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Cyclists want more bike lanes

Council to consider requests in fall

By Phil Melnychuk
Staff Reporter

When the Golden Ears Bridge opens next year, cyclists will get a free ride while motorists will be dinged every time they cross.

But getting the two-wheeled commuters from downtown Maple Ridge to the bridge is another question, for which the bike advisory committee has the answer.

Put in a bike lane on Lougheed Highway, from 222nd Street to at least Laity Street.

"There's a lot of right of way along Lougheed Highway. It's the logical place you can put an efficient bike lane through," says committee member and commuter cyclist Dave Rush.

In June, the committee presented its wish list of projects to the district, including: a bike lane on Old Dewdney Trunk Road, between Laity and 210th streets; on 203rd Street, between 123rd and Powell avenues; 122nd Avenue, between 216th and 224th streets; and just to be on the safe side, in case it's not built that way, bike lanes on the Abernethy connector/128th Avenue, all the way from 203rd Street to the far eastern part of Maple Ridge at 256th Street.

Extending 128th Avenue east, from the Golden Ears Bridge approaches to 256th Street, is a top priority for council as it tries to cope with the waves of traffic



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Dave Rush cycles to work along Lougheed Highway.

that it will bring. Council liaison to the committee, Linda King, said it's not known what projects will be approved this fall, after council does its business plans.

"I'm hopeful we're going to get more. We just don't know which ones."

There's never a lot of money for bike lanes, she added, so it's a matter of doing them bit by bit.

But the priority the past few years has been finding a way to connect to the two new bridges, the Pitt River Bridge and the Golden Ears Bridge, which open next year.

Rush suggests Lougheed Highway from downtown at least be used as far as Laity Street, after which it could turn south to hook up with a bike lane system at 203rd

Street that would lead over the Golden Ears.

Rush said he'd even settle for a two-way bike lane on one side of Lougheed Highway and isn't worried about utility poles being in the middle. They could separate the different directions or users of the lanes.

He notes bike lane works well on Westminster Highway in Richmond.

"It's really nice. You can just high-tail it down there."

"It's a great connector. I don't see any reason why we can't have the same thing here."

Chris Hennessey, chair of the bicycle advisory committee, said cyclists always want more bike lanes.

And rapidly growing east Maple Ridge needs bike lanes to accompany new road construction.

For instance, 240th Street, a main north-south corridor, currently isn't the best for cyclists because it's narrow and the undulating terrain makes it tough to see cyclists. But when the district rebuilds and widens that, and includes bike lanes, cyclists can breathe easier.

"There's definitely plans to have proper bike lanes on that," said Hennessey, who works at Norco Performance Bikes in Port Coquitlam.

He noted when the committee formed in 1994, there were no bike lanes.

Now there are more than 30 kilometres of signed, marked bike lanes in the District of Maple Ridge.

Rush, though, who still sees thousands of cars on the road and a handful of cyclists despite rising gasoline prices, wants to focus on hooking up Maple Ridge's downtown to a cycling network.

It's sometimes a frustrating exercise. "Maple Ridge, frankly, is not coming up with a pile of money at all."

For the most part, those who live in the distant suburbs aren't cyclists, Rush adds.

"If you live in Rock Ridge, you're not cycling anywhere, you're driving."

Cyclists often say all they want is a separate shoulder and they'd be happy. But that part of the road has to be kept clean and clear.

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