Proposal for a Coquitlam Connector to the Central Valley Greenway

Prepared by the TriCities Committee of the Vancouver Cycling Association

Short Summary

This document describes a proposal to create an off-road multi use trail/path connecting the Central Valley greenway in New Westminster with the new Port Mann bridge along a green space corridor shared with the CPR, Hydro, and other utilities, between United Boulevard in Coquitlam and the trans Canada highway. The proposed trail would establish a very safe access trail/path for pedestrians and for both commuter and recreational cyclists through a stretch of land that is currently unsafe for cyclists and pedestrians.

Proposed Route

A map of the proposed trail is shown in Figure 1. The total route length through Coquitlam is approximately 3.9 km, depending on the exact alignment. The map shows a couple of trail options which link the Braid Skytrain station in New Westminster with pending cycling facilities for the Port Mann Bridge which will start at Fawcett Avenue in Coquitlam.

The Coquitlam portion of the route consists of three main sections:

1. Brunette Creek at United Blvd to old landfill access road. Approximate length, 1.5 km. (Detail in Figure 2) We propose to use an existing gravel access road managed by Metro Vancouver which is currently used to access a leachate control station associated with the old landfill, as well as access to a Metro Vancouver sewer line (Coquitlam interceptor sewer). This route is currently off limits to the public. If this route is not feasible for safety reasons an alternate alignment along United Blvd would be a less desirable backup.

2. Old landfill access road to Como Creek. Approximate length: 580 m (detail in Figure 3). This portion would run primarily along the south side of the CPR right of way, just inside the right of way.

3. King Edward to temporary Cape Horn access road. Approximate length 800 m (detail in Figure 4). This section would run along an existing BC hydro right of way located on private property owned by several retail outlets. The trail would run parallel to Como Creek, on the south side. The proposed location is on high ground for the most part, on land that is currently largely overgrown with Himalayan Blackberry.

4. Temporary access road built for Cape Horn construction to Fawcett Road (detail in Figure 5). Approximate length 1.0 km. The idea here is to use an existing temporary access road currently under use by the contractors for the Cape Horn/Port Mann bridge upgrades.

Linkages:

The proposed trail would provide a critical linkage between the following locations:
- Central Valley Greenway/Braid Skytrain
- New King Edward Overpass and associated cycling facilities accommodating the Maillardville Community and people on the north side of the Highways and tracks.
- New Port Mann bridge and associated cycling facilities, with connections to Surrey.
- Traboulay Poco Trail in Port Coquitlam with connections to Pitt Meadows via the Pitt River Bridge.
- Colony Farm Regional Park.

**Advantages of the proposed route**

At present the City of Coquitlam is also investigating the feasibility of connecting the same endpoints via a multi-use path along the north side of United Boulevard. TriCities VACC Committee prefers the its proposed route for the following reasons:

- The VACC preferred route would have to cross only one traffic intersections from Brunette creek to Fawcett Road. The United Boulevard alignment would require crossing approximately 18 retail outlet entrances and streets, including King Edward Street.
- The VACC route would go under King Edward, rather than exposing cyclists to a very busy interchange.
- The United Blvd alignment would require negotiation of an easement from the owners. The same is true for the VACC preferred route, however we believe that the owners would be more amenable to a route that does not cause potential conflicts between cyclist/pedestrians and customers.
- The VACC proposed route would be a true greenway, giving cyclists/pedestrians a safe, scenic route between key cycling network locations. In other words, it would be a feature rather than an unpleasant ordeal thus making it attractive to a wide range of users. We believe that few people would use a United Boulevard alignment. Commuters would probably prefer to use the new bike lanes along Lougheed Highway to the north of Highway 1.
- Currently there is a lot of unsightly dumping occurring on the retail property parking lots between King Edward and Schooner Street. We believe that the presence of of community users on the path would act as a significant deterrent to this, though the presence of eyes in the corridor, advocating a well preserved greenway.
- The route would have negligible impact on the Como Creek watershed as it can be achieved without entering the wetland area. Nevertheless, the proposed route would run just inside the official Stream Protection Enhancement Areas (SPEA) setbacks.
- The proposed route would create the potential for loop trails around the TriCities as well as with New Westminster, Burnaby and Vancouver. In other words, Coquitlam, at last, will truly be connected with a safe pathway with the rest of the Tri-Cities, the Central Valley Greenway, the 7-Eleven Trail/BC Parkway, and the Trans Canada Trail, not to mention the Fraser River Crossings and the Pitt River Crossing. The proposed connection is vital for the integrity of numerous off-road recreational loops and commuter regional links.
Issues:

- Fences would likely be required to separate cyclists from train tracks north of Princess Auto.
- Fences may be required to adjacent to retail outlets (East of King Edward).
- Property ownership: none of the land is actually owned by Coquitlam. There are three primary land owner groups: (1) Metro Vancouver (old landfill site) (2) CPR, and (3) Various retail outlets east of King Edward. At the time of writing this document, it is not clear to us who owns the short stretch of land between the retail outlets and Fawcett Avenue.

Summary:

We sincerely hope that the various stakeholders will work with the VACC in pursuing this route option. It is important that this work be expedited, and coordinated with the current highway construction. The proposed route will be a vital and popular route for families, recreational cyclists, and commuters as it represents a critical connection between existing cycling routes in New Westminster, Surrey, Port Coquitlam and beyond.

File updated 13 April 2011
Central Valley Greenway Extension – Proposed Routing

Figure 1: Overview of proposed route

Prepared by the Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition, March 2011
Figure 2: detail of Metro Vancouver Property on old landfill site. Proposed trail is marked in yellow.
Figure 3: Detail of proposed trail from old landfill site east along CPR right of way
Figure 4: Proposed alignment along Como Creek, behind various retail outlets.
Figure 5: Trail alignment along temporary construction access road east of Como Creek
Figure 6: From construction access road to Fawcett road.