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## Bikes: The "Green" Machines that are Moving Vancouver toward Sustainability



Riding across the Burrard Bridge in the cycling lane, protected from automobile traffic. During peak periods, between 500 to 800 cyclists cross the bridge every hour. Photo courtesy of City of Vancouver

By KATIE HAWKINS

Metro Vancouver, B.C. has a vision, and everything is looking green. Named the most eco-friendly city in Canada for the past two years by *Corporate Knights* magazine, the city is establishing itself as the "Green Capital" in their 30-year strategy that focuses on sustainability through creating a compact urban area, supporting an ecological economy, protecting the region's ecosystem and responding to climate change impacts, developing complete communities, and supporting environment-friendly transportation choices. But Vancouver isn't satisfied with being named the greenest city in Canada; they're going global, and hope to do so before the end of the project in 2040.

"The recognition [from *Corporate Knights*] confirms we're on the right track," said Mayor Gregor Robertson to the *Vancouver Observer*, "to become the world's greenest city by 2020." By then, Vancouver hopes to see 50 percent of its population walking, cycling, and using public transportation. The city council states that bicycles are a large component to the number, hoping that they will account for around

10 percent of overall travel and 15 percent of trips that are less than 8 kilometers.

Vancouver saw the most drastic change in public transportation during the 2010 Olympics, when traffic was reduced by 40 percent. According to Vancouver City Council, a quarter of those who stopped driving stuck with public transportation.

"They understood that it works!" exclaims council member, David Cadman, Chair of the Standing Committee on Transportation and Traffic. "They realized they didn't have to hassle to find and pay for a parking spot, all while enjoying a more pleasant ride to work."

Last year marked the end of a 10-year plan implemented in 2000. Under Mayor Robertson's leadership, the city's bicycle infrastructure budget has doubled from \$1.7 million to about \$3 million. Much was accomplished with bicycle and public transportation infrastructure: 10 percent of all roads now include designated bikeways, and in the last few years, Vancouver has focused on separating bikes and autos, adding 400 km of greenways and bike routes. The goal

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Bicycle boxes allow cyclists to go ahead of motor vehicles, providing better visibility.

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## RACING

### Portlanders Shine and Shatter Records in Rain-Shortened AVC

By DAVE CAMPBELL

When the Alpenrose Velodrome Challenge (AVC) began in 1999, it became one of the richest, competitive, most anticipated and prestigious track races in the country. Riders, including many Olympic medalists, world champions, and countless national champions, have gathered annually to race at the unique and steeply banked 268-meter track nestled in Portland's southwest hills. The major change witnessed over the past thirteen years has been the increased performance level of the locals. Once just happy to make the finals, Rose City riders now count themselves among the very best. From two high-level local coaching programs to the elite Project London 2012 (Olympics),

a team with two Portlanders among its five world-class sprinters, most of the nation's elite fixed-gear riders now have a Portland connection. And despite a program cut short by unseasonable rain on Sunday, the hometown favorites shone brightly and a number of records tumbled in the process.

Time trial racing kicked off the event on Friday, July 15, and Washington rider Dan Harm (Broadmark Capitol) won his fifth consecutive AVC 4 km individual pursuit title, posting a 4:58.07. Californian Elizabeth Newell won the Women's 3km pursuit in 4:00.72, just in front of Gilian Carlton of Victoria, B.C. (Oak Bay Bicycles). San Jose's Dave Mamimski claimed

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## HEALTH

### Combining Modern Science with Ancient Wisdom

By MELISSA SHAYS, ND, LAC, PC

There is more to cycling performance than mental strength and ample energy gels. Regardless if you are racing, training to improve your personal best, or enjoying a scenic ride, your health and wellness play a role in your experience. Licensed Naturopathic physicians (ND) are able to bring cyclists an innovative set of personalized treatment options that focus on performance, recovery, and feeling their best. Naturopaths attend a four-year graduate-level naturopathic medical school and receive standard education in laboratory testing, physiology, pathology, and prescription medication. They are also trained in clinical nutrition, botanical medicine, and have a strong background in disease prevention.

Naturopathic medicine is an excellent choice for the endurance athlete. The rigors of training and competition can change an one's hormone levels, thyroid function, energy levels, and

blood markers. Naturopathy believes that looking at the overall health picture is more important than treating the symptoms alone. Treatment includes nutritional supplements, herbal extracts and prescription medications while conforming to the international sport governing bodies banned substances list.

#### Labs

Hemoglobin (Hgb), Hematocrit (Hct) and Ferritin (Ft) are common blood constituents that are monitored in endurance athletes and are markers for iron deficiency and thus, oxygen carrying capacity. These levels decrease in elite cyclists by 11.5% during the Tour de France[1]. Unusually high Hgb and Hct values can be indicators that an athlete has been artificially increasing their red blood cell production (blood doping). Iron from supplements and dietary sources is poorly absorbed by the body and

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#### TRACK WEEKLY

The Northwest is home to four velodromes and each offer programs to get you started.

PG 6



#### PEOPLE'S COAST

Publisher Jay Stilwell describes his experience at the inaugural Oregon coast ride.

PG 7



#### FLATWEBTV

Two Oregon BMX Flatland fans help bring the sport back from the fringe.

PG 15



**FROM PAGE 1**

**"2040" FROM PAGE 1**

for the next ten years is to get those who are still driving to use them.

Currently, Vancouver is still in the process of development, and before it can reach its transportation goals, there are some pieces that need to come together, such as working on extending the transit line to the University of British Columbia (UBC). With more than 63,000



Photo courtesy of City of Vancouver

**Rush hour in the Dunsmuir bike lane.**

trips per day to and from campus, UBC is the second largest transit destination in the region. When the extension is completed, residents will be able to ride their bike to the SkyTrain, take the train to UBC, and then bike the last leg of their commute.

Though the university is not technically part of the City of Vancouver and has no formal role in contributing to the 2040 plan, UBC's Transportation Planning staff has been participating in consultations to ensure integration of transit on campus. Since 1997, UBC has been working to reduce automobile trips by promoting sustainable modes of transportation. By providing a variety of programs, such as the Bike-Share Program and End of Trip facilities (providing covered bike racks, bike lockers, showers, and more) for cyclists, they have more than doubled transit ridership to campus, seeing 12,000 fewer cars traveling to the university each day. The campus also offers a nonprofit full-service community bike shop and an online cycling route planner where one can plug in a destination, route type (designated plus alternate cycling roads or major roads included) and preference (shortest route, the road with the least amount of traffic, pollution, elevation gain, and even the most vegetated trail).

Since the launch of the 2040 plan in 2009, the city has been replacing some parking lanes with bike lanes and inserting a median between cyclists and motorists. This includes the Burrard Street Bridge and Dunsmuir Viaduct, which

gives cyclists and pedestrians protected routes to cross the bridge more safely. This also means one less lane for vehicles; though there has been some backlash from motorists on some lane losses and a few less parking spaces, Cadman believes that it is worth it.

"Motorists feel as though we are taking away what they have as a right to as a motorist," he notes. "But every year, there are fewer and fewer cars in downtown Vancouver. The issue is that car traffic is declining in a city that wants to move to walking, cycling, and public transportation. Why not take away a lane of parking to facilitate them?"

Cadman explains that, though the city is progressing toward a less-carbon emitting and more sustainable future, they are not looking to kick out vehicles altogether.

"The car is well and truly sold and promoted within the community," he explains. "But as gas and oil prices rise,

people question the use of the car. The shift [to public transportation] will come very quickly, and we have to be able to accommodate."

Councilor Geoff Meggs adds, "The amount of cars in the city has been declining for the last 50 years, so we have been successful in making the shift. We aren't looking to do anything we haven't been doing, but looking to do it in a faster, more permanent way."

Metro Vancouver has seen an addition of more than one million people in a generation. This population growth is likely to continue, and a crucial challenge for the city is to maintain livability and advance sustainability at the same time.

There cannot be too much backlash on the infrastructure changes, as the \$700 million plan is funded by capital investment — tax revenue that is voted in as a referendum by Vancouver residents. Some federal funding also plays a part. In addition, this amount covers the development and maintenance of roads and community centers, among others.

There is some cost sharing for regional routes. TransLink, Metro Vancouver's regional transportation authority, shares responsibility for the Major Road Network and regional cycling with municipalities in Metro Vancouver, and is accountable for about 35 percent of the funding. TransLink has adopted a similar plan to the city of Vancouver called Transport 2040, which shares many of the same long-term goals. With input from regional and govern-

ment stakeholders as well as Metro Vancouver residents, TransLink has set six goals to serve as a framework to their future actions:

- Greenhouse gas emissions aggressively reduced
- Most trips by transit, walking and cycling
- Most jobs and housing located along Frequent Transit Network
- Regional travel is safe, secure, accessible
- Transport network supports goods movement and the economy
- Funding is stable, sufficient, appropriate, and influences transport choices

Their strategies include making early investments, calculating the best use of assets and keeping in good repair, building and operating safe, secure, accessible systems, and diversifying revenue sources while pursuing new funding.

"With the development of the higher level of cycling infrastructure, the council shook every penny loose that they could," comments Meggs. However, he explains that bicycling infrastructure is "laughably cheap in comparison to changing roads." In recent years, the provincial and local governments, along with TransLink, have spent approximately \$30 million per year specifically on cycling facilities and programs in Metro Vancouver — less than one percent of total transportation spending, and about one quarter the level of funding that major northern European cities direct to cycling.

TransLink recently joined agencies and government ministries from around the world at the Velo-City 2011 conference in Seville, Spain, calling on governments to turn more attention to cycling as a viable transportation option. In 2012, TransLink, along with the City of Vancouver, will be co-hosting the Velo-City 2012 conference in Vancouver, the first time it will be held outside of Europe.

TransLink has also been working on a project called "Cycling for Everyone — A Regional Cycling Strategy for Metro Vancouver," which aims to encourage participation in biking and improve bicycle safety.

"The Regional Cycling Strategy is exciting for us," says TransLink's Manager of Infrastructure Planning, Jeffrey Busby. "It's our first time looking at cycling on a regional scale." They are also ongoing sponsors for Bike-to-Work Week, Business for Bikes, Streetwise courses, Bike to School programs, Bike Valet, Bike Month, and PEDAL (bicycle maintenance education).

"Cycling is an option for everyone," Meggs emphasizes. "Not just commuters. We have an

8-80 mindset." The Canadian based non-profit organization, 8-80 Cities, promotes walking and cycling for all ages and social, economic, and ethnic backgrounds to improve the environment, advance economic development, boost and complement transportation systems, make better recreation for all, and enhance personal and public health.

To encourage young riders, TransLink and Metro Vancouver are working at incorporating cycling skills training and testing into the core elementary school curriculum and providing regular programs for multiple ability levels. TransLink is collaborating with the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC) to make cycle safety awareness a key component of all driver training courses and exams. They are also conducting regular research to understand what messages most effectively promote cycling to each of the different market segments in Metro Vancouver, organizing regular media campaigns, coordinating promotional efforts, including funds for post-construction marketing in all bicycle facility project budgets, and holding community events, festivals and rides to encourage and celebrate cycling.

Vancouver city council also approved a program in 2009 called Summer Spaces, which



Photo courtesy of City of Vancouver

**A barrier separates vehicular traffic from the bike lane users while pedestrians have the sidewalk to themselves.**

closes four neighborhoods (Commercial Drive, Main Street, the West End, and Kitsilano) to vehicle traffic on several Sundays each summer.

If projects go as well as they have been so far, it seems that Vancouver will reach its goal to be renowned globally as a cycling-friendly region, boasting an ecological transportation infrastructure and a sustainable economy by 2040.

"We believe that the only way for our city to move forward is to create a diverse, eco-friendly, low-carbon environment to support city life and business," concludes Meggs. "It is our job to be resilient, productive, and prosperous in the decline of the automobile."

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