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Still some gaps in cycling network

Committee lays out goals for bicyclists

by Phil Melnychuk
staff reporter

Next time you jump in your car or truck, Chris Hennessey wants you to change your perspective. Instead of looking at the road as a motorist, pretend you're a cyclist trying to navigate the streets and ask yourself, is this road safe for a cyclist?

Would it be safe for someone you know who's a cyclist?

When bicycle accidents stats are compared between Europe and North America, sharing the road with cars is a risky business.

Hennessey told Maple

Ridge council Monday that a North American cyclist is seven to 70 times more likely to be injured per kilometre travelled than a cyclist in Europe.

Nevertheless, the chair of bicycle advisory committee was upbeat about progress in the cycling world.

"I think it's really cool that the municipality provides the resources for this committee. Not every municipality in the Lower Mainland does that."

He listed five goals of the committee, a joint group between Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows. The first is to increase the number bike routes that are separated from roads. The bike path south of Lougheed High-

way from just east of the Pitt River Bridge is one such example of "the No. 1 goal of the future," said Hennessey.

There are more immediate goals, which he described as "low hanging fruit," such as designating bike routes and ensuring they're safe and marked.

The group also wants to leverage funding, promote cycling as a means of transportation and influence development plans to accommodate two wheels.

The opening of the Golden Ears Bridge, with its bike lanes on both sides, was a milestone for the cyclists, he said. About a thousand cyclists attended the opening celebrations on June 14.

"I think it's symbolic

that the first citizens that crossed the bridge did it on a bike."

But there are still gaps in the cycling routes leading east or west. One of those is between 222nd Street and Laity Street. However, a consultant is studying a bike path there that would be separated from Lougheed Highway.

Another difficulty is the narrow, shoulderless section of 210th Street from 128th Avenue to Neaves Road and 132nd Avenue. "It really needs to be addressed. There isn't going to be a simple solution here," he told council, adding the committee will be raising that this fall. West of that, a shoulder gives some space for riders on 132nd Avenue.