


2010



SHARED ROADWAYS - GABRIOLA ISLAND BICYCLE
ROUTE PLAN

Prepared by: Cyclepaths of Gabriola, March 2010

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	2
Table of contents	3
Introduction	4
Gabriola OCP and Land Use By-Law Recommendations	5
Cycle Route Plan	6
Cycle Route Map	7
Current Safety Issues on Proposed Cycle Route	9
South Road & North Road	10
Barrett Road	16
Taylor Bay Road	18
Berry Point Road/Phase IV	21
Harrison and Pat Burns loop	24
Issues related to provision of bike lanes in the Village area of Gabriola Island	26
Administration and implementation	30
Appendix A MOT/Islands Trust Protocol Agreement	32

INTRODUCTION

Most of the roads on Gabriola Island are narrow with inconsistent and uneven shoulders. It is widely felt that this is one of the main impediments to the use of bicycles. Development of on-road cycling lanes on designated routes will make roads safer for cyclists and other non-motorists, will encourage greater use of bicycles over cars (and hence will reduce the island's carbon emissions), will reduce ferry congestion and will lead to improved health for Gabriolans and visitors.

An existing agreement between the Ministry of Transportation and Highways and the Islands Trust (Appendix A) provides that during upgrading of designated roads paved bicycle paths - separated from the vehicle lanes with painted lines - will be constructed on both sides of the road. This would apply to routes that have been designated by the Local Trust Committee within an official cycling route plan. At present, no such cycling route plan exists for Gabriola Island.

The following report outlines a proposed cycling route, together with a corresponding Land Use Bylaw. Stretches of the route that have safety risks are identified together with recommendations regarding addressing those risks. The recommended routes and required changes for the Gabriola Village area are outlined in a separate section.

The focus of this report is on side of road cycle paths. Pedestrians, young children, people using electric carts, strollers, and walkers are also users of these paths. This report should be considered a component of the larger concept of "Shared Roadway" strategies and actions.

Gabriola is a known cycling destination because it offers a circle-route with numerous interesting natural and cultural features to visit as well as overnight camping facilities. In general, drivers are considerate of cyclists and vehicular traffic is light compared to urban settings. Touring cyclists are usually experienced riders who can deal with range of grades, hazards and adventures that come with cycling on Gabriola Island.

GABRIOLA OCP AND LAND USE BY-LAW RECOMMENDATIONS

OCP Statement

The current statement in Gabriola's Official Community Plan (OCP) related to a cycle route is:

"Roads designated as being part of a bicycle route plan developed in accordance with the agreement with MOTH and the Islands Trust shall include provision for a paved bicycle path of not less than 1.2 metres (4 feet) and a painted line should be provided on the road surface to delineate a separation between the vehicle and bicycle lane portions of the road surface."

Concerns identified with the preceding statement relate to the defined width of the on-road cycle path. There are stretches of road that would be difficult to implement 1.2 metre on-road cycle paths on both sides of the road. So, for purposes of flexibility and to ensure that large trees and geographical factors, such as escarpments are kept it is recommended that the OCP statement reads as follows:

"Roads designated as being part of a bicycle route plan shall include provision for bicycle paths in accordance with the Letter of Agreement between the Islands Trust and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure."

Land Use By-Law

In order to reference the cycle route map required to implement the protocol agreement a statement is required in Gabriola's Land Use By-Law. The proposed Map (x) can be found on page 7. The following statement is recommended:

On-road bicycle paths will be established on the roads identified on Map (x) in accordance with the agreement between MOTI and the Islands Trust. It is recommended that the width of the cycle paths be 1.2 metres except in the following situations where:

- a) Changes to natural geographic features, such as escarpments, would be required in order to implement the 1.2 metre cycle path.*
- b) Mature trees would need to be removed in order to implement the 1.2 metre cycle path.*

It is recommended that the cycle route be at least 0.6 metres in the preceding situations.

All other roads on the island should also be considered bicycle routes, although lower traffic speeds mean that separate paths may not be required. The construction of on-road bicycle lanes on roads that are currently a public safety hazard are priority in development of island bicycle paths. These priority areas are identified on Map (x).

CYCLE ROUTE PLAN

The proposed Cycle Route Plan referenced in the Official Community Plan and the Land Use Bylaw can be found on the following page. This route closely mirrors the proposed bus route for Gabriola Island.

While the prime purpose for the on-road bike paths is to support non-motorized commuting to work and shopping many Gabriolans and visitors to the Island also cycle to the beautiful scenic locations on Gabriola. For obvious reasons, one should hesitate to mention the pubs of Gabriola as cycling destinations, but they are located in areas of interest towards the extremities of the island and they do also offer food and restrooms. The three BC Provincial Parks are each esteemed day-use destinations. Gabriola Sands offers sandy beaches that form an isthmus that divides Taylor and Pilot Bays. There is a pleasant loop ride with interesting shore access on the on the tied-island beyond the park. Sandwell Provincial Park is well worth the required walk or ride beyond the end of The Stand, but the final gravel road descending to the beach is too steep to ride except by mules. Drumbeg Provincial Park has lovely gravel beaches and sandstone shorelines that give out onto the active waters of Gabriola Pass and the vistas toward Valdez and Galliano Island. There are other interesting loops available in the Easthom/Harrison, Norwich/Hemlock (Phase 4) Horseshoe and the Whalebone neighbourhoods.

Beyond recognized roads there is an off-road network of trails that are being developed and mapped by Gabriola Land and Trails Trust. Trails are also being developed in Regional and Community Parks administered by the Regional District of Nanaimo.