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## Building Biketoria

### *Discussing Biketoria's proposed routes*

The GVCC strongly supports Biketoria, the City of Victoria's proposal to construct a network of bike routes that will connect and traverse the city. This will allow people to travel on bikeways that are comfortable and safe for riders of All Ages and Abilities (AAA). Just as important, the Biketoria initiative establishes a solid baseline of bicycle network funding, and sets the stage for ongoing improvements in the years to come. As the Biketoria consultant team and city staff work towards final route selection and draft designs, we offer some feedback on the key design ideas and the various routes and look forward to more detailed discussion as more facts become available

#### **A Bike Network for Everyone**

We are excited by the three central principles of Biketoria: comfortable, convenient and complete. Taken together, they will help build a bike network that allows anybody to ride their bike to the front door of major destinations comfortably and safely.

Biketoria recognizes that different roads need different designs to create a comfortable and safe riding experience for all. Major roads require protected bike lanes with a barrier between bikes and motor vehicles, and local streets become neighbourhood greenways, where traffic calming brings cars volumes down to less than 500 cars per day and slows the remaining cars to 30 km/h or less. We prefer protected bike lanes on major roads over neighbourhood greenways because in most cases they provide better connections with major destinations.

#### **Complete Streets with Benefits for All**

Building a bike network in any city is a challenging task. One of the key points of discussion has been car parking, as local businesses are concerned that loss of parking may mean loss of business and residents want to park on the street in front of them. We know that experience from other cities around North America, including Vancouver, Salt Lake City and Seattle, has shown that adding protected bike lanes has yielded positive results: new riders increase sales, and sidewalks become more comfortable, further increasing vital foot traffic.

### Our Route-Specific Comments

#### *North-South*

##### **Cook St**

The GVCC supports installing a protected bike lane on Cook Street because of its direct connections to destinations such as Cook St. & North Park villages and George Jay Elementary School. Further, Cook offers a flatter and more direct route from the waterfront at Dallas Rd. up to Haultain St. Crucially, Cook St. connects with every east-west route, becoming a central spine for the City's bike network. Often

mentioned as an alternative, Vancouver St is a decent secondary route, but lacks the popular destinations and network connections and is more hilly.

***For these reasons, the GVCC supports Cook St in preference to Vancouver St.***

### **Shelbourne St**

Shelbourne St. is the flattest, most direct north/south connection between Victoria and Saanich and the major commercial centres along the street. Protected bike lanes along the entire length of Shelbourne St. are strongly endorsed by the GVCC. As an interim step, Saanich is considering conventional bike lanes north of North Dairy Rd. Building protected bike lanes along Shelbourne south of Hillside would provide a direct link, rather than being detoured onto non-continuous parallel streets. Shelbourne St. does have challenges with limited road width and frequent transit service, but those can be resolved with good design.

***For these reasons, the GVCC supports protected bike lanes the entire length of Shelbourne St.***

### **Gorge Rd & Government St**

No neighbourhood in the Biketoria plan has less safe and comfortable on-street bikeways than Burnside Gorge. While the Galloping Goose Regional Trail serves as a valuable regional connector, it is difficult to get to. The neighbourhood lacks connected side streets and the few bike lanes are barely wider than a bike. Further, the southern portion of the route along Government St. offers the only north-south connection through and out of downtown Victoria, making it a crucial spine in the network. ***For these reasons, the GVCC suggests that Gorge Rd & Government St are amongst the first built.***

### **Harbour Rd / Wharf St / Belleville St**

One of the busiest bikeways in the region, Harbour Rd / Wharf St / Belleville St offers key connections for tourists and residents alike. Like Pandora St., a two-way protected bike lane would offer a second extension of the Galloping Goose Regional Trail into downtown, the Belleville Terminal, the Seaside Touring Route and James Bay.

## *The East-West Routes*

### **Fairfield Rd**

An important east/west connection from downtown through the Fairfield neighbourhood and into Oak Bay, we support Fairfield Rd. due to its better connections to many major destinations including the Fairfield Plaza, two schools (Sir James Douglas Elementary and Margaret Jenkins), and the Fairfield Gonzales Community Place. Although it has challenges with road width, careful design can allow buses and people biking to flow around each other without major conflicts between them. Richardson is a viable alternative with gentler hills and better connections to Oak Bay, but lacks the major destinations on Fairfield.

***For these reasons, the GVCC supports Fairfield Rd in preference to Richardson St.*** If Richardson is selected over Fairfield, Biketoria should extend AAA bikeways on the streets connecting the destinations on Fairfield Rd to Richardson St.

### **Fort St.**

The GVCC supports a protected bike lane along Fort St. A busy bike route with a narrow existing bike lane, upgrading this to a 2-way bike lane on the north side of Fort St would eliminate bus/bike conflicts and improve bus speeds along this major transit corridor.

### **Haultain St & Bay St**

Haultain is the northern-most route in Bikeloria, and offers excellent connections east to UVic and Oak Bay. We recommend simplifying the route west of Cook St. by using Bay St, which avoids difficult left turns and is a flatter and more direct route. With the re-routing down Bay needs to come a simplification of the Cook St/Fifth St route to run directly north up Fifth St from Bay, preserving the connection into Quadra Village.

### **Pandora Ave. & Oak Bay Ave.**

With Victoria's first protected bike lane being built on Pandora Ave. later this year, the western part of this route will become the first major piece of the Bikeloria network constructed. Extending the Pandora protected bike lanes along Oak Bay Ave to the Oak Bay border will provide an important east-west spine, and connector for the city's minimum-grid network.

### **E&N Rail Trail**

The GVCC is excited to see that the E&N Rail Trail crossing at Esquimalt Rd. will be completed in early 2016. However, we are concerned that the final connection through to the Johnson St Bridge isn't complete. A delay in the buildout of the Roundhouse will delay building this final link. To address that gap in the near future, we recommend the installation of a protected bike lane along Kimta Rd. as an alternative route.

### **Missing connections**

Although Bikeloria does a good job of connecting to most of the major destinations, it is missing three critical ones: Hillside-Quadra, James Bay Village and Royal Jubilee Hospital. These are popular biking destinations and need AAA connections. Hillside-Quadra is especially underserved by Bikeloria proposals. The area would greatly benefit from improved east/west connections on Hillside Ave. or Finlayson St. The current Bikeloria routes end a few blocks from either Royal Jubilee or James Bay Village, so adding AAA connections needs to a priority in future work.

### **Conclusion: Bikeloria is just the start**

We are pleased to see the adoption of Bikeloria, and strongly support this beginning of our AAA bikeway network. The design and construction of the primary routes - the backbone of the network and probably the most challenging of the components - is just the beginning. Once these key pieces are selected and under construction, it is important to turn attention to the secondary routes and the finer-grained connections in neighborhoods – connections to schools and parks – to complete the network. Ongoing dialogue between the City of Victoria and other municipalities in the region is necessary to ensure that the Bikeloria bicycling network connects well with other local and regional bicycle networks.

**The GVCC urges the City to continue moving forward with momentum to complete construction of the Bikeloria network by 2018.**