

Good morning Mayor Brown and Councillor Therien,

Apologies for the late timing on this email but I was just informed that the Connector issue is up at your council meeting today on a notice of motion to move forward on investigating the Small Road/trail combination that we discussed.

On behalf of the Cycling Coalition, thank you again for championing a safer commuter cycling route between Cumberland and Courtenay. We are happy to see discussions continuing with MOTT and are supportive of the route you are working on - especially as UROC are first-class trail builders and we have high confidence they can provide a very usable, low-cost alternative.

We would very much like to be part of the discussions with Cumberland staff and MOTT going forward and feel our work to date can help guide the process. We have provided some comments below for your consideration:

1. Define and Understand the Goals – we must always keep in mind what we are trying to achieve. Do we want the infrastructure to make it safer for existing users, draw additional commuters to choose cycling, or some of both? The Coalition did a cyclist count in late October 2024 to support the CVRD Connector evaluation process and found up to 34 cyclists using the Cumberland Rd/Parkway routing daily, even in a “shoulder” month with less than ideal weather and shorter daylight hours.
2. What Drives Choices – a cycling route will maximize user up-take if it is direct, convenient and safe. The proposed trail adds somewhat to user safety perception levels but also adds to the distance and puts people onto an unpaved surface which likely requires slower travel speeds. Some will choose to use it but we question whether this addition will draw a material volume of drivers to shift from their vehicle to cycling between Cumberland and Courtenay. In any case, if UROC can work with MOTT to provide a very low-cost alternative, we feel that this concept is worth pursuing.
3. Understand the Demographics – the survey done for the Village in 2022 shows Cumberland is in a very unique situation where it is both a cycling hub and a place where folks still own a lot of vehicles. Over 50% of bikers consider themselves confident or fearless when most North American surveys typically identify that group in the 10% range. Yet, almost 70% of households reported having two or more vehicles registered (likely due to most work and services being in Courtenay). Both of these provide impetus for us to provide as safe and efficient a cycling connector as possible within investment cost limitations.
4. Highway 19 Underpass – this is, by far, the most daunting piece of roadway for cyclists as they have to cross busy, higher-speed vehicle lanes three times in each direction. Although the proposed trail/Small Rd routing takes riders off the Parkway for part of their commute, they

must still negotiate the underpass in both directions. This was identified clearly as a challenge to increasing cycling mode use by Urban Systems in their Options Review of 2024 for the CVRD.

5. Bi-Directional Routes – the MUP proposal that was brought to CVRD directors in 2024 created a two-way travel pathway (as opposed to one way pathways on either side of the road). This methodology usually saves on costs as you are building one path instead of two. However, it adds complications (and risks) when you intersect roadways as vehicles have to deal with cyclists traveling against traffic in one direction.
6. Detailed Trail Route Selection – the construction cost estimate presented in 2024 for the MUP via the Maple Lake tunnel totalled \$10.5M. This included \$5.8M for retaining walls and movement of utility poles that was a direct result of inflexibility in selecting where the trail should be located within the MOTT ROW. It is unclear what or who drove the specific trail location choice but it did not allow any deviation from textbook directives for offsets. Without those two items, the MUP cost would have been reduced to less than half at \$4.7M. UROC will be able to identify the best route to build a safe and cost effective trail and we are hopeful that MOTT will allow that process to happen within reason.
7. Make the Current Parkway Route Safer for Existing Users – we understand that MOTT are looking at redesigning the intersection here and we feel that there are a number of lower cost improvements that can be made. This could include painted bike lanes, bollard delineators, reduced speed limits, and improved signage to direct cyclists and vehicles through this “gauntlet”. We have some specific preferences and ideas which we would be happy to share with staff/MOTT and would appreciate it greatly if we can be included in those conversations. We can provide some diagrams if you think those would be helpful – there are three conflict zones going each way.
8. Road Sweeping – due to higher traffic volumes and the proximity of local aggregate pits, the road shoulders on the Parkway end up with significantly more debris than other area roadways. We would like to work with you and MOTT to identify a viable increase in the sweeping schedule for the Cumberland Rd/Parkway route that is already used by many commuter and recreational cyclists. Mainroad have been a pleasure to work with and I am sure we can increase the user experience very quickly just by keeping the road in good shape.
9. Parkway/Cumberland Rd Intersection Improvements – when cyclists are travelling into Courtenay from Cumberland, the vast majority wish to turn left from the Parkway onto Cumberland Rd. This can be daunting to negotiate in the vehicle lanes for even the most seasoned cyclist. Those who are not comfortable can stop and use the crosswalk but that puts them onto the wrong side of Cumberland Rd. We would like to see some changes to the intersection including the addition of a crosswalk on the north side of the intersection to allow proper flow into Courtenay. The crosswalks should have “elephant feet” added to allow cyclists to ride in them as well.

10. Education – we have found that the most cost-efficient method to increase ridership is to give people the skills and confidence they require to use navigate existing infrastructure routes. Our adult lessons help riders identify potential trouble spots and get through them safely. We provide these lessons free of charge and would be happy to work with the Village to get anyone over the “hump” of hesitation to ride into Courtenay. Due to the limited daylight hours for commuters for half of the year, it is critical that riders have suitable reflective wear and lights. Perhaps Cumberland would consider a program to help provide some of this equipment? We can also provide guidance and advocacy on safety equipment, locks and secure bike storage during the day.

As you can see, we have spent a fair amount of time considering this challenge and would very much appreciate being a contributor in conversations with MOTT and others going forward. We look forward to your comments and questions and are happy to help in whatever way you deem appropriate.

Best Regards,
Mike Keohane
President – CV Cycling Coalition