

Get Johnny a new bike

As an individual, you can't solve all the world's problems. I get overwhelmed, and find it easier to try and focus on one thing, and for me is cycling, of course.

The more I see, read and think about it, to include cycling, and walking, as part of the puzzle makes so much sense, in so many ways.

Recently, Maple Ridge council started discussions on the implementation of the 2014 Transportation Plan, which is supposed to guide our infrastructure planning and spending for the next 20 years. The somewhat unambitious plan was approved by the previous council, and, not surprisingly, it lays out how we're basically 'staying the course.'

The main focus remains on cars as the main staple of our road diet.

Improvements for walking and cycling will happen mostly as development occurs or opportunities arise.

It's wonderful that cycling definitely does

get more attention than in past decades and some innovative projects are happening on some existing roads in Maple Ridge.

But with the fast pace of growth, we're seeing even more roadways expanded and improved without cycling facilities.

So we're still moving backwards.

The engineering department asked council to approve a budget for cycling of \$100,000 per year for the next five years. It used to be \$50,000 per year, when Maple Ridge was smaller.

It's still not much; just a little over \$1 per resident per year, about one percent of our transportation budget. Is that how much we're willing to spend to keep people on bikes alive? Take a moment to think about that, in this season of generous giving. Christmas shoppers say they're planning on spending more again this year, close to \$900.

Let's give Johnny a bike for Christmas. Never mind that he can't ride it to school because there aren't any bike paths.

The discussion about banning cyclists off the sidewalk has once again been reignited by several councilors. They argue that we need to ensure the safety of pedestrians on our sidewalks. I agree.

The point that's totally missed is that the very reason why cyclists are found on the sidewalk in the first place is because they fear for their own lives when cycling on the road.

The problem can't just be solved by ticketing them. If we'd use the same reasoning to solve the problem of cyclists' fears of misbehaving drivers, we'd be banning cars altogether.

HUB has invited mayor and council for bike rides along some of our more bike friendly routes to help them understand the issues. They need not worry. We won't ask them to ride on busy high-speed roads if they're



Cycling
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scared.

None of them have so far accepted the invite, although Coun. Kristen Duncan has shown interest. Coun. Craig Speirs told me: "I don't want to die."

Don't worry, Coun. Speirs.

Possibly the most important quote from city engineer, David Pollock in his presentation to council, was "road design is key."

There are safety and livability issues on many of our roads. When they're first built, various guidelines and standards are strictly followed to guard the city from potential liability issues. Emergency vehicles need to be able to travel far, fast, and shouldn't have to slow down too much when navigating turns.

Engineers need to ensure an optimum 'level of service' for cars. But then people complain that it's become too dangerous to cross these roads that have been so smartly engineered.

Eventually, when required thresholds of numbers of cars have been reached and perhaps some pedestrians have become part of some unfortunate statistics, a crosswalk may be put in. Later, if enough people speak up, maybe we'll see a pedestrian crossing light. When pedestrians still get hit while crossing in crosswalks, we can always blame it on dark clothing, or some other fault on their part.

I think we've got our priorities wrong, and I challenge Mayor Nicole Read and her team to do better. If we honestly do want more people to start walking and biking more, it's people that need to be prioritized and made to feel welcome on our streets, not just cars.

Jackie Chow is a member of HUB.