

Week will promote cycling to work

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Why drive under five? This is the challenge that Rick Halas and other members of the Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition are presenting to residents of the Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows during their fourth annual Bike to Work Week next week.

This year, the focus of Bike to Work Week is on local cycling traffic. While last year stations were set up for those "sporty, hardy" cyclists who have a certain level of expertise along their work commutes, this year the focus is to "encourage people who stay within that two to five kilometre range," Halas said. "We want to appeal to the people who stay in town," Halas said.

None of the members of the cycling coalition are purists, the Maple Ridge resident added, and they want to encourage people to cycle whenever possible to reduce car traffic, especially shorter distances under five kilometres.

The local VACC chapter has challenged council and city staff from Pitt Meadows to beat their counterparts in Maple Ridge clocking cycling kilometres next week.

The prize will be The Fork, a sculpture made by Port Moody sculptor Ian Freemantle.

Maple Ridge Mayor Ernie Daykin said he will be cycling to work next week on the days he can.

For him, there's no question that Maple Ridge will win the trophy and they're already clearing a space in the trophy cabinet at the municipal hall.

"We're going to wear our pride on our sleeves," Daykin said. "We're going to peddle



Maria Rantanen/TIMES

Cycling advocate Rick Halas with The Fork trophy.

our butts around town." Pitt Meadows Mayor Don MacLean, however, isn't ready to forfeit yet and is rising to the challenge.

"Ernie has already beaten me in the wheelchair race by two seconds — my ego couldn't take another loss," he said at last week's council meeting.

To get more people out of their cars and riding their bikes, Maple Ridge needs more contiguous cycling infrastructure, Halas said. While there are "bits here and there" of bicycle paths, they often end abruptly and "at the end of those you're on your own."

"Where does it go to — it goes to sheer death," Halas said.

Not every cyclist is a "road warrior," Halas said, able to ride long distances and decked out in the latest

high-tech cycling gear. The cycling coalition is trying to make riding a bike easy for people of all ages and abilities.

"VACC is trying to appeal to anyone," Halas said. "Why can't Mrs. Jones ride her bike to the mailbox?"

On the one hand, there's a need for more bike paths around the community, on the other hand, Halas pointed out, motorists need to be educated that bikes, pedestrians and transit also all belong on the roads.

While cities like Copenhagen and Amsterdam have cycling rates of more than 30 per cent, and Portland has attained about 25 per cent ridership, Halas said cycling needs to be promoted as a viable means of transportation in the Lower Main-

land. Currently, only about one per cent of commuters cycle in the outlying areas of the Lower Mainland, Halas pointed out.

Halas commutes to work from Silver Valley to Port Coquitlam once a week in the winter and about twice a week when the weather is better.

His commute is 18 kilometres one way — about 50 minutes.

Every year, Halas does the Galloping Goose trail from Swartz Bay to Victoria with his family and envisions a similar destination cycling route for Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows.

► Bike to Work Week runs from May 31 to June 5 for

the fourth year in a row. On Wednesday, June 2 there will be a Bike to Work Week station at Zen Berry Café in Pitt Meadows from 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Zen Berry is located at #7-12350 Harris Rd. in Pitt Meadows. On Friday

June 4 there will be a station at Memorial Peace Park on 224th Street in Maple Ridge from 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. At the pit stops, cyclists can get food and drinks, bike maps, learn about bike maintenance and prizes.

QUOTE:

"We're going to wear our pride on our sleeves. We're going to peddle our butts around town."

Mayor Ernie Daykin