

# urbane cyclist

THE VANCOUVER AREA CYCLING COALITION QUARTERLY

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Making cycling an integral part of Metro Vancouver's transportation culture

WINTER 2010 #47

**IN THIS ISSUE:**

## **Bike to Work + Cycling Abroad**

Vancouver Perspectives from  
England and New Zealand





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MANAGING EDITOR: Rob Brownie

COPY EDITORS: Ulrike Rodrigues, Arno Schortinghuis

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GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?

We welcome articles of 400 words or less about cycling in Greater Vancouver.

Submissions may be sent to **Urbane Cyclist: newsletter@vacc.bc.ca**

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

NEXT ISSUE OF URBANE CYCLIST:

March 2011

## How do Bikes Benefit Business?

### The VACC introduces the Business for Bikes initiative

by Erin O'Melinn

Did you know that people who arrive by transit, foot, and bicycle visit individual stores more often and spend more money than those who drive? Or that Metro Vancouver Bike to Work participants' individual average income is \$50,000+ (more than 27% make over \$75,000)?

If you're surprised by those stats, you're not alone. Many business owners and managers in Metro Vancouver are also left in the dark when it comes to the potential of cycling clientele, and this can cause them to be concerned they might lose business when new cycling infrastructure is introduced in their area, reducing road or parking space for other modes.

But the VACC has launched a new program to increase the awareness of cyclists' purchasing power, to help businesses engage with cycling consumers and the benefits of a more vibrant, people-friendly community.

The Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition is pleased to announce the launch of the Businesses for Bikes initiative. Businesses for Bikes seeks to create a robust group of businesses that openly support cycling and to supply businesses with the tools and resources to reach the cycling consumer;

empower employees to ride safely and confidently; and help create a more vibrant community and local economy.

The program will provide business recognition and promotion to cycling audiences. The VACC will showcase Businesses for Bikes organizations through VACC websites, regional events, and newsletter and potential media exposure. The Discovering Downtown by Bike initiative will also be launched

Bike to Work Week Cyclists Growth Over Time



to encourage cyclists to discover specific businesses that are bike-friendly, including maps and BIA involvement.

A Guide to Marketing to Cyclists will be also be developed and distributed to Businesses for Bikes members in the fall of 2010. It will include statistics and studies from other cycling successes around the world, along with strategies and tips to focus on our local cycling market.

For more information and to see who has signed up to be a Business for Bikes, visit [www.biketoworkmetrovan.ca/businesses](http://www.biketoworkmetrovan.ca/businesses)

# Spring 2010 Bike to Work Results Are In!

Commuter Stations	51
Change in Cyclists Counted at Stations	+65% from 2009
Registered Participants	4,564
Registered Workplace Teams	954
Number of commutes logged	17,669
Carbon Dioxide Savings	32,651kg
Distance Cycled	173,776km
New Commuter Cyclists	739
Percent of Registered Cyclists that are Women	45%
New Registered users in 2010	2,238
New municipalities that are official partners in 2010	Coquitlam, West Vancouver, and White Rock that make up some of the 13 participating municipalities in Metro Vancouver

by Erin O'Melinn  
Bike to Work Program Manager

The Spring 2010 Bike to Work Week showed commuter station attendance has skyrocketed, despite some wet spring weather this year. Since 2009, cyclist counts are up 65%, and since the Bike to Work program's beginnings in 2007, there has been a 162% increase in cycling for transportation in Metro Vancouver as measured by counts at commuter stations in the same location each year.

With 739 brand new commuter cyclists and 2,238 new registered website users in 2010, Bike to Work Week continues to have a fundamental impact on cycling mode share in the region.

The year is not over yet – the VACC will be hosting the third annual winter Bike to Work Week November 1 to 7th. In Vancouver we are lucky enough to have a climate that although wet, is not usually icy or snowy. Cycling for transportation is viable all year round. We know it isn't always easy to motivate yourself to hop on your bike in the rain or the dark, so Bike to Work Week is coming to add some free hot coffee, snacks, prizes, and free bike maintenance on your way to work at our celebration stations along bike routes.

We also want to help you be safe and comfortable for your whole ride, no matter what the week. Getting the right gear is fairly simple: slap lights on, grab some fenders (they help you and your

bike make it through winter weather), pick up a waterproof jacket, pants, bag covers and booties. This will make you more visible and less soggy on your commute. Get a deal at MEC! Join us on Oct. 19th for VACC member's night at Mountain Equipment Co-op. As a member, you'll get great discounts on everything in the store, and if you're not a member, you can sign up on the spot.

November 1-7th: join us at a celebration station and join us online to challenge yourself, co-workers, and rival companies to stay cycling year round. Workplace awards are up for grabs and pride is at stake. Bike to Work Week is free, fun and for all seasons. Find us at [www.biketoworkmetrovan.ca](http://www.biketoworkmetrovan.ca)

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## Vancouver Biking A Kiwi Comparison

Visiting from New Zealand last summer, Alastair Smith offers his thoughts on cycling in Metro Vancouver and reflects on challenges back home.

by Alastair Smith

Wellington, New Zealand, was recently listed as one of the top ten bicycling destinations in the world. So why would I leave Wellington for a three month sabbatical in Vancouver - which unfortunately didn't make the list this year?

There are a lot of similarities - both cities are Pacific ports surrounded by mountains, which provide both challenges and opportunities for bicycling. Vancouver is bigger, and in general flatter while Wellington's steep hills mean there is often only one narrow winding street that bicycles must share with other vehicles. In contrast, I'm enjoying Vancouver's network of bicycle priority routes - when I bought a new bike from a shop on busy Broadway, it was great to be able to ride practically all the way back to UBC on bicycle routes.

Wellington is the one city in NZ that has seen a rise in bicycling over recent years (to 3% of commuter trips). This is due to the availability of mountain bike gearing which makes it practical to commute up the steep hills, and flow-on from the popularity of mountain biking in areas such as Makara Peak mountain bike park (our equivalent of the North Shore MTB areas).

On my first day in Vancouver I joined the BC Day hordes cycling and walking around the Stanley Park seawall, and felt very much at home - just like a weekend on the Wellington waterfront shared cycling and walking route.

We're hoping to extend the waterfront path right around the harbour to form a Great Harbour Way route - much of it is bikeable already, but a key segment has a 1930s bike path which has been squeezed out of existence between the railway and a busy expressway.

The debate over the Dunsmuir and Hornby separated bike paths was very familiar to me, but made me realise how far we've got to go in Wellington. On Thorndon Quay, a key bicycle

commuter route into Wellington, proposals for bike lanes got nowhere due to business demand for car parking, and we've had to compromise on peak hour parking restrictions to improve bicycle safety. On the part of this route which does have a separated path, problems with parked delivery trucks, vehicles turning across the path, etc are common. The city council does have a reasonably responsive parking enforcement hotline, which some cycle commuters have preprogrammed into their cellphones!

What I'm really enjoying in Vancouver is being able to take my bike on public transport. So far only Christchurch is starting to provide bike racks on buses in NZ, and Wellington's rail services have a strictly enforced two bike limit, which makes getting a bike on train a gamble, compared with the Skytrain's more flexible approach.

As yet, NZ only has one public bike system, NextBike in Auckland. Bikes are unlocked by getting the combination texted to a mobile phone. They've dealt with the helmet issue (NZ, like BC, requires bicycle riders to wear helmets) by attaching helmets to the bikes - this doesn't seem to be a problem. There are plans to get the scheme extended to Wellington. In Vancouver, I've enjoyed helping refurbish bikes for UBC's grassroots yellow and purple public bike scheme. So I'm enjoying exploring Vancouver by bicycle, and if I get the chance, I'll certainly vote to get Vancouver back into the top 10 bicycling destinations!



Riding through an idyllic moor.  
Photo by Sean McKibben

## A Cycling Advocate's View from the UK

Sean McKibben, the VACC's past Executive Director, reflects on changes to cycling routes in England.

by Sean McKibben

I love riding my bike to work, for the sense of freedom and the kick-start to a dozy body and brain. Then I spend the day anticipating the pleasure of piloting home my little flying machine. I spent many years in London, engaging in guerilla warfare with the traffic, before riding all over Metro Vancouver. Now I'm in Yorkshire, England, riding from the Skipton Dales to the City of Bradford.

I have two routes to choose from. The flat route funnels down the valley straight into the city, or there is the road that twists up onto the moors between dry stone walls. The first route is fast, the second is spectacular. But the fast route is swarming with cars, with no bike lane. The second is circuitous, with grades of 20%.

These less than ideal choices

reflect the assumption by planners that bikes are not viable for longer journeys, a self-fulfilling prophecy while the infrastructure actively discourages cycling. I think this attitude changing in Metro Vancouver, thanks largely to the efforts of the VACC, with routes like the CVG and integration with schemes like the Gateway project. Here in the UK, bike-friendliness varies enormously depending on where you are. Bradford's bike infrastructure is patchy and uncoordinated and few are brave enough to use their bike for transport - at my workplace, I am the only bike commuter out of 200 people.

Change is happening though. There are cities in the UK that already have a strong cycling culture - Cambridge, York, Bristol, Edinburgh, to name a few. There are powerful bike advocacy organizations like the Cyclists' Torung Club, the London Cycling Campaign, Sustrans and others. And there has been some serious investment in bike infrastructure and education although it remains to be seen if any of these

programmes survive the huge cuts being imposed on public services by the new government. There has also been a big increase in leisure cycling in the UK, and on weekends, the lanes are full of riders. As in Vancouver, the challenge is to turn this army of weekend warriors into advocates.

In London bike use is up by 80% in only a few years and injuries to cyclists have decreased over the same period. The difference is astonishing; swarms of cyclists of all ages and inclinations mixing it with the buses and taxis. Although there is some new infrastructure, it seems people have simply got fed up with waiting for "Cycling Nirvana" and got on their bikes, creating a positive feedback loop; more cyclists, more respect, safer streets, more new riders.

The latest initiative is 12 new 'cycle superhighways', blue painted bike lanes along commuter routes. However, critics say the plan is really nothing more than repainting existing cycle lanes. Compare London's plans with Vancouver's segregated lanes and you realise how visionary the city by the sea is.

So, the news from the UK is generally positive and the argument about whether cycling is a Good Thing is won. As for my commute, in the morning, the valley road gets me there fast and the cars whizzing by my ear add a sense of urgency. But in the evening, I don't need much excuse to vanish into the country lanes that climb out of the valley and away from the cars. The views are worth the effort and it beats going to the gym.

## TO BECOME INVOLVED, PLEASE CONTACT:

Bikes on Transit: [bikesontransit@vacc.bc.ca](mailto:bikesontransit@vacc.bc.ca)

Metro Vancouver: Arno [metrovan@vacc.bc.ca](mailto:metrovan@vacc.bc.ca)

Burnaby: Moreno [burnaby@vacc.bc.ca](mailto:burnaby@vacc.bc.ca)

Delta: Carol [delta@vacc.bc.ca](mailto:delta@vacc.bc.ca)

Langleys: Richard [thelangleys@vacc.bc.ca](mailto:thelangleys@vacc.bc.ca)

Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows: Rick or Ivan

[mapleridge-pittmeadows@vacc.bc.ca](mailto:mapleridge-pittmeadows@vacc.bc.ca)

New Westminister: Andrew [newwestminster@vacc.bc.ca](mailto:newwestminster@vacc.bc.ca)

North Shore: Jay [northshore@vacc.bc.ca](mailto:northshore@vacc.bc.ca)

Richmond: Arno [richmond@vacc.bc.ca](mailto:richmond@vacc.bc.ca)

Surrey/White Rock: Gordon [surreywhiterock@vacc.bc.ca](mailto:surreywhiterock@vacc.bc.ca)

Tri-Cities: Alexi [tri-cities@vacc.bc.ca](mailto:tri-cities@vacc.bc.ca)

Vancouver/UBC: Lisa [vancouver@vacc.bc.ca](mailto:vancouver@vacc.bc.ca)

## Who to write about issues in *Urbane Cyclist*:

Hon. Gordon Campbell, Premier  
PO Box 9041  
STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria BC V8W 9E1  
Phone: 250 387-1715 Fax: 250 387-0087  
[premier@gov.bc.ca](mailto:premier@gov.bc.ca)

Hon. Shirley Bond, Minister of Transportation  
PO Box 9055  
STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria BC V8W 9E2  
Phone: 250 387-1978 Fax: 250 356-2290  
[Minister.Transportation@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Minister.Transportation@gov.bc.ca)

City of Burnaby – Mayor Derek Corrigan & Council  
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453 West 12th Avenue  
Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4  
Phone: 604 873-7621 Fax: 604 873-7685  
[Gregor.robertson@vancouver.ca](mailto:Gregor.robertson@vancouver.ca)

TransLink – Chair Dale Parker & Board of Directors  
1600-4720 Kingsway  
Burnaby, BC V5H 4N2  
Phone: 604 453-4500 Fax: 604 453-4626  
[www.translink.bc.ca](http://www.translink.bc.ca)

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# Talking to Cyclists

by Karen Larsen, VACC Member

As I ride to work, gazing at suncatchers hanging from leafy branches while breathing in the sweetness of blackberry bushes, I wonder why anyone would prefer commuting on a sweaty bus or crawling along a highway choking in exhaust fumes.

When I'm puffing my way up hills, my upper lip glowing with perspiration, I recall the clamors of the perhaps never-to-be-converted cyclists: "don't you get all sweaty by the time you get to work? Or drenched in the rain? Isn't it scary to bike in traffic?" and so on.

I have many reasons for cycling, and I'll share them with anyone who'll listen. I know my reasons, but I wanted to ask other cyclists about their motivation for riding, so I did. Here are the answers I got from one cyclist, Andrea R., an avid bike commuter and roadie:

**K:** *What do you like about cycling?*

**AR:** A number of things, the first is that I don't need to rely on public transit and I'm not confined to timelines or

exposed to other people's sicknesses. I get fresh air when I'm riding. It's satisfying to have a direct relationship with your body and your bike; the energy you put into cycling is what you immediately get back. It's great fitness. It's low impact on the environment. It doesn't hurt to have a pretty bike either.

**K:** *What don't you like about cycling?*

**AR:** It can be hard to motivate yourself to get out in the rain. Some routes are not so great for riders, I mean, vehicles can't see you so easily and vice versa. In general, you need to be aware of vehicles.

**K:** *Why do you ride your bike?*

**AR:** For fitness, affordability, for the environment, for my mental and physical wellness and the excitement!

**K:** *What, if anything, would make you cycle more?*

**AR:** Time and money! If I had more money, I'd get a better bike and a coach, and then I'd spend more time training on my fabulous fast bike with my coach!

*(Look for further cyclist musings in the next issue of The Urbane Cyclist!)*

## Headwinds | Tailwinds

**Tailwind** The VACC is pleased to announce that Metro Vancouver will host the Velo-city 2012 Global Conference. Velo-city is widely respected as the premier international cycling planning conference series in the world. For more information on the 2010 conference check this website: [www.velo-city2010.com](http://www.velo-city2010.com)

**Tailwind** Velopalooza will be expanding to a two-week bike fun festival in June 2011. – **Terry Lowe**

**Headwind** The Queensborough bridge is a perfect example of a "tailwind" that became a "headwind. A lot of money was spent building great infrastructure. The City of New Westminister and the Ministry of Transport then made the least of it by failing to spend the extra 1% to install appropriate signage and connections. – **Marion Orser**

# Making Room for Cyclists in Surrey/Whiterock

by Andrew Cuthbert, VACC Member

Out in Surrey and White Rock there is one very busy group of people. The Surrey/White Rock VACC committee is a small but extremely active and dedicated group of individuals that are doing a lot for cycling for their respective municipalities. They face a unique challenge. The Surrey/White Rock area is growing very rapidly, meaning there are far more road users using rural streets that weren't designed for the increased capacity.

Making sure there will be room for cyclists amidst the growth has been a priority. The committee has been very active attending and participating in festivals and open houses for major infrastructure projects to raise awareness and provide bike valet parking at select events. Some notable festivals and projects include:

- Canada Day Celebrations
- Fusion Festival
- Bike to Work Week
- Surrey City Centre ReDesign
- BC Parkway Redevelopment
- New Port Mann and Pattullo Bridge
- South Fraser Perimeter Road
- City of Surrey Sustainability Studies
- Highway One Project
- Surrey Greenway parks and projects

Many of the projects are ongoing and the committee is still involved in providing input as they move forward. The City of Surrey is currently in the midst of a major review and rewrite of the bicycle plan for the city which includes preparing online surveys and a new bicycle map.

The Surrey/White Rock VACC has been proactive in providing feedback and data that is being incorporated into this plan, expressing special concern to issues such as traffic speed, physically separated



Mary and Mona setting the VACC display and bike parking for Canada Day in Cloverdale. Photo by Gordon Hall

bike ways and missing links in the network. The committee is also proud to announce that one of their committee members will be giving a presentation at Transportation course at SFU in fall 2010.

The Surrey/White Rock VACC committee meets the first Tuesday of every month (September to June) at the Newton Seniors Centre from 7-9pm. For more info: [surreywhiterock@vacc.bc.ca](mailto:surreywhiterock@vacc.bc.ca).

# Cycling For Everyone in Burnaby

The Burnaby chapter of the Vancouver Cycling Coalition may be a small force but it is composed of a passionate and experienced group of people. In the past the group has accomplished changes to the city's official community plan to better reflect the needs of cyclists, as well as the preservation of the Lougheed cycle lanes after the Millennium Line construction in 2001. The committee has also aided in the design of the Victory, Cariboo, Sea-to-River, and Southeast Burnaby bike routes.

Currently the committee is working

on establishing an official cycling advisory committee for Burnaby Council. Such a committee would make other goals easier to accomplish, including the development of off-street cycle parking by-laws and the establishment of a 30 km/hr limit on cycle ways. The off-street cycle parking by-law would make bike parking a mandatory component of new developments.

Moreno Zanotto, the chair of the Burnaby committee is confident in the groups accelerated progress. The committee is looking forward to the approval of the

proposal to have a maximum speed limit on Burnaby cycle ways, a decision set to happen fall 2010. Other projects for the future include continuing work on the cycle parking by-law with the aim to present a model in spring 2011, and the development of a cycling advisory committee. If you wish to participate, meetings for the Burnaby VACC committee are held at McGill Library in North Burnaby on the second Thursday of the month from 6:45-8:45 pm. Please go to our site: [burnaby@vacc.bc.ca](mailto:burnaby@vacc.bc.ca)

# VACC Membership Benefits



## NEW! Discount Plan at Metro Bike Stores

In partnership with bike stores throughout Metro Vancouver, when you join the VACC, you will get THREE one-time discounts or special offers per year at any of the participating stores below:

**DISCOUNT 1:** 5% off a new bike

**DISCOUNT 2:** up to 10% off a tune-up/service

**DISCOUNT 3:** 15% off accessories

Take your new VACC Membership card into one of the following bike stores to redeem

your discounts and get your card stamped (check our website often as participating bike stores and businesses are updated all the time: [www.vacc.bc.ca/membership](http://www.vacc.bc.ca/membership))

Bike Doctor (Van/Burnaby), Bikes on the Drive (Van), Dream Cycle (Van), Different Bikes (Van/N. Van/W. Van), Experience Cycling (Maple Ridge), Local Ride (Maple Ridge) Maple Ridge Cycles (Maple Ridge), Mighty Riders (Van), Obsession Cycles (N. Van), O'Hagan's Cycles (Surrey), On Top

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