

January 12, 2010

Public Works & Transportation Committee
City of Richmond
6911 No. 3 Road
Richmond, BC V6Y 2C1

Attn: Councillor Linda Barnes, Chair

Dear Councillor Barnes:

Re: Staff Report to Public Works & Transportation Committee on Richmond Community Cycling Committee's Initiatives for 2010

As a member of the Cycling Committee, I am familiar with the proposal to make bike lanes continuous through arterial intersections as described in Section 2.1 of the report. I would like to take this opportunity to express my support for this initiative as I will be unable to attend the January Public Works & Transportation Committee meeting when the report is presented.

Research has consistently shown that the main deterrent to choosing a bicycle as a means of transportation is the threat posed by motor vehicles by their volume and speed as well as driver behaviour. Bicycle facilities that mitigate these influences are considered the first step in building a bicycle community.

The relationship between investment in cycling infrastructure and the willingness of people to give it a try is borne out by the recent increase New York City has seen in its number of cyclists. NYC has made extensive improvements to its bicycle facilities over the last few years and cycling increased by 26% in 2009 after shooting up by 35% in 2008. This type of increase is being played out in many North American cities as increased support for bicycling as transportation makes it a convenient way to get around.

One aspect of the case for a useable bicycle network, often lost in the engineering perspective, is that it gives credence to bicycling as a legitimate means of getting to a destination. Pedestrians gained this type of recognition with the advent of crosswalks. Crosswalks said to people on foot that you have traveled on a sidewalk, your own designated "lane," and to cross an arterial road you will have priority over turning vehicles, when you want to cross it, by occupying the extension of your "lane" – that is, your crosswalk. Pedestrian entitlement has evolved to the extent that urban planning reveres walking as fundamental to any municipality's mobility strategy.

Analogously, continuity of bike lanes in Richmond's cycling network at arterial intersections is urgently needed. Through bike lanes would help protect cyclists from the movements of right-turning motor vehicles, and would remove confusion as to what the proper behaviour and positioning is at intersections for motorists and cyclists. Through bike lanes would also eliminate the current illegal movement of cyclists through

an intersection from a right-turn lane in the situations where bike lanes are dropped in advance of the intersection to allow a right-turn only lane. As importantly, they would clearly indicate the relationship between cars, bikes and pedestrians as their separate streams overlap during turns.

I feel strongly that Richmond residents would adapt quite readily to a pattern of road behaviour where right-turning motorists yield to cyclists in their bike lane at intersections, and turning motorists and cyclists yield to pedestrians in their crosswalks. This would be intuitive to anyone with maritime experience where, in a similar hierarchy, powerboats yield to human-powered craft and all yield to swimmers. I would anticipate adjustment by Richmond residents, if the loss of right-turn lanes were offset by the provision of a continuous bicycle facility. The City of Vancouver has shown leadership in this type of road space conversion by reallocating an entire lane of the busy Burrard Street Bridge to cyclists. All bridge users have adapted to the reconfiguration.

In closing, I would like to quote an excerpt from Portland, Oregon's Bicycle Master Plan. It expresses what a timely opportunity is inherent in the Cycling Committee's proposal:

"Bicycling creates safer streets, reduces the causes of global climate change, promotes a healthy environment and limits the effects and health care costs related to inactivity. It provides equity and access to viable, affordable transportation options and creates fun, vibrant and livable neighbourhoods."

Yours truly,



Lawrence Pamer
Chair, Richmond Community Cycling Committee