is an example of a 'trail' that was built on 104 Ave. west of 240 St.:

⁸ HUB Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows assessment of Regional Greenways in Maple Ridge:
https://www.bikehub.ca/sites/committees/images/3/3f/2021_2021Oct_Metro_Van_Greenways_assessment.pdf



The 'trail' is interrupted by a driveway every few meters. Even if homeowners would not use the gravel section as extra parking, the City can't prohibit homeowners from using the full length of their

driveways, which makes such a trail totally useless. This not only leaves gaps in the horse trail network; they can't be used for AAA cycling either.

The City needs to ensure that high quality facilities are built so that opportunities to improve the active transportation network are not lost.

West Ridge Greenway

We assume that the Parks Department will be involved in at least some parts of the development of the planned West Ridge Greenway along the Lougheed Transit Corridor. We have been told by our planners that it will likely take 30 years to complete this Greenway. With the expected increase in density along the Lougheed Transit Corridor, we would like to see a plan to accelerate construction of sections of the Greenway that are not the responsibility of developers but will have to be constructed by the City, so that connections can be created where they don't yet exist. This will give existing as well as many new residents moving into this area a viable alternative to the car for their short trips in town, to shop or to do other errands. We can't wait another 30 years to complete this Greenway, while the calls to expand road and parking space for more motor vehicles grow ever louder. Completing sections of the Greenway such as through the cemetery and the McKenney Creek area would help fix the missing links.

Golden Ears Park

Golden Ears Provincial Park is a major destination for not only Maple Ridge residents but also many visitors from afar, with almost 800,000 visitors every year, but access is presently mostly limited to those who have access to a motor vehicle. The road into the park has no shoulders, and gets very busy in the summer, with lots of oversized vehicles, RVs and trailers with boats. In recent years, access to the park had to be restricted due to high numbers of visitors and insufficient car parking.

Safe, separated infrastructure to the Park for people cycling would help reduce the pressures on the single access road to the Park, and provide safe access to the Park for those who do not drive. A separated multi-use path along the access road would help attract cycling tourism to Golden Ears Park and to local businesses in Maple Ridge. Cycling tourism has significantly more benefits to the local economy than tourists who visit by car⁹. Cycle tourists tend to stay longer, are more likely to stay overnight, eat a lot, and look for other things to do, see and experience, while many car tourists tend to just drive through after visiting Golden Ears Park.

We pointed out the benefits of cycle tourism in our feedback for the Maple Ridge Tourism Strategy¹⁰ back in 2017.

⁹ Ontario's Cycling Tourism Plan, 2017: http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/tourism/pdf/cycling_plan.pdf, see page 8 and 9, Economic Impact of Cycling Tourism.

¹⁰ HUB Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows feedback for Maple Ridge Tourism Strategy, Jan. 14, 2017: https://wiki.bikehub.ca/sites/committees/images/1/11/MRPM_2017Jan_Maple_Ridge_Tourism_Strategy_Plan_fin.pdf

Kanaka Creek Park

Our HUB Committee would like the City to work with Metro Vancouver on the development of a multi-use trail along Kanaka Creek Park, to provide opportunities for recreational and transportation cycling for all ages and abilities in east Maple Ridge, away from car traffic. This is planned as part of the Experience the Fraser project¹¹. We do understand the need for, and support protection of, the natural environment. Providing pleasant, convenient and safe access to our natural environment so more people can enjoy the outdoors from outside the confines of a motor vehicle, is critical to develop a stronger connection and commitment to protection of our natural spaces that we so depend on to thrive, and to survive.

Fraser Riverfront Trail

Mentioned in the 2010 Parks Plan is the idea of a multi-use trail along the Fraser River between the Kanaka Creek Riverfront Park and the Haney Wharf area. This would be a great asset for local residents and a wonderful draw for visitors. It would also open up possibilities for re-development of some of the waterfront south of the Haney Bypass.

Again, a connecting trail all along the Fraser River (from Hope to the Salish Sea) is part of the Experience the Fraser project (Canyon to Coast Trail). We hope to start seeing some progress here in Maple Ridge in the coming ten years.

Bike parking at parks and facilities

Bike racks at parks and other amenities and destinations are needed. Whether it's for transportation or recreation, just like drivers need parking at every destination, people cycling need a place to safely leave their bikes. We hope that this is going to be part of the Plan, and that it's going to be looked at when the City updates its Off-street Parking and Loading Bylaw this year.

Maps and Signage

Both good maps and better signage are essential to help people find their way, as mentioned in the 2010 Plan. Unlike the road network for cars, the cycling network is convoluted, with many gaps, and far from intuitive. We were happy to work with the City on the combined city-/bikemap that was published prior to the pandemic, and which will continue to be a “work in progress” as the cycling network improves. More destinations that are of interest to people cycling can be added to the map. It would be more practical to list the destinations on the same side as the bike map. Advertising can be used as a source of funding.

For guidance, we refer to TransLink’s Wayfinding Guidelines for Utility Cycling in Metro Vancouver¹².

¹¹ Experience the Fraser: <https://www.fvrd.ca/en/main/parks-recreation/experience-the-fraser.html>

¹² Wayfinding Guidelines for Utility Cycling in Metro Vancouver:
https://www.translink.ca/-/media/translink/documents/cycling/regional-cycling-strategy/wayfinding_guidelines_for_utility_cycling_in_metro_vancouver.pdf#view=fitH

Multi-use pathways

Mayor and Council as well as the Engineering Department are well aware of our Committee's concerns with the almost exclusive focus on multi-use pathways to extend the cycling and pedestrian network, regardless of context. We will not elaborate on this here, as it's a continuing discussion with the Engineering Department.

Funding

Significantly more funding is required to build the high quality recreational and transportation infrastructure that we urgently need to encourage more people to use active transportation, to accommodate the latent demand for cycling opportunities in general, and the growing number of e-bikes, so that more people can enjoy safe and comfortable travel on foot or by bike. Apart from taking advantage of available grants, the municipality may want to look for other sources of stable, dedicated funding, such as:

1. to dedicate a certain percentage of Development Cost Charges to active transportation improvements along existing roads that experience increased traffic volumes as a result of new development.
2. to dedicate a certain percentage of Community Amenity Contributions to fund improvements to multi-use recreational trails and greenways.
3. to dedicate a certain percentage of soil volume deposit fees, charged to gravel truck operations that operate in our community, for active transportation and multi-use recreational trails. Soil volume deposit fees have thus far only been used for general road maintenance and repair of the roadways that are used to move large quantities of dirt. However, the heavy truck traffic generated by these operations cause dangerous road conditions for vulnerable road users, on roads that often do not even have shoulders, bike lanes or horse trails along them.
4. to work with other municipalities as well as with other levels of government to examine possible ways to ensure that the operation of all heavy trucks on municipal and provincial roads contributes to the cost of needed safety improvements for vulnerable road users, such as separated multi-use pathways and bike lanes. Development generates a considerable amount of truck traffic, with soil being removed and aggregate and soil to be deposited back on development sites, but soil volume deposit fees are not charged when soil is hauled away to outside Maple Ridge boundaries. We believe there could be an opportunity to generate needed funds to improve recreational and road 'trail' networks by adding a certain percentage to development permit fees.

We are looking forward to working with the City and hope to see significant progress in the next ten years.

HUB Cycling

Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Committee

JC/SG/EoM/DM/JW/MN

About HUB Cycling

HUB Cycling is a charitable not for profit organization that has spent over 22 years removing barriers to cycling in Metro Vancouver, while cultivating the health, environmental, and economic benefits that active transportation can bring. HUB has educated thousands of people, motivated thousands more, and championed improvements that [#UnGapTheMap](#) to create a connected cycling network. HUB Cycling's mission is to get more people cycling more often. HUB Cycling has close to 3,000 members and more than 45,000 direct supporters. HUB Cycling has 10 volunteer committees across Metro Vancouver that encourage cycling for all ages and abilities (AAA) in municipalities across Metro Vancouver. For more information, visit bikehub.ca.