

Cycling catching on everywhere else



Colleen Flanagan/THE NEWS

Alex Pope of the cycling advisory committee would like more of the transportation budget to go to cycling infrastructure.

Maple Ridge not doing enough, Pitt is better

by **Phil Melnychuk**
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Vancouverites are taking to two wheels to save their health and gas money like never before, says a TransLink survey.

But the greater the distance from the big city, the fewer the cyclists on the road, with Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows among

municipalities dead last, according to a TransLink Trip Diary Survey.

"We don't do nearly as much here to improve cycling infrastructure as they do in other areas," pointed out Alex Pope, chair of the local bicycle advisory committee.

Out of a transportation budget of \$5-\$7 million, Maple Ridge spends \$50,000 on bicycling infrastructure, with that amount matched by TransLink, he said.

Instead, he would like between three and five per cent allocated

for two-wheeled pedal power.

TransLink's survey says the number of bike trips in Vancouver has jumped 35 per cent from 2008 to 2011.

"When I'm cycling downtown, I need to slow down because their [bike lanes] are too crowded." That's a good problem to have, says Pope, who pedals to work in Vancouver twice a week, a trip that takes about an hour and three-quarters one way.

When the number of bicycle trips per 100 residents is con-

sidered, Vancouver also has the highest number of trips - 12.

Richmond-Delta is next with 3.4, followed by Burnaby at 2.6 bicycle trips per 100 residents. The suburbs of Langley, Surrey, White Rock and the northeast sector, including Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows, are last at 1.7.

Such comparisons aren't fair, however, says Coun. Bob Masse. Maple Ridge is too far from jobs and office buildings for cycle commuting, he points out.

Pope says Maple Ridge just

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Cycling from front

Pope says Maple Ridge just hasn't seriously started building cycling infrastructure, adding Pitt Meadows is doing a better job.

Pitt Meadows's bylaw says any major road that's built or rebuilt must include a 1.5-metre-wide, marked bicycle lane, where motor vehicles aren't allowed. That's usually the road shoulder.

Pope said Pitt Meadows has done a "great deal for cycling," from building the separated multi-use path from the Pitt River Bridge to

Meadowtown Centre, to adding more trails around Hammond Road and Airport Way.

Unlike Maple Ridge, however, Pitt Meadows has no set budget amount for cycling.

Pitt Meadows engineering services coordinator Ike de Boer doubted there was any money spent last year on bike lanes, though staff are waiting for council's approval of the pedestrian and cycling master plan, which will set priorities.

And he questions Maple Ridge's progress.

"I know they put a lot

of paint marks down in Maple Ridge, but I don't see a lot of infrastructure going down other than that," except for the separate Abernethy Way cycle path east of 224th Street, he added.

Pitt Meadows's most recent cycling infrastructure addition was a short connection from Lougheed Highway to Ferryslip Road and the Pitt River dike.

De Boer says Pitt Meadows has most of its bike lanes in place, many off-road, and that the bicycle advisory committee has few requests.

"We've got everything already."

He attends the joint bicycle advisory committee meetings and asks about the committee's goals for Pitt Meadows.

"Give me a project. What needs to be done in Pitt Meadows? I never get any answers."

De Boer points out that bike lanes run on both sides on Old Dewdney Trunk Road run from Pitt Meadows' western border to Neaves Road, then stops at the Maple Ridge border.

"We've been talking about that for years, but that doesn't seem to be going anywhere."

Pitt Meadows' off-road paths follow the dikes along the Fraser

and Pitt rivers so cyclists can pedal from Bonson Road, beside Pitt Meadows Regional Airport, beneath the Pitt River Bridge and up to the Alouette River.

Harris Road, which runs north-south, now has bike lanes as far as the Alouette River, there's a separate multi-use path on Lougheed Highway from the Pitt River to Meadowtown Centre at 200th Street.

With most routes in, the focus will be on sidewalks or building additional off-road bike paths, he added, "making it more safe."

"We've got everything already."

Ike de Boer, Pitt Meadows engineering services coordinator

Links also have to be made between pedestrian activity centres like recreation centres or shopping malls.

Pope said more bike lanes should be built in Maple Ridge's downtown so people can make quick trips for shopping. That would be cheaper than building more roads as population density increases, he added.