

Sharing our common spaces



There was an interesting response last week to the City marking our main cycling and walking routes with share the road signs. For one person, we had turned Johnston Subdivision into a “war zone,” for others we were inappropriately spending tax dollars to tell people what should be “common sense,” others felt that we shouldn’t spend tax dollars on people who don’t pay taxes, and another person stated that cyclists should know they need to share the road, otherwise they’re putting themselves at risk.

The reality is that Quesnel is simply catching up with the rest of the world with this program, which is an outcome of a community consultation process that resulted in City Council adopting an “Active Transportation Strategy.” This Strategy will see us make every effort to provide safer means for people to walk and cycle throughout our community (we’re also taking the increased use of mobility devices into account in the implementation of this strategy). The vast majority of our current road infrastructure cannot accommodate separate bike/pedestrian lanes or more sidewalks, something we will attempt to change as we rebuild roads in the future. In the absence of dedicated lanes, we have simply started marking what our community stakeholders have suggested to us are the main cycling and walking routes with share the road signs and road markings.

Now, I’m not sure how signs and paint on the road create a “war zone,” but I do understand that some people felt we might have gone overboard on the signage on a section of Johnston Avenue. This one small section has a lot of signs because the standards require a sign after each intersection and there are multiple intersections on this stretch of road. However, as someone else commented, more signs are better at this time until people get the message that cyclists (and pedestrians) have rights to the road too.

The reality is that our City’s roads are common spaces; they are not the sole domain of cars and trucks. The people who walk on the sides of roads that do not have sidewalks (like Hydraulic Rd or Moffat Ave, which are major pedestrian thoroughfares) and the cyclists who use any of the City’s roads have rights to use that common space, and the law requires motorists to recognize those rights when they are driving. As the ICBC driving handbook states: “bicycle riders have the same rights and responsibilities on the road as drivers.”

The people walking and cycling on our road system also contribute taxes to this public transportation infrastructure if they live in the City, as the road system is funded by property taxation. In short, our road infrastructure is common space that we all contribute toward and need to share respectfully and responsibly (including cyclists who must obey all traffic signs and rules when using the road).

At the end of the day, the combination of common sense and common courtesy will result in people enjoying their chosen mode of transportation on our commonly funded public infrastructure. Let’s make it part of our nature to be the safest place in BC for people to cycle, walk, and drive.

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