

# Looking at new bike path to Golden Ears park

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Construction continues on a new bike path along 128th Avenue, between 216th and 210th streets. / COLLEEN FLANAGAN/THE NEWS

It's still just a geometric exercise, but the long, winding road that leads to the door of Golden Ears Provincial Park could change over the years.

Maple Ridge staff last year looked at how they could fit together the various pieces of road and property and riverfront – and build an improved Fern Crescent, along with a separate bike and pedestrian path, leading from 232nd Street to the gates of the Golden Ears park.

“It was started to spark discussion about when we do it,” said city engineer Dave Pollock.

“That would be a long-term goal.”

“It will require a lot of consultation,” and will be a basis for ongoing talks with residents, he added.

“That would be awesome,” said Ivan Chow, chair of the Maple Ridge branch of HUB, the cycling group.

“Imagine the recreational value that would bring to Golden Ears.”

However, the pace and type of development, residents’ concerns, the environment, and the provincial government will all shape how [Fern Crescent](#) develops, as will a new bridge planned for 240th Street over the South Alouette River, if it’s ever built.

The first step, though, may be ready to take because the city has money to do some design work on improving Fern Crescent, from 232nd to 236th streets.

While a cycle path to the provincial park is years away, the two-wheeled crowd is about to get immediate relief.

The separate bike and pedestrian path along 128th Avenue opens soon, providing cyclists a safe way of getting from 216th to 203rd street. Next year, the entire stretch from 224th Street will be done, giving cyclists a separate pathway from 232nd Street to Golden Ears Way.

This year, a separated, two-directional bike path will be built along 203rd Street between Powell Avenue and Dewdney Trunk Road, when that road is reconstructed.

A similar path is planned for 2017 on 232nd Street from 132nd Avenue to Silver Valley Road when that road is rebuilt.

Separate pathways are nice, but Chow would like to see such paths on both sides of the road. The current design calls for a two-directional cycle path on only one side of the road.

With cyclists riding in both directions, motorists could forget to look when crossing the path, he said.

“People are not used to looking.”

Maple Ridge allots about \$100,000 a year for cycling infrastructure, although that amount is increasing, and this year plans on improving signage so that cyclists can more easily follow bike routes that use actual roads.

New signs in west Maple Ridge and along the separated bike path on Lougheed Highway between 216th and Laity streets also will help cyclists make connections to cycling routes on Donovan and Selkirk avenues that lead to the downtown.

Pollock said the city is trying to implement its transportation plan.

“One of the goals we’re trying to do is to improve the multi-modal transportation system to provide people with options.”

Every city is trying to do that, he added.

“It’s going to be a process before we fully connect the bike system.”

Once the 203rd Street bike lanes on either side of Lougheed Highway are connected, cyclists will be able to pedal from Golden Ears Way to the Golden Ears Bridge.

“This is going to be a real good connection. It will connect the northern east-west route. When 203rd Street becomes connected, that will take you right up to the Golden Ears Bridge,” said Russ Carmichael, director of engineering operations.

Cyclist Alex Pope, though, likes the improved signage and markings for the routes and lanes that lead to the downtown along 117th and 123rd avenues. Signage needs to be improved “to keep cyclists on the right route.”

He said the pathway along 128th Avenue is more for recreational cyclists.

“For a lot of people who live farther south, it’s not a great commuter connector.”

Pollock said decisions will have to be made regionally about where the growing variety of vehicles – from wheelchairs to rollerblades, skateboards, electric bicycles and scooters, motor-powered bicycles, wheel chairs and mobility scooters – will fit in.

Maple Ridge currently allows cycling on its sidewalks.

Last week, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure announced it was giving BikeBC \$6 million in 2016 to help out with costs of expanding cycling lanes throughout B.C.

That’s twice the amount the government usually gives to BikeBC.

Pollock said the city will check to see if any projects qualify. “We just have to look at the criteria.”

Cities have until April 8 to apply for the funding and must explain how the money would benefit the city and increase physical activity.