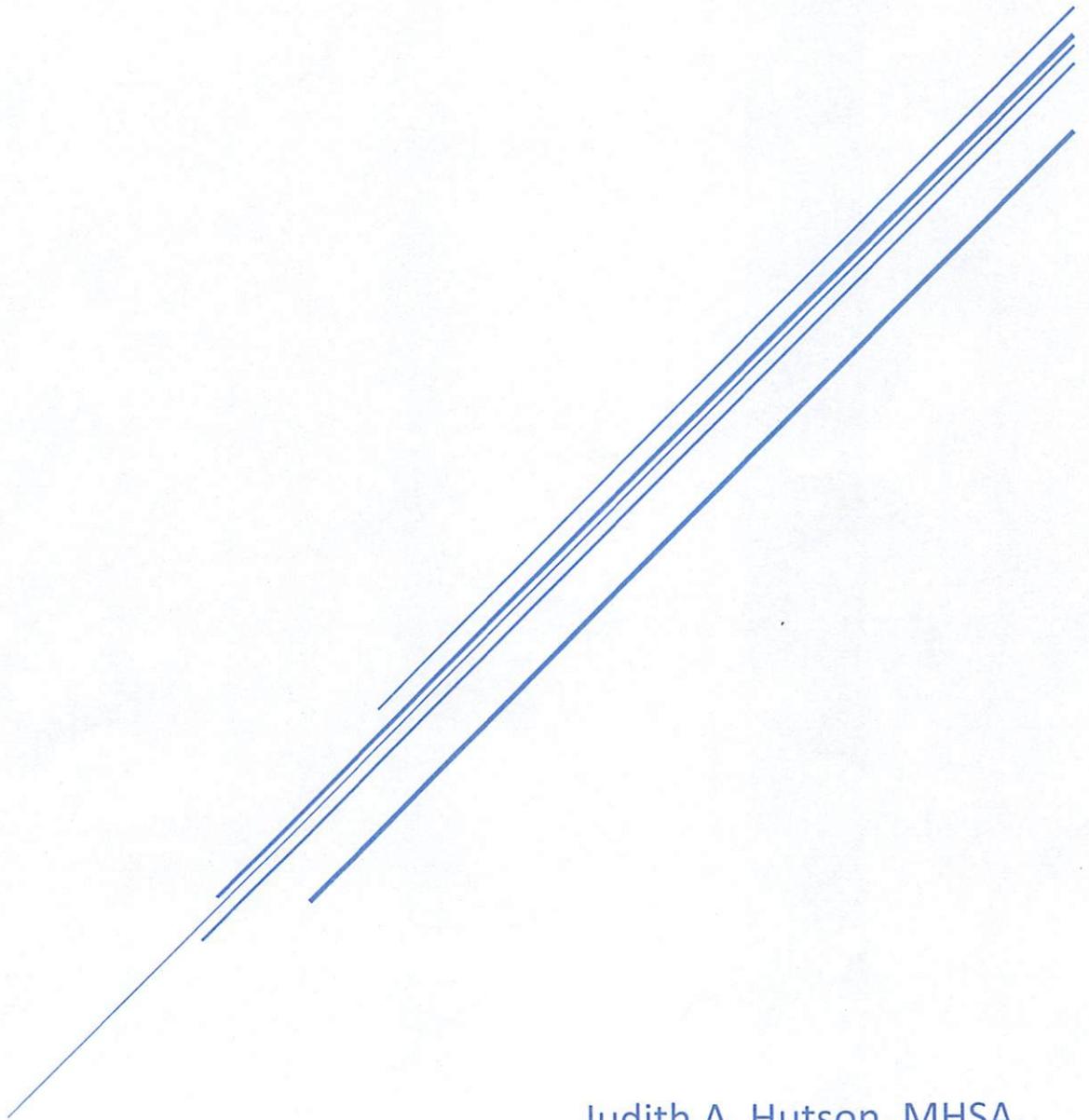


# BARK PARK RICHMOND SAFETY ISSUES

Review of the City of Richmond Response, March 2024



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## 1.0 Current state

- Bark Park is an off-leash dog park that is owned and operated by the City of Richmond.
- For more than 4 years there have been major issues with cyclists who use this multi-use path in the off-leash dog park. **This has created a significant safety issue for all users of the park: people (adults and children), dogs, and cyclists.**
- **There has been a change in the type of cyclists who use this multi-use trail.**
  - There has been a significant increase in the number of powerful e-bikes.
  - There has been an increase in the number of powerful cyclists who race through the park.
  - There has been an increase in the number of cycling groups who race through the park.
  - There are other powerful machines that use the park including motorized unicycles, e-scooters, and even motor bikes.
- **There are a large number of cyclists/other motorized machines who consistently break the bylaw requirements.** Bylaw No. 8771 sets a maximum speed of 15km/hour, cyclists/ e-scooters are directed to slow down and yield to pedestrians and dogs. At Bark Park, as per the City's requirement, cyclists are not permitted on the waterside trail and are directed to dismount.
  - Speed is a major issue on all three of the multi-use paths in Bark Park (waterside path, north path, and the narrow path the runs alongside the Crown Packaging site).
  - Slowing down and yielding to pedestrians and dogs is a major safety issue on all three of the multi-use paths.
  - Cyclists routinely cycle on the waterside path even though bikes are not allowed on this path.
- **Staff at the City of Richmond have been formally advised of this significant and escalating safety issue and, to date, have not effectively managed this issue.**
  - The safety issues with the cyclists exploded during the dyke remediation (2022). Formal communications and meetings were held with City Richmond staff to ensure that they fully understood the scope of the safety issues and the need to immediately address these concerns.
  - There has been ongoing formal communication with City of Richmond staff about the increasing safety issues and the need to immediately address these safety issues.
  - A citizen led petition regarding the ongoing safety issues at Bark Park was tabled with Richmond City Council in 2023.
  - Citizens identified these ongoing and escalating safety issues during City of Richmond led consultation meetings.
- **Staff at the City of Richmond have been formally advised that the safety issues at Bark Park increase in scope and intensity in the spring and summer.**
  - There is a demonstrated need to fully resolve this known safety issue as soon as possible.

## 2.0 Safety issues at Bark Park

- Cyclists who refuse to comply with the bylaws are a major safety issue
  - Speed is a major safety issue.
  - Not slowing down and yielding to pedestrians is a major safety issue.
  - Cycling on the waterside path where bikes are banned is a safety issue.
  
- The change in the volume, types of bikes, and types of cyclists
  - There has been a significant increase in the number of unsafe cyclists who ride through the park.
  - The change in the type of bikes that ride through Bark Park has contributed to the safety issue.
    - This includes a significant increase in the number of heavy, powerful e-bikes that have the capacity to travel up to 50 kph.
  - The increase in the number of large cycling groups that ride through the park.
    - These groups most often exceed the posted speed.
    - Ride in a tight formation.
    - Do not yield to pedestrians or dogs.
    - These groups create an extremely unsafe event when they ride the narrow path that runs alongside Crown Packaging.
  
- The narrow path that runs alongside Crown Packaging is not a safe multiuse path for pedestrians, dogs, and cyclists.
  - The path is approximately 1.5 meters wide.
  - It is bordered by ditches and a fence. Consequently, there is no place to safely escape an aggressive, fast-moving cyclist/group of cyclists.
  - There are a large number of safety concerns about this path.
  - There are a large number of safety incidents including near misses that occur on this narrow path.
  
- Verbal abuse and threats
  - When citizens interact with cyclists to ask them to abide by the requirements identified in the bylaw, the interactions are often very aggressive.
    - Cyclists shout and swear at citizens.
    - Cyclists have threatened to harm citizens.
    - Cyclists have threatened to kill dogs.
    - Cyclists have responded by aggressively riding their bikes towards citizens and dogs.
  
- Dogs have been injured by cyclists
  - Dogs have been hit by cyclists.
    - To date no dog has died but dogs have required medical treatment. **The most recent incident (March, 2024) involved a large group of cyclists, a small dog who was hit by the cyclist, and an aggressive interaction with a citizen.**

➤ People have been injured

- There have been a number of physical interactions where citizens have been harmed by cyclists.
- The injuries sustained by a few citizens have been so significant that they were transported to hospital in an ambulance. **The most recent incident (March,2024) involved a cyclist on an e-bike hitting a dog. The cyclist was taken to Richmond Hospital by ambulance.**

### 3.0 Failure to manage the known safety issues at Bark Park

Once a safety issue is identified it should immediately be assessed, risks mitigated, and the safety issue should be promptly and effectively managed. This is a universally accepted best practice. This has not happened.

- The safety issues were not immediately assessed or addressed.
  - These issues were identified to the Parks Department as significant safety issues in 2022.
- The Parks Department failed to address the known safety concerns during the park “upgrade” following the dyke remediation.
  - This was a significant failure. All of these known safety issues could have been addressed at this time.
  - “Site user group representatives and the general public were consulted throughout the 2012 - 2023 site improvement process.” **This statement is not accurate.** The City did not initiate any consultation/ engagement about the upgrade. This was a major issue, and this has been raised multiple times with the City.
- The Parks Department did not take the time to study and understand the safety issues.

**In order to effectively resolve an issue, you must understand the issue.**

There should have been a detailed assessment of the current state. This assessment should have included a thorough evaluation of identified concerns.

- **Bikes**
  - What type of bikes access Bark Park?
    - What type of e-bikes access the park?
      - How powerful are they?
      - How heavy are they?
  - What other motorized units access the park (e.g., motorized unicycles, etc.)?
  - Has there been a change in the mix of bikes that use the park?
  - How often do large cycling groups access the park?
    - What is their speed?
    - Do they ride single file?
- **Use of the waterside path (where cyclists are banned)**
  - How often do cyclists use this path?
  - Why do they use this path?
    - Is it an issue with signage?
    - Is it an issue with the City bike path information?
    - Is it because they just want to?
  - What happens when they are asked to use the designated path?

- What type of bikes use this path?
  - Has the mix of bikes changed over the past 4 years?
  - Has the volume of cyclists changed over the past 4 years?
- Has there been an increase in large cycling groups that use this path?
- Do large cycling groups move through the park single file or in tight groups?
  - Does this create a safety issue?
- What are the busy times for cyclists on this path?
- What % of cyclists exceed the posted speed limit?
  - How fast are they going?
  - What type of bikes exceed the speed limit?
  - Why are they exceeding the posted speed limit?
- Do these cyclists give way to pedestrians and dogs?
- Is the gravel on the path a safety issue for people and/or cyclists?
- Have there been safety incidents/concerns? And if so, what happened?
  - Where safety incidents/ concerns were identified, were interviews conducted?  
And what were the findings?
  
- **Wide multi – use path (3 Road to the Crown Packaging fence)**
  - What type of bikes use this path?
    - Has the mix of bikes changed over the past 4 years?
    - Has the volume of cyclists changed over the past 4 years?
  - Has there been an increase in large cycling groups that use this path?
  - Do large cycling groups move through the path single file or in tight groups?
    - Does this create a safety issue?
  - What are the busy times for cyclists on this path?
    - Season (e.g., summer, spring, etc. )
    - Day
    - Times
  - What % of cyclists exceed the posted speed limit?
    - How fast are they going?
    - What type of bikes exceed the speed limit?
    - Why are they exceeding the posted speed limit?
  - Do these cyclists give way to pedestrians and dogs?
  - Is the gravel on the path a safety issue for people and/or cyclists?
  - Have there been safety incidents/concerns? And if so, what happened?
    - Where safety incidents/ concerns were identified, were interviews conducted?
      - Did the incident involve an injury (dog and/or human)?
      - Was an ambulance/ veterinary care required?
      - Was speed a factor?
      - What was done to prevent this from happening again?

- **Thin multi-use path (1.5-meter-wide path that runs between Crown Packaging/ farmers field to Garden City Road).** NOTE: The Parks Department incorrectly identified this narrow multi-use path as an area without conflict.
  - What type of bikes use this path?
    - Has the mix of bikes changed over the past 4 years?
    - Has the volume of cyclists changed over the past 4 years?
  - Has there been an increase in large cycling groups that use this path?
  - Do large cycling groups move through this path in a single file or in tight groups?
    - What is the impact of a cycling group using this path?
    - How big of a safety concern is this, given the narrow width of the path?
  - What are the busy times for cyclists on this path?
    - Season (e.g., summer, spring, etc.)
    - Day
    - Times
  - What % of cyclists exceed the posted speed limit?
    - How fast are they going?
    - What type of bikes exceed the speed limit?
    - Why are they exceeding the posted speed limit?
  - How do pedestrians avoid colliding with the cyclists on this narrow path?
  - Do these cyclists give way to pedestrians and dogs?
  - Have there been safety incidents/concerns? And if so, what happened?
    - Where safety incidents/ concerns were identified, were interviews conducted?
      - Did the incident involve an injury (dog and/or human)?
      - Was an ambulance/ veterinary care required?
      - Was speed a factor?
      - What was done to prevent this from happening again?
- **Parking lot (3 Road entrance)**
  - Are there safety issues with cyclists in the parking lot?
  - Is the gravel on the path a safety issue for people and/or cyclists?
  - Have there been safety incidents/concerns? And if so, what happened?
    - Where safety incidents/ concerns were identified, were interviews conducted?
      - Did the incident involve an injury (dog and/or human)?
      - Was an ambulance/ veterinary care required?
      - Was speed a factor?
      - What was done to prevent this from happening again?
- **Are there other safety issues at Bark Park that need to be addressed?**

- **Overall assessment of the severity of the known safety issues**
  - What are the major known issues?
  - What is the relative severity of each of the known issues?
- **Liability exposure – City of Richmond**
  - What is the liability exposure for the City of Richmond if these known safety issues are not addressed?
- **Management of the known safety issues**
  - From a safety and injury prevention perspective, what actions need to be taken to effectively manage these known issues?

➤ The Parks Department does not understand the full scope of the safety issues at Bark Park.

**Without knowing what the full scope of the issue is, it is almost impossible to know what needs to be done to fully address the issue.**

- A glaring example of this is their assessment that the “areas of conflict” does not include the 1.5-meter-wide path that runs alongside the Crown Packaging site. This path, by design, is unsafe for a multi-use trail that includes cyclists, there are a large number of conflicts/ safety issues that occur on this path, and addressing the known safety issues on this narrow path has to be addressed.
- There is no information about the speed infractions at Bark Park.
- There is no information about the change in the types of cyclists.
- No information about key findings about the significant safety events that have occurred at the park.
- No information about what days/ times are considered to be the most unsafe at the park.

➤ The Parks Department has not done anything to manage the safety issues.

- Other than the recent (March, 2024) installation of temporary barriers, staff at the City of Richmond have not done anything concrete at Bark Park to manage the known, and escalating, safety issues.
- These temporary barriers have not addressed the known safety issues at Bark Park.

➤ Known safety issues are not best managed by a public engagement activity.

- The City of Richmond Parks Department launched a consultation process in the fall of 2023.
- **This approach failed to effectively manage these known safety issues.**

## 4.0 Parks Department No. 3 Road Park Safety Enhancement Project

- The public engagement strategy was fundamentally flawed.
  - **The materials shared at the public engagement events were poor quality and inaccurate including a key false assumption that the “area of conflict” in the park does not include the narrow path that runs parallel with the Crown Packaging Site.**
    - The poster created by the Parks Department to advertise this engagement strategy was tone deaf.
      - It showed a cyclist on the path that bikes are not allowed to be on.
      - Included a dog on leash when this is an off-leash dog park.
      - And included a cyclist without a helmet on.
    - Documents that are shared with the public for feedback need to be accurate. There were a number of issues with the documents shared at these sessions. For example, one of the options is missing a path. This lack of attention to detail is problematic. These documents should have been updated immediately to correct the errors. This was not done.
    - The request to post the updated/accurate information at Bark Park to ensure that all of the park users are aware of this engagement exercise was ignored.
  - Even though the Parks Department was tasked by Richmond City Council with **“examining the safety concerns of users of the No. 3 Road Bark Park and report back, the survey did not have a single question about the safety concerns of users. Another significant fail.**
  - **Options for the public to consider were predetermined by the Parks Department prior to the engagement and did not include an option many citizens wanted to be considered: eliminating the cycling path from Bark Park.**
  - The options that were proposed appear to many as “bike centric” and did not consider that Bark Park is primarily an off-leash dog park. Some stakeholders noted that the options seemed to focus on ensuring that the bikers were looked after at the expense of all of the other park users. Of note, stakeholders commented that taxpayers pay to license their dogs, there are no license fees for bikers; most non-bike users are in the park for 30 – 60 minutes and most bikers are in the park for less than 5 minutes; there are limited number of places in Richmond that dogs can be off leash.
  - **None of the options that were proposed in the survey addressed the known safety issues including the significant safety issues on the narrow path that runs alongside Crown Packaging.**
    - Best practices would dictate that the only options that should be put forward for consideration would resolve the safety issues. None of the options proposed by the Parks Department resolve the known safety issues.

- The summary report is missing fundamental information.
  - **The Parks Department did not provide any evidence that they had studied the safety issue at Bark Park. This is a major failure.**
    - There is no information in the summary report about the scope of the safety issue at Bark Park. If the scope of this issue is not fully understood, it makes it very difficult to fully address the safety issues. **This is a very significant flaw in this review.**
      - ✓ The report should have included detailed findings about the identified safety issues.
      - ✓ This should have been a major focus of this issue management strategy. It was not.
  
- The summary report minimizes the Park's Departments knowledge about the safety issues
  - **The summary report states that there have not been any formal safety reports regarding cyclists, pedestrians, and/or dogs in the last 5 years. This is not true.**
    - The arbitrary test set by the Parks Department is that there were no formal safety incident reports filed with the Parks Services Customer Services System, Bylaws, or the Richmond RCMP. This does not negate the fact that there have been and continue to be major safety concerns.
    - Detailed information about the safety issues at Bark Park have been shared with the Parks leadership team and staff members.
      - ✓ There were 100s of contacts with the Parks Department about the safety issues during the dyke remediation project.
      - ✓ There have been 100s of contacts with the Parks Department about the safety issues during the redesign of the Bark Park, post dyke remediation.
        - The Park Department, contrary to the statement in the report, did not engage with Bark Park users during the redesign of the park (a major failure) and did not address the known safety issues in this redesign (another major fail).
      - ✓ Bark Park stakeholders have shared their safety concerns/incidents with Parks staff at the public engagement events, in the comments in the survey, and in other communications with City staff.
  
- The collection and analysis of the information was fundamentally flawed.
 

**This compromises the validity of the analysis.**

  - The analysis of the information collected during the engagement project did not include information about the public engagement events (e.g. number of participants, verbal feedback, notes posted by citizens on the information boards, etc.), feedback provided directly to the Parks

Department about the safety concerns, or a detailed analysis of the large number of written comments provided by the survey participants.

- **Site User Values and Concerns**

**These statements are subjective, do not contain any values to substantiate them, and are not representative of the majority of park users.**

- “Many site users like the site the way it is now and want minimal change.”
  - This is not representative of the feedback. There is a strong desire to have the safety issues addressed.
- “Many people like to walk their dogs off-leash along the dike trail because it is a unique experience, allowing dogs to run freely and have access to the river.”
  - Few dog owners allow/or would want their dogs to have access to the river.
- “Many dog owners, on the other hand, have safety concerns about the free access to the river and would appreciate some control measures to limit access to it.”
  - The majority of dog owners have control of their dogs, and this is not an issue for the vast majority of dog owners.
- “There are concerns among dog-owners and pedestrians about the speed of cyclists and electric micro mobility devices through the area.”
  - There are **major safety concerns**. This statement minimizes these concerns. There are also **major concerns** about the aggressive interactions including threats to kill dogs and harm users. These concerns have been shared with the City of Richmond many times and should have been included in this report.
- “The cycling trail is a recreational and major regional commuter route used by people biking the dike trail system and connecting to/from the George Massey Tunnel shuttle for cyclists.”
  - This is not a user value or concern. And if it is a major regional commuter route, the entire route including the path that runs next to Crown Packaging site, should be addressed. It has not been.

## 5.0 Recommendation from the Parks Department

- The proposed recommendation does not address the known safety issues.
  - Does not include the path runs beside Crown Packaging site. This path is approximately 1.5 meters wide and is not a safe multi-use path for people, dogs, and cyclists.
  - Does not address the issue of cyclist compliance with the speed.
  - Does not address the issue of cyclist compliance with path use.
  - Does not address the safety impact of large cycling groups.
  
- The proposed recommendation does not provide a timely response to the known safety issues.
  - Does not provide a timely resolution to a known safety issue, as the proposal anticipates that construction is “expected to take place in summer/fall of 2024.

## 6.0 Solution that will immediately address the known safety issues

- Immediately reroute the cycle paths so that cyclists cannot access the off-leash dog park.
  - The Parks Department has identified this as Option 6 – reroute the cyclists.
    - In terms of safety options, it “provides the greatest degree of separation of cyclists...”
    - It is the most cost effective.
    - It is the option that fully manages the known safety issues at Bark Park.

### Option 6 -Reroute the cyclists

Relative Site Impacts	Relative Cost	Safety Enhancement Options	Comments
*	\$ Note: should separated bikes lanes along the roadways be pursued, the cost and roadway modification would be significant.	Provides the greatest degree of separation of cyclists from dogs	<b>Also completely addresses the known safety issues.</b>  In terms of the relative cost, the comment regarding the need to provide separated bike lanes is a red herring. This is not a requirement. And the Finn Road route is currently used by many bikers. It is also the preferred route for many bikers because it is paved.
		Does not provide separation of pedestrians and rollers from dogs off leash.	<b>This is not an identified issue.</b> Also, a red herring.
		Results in minimal site impacts.	<b>This is a very positive attribute and supports an immediate resolution of a significant known safety issue.</b>
		Retains the capacity for people to walk along the dike trail with their dogs off-leash and on a looped trail.	<b>Another positive attribute.</b>  <b>It will also allow safe passage for all park users on the trail that runs alongside the Crown Packaging site. This trail is well used by citizens.</b>
		Results in great change to the existing sites uses by removing cycling all together.	The change is needed to address a significant and known safety issue. This is not a great change. <b>Bark Park, as the name suggests, is primarily an off-leash dog park.</b>

		Results in cyclists sharing lanes with vehicles due to limitations to widen the roadway and add bike lanes.	Cyclists share the roadway on the majority of roads in Richmond. <b>It is not reasonable nor feasible to provide a designated bike lane on every road in Richmond. Cyclists currently use this roadway (which is not that busy and parts of the roadway have a 30KM speed requirement).</b>  This is another red herring.
		Does not align with Metro Vancouver's Transport 2050 Regional Cycling Network plan which identifies a cycling connection through/ along the No. 3 Road Bark Park as part of the regional greenways network.	<b>The rerouting of the cycling path along Finn Road will support the connection for the regional greenways network. This requirement can be met.</b>  The Metro Vancouver Transport Regional Cycling Network plan would also not knowingly support a cycling connection that was not safe.
		Requires approximately one kilometer of additional travel for cyclists.	<b>This is not an issue.</b>

➤ Safety is not negotiable.

- The safety issues at Bark Park have been known for years, the issues are escalating, and it is imperative that these issues be fully addressed immediately.