

# Cycling: Develop with two wheel transportation in mind

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Barely two weeks after Maple Ridge council's inaugural meeting, Mayor Nicole Read and her team had some discussions that gave us a pretty good indication that our new group intends to get more serious about cycling.

On the agendas for the public hearing and council meeting of Dec. 9 was a development proposal for an 18-storey tower on Brown Avenue in the town core.

This proposal is part of a plan for a number of high rises, all along Brown Ave., north of Dewdney Trunk Road. This is a real game changer for our town. There are already three other towers in the pipeline, two of which are also on Brown Ave., and the third will be right around the corner from the other three on Dewdney and Edge Street, all built on a large podium with a commercial component and multiple floors of under- and above ground parking.

In another five years or so, it is expected that another development of five more high rises will move forward, also along Brown Ave., but on the west side of 224th Street.

Brown Ave. is one of two designated bike routes that help cyclists get to and through the town core. So far, car traffic on Brown Ave., hasn't been busy.

It's clear that going from low to high density will affect traffic.

Proper cycling facilities will have to be included in the road design, so that cyclists can continue to safely navigate the roads.

According to the present plan, space is provided for parking on either side and one car lane in each direction. Cyclists will have to ride in the middle to avoid getting hit by an opening car door.

Many cyclists will end up having to ride on the sidewalk.

Wayne Bissky, the developer of this property, a 25-year resident of Maple Ridge, has a strong desire to help the city become less reliant on cars, and to make it more feasible to get around on foot and by bike. He says that if the standards for Brown Ave. included bike lanes, that's what he would have planned to build. The multi-modal transportation plan for the town core, the cycling component of which has not been reviewed as part of the new 2014 transportation plan, does not call for bike lanes.

Council took a strong position that a solution will have to be found. It's so refreshing to see this council take cyclists' concerns seriously. It's in the interest of anybody who drives, bikes or walks in and around town to make safe cycling part of the plan.

Another development proposal that concerns cyclists is on 123 Avenue at 207th Street. A 21 single-family-home development is proposed to be built between two tributaries of McKenney Creek.

Cycling along this narrow stretch of 123 Ave. is daunting, with cars speeding by and some giving cyclists little space. According to the city's road standards, it is considered "substandard", and the city can ask the developer to widen it as a condition of the development.

I'll be watching with great interest to see what happens with these two proposals.

I think we just may be on a path to better cycling in the future.

*Jackie Chow is a member of the Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows chapter of HUB Cycling.*