



Observations from an Emerging Bike Culture

Chris & Melissa Bruntlett
Tuesday, November 4th, 2014

@modacitylife
#AKLConversations

modacity



Vancouver Bike Culture Prior to 2008

modacity



Mayor Gregor Robertson

- Doubled annual bike infrastructure budget during his first year in office
- Constructed six new protected bike lanes over two terms from 2009 to 2014 (re-elected with a clear mandate in 2011)
- Boldly aiming to be the World's Greenest City by the year 2020
- Goal is for 50% of all trips within city by foot, bicycle or transit by 2020, 66% by 2040

Vision Vancouver's Cycling Strategy Shift



- First piece of “trial” bike infrastructure opened in 2009
- One lane of traffic removed from southbound road and northbound sidewalk dedicated to cycle traffic only
- Constructed with a physical barrier from vehicular traffic
- In the first two weeks of trial, saw 30% bike count increase

1. Burrard Bridge: The Critical First Step



- Approved on a trial basis in Mar. 2010, 1.6 km total length
- Previously unused section of the westbound viaduct
- Connects with on-street bidirectional cycle track
- Provides east-west connection into the downtown peninsula

2. Dunsmuir Viaduct: The Downtown Portal

- 2.1 km approved in October 2010 with \$3.2 million budget
- 150 on-street parking spaces removed, replaced in adjacent parkades and side streets
- Protected with combination of concrete, planters, bike corrals
- Connects Burrard Bridge with north waterfront, including east-west Dunsmuir route



3. Hornby Street: A North-South Connector



- Connects parks, schools, retail areas, community centres, and neighbourhoods between Hornby Street and Stanley Park
- 1.9 km approved in December 2012 with \$5.5 million budget
- Combination of shared and separated space bikeways

4. Comox-Helmcken: A Community Greenway



- \$700,000 worth of upgrades to one of the city's oldest (and busiest) bike boulevards in 2013
- Street saw 5x the vehicle traffic ideal for shared space bikeway
- Parking-protected bike lanes, bike corrals, traffic calming (turning restrictions, one-way)
- Reconfiguration of intersection connecting to Dunsmuir Viaduct

5. Union Street: Segregating Shared Space



- \$3 million, 4.6 km route that formally completes the city's 30+ km Seaside Greenway
- Officially opened Spring 2014
- Connects Burrard Bridge with Jericho and Locarno Beaches
- Significant upgrades to south intersection of Burrard Bridge

6. Point Grey Bikeway: A Seawall Completed



The Importance of Bike-Friendly Policy



- Business owners worry about potential loss of business due to reduction of on-street parking
- Motorist speculate that the reallocation of road space will increase vehicular congestion
- “Taxpayer groups” believe the cost of construction is a luxury for an under-utilized amenity
- Public believe that new bike lanes cater to a group renowned for “law-breaking” (sidewalk cycling, rolling stop signs, etc.)

Inevitable Opposition to Progress: “Bikelash” 



- The Burrard Bridge averages 1,048,000 trips per year, with a 5% annual increase since opening
- Dunsmuir Viaduct averages 497,000 trips per year, and a 3% annual increase since opening
- Hornby Street averages 440,000 bike trips per year, with a 14% annual increase since opening
- Point Grey Road: after opening in June 2014, daily trips jumped 150% to over 1,500 per day
- Overall, the number of bike trips in the City of Vancouver increased 40% between 2008 and 2011

Quantitative Success (Part One)



- Peak period driving travel time on Dunsmuir and Hornby Streets increased by just 30 seconds
- 18% decrease in the number of car-bike collisions on Dunsmuir
- 80% decrease in sidewalk cycling on Hornby Street
- Women made up 34% of all cyclists on the road after separated lanes opened
- A four-fold increase in the number of children cycling downtown since 2010

Quantitative Success (Part Two)



Slower, Simpler, More Civilized Bike Culture

modacity



- Streets formerly designed for speed and distance see the return of the gender-neutral, upright “Dutch-style” bicycle
- Average person encouraged to ride for utility, not exercise
- Slower speeds, shorter distances, all ages/abilities

The Rise of the Upright Bicycle



- Typical wardrobe moves away from cycle-specific clothing to a more “pedestrian” ensemble
- “Walking with wheels” concept
- Cycling becomes an extension of walking and/or public transit
- Appeals to people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds

Dressing for the Destination



- Helmet law passed in 1990s when fast, forward-leaning cycling all that existed; safe, separated infrastructure didn't
- Helmet usage dropped when people felt safe, comfortable
- Law has become unnecessary and unenforceable barrier

Head Protection Becomes Optional



- Often the “indicator species”
- More risk averse, separated infrastructure provides a heightened sense of comfort
- Utility cycling fits into a simpler, pragmatic lifestyle
- Facilitates multi-purpose trips (sometimes with children)

Bridging the (Cycling) Gender Gap



- Resurgence of cycling to school, with residual benefits of increased health and academic performance
- Parents more willing to ride with children with safer means to do it (school, classes, errands, recreation)

Starting Them Early: Kids on Bikes



- Ideal vehicle for transporting kids, groceries, pets, supplies
- Also facilitates urban freight deliveries (packages, food)
- Noticeable increase in cargo bike use with friendlier streets
- A fraction of the cost of owning an automobile

The Rise of a Cargo Bike Culture



- Cycling can broaden the way we allow those with physical limitations to maintain control over their mobility freedom
- Less strain on joints/muscles, sometimes easier than walking
- Increased physical, emotional well-being later in life

Cycling as the Great Equalizer



- People feel safe transporting their animals by bicycle
- “Walking the dog” becomes a joy rather than a chore
- Represents a more practical, casual, comfortable approach to getting around the city
- Makes pets more portable

Walking the Dog (With Wheels)

- With increased ridership there has also been a surge in organized, group rides
- Like-minded people gather for dedicated rides purely for enjoyment in a stunning setting
- Showcase riders of all ages and abilities gathering in a fun, safe, celebratory, social environment
- Some of these group rides inspire recreational cyclists to consider taking up every-day riding for transportation, too!



The Social Side of Cycling



- Businesses located on or near dedicated bikeways see an increase in revenue (some bike-centred, most aren't)
- Money is kept local due to ease/freedom to make multiple stops in one trip, and more frequent visits

Bikes Mean Business



- Tourists now come from around the world to cycle in Vancouver
- Businesses see the benefits: hotels offer bike rentals, valets
- Themed, curated bicycle tours offer these visitors a unique, intimate, and personal way to experience the best of the city

A World-Class Cycling Destination

modacity



www.modacitylife.com

@modacitylife

modacity