

September 4, 2022

Dear Cariboo Regional District Directors,

We are the recently formed Active Transportation Group of citizens. Our group formed to try to encourage area elected officials to take actions supporting safe active transportation infrastructure in our area.

Active transportation includes not just walking and cycling, but wheelchairs and other self-propelled or electrically-assisted movement. Getting citizens out of vehicles for short trips is not only beneficial to citizens' health, independence, and the environment, but it has also been proven to have a myriad of economic and social benefits as well – downtowns thrive, and newcomers and visitors connect with the local community.

Our area is known for many forms of recreation, but our transportation infrastructure has not kept up with the times in this regard. This is despite a Parks, Trails Outdoor Recreation Master Plan adopted in 2011 by the city (with significant consultation from the community), meant to be completed in 2020, which would have addressed some of the challenges the area faces (Page 66 mentions some key connections identified as priorities).

While some significant barriers exist within the city limits, experienced cyclists and wheelchair users, once in town, can use side streets, and combine sidewalks and pathways to try to stay safer. Many of the biggest barriers exist in creating safe corridors for people to get into the downtown, some of which are within the regional district. As development in the outskirts has increased, so has the need for people to travel safely into town from 150 Mile House, Wildwood, Sugar Cane, Dog Creek and other areas.

Cyclists and pedestrians along these major routes in our community face drivers who may feel uncertain how to deal with them, often resulting in unsafe passing at high rates of speed. Road shoulders can be unpaved or eroded and some areas have debris accumulation due to large industrial traffic which is not being cleared regularly.

Coming from the west side of town towards downtown, there are potholes, debris and traffic narrowing bridges which have led one young physician to give up cycling to work, which she used to do daily in other places. She believes it makes recruitment of professionals even harder.

These barriers impact all of us and the benefits of active transportation could as well. Fewer people driving means less traffic for those who do drive, less exhaust in our shared airshed, less parking needed and less wear and tear on the roads. More people out of vehicles has been shown to benefit businesses and the social fabric of communities.

As e-bikes, adaptive bikes and other options make active transportation more accessible for everyone, we hope to see the infrastructure needed to make these safe for seniors, children and all vulnerable road users. Mayor and council have agreed to look at restarting the Active Transportation Committee and we would like the Cariboo Regional District to participate as well.

We look forward to seeing you out on our roads during Go By Bike Weeks.

Denise Deschene

  
Active Transportation Williams Lake