



April 15th, 2014

Mayor and Council
City of North Vancouver
141 West 14th Street
North Vancouver, BC V7M 1H9

4th Street bike route improvement recommendations

Dear Mayor and Council,

HUB is a charitable organization that encourages cycling for all ages and abilities in Metro Vancouver to improve the quality of our communities and local economies, our health and the environment.

The HUB North Shore Committee is concerned about the volume of vehicle traffic on the 4th Street bike route, which directly compromises the purpose of the bikeway as a safer alternative to vehicle-heavy 3rd Street. We ask that the temporary traffic diverter at St. David's Avenue is reinstated and made permanent to reduce traffic volumes on 4th Street.

In addition, cyclist activated signals are needed at the intersections of 4th Street and Lonsdale Avenue, St. Georges Avenue and Chesterfield Avenue to allow residents of all ages and abilities (AAA) to use this route, supporting Council's recent approval of an AAA cycling network across the city.

Issue 1: Vehicles use 4th Street as a shortcut route

The most significant challenge to AAA cycling on 4th Street is the vehicle traffic volume on the bike route during afternoon rush hour. You are probably aware that eastbound traffic regularly backs up on 3rd Street and Keith Road whenever there is an incident near the Ironworkers Memorial Bridge or further east along the Highway 1 corridor. A significant number of drivers drive impatiently on 4th Street to Heywood Street to get closer to the front of the lined-up cars.

Without a traffic diverter, 4th Street is the perfect shortcut route for drivers. The repositioned stop signs along much of the route (to better accommodate cycling) makes it the fastest alternative to 3rd Street or Keith Road. We would like to note that the City of Vancouver has no residential street bike route without traffic diverter--
precisely to prevent drivers from using residential street bike routes as shortcuts.

A traffic diverter had been trialed on 4th Street at St. David's Avenue, but was removed in early 2013, after which vehicle traffic increased. Cycling safety has thereby been compromised.

We note that the original 4th Street bike route design from 2011¹ includes a traffic diverter at St. David's Avenue.

The City states the following reasoning for removing the diverter:

A diverter at 4th and St. David's was installed temporarily; however, upon review, it was determined that speed humps on E. 4th Street, west of St. David's, and on the 300 and 400 blocks of St. David's would also help reduce traffic speeds without diverting traffic onto nearby streets and laneways. Thus, speed humps have been installed and are currently being evaluated.²

We disagree with this reasoning. The purpose of traffic diverters is--after all--to divert traffic, not just slow it down. Since 4th Street is a designated bike route with shared lanes on a local street, traffic volumes need to be low to make the route safe for cycling.

While speed humps help with reducing traffic speeds, they are not effective in keeping drivers from using 4th Street as a shortcut route. The speed humps are also ineffective in slowing some SUVs and pickup trucks.

Issue 2: Dangerous crossings of arterial streets

4th Street crosses several arterial streets (Chesterfield Avenue, Lonsdale Avenue, St. Georges Avenue and Queensbury Avenue), none of which have infrastructure that would help cyclists cross safely. Even crossing of St. Andrews Avenue—itsself a designated bike route—is becoming problematic.

For AAA cycling on 4th Street, cyclist activated signals are needed at the following intersections (in order of importance):

1. Lonsdale Avenue
2. St. Georges Avenue
3. Chesterfield Avenue

At Queensbury Avenue a refuge in the middle of the street, to shorten the crossing, may be sufficient, unless traffic volumes increase. St. Andrews Avenue traffic volumes

¹ <http://www.cnv.org/City-Services/Streets-and-Transportation/Cycling/Cycling-Projects/~media/City%20of%20North%20Vancouver/Documents/Cycling/4th%20Street%20Bikeway%20Design%20Map%20-%20September%202011.ashx>

² <http://www.cnv.org/City-Services/Streets-and-Transportation/Cycling/Cycling-Projects/4th-Street-Bikeway>

should be monitored and possibly reduced through traffic diverters or other measures.

Conclusion

With the increase in vehicle traffic and the difficult intersection crossings, 4th Street has few features that would qualify it as a safe and convenient bike route compared to other nearby residential streets. We hope that our recommendations help with the City's efforts to establish a basic AAA bike network and we look forward to discussing our suggestions for a safer 4th Street bike route.

Sincerely,

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