Town of Comox

Infrastructure Improvements Discussion

COMOX VALLEY CYCLING COALITION

NOVEMBER 2020

Purpose and Background

The **number of people cycling** (including e-bikes) in the Comox Valley has **increased steadily** over the past few years and even more so during the recent **pandemic**. As a result, **a number of infrastructure deficiencies** have been identified that require **safety improvements for active transportation users**.

A key factor of the growth in Comox Valley is the **high interest in active transportation** – both for leisure and commuting. **People move here to be active** and we need to ensure they have safe infrastructure to do so.

The CV Cycling Coalition has worked on building a list of areas where there are serious safety issues for cyclists and, at the request of area jurisdictions have attempted to **prioritize the most urgent areas where upgrades are required**.

What is our Goal at CV Cycling Coalition?

Our Mission:

To create a safe environment for cycling in the Comox Valley and encourage cycling as an effective, economical, healthy and environmentally friendly mode of transportation.

- This includes supporting **leisure and commuter cycling** through safe cycling **education** and **advocacy** of suitable infrastructure.
- **Outdoor activities**, including cycling, **are one of the largest draws to the Comox Valley** for residents and visitors – making it imperative to provide a safe environment.
- We hope we can assist local jurisdictions to **identify unsafe conditions** and **prioritize methods/timing for infrastructure improvements**.

What Constitutes Safe Cycling Infrastructure?

Where cyclists co-exist with vehicles, it is paramount that we provide a safe corridor – taking **many factors** into account:

- Vehicle speed limits
- Shoulder width and condition
- Road surface paint and signage
- Consistency – cyclists are far safer when they can travel in a predictable manner
- Visibility

It is of note that safety may be addressed without requiring large infrastructure investments. If **cycling is included in early stages of planning & design**, it is more economical than to attempt a retrofit.

How Do We Know Cycling is Growing

Aside from simply experiencing more cyclists on the roads, we have **utilized a popular activity network/tracking application** in an attempt to quantify the amount of growth in active transportation.

Strava is an activity tracking application with over **60 million users** worldwide. Users track their leisure and commuting activities and network with other active people via the app.

Strava **Metro** was built to assist governments, consultants and advocacy groups in **quantifying routes** chosen by active transportation users to help with **analysis of infrastructure needs**.

Metro utilizes **non-private Strava user data** to quantify where, when and how often cyclists and pedestrians are using various roads/pathways.

Although not perfect by any means, this high level dataset provides extremely **valuable insight** into active transportation trends.

Strava Metro – BC Data

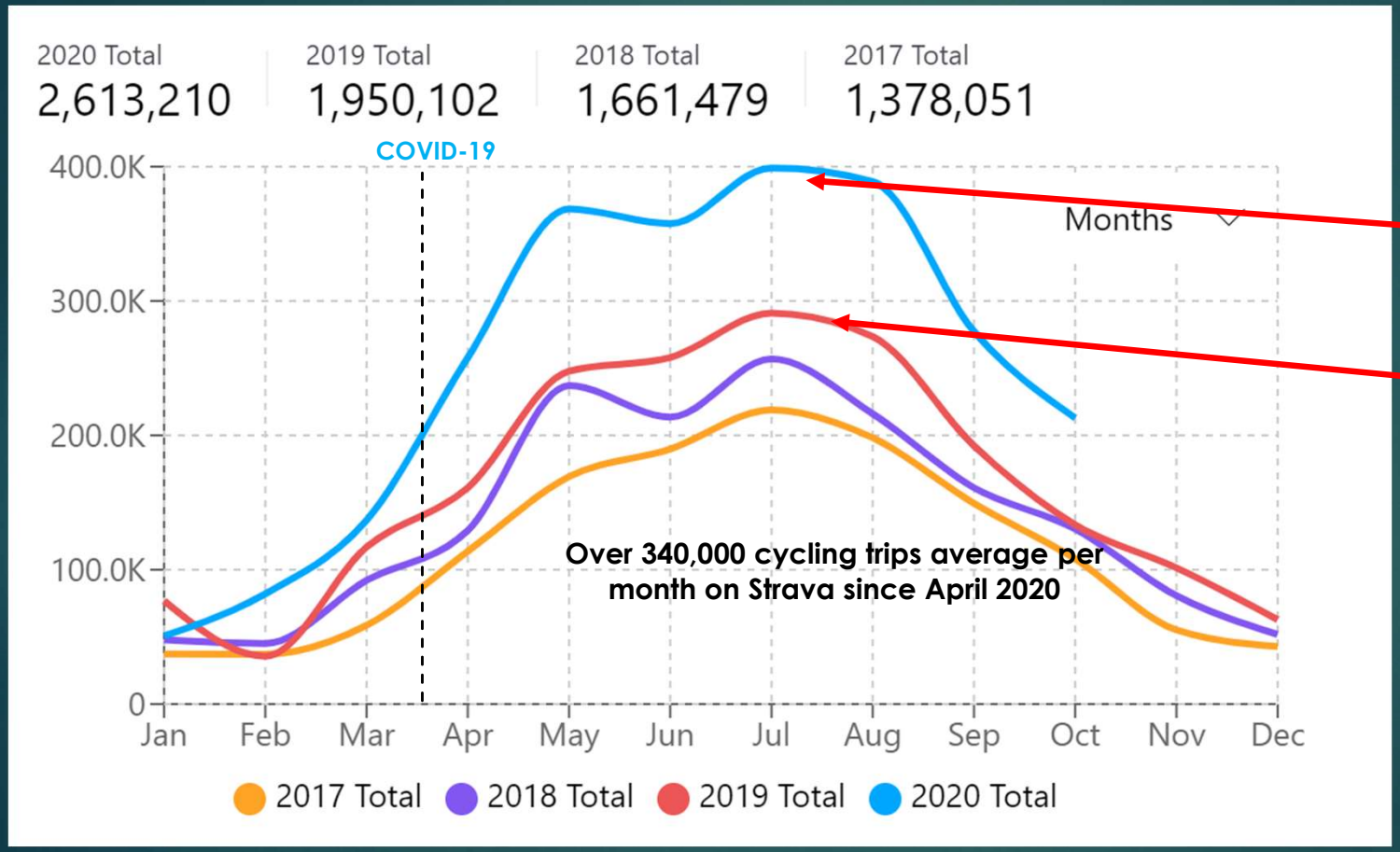
Data can be broken down and analyzed by:

- Location — BC Total or Metro Vancouver Area
- Time — Year/Month/Week (**Jan/17 to Present**)
- Cyclist vs Pedestrian (walk/run/hike)
- Leisure vs Commute
- Age of Traveler (5 Age Groupings)
- Local vs Visitor (Tourism)
- **"Streets" Function** can identify trends on **individual roads** or routes within BC

The BC data set is quite large. In July 2020 there were **400,000 Strava cycling trips** registered by **61,000 different users**. More than half of those users were outside the Greater Vancouver area.

The July **2020** numbers represent a **40% increase in ridership** over the same month in 2019.

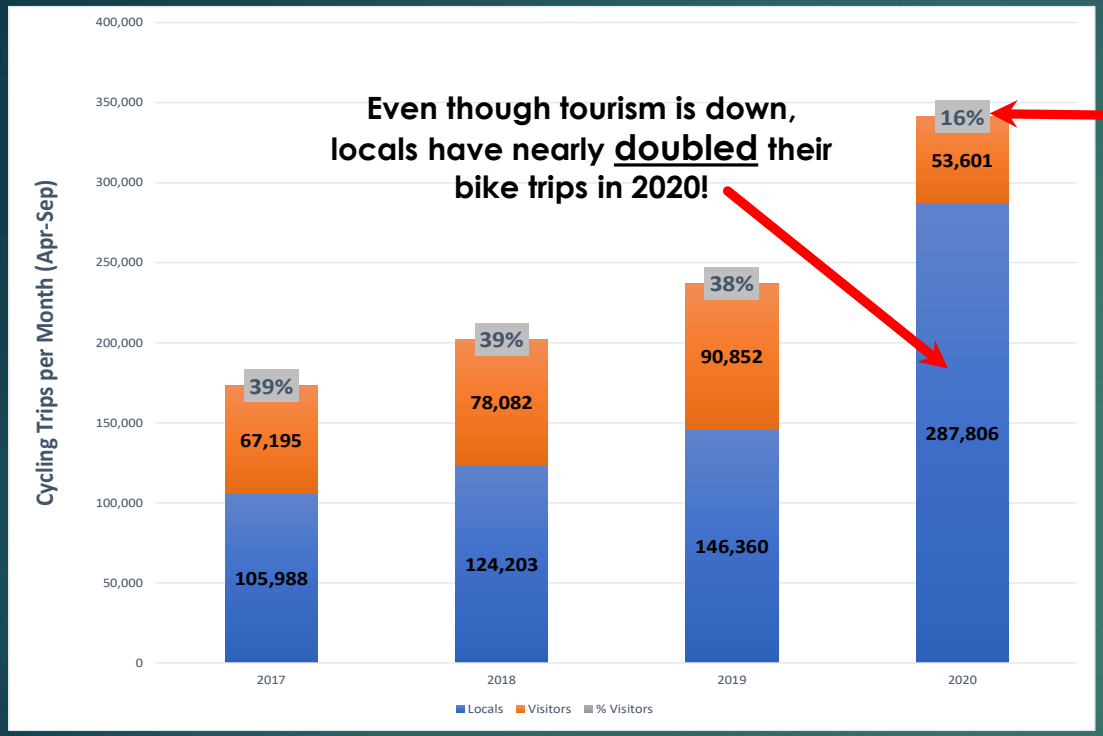
BC Total Monthly Cyclist Trips on Strava



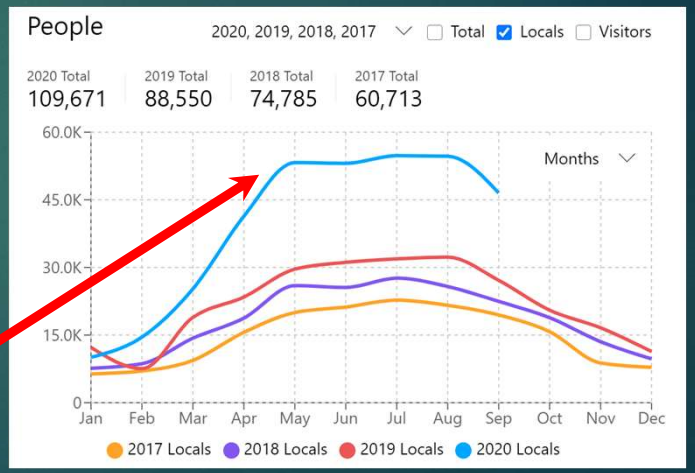
** Strava Metro Data for BC (2017-2020)*

- 2020 cycling trips are up 40-50% since start of pandemic
- Average increase in trips for last two years has been ~15%
- Sept/20 data is down due to poor air quality (from USA wildfires)

Local Riders vs Visitors



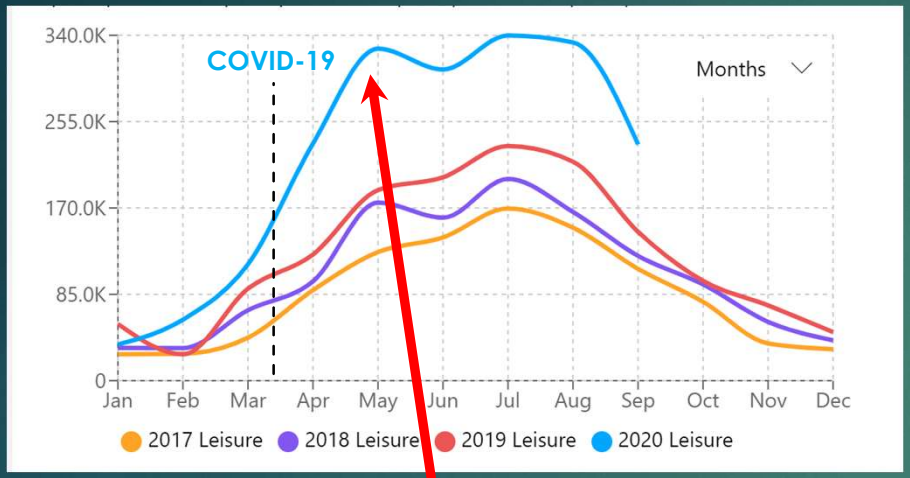
- **Visitor trip percentage** has remained constant at 38% for 2017-2019 but **dropped to 16%** in 2020 due to pandemic



- **The number of local people cycling increased dramatically in 2020**

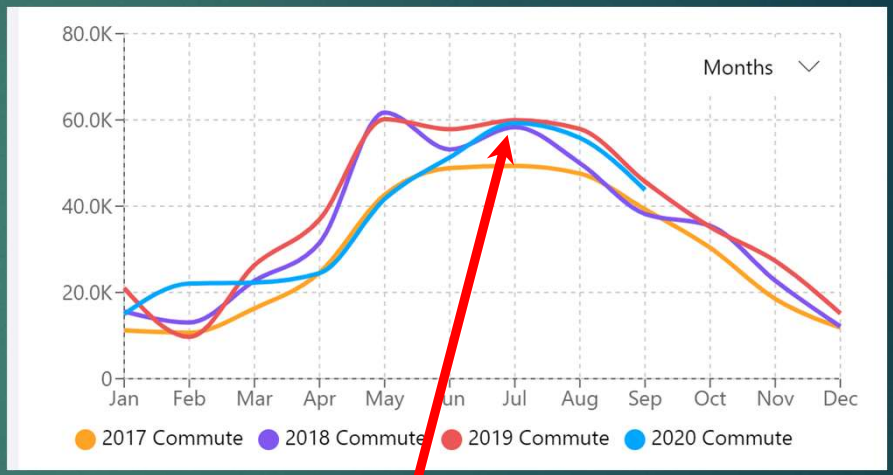
** Strava Metro Data for BC (2017-2020)*

Leisure Cyclist Trips



- **Leisure cycling has boomed** during the pandemic

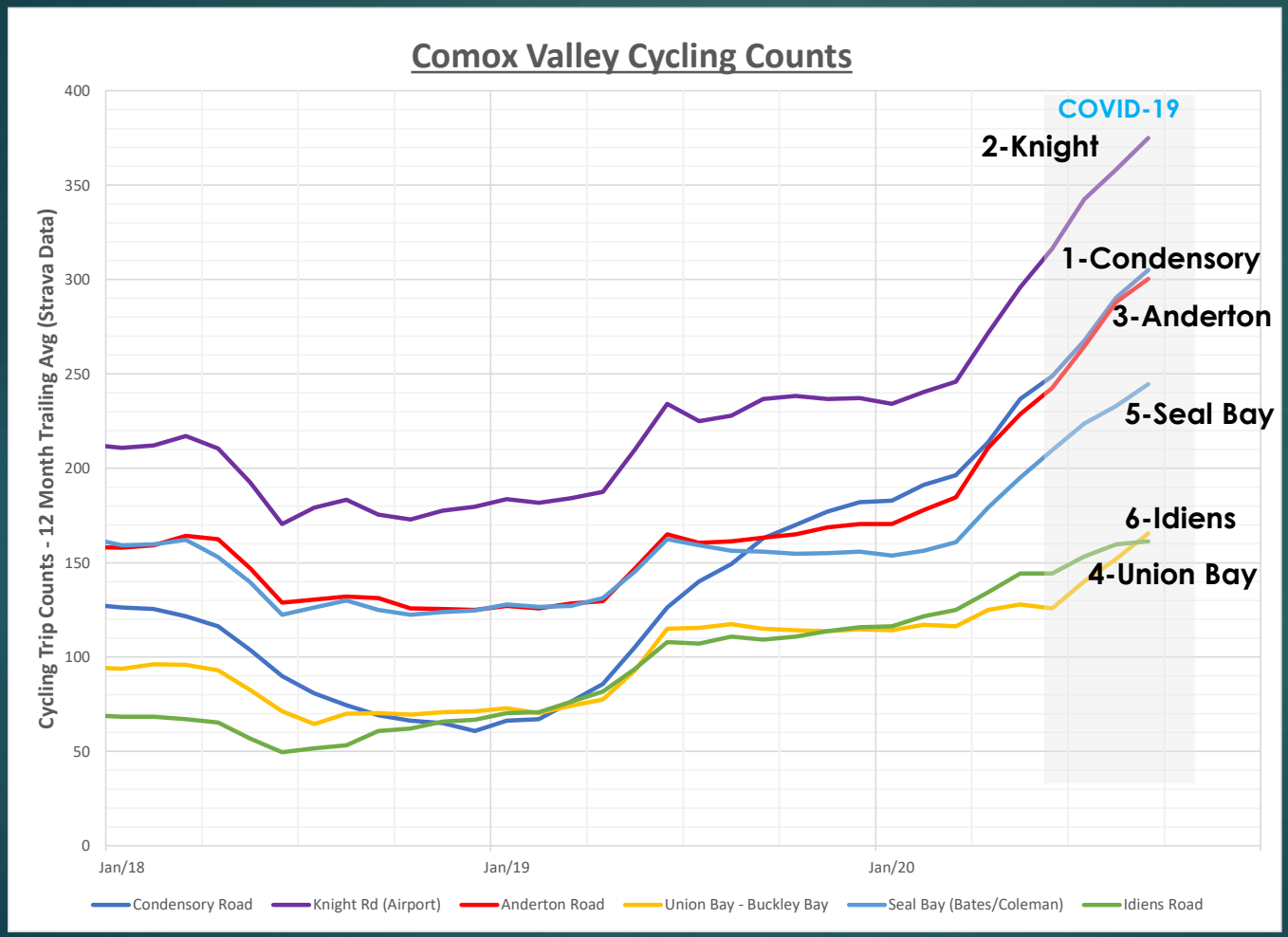
Commuter Cyclist Trips



- The number of **trips by commuter cyclists dropped** at the start of the pandemic but is recovering back to 2019 levels. This is a direct result of businesses closing or working from home.

** Strava Metro Data for BC (2017-2020)*

Cyclist Trips/Month on Top Six MoTI Priority Roads



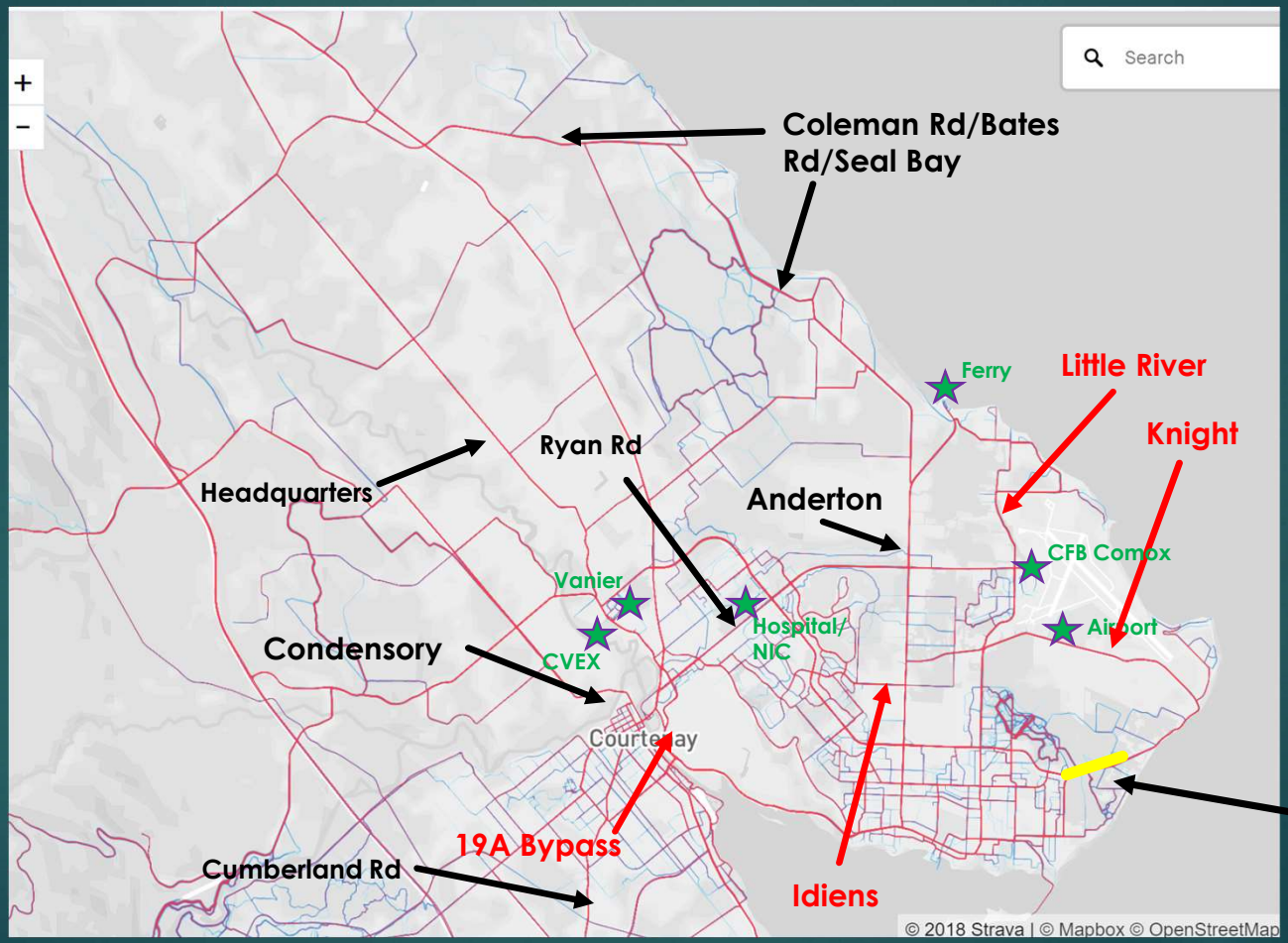
- **Cycling counts have increased dramatically at all 6 "trouble spots"**

** Strava Metro Data for BC (2017-2020)*

Cyclist Counts

- Strava Metro data can give us some indications of areas that may require safe cycling investments; however, in order to build a case for investment, it is usual to require more **detailed counts** of active transportation users.
- CVCCo has assisted local jurisdictions with active transportation counts that have been utilized to assist with discussions such as the 5th and 6th St Bridge evaluations.
- We would be happy to discuss how **we can be of assistance with active transportation counts** going forward – either narrowing down locations or providing volunteers.

Locator Map – Comox Valley



- Priority Locations for MoTI Infrastructure Improvements
- Of the ten MoTI locations, four have a direct **effect on Comox due to proximity**

1.1 km of repaving on Lazo Road (2019) with 1.5m shoulders

Priority Ranking of MoTI Infrastructure Issues

1. **Condensory Road** – Puntledge Bridge to Cessford Rd
2. **Knight Road (Airport)** – Kye Bay Rd to Glacier Greens
3. **Anderton Road** – Ryan Rd to Waveland/Ellenor
4. **Union Bay – Buckley Bay** – Hwy 19A
5. **Seal Bay Area** - Bates Road/Coleman Road
6. **Idiens Road** – west of Anderton
7. **Little River Road** – Ryan Rd E to Kilmorley Rd
8. **Buckley Bay – Cook Ck** – Hwy 19A
9. **19A Bypass** – 17 St Bridge to Ryan Rd
10. **Headquarters Rd** – Fairgrounds and Rennison to Merville
11. **Cumberland Rd** – Courtenay boundary to CV Parkway
12. **Ryan Road Hill** – Back Rd to Lerwick
13. **Rotary Trail** – Crossing of Comox Valley Parkway

Comox – Cycling Infrastructure Areas of Concern

1. **Lazo Road (Pt Holmes)** – Simba Road to Kye Bay Rd
2. **Knight Road** – Anderton to Pritchard (incl Dryden/Hudson Pathway)

Comox – Cycling Infrastructure Additional Areas

Within Comox

- Noel/Aspen/Murrelet
- Downtown (sewer line upgrade project)

Connections To/From Comox

- 19A Bypass/Comox Rd
- Back Rd
- Murrelet to Sheraton Greenway
- Guthrie to Lerwick
- Aspen to Idiens?

How Can We Improve the Process

Proactive Planning

- Easier to have standard planning practices than try to retrofit into a project that is underway

Better and More Cycling Counts

- CVCCo always willing to help
- Strava Metro can help narrow down locations for counts

Better Communication

- Multiple jurisdictions not always sharing plans (Comox, Courtenay, Cumberland, CVRD, KFN and MoTI)
- CVCCo has been invited to participate in the Regional Active Transportation Network Plan (CVRD led)

Thank You !

The CVCCo **greatly appreciates the opportunity** to meet with you and discuss our feelings on active transportation needs in the Comox Valley.

We are happy to work with you and all the other jurisdictions in the Comox Valley to **optimize the timing and funding** of infrastructure upgrades.

We are hoping that it will become a **standard for all jurisdictions** in the CV to review and **include opportunities to improve cycling infrastructure whenever there are roadworks projects being planned**.