

Your life's at risk riding to UBCO

Re: Ron Seymour's column, Missing link should evolve quickly (Aug. 14):

I don't always agree with Seymour, but his column dealing with the lack of cycle paths from UBC Okanagan, was bang on. I also agree with the need for the Glenmore-UBCO link to be expedited. However, I would like to focus on the serious life-safety issue he raised.

As a resident of Quail Ridge University District who attended UBCO last term by either walking or bicycling, I concur with Seymour's description of the perilous trip along Highway 97 cycling on the shoulder until the strip disappears on the bridge over the railway tracks.

From personal experience of at least once per week cycling to friends/businesses in the Rutland area, it is a dangerous, harrowing experience that will end up with a cyclist getting seriously injured or killed.

Believe me, I am talking from personal and professional experience when I state that.

There is a saying which some might be familiar with about the puckering of ones extremities — this occurs every time that I cycle home and have to cross that no-bicycle-lane bridge.

I am not alone. There is a large student body living in the Rutland area whose only method of travelling to the university, if they are cyclists and there are many, is over the non-bicycle lane on the Highway 97 overpass, or travelling on the other side of the road against the traffic and encountering other cyclists travelling toward them.

At one time, cyclists could travel the bicycle lane of Rutland Road to the Sexmith intersection, then on the back roads of Acland and Bulman roads to a farmers field and opened gate that led to the paved cycle path along the railway under the overpass bridge, and then to UBCO.

The farmer, probably getting tired of the constant traffic through his/her property, said enough is enough and shut and chained the access gate.

This is an action which is entirely within their right to do so. Having done so though, it has effectively eliminated the only safe route to UBCO from Rutland.

The question then arises, what can the city do? Well, if they are serious about safety and cycling, there are three alternatives:

— Construct a pedestrian/bicycle railway crossing underneath the 97 overpass bridge connecting the existing paved cycle path to Bulman Road (low cost).

Reach agreement with the property owner/farmer for opening the gate and allowing a cyclist's easement through their property (low cost).

Re-engineer the median on Highway 97 bridge overpass to accommodate a proper bicycle lane (high cost).

I trust that our city staff will explore these options, two of which are low cost and could be implemented quickly. Furthermore they just might add to our community's safety.

*Glen Maddess,
Kelowna*