

Issue 36

Spring 2008



With this Edition of The Urbane Cyclist we look back at the accomplishments of the VACC over the past ten years

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The Urbane Cyclist

The Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition Quarterly

www.vacc.bc.ca

Make cycling an integral part of the transportation culture of the Lower Mainland

Looking Back on a Decade of Cycling Advocacy *by Erika A. Eineigel*

We begin this issue with an article focussing on the accomplishments of the VACC over the past ten years. We acknowledge the contributions of all of the committed volunteers that have advocated for a better cycling environment and continue to do so.

The Making of the VACC

The VACC first came to life as a non-profit society in 1998. Marion Orser and Colin Brander, currently directors of the VACC, sat on the initial board, and Richard Campbell – who is currently working on a project for the VACC – was the first president.

In the early 1990s, the VACC's predecessor group, the Cycling BC Advocacy Committee, was formed. The Committee was made up of cyclists who enjoyed riding, but wanted to see changes in cycling infrastructure – changes that required cooperation and organization. Soon this early group, which included Marion Orser and Colin Brander among others, joined forces with the Advocacy Committee of the Vancouver Bicycle Club. Their first joint meeting was held in 1995.

In 1996, however, the idea for a new and separate cycling group dedicated primarily to improving the cycling climate began to catch hold. The interim name for this group was the Lower Mainland Bicycle Organization (LMBO). One year later, in 1997, the organization took steps to develop its constitution, and in November of that year, the first public meeting to set up the VACC was chaired by Robert Delahanty. 1998 marked the official incorporation of the VACC with its first Annual General Meeting chaired by Richard Campbell, as well as the establishment of its website. This was followed over the next few years by the formation of the various Committees and the eventual expansion of the VACC across the Lower Mainland.

Continued on page 2

AGM

Saturday, March 29, 2008 12 noon - 4:00 p.m.
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Published quarterly by the Vancouver Area
Cycling Coalition (VACC)

The views in this publication are not
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MEET US

The VACC Board meetings are open to all
interested in bicycling in Greater Vancouver.
We generally meet on the second Wednes-
day of the month at 6:30 p.m.
Phone **604 878-8222** for details.
info@vacc.bc.ca

INTERNET

Keep up on the latest cycling issues and
events. Join one of our e-mail lists at
www.vacc.bc.ca/lists

GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?

We welcome articles (300 words or less)
about cycling in Greater Vancouver.

Submissions may be sent to:

The Urbane Cyclist:
newsletter@vacc.bc.ca

We reserve the right to edit submissions
for clarity and length.

Ten Years of Advocacy – What’s Been Done.....

The past ten years has seen the fruition of plenty of hard work by the VACC, including the implementation of cycling infrastructure on the Lions Gate and Queensborough Bridges, the successful campaign to allow bikes on the SkyTrain, and providing input on the Canada Line and the Burrard Bridge, among many other accomplishments.

Colin Brander, who has worked tirelessly for cyclists as a board member of the VACC, notes that over the next ten years he would like to see the VACC have a stronger presence in neighbouring areas outside of Vancouver. He would also like to see consistency in cycling facilities across municipalities and more effective enforcement of the rules of the road. It is by ensuring that drivers look out for other users of the road, Colin insists, that people can be better encouraged to cycle. He states that for him, the mission statement of the VACC says it all – making cycling an integral part of the transportation culture. Ideally, he says, once the public fully recognizes that bikes belong on the road, the VACC will not have to exist at all.

Marion Orser, a long time commuter cyclist whose involvement in cycling advocacy grew out of her belief that if you ride you should do something in return for cycling, sees the VACC as continuing to advocate for routes on which the average person can feel comfortable riding. In the ten years that the VACC has been in existence, and for which she has passionately dedicated countless hours, she notes that the only thing that has fundamentally changed with the VACC is that its vision is even clearer now than it ever was. It’s a vision that includes as many people as possible choosing to use their bikes for transportation – and doing so with ease.

.....and What’s Yet to Come

Jack Becker, who has been involved with the VACC for nearly six years, adds that the most significant change he’s seen since joining the VACC is a movement away from a model focused primarily on local advocacy to a model that has mounted large scale programs such as the Commuter Cycling Skills and Bike to Work Week. Providing services to organizations such as TransLink is a further service that the VACC has been dedicated to. He sees a need for creating greater exposure to the public in conjunction with the development of an income stream as two developments that will allow the VACC to fully engage in its advocacy projects and to continue to move forward. He notes that in large scale projects such as the Canada Line and Gateway the VACC has had, and continues to have, an important role in ensuring that cycling plans are properly incorporated and realized. Jack is interested in seeing a dramatic increase in the volume of bike use and envisions a more European style of cycling infrastructure. Jack, who has been a powerful voice on behalf of the VACC, notes that the prime importance of cycling advocacy is its ability to “sell cycling as transportation.”

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Another long time VACC member is Richard Campbell who was the first president of the VACC and has been a dedicated cycling advocate for years. He notes that since the inception of the VACC there has always been room for both the arterial road cyclists and those more interested in a quiet riding experience as long as the facilities for both types of riding are well designed and of a high standard. For him, the next level for cycling advocacy is the integration of properly planned and separated facilities and bike paths for everyone. He believes that people should be able to get anywhere comfortably and safely on their bikes. He states that the biggest change he has seen in the past ten years is that cycling is now "on the table" when it comes to new transportation plans, something that was not the norm 15 years ago. He states that planners finally came to realize that cycling advocates are easier to accommodate than ignore and "they figured we wouldn't go away."

Beginning with only a handful of committed cycling advocates over ten years ago, the VACC has grown to become an important voice for cyclists in the Lower Mainland. As the VACC continues to pedal its way into the future, it is hoped that a cycling environment can be created where cycling advocates aren't required to continually fight for recognition, but instead can just get on their bikes where they belong and ... ride.

Letter To The Editor

(Our recent Newsletter Survey results indicated an overwhelming interest in having a Letter to the Editor section included in The Urbane Cyclist. Our space is relatively limited for letters so please limit the size of your submission to less than 200 words. Also note that the editor reserves the right to reduce the size of your letter as required and that such letters do not necessarily reflect the views of the VACC or the Newsletter editor.)

Improving the MVSA and the MVTA

Recently, I made presentations to the bicycle or traffic safety committees of the cities of Vancouver, Burnaby, and New Westminster. It was explained that the federal Motor Vehicle Safety Act and the Motor Vehicle Transport Act need amendments to facilitate the safety of cyclists, the public, and road design in the Lower Mainland.

This requires the convening of public hearings with the federal transport committees to submit recommendations to revise the MVSA and the MVTA. A bill or motion authorizing the convening would need to be passed in the House of Commons. Local and municipal support is needed, of which Vancouver and Burnaby have provided.

The recommendations would eliminate preventable fatalities and serious injuries of Lower Mainland cyclists. They would also improve the safety of pedestrians and drivers, and enable municipalities to address through road improvement the inherent danger of trucks and buses.

The MVSA and the MVTA need roughly two dozen engineering improvements, wherein the most important is a no-load weight limit. Weight is an engineering parameter that largely controls cyclist safety, road design, and user behaviour. This is why federal improvements are a prerequisite to comprehensive local improvements.

Thang Vu- Burnaby, BC



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Headwinds

- To Provincial Government for botching up the Pitt River Bridge Project. After considerable consultation on behalf of the VACC and others, the Province agreed to a design which would have been adequate for cyclists. This design was overturned by the builder and we now have to put up with totally inadequate cycling facilities on the new Pitt River Bridge.

Regional Cycling Network Updates and Data Collection by Richard Campbell

On behalf of TransLink, the VACC is collecting updates and other information on cycling routes throughout the region.

The work will include:

- Reviewing the designated route network to identify updates
- Noting location of all cyclist and pedestrian activated lights in the region
- Rating of segments of streets that are not very comfortable to cycle along so the trip planning tool can take this into account when suggesting a route.
- Updating of the alternate route network.
- Indication as to where some routes might be uncomfortable to use at certain times of the day due to personal security concerns.

This information will be used in a variety of educational tools, including an update to the regional cycling map, and to enhance the bicycle trip planning tool that is currently under development by UBC Professor Mike Brauer and graduate student Meghan Winters. This work could also help identify priorities for future improvements of the network.

The process will include with consultation with VACC members,



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municipal staff and bicycle advisory committees; requests through VACC e-mail lists; and observations made by project personnel or VACC volunteers during rides along the routes. This work is expected to be completed by mid-March.

Bringing Cycling Skills to your Workplace **by Bonnie Fenton**

Did you know...?

- Employees who cycle to work are healthier, more productive, take fewer sick days, and are less likely to change jobs.
- Cycling to work is cost efficient for both employers and employees, reduces the need for workplace (car) parking, allows employees to reduce their ecological footprint, and it's fun! (www.smartcommute.ca/tma_toolkit)

The Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition's Commuter Cycling Skills Program is offering a one-day (7 1/2 hour) cycling skills course to workplaces whose employees are interested in using their bikes for transportation but who lack the confidence or skills to ride in traffic.

Classes are interactive and practical and go through the most common situations faced when riding in traffic, providing basic cycling knowledge to new and less-experienced cyclists. The combination of classroom and on-road training builds traffic cycling proficiency and confidence for adults who want to cycle for transportation. You'll learn basic traffic skills, gain confidence in the abilities you already have, and pick up some handy tips.

Courses are held at the workplace and can be arranged on a weekday or weekend. We can accommodate groups of between 6 and 18, and all participants must have a bike in safe working order and a helmet.

For more information on bringing a commuter cycling skills course to your workplace, contact Bonnie Fenton, VACC Commuter Cycling Skills Program Director at 604-734-1385 or bikeskills@vacc.bc.ca

Many thanks to TransLink for their continued support of the Commuter Cycling Skills Program.

Work with the VACC

To become involved, please contact:

<input type="checkbox"/> Burnaby	Luis	604 431-6658
<input type="checkbox"/> Delta	Carol	604 943-3412
<input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising	Fulton	604 526-3585
<input type="checkbox"/> Greater Vancouver	John	604 986-9220
<input type="checkbox"/> New Westminster	Andrew	604 521-2742
<input type="checkbox"/> North Shore	Dave	604 988-5454
<input type="checkbox"/> Bikes on Transit	Jack	604 681-5744
<input type="checkbox"/> Surrey/White Rock	Gordon	604 535-2513
<input type="checkbox"/> Tri-Cities	John	604 469-0361

Did you know...?

The more letters written and the more phone calls made, the more likely cycling conditions will improve.

Who to write about issues in The Urbane Cyclist:

Hon. Gordon Campbell **Premier**

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Refer to our website for more contact information.

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MEET YOUR BOARD

MEMBERS



Charlotte Bathurst

Originally from the UK, Charlotte is a skiing and sailing instructor, and instructs for Vancouver Adaptive Snow Sports, which supports her philosophy that people should be empowered and educated to take part in activities that they wouldn't necessarily feel comfortable or confident doing.

With degrees in Urban Geography and Transport Planning, Charlotte is passionate about sustainable and accessible transportation. Transferring this interest into a career started with a co-op placement at Heathrow Airport. Since then, she's worked as a transportation planner in London, Manchester and now Vancouver.

Just before leaving the UK, Charlotte cycled across Great Britain which is something she would like to do in Canada but thinks it might take a bit longer!

Bike to Work is Back! May 26 – June 1, 2008 *by Mia Kahout*

Due to the enthusiastic response received from the Metro Vancouver community in 2007, the VACC welcomes back Bike to Work to its springtime program line up. Participating in the Bike to Work program delivers measurable results to the individual commuter, our workplaces, our municipalities and our greater Metro Vancouver region as a whole. The VACC encourages everyone to register and to participate in this year's program, whether you bike to work year round or whether you are thinking about trying biking to work for the first time. As part of the spring Bike to Work campaign, the VACC is excited to announce it will make significant upgrades to its website. On-line membership, payment options and overall improvements to the site should be well received by present and potential members alike. Bike to Work staff is anticipating a significant increase in VACC members as a result of these improvements.

Commuter stations, celebratory pit stops for cyclists, will again be staged in participating municipalities throughout Metro Vancouver during Bike to Work Week. If you would like your municipality to host a

Bike to Work Week event, please contact your local municipality and voice your support of the program. Volunteers are needed to work at commuter stations and to promote Bike to Work Week at events throughout the spring. Stay tuned for specific event details in the next newsletter, or contact biketowork@vacc.bc.ca for more information. With the intent for widespread participation, the Bike to Work program features three on-site workshops to support cycling in the workplace. Contact biketowork@vacc.bc.ca to register your workplace for one of the following workshops.



Photo Credit: Leslie Love

LUNCH HOUR BIKE TO WORK PRIMER This one-hour workshop preps your workplace for Bike to Work Week and includes such topics as wardrobe, bike buddies and route planning.

AN INTRODUCTION TO COMMUTER CYCLING SKILLS This 2-hour workshop is an introductory workshop covering much of the classroom component of the full day commuter cycling skills course.

COMMUTER CYCLING SKILLS COURSE Now in its successful third year, the VACC's Skills Course is now being offered at the workplace.

Resources for first time commuters are available on the VACC website. Registration for Bike to Work Week begins in April. Encourage your workplace and your municipality to become involved. Purchase a workshop. Request a sponsorship package. At the time of publication, confirmed sponsors for 2008 include TransLink, the City of Richmond & Zip Car. Please contact Mia at biketowork@vacc.bc.ca for more details.

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Recreation Trails Strategy for BC – Update by Jack Becker

The Recreation Trails Strategy for BC, led by the Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts (MTSA), is well into the second phase of development. The first phase, completed last year, assessed the status of BC's current recreation trail network and proposed a process for developing a made-in-BC trails strategy. Phase 2 involves the development of a Trails Strategy by a broad-based Trails Strategy Committee.

The Committee's task is to create an effective framework for guiding future decision-making and establishing clear direction for the planning, managing, marketing and sustainable use of BC's extensive trail network. The Committee consists of members from provincial ministries and agencies; regional and local governments; academic institutions; recreation trail user groups, including the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC; and an Aboriginal representative to provide a First Nations perspective. Your transportation, recreation, and touring cyclist representative is Jack Becker (president@bccc.bc.ca). The mountain biking representative is James Brown of IMBA (jamesbrown@shawcable.com)

The Trails Strategy Committee has met twice since November 2007, with a third meeting planned for late February 2008. At the initial meeting, the Committee defined a vision for BC's recreation trail system – "a world renowned network of sustainable trails, accessible to all, which foster social cultural, health, economic and environmental benefits for trail users, communities and the province."

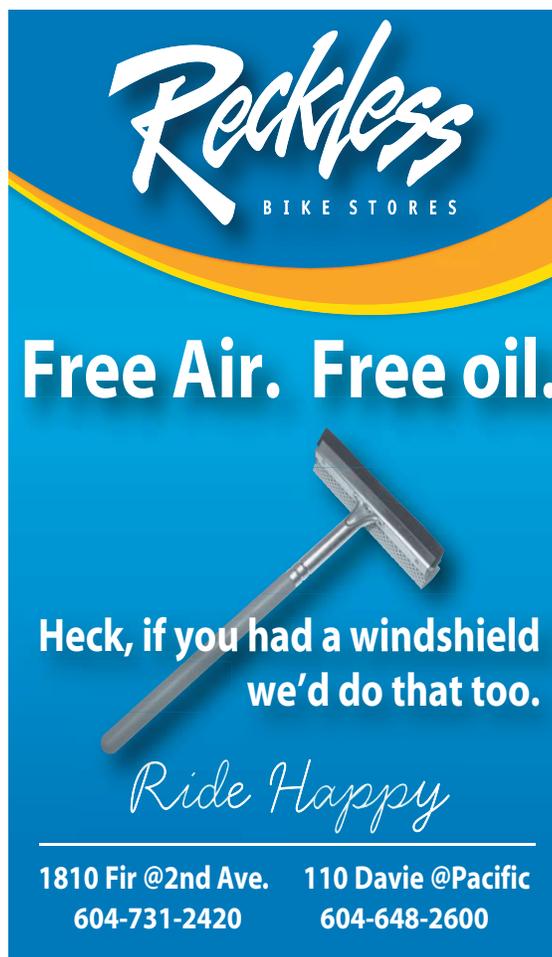
Cyclists note, that the definition of "Trails" includes rail-trails, dyke paths, multi-use paths, among other paths which may be used for cycling.

A primary task of the Committee is to address key issues identified in the trails survey conducted during phase 1 of the project. These issues include important considerations such as trail access, sustainable funding, insurance and liability, environmental concerns, compliance and enforcement, etc. Effective strategies that help address these issues will be a key part of the Trails Strategy.

Community consultation is the cornerstone of the strategy development process, and the Trails Strategy Committee is currently finalizing plans for conducting formal community and stakeholder consultations to ensure that interests are represented and heard from all areas of the province. These regional consultations will help ensure that the trails strategy maximizes the values and benefits of BC trails, and will also foster support for the strategy and its implementation.

Additional information, documents, and regular updates on the Recreation Trails Strategy for BC can be found on the MTSA website at: http://www.tsa.gov.bc.ca/sites_trails/Initiatives/recreation_trails_strategy.htm.

Please review these documents and provide your thoughts, issues, and strategies on non-mountain biking cycling to Jack Becker (president@bccc.bc.ca). These will be consolidated and passed on to the committee and the Ministry. Input to the next committee meeting should be provided by Feb. 25.



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The Urbane Cyclist Newsletter Survey by Rob Brownie

We were pleased to receive thirty responses to our recent request for feedback on The Urbane Cyclist. Overall our membership is very satisfied with the quality of the newsletter but there were some notable suggestions with respect to possible themes and appearance. Here is a summary of our findings:

- 83% of respondents named advocacy as the most important issue the newsletter should cover, followed by safety 48%, cycling skills 36% and, cycling and the law 32%. There is also an interest in seeing more stories on cycling gear and equipment as well as articles and anecdotes on cycling advocacy in other cities and countries.
- there is a strong interest in keeping the newsletter to 8-10 pages which should translate into more articles of shorter length. We will continue to publish the newsletter quarterly although there was some interest in separating the focus of the on-line version of the newsletter (to advocacy only) from the printed copy (to more general topics) that is distributed throughout Metro Vancouver.
- finally, there was overwhelming support for a letter to the editor section and a desire for brighter colours in our masthead (perhaps to catch your attention when you walk by the vast assortment of community papers displayed in the library).

Your ideas and suggestions will be duly considered over the coming months as we continue to provide you up to date on issues of the day and upcoming VACC sponsored programs. You can contact me directly if you have any further comments: robrow@shaw.ca

Please mail this form and a cheque to:

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