

December 20, 2019

From: Fairfield Gonzales Cycling Task Force

To: Board, Fairfield Gonzales Community Association

The City of Victoria is seeking feedback on design options for the Richardson Street portion of the city's bike network, and after review by our neighbourhood task force, we strongly recommend that the route be **redesigned as a Neighbourhood Bikeway**.

Context

City Council has approved the creation of a AAA (All Ages and Abilities) cycling network. For 2020, four routes are being added, including Richardson Street as the principal east-west cycle route through Fairfield-Gonzales. The City recently conducted Open Houses, and two City Engineering staff met with our neighbourhood Cycling Task Force to thoroughly review design options.

The City's current proposal is for Advisory Bike Lanes with a single narrow vehicle lane between them, and parking on both sides. Traffic volumes and speeds would be lowered somewhat through vehicle diverters and speed humps.

Key Finding

The advisory bike lanes proposed for Richardson are unacceptable because they are not AAA (see *BC Active Transportation Design Guide*). At the proposed volume of vehicle traffic, they would not be safe for all ages and abilities (for example – children biking to neighbourhood schools), they would not encourage a significant increase in bike use, and they are an unproven and unfamiliar street design for both drivers and people on bike.

After discussion with staff, our Task Force agreed that Richardson will function best as a Neighbourhood Bikeway – a quiet, local, residential street, rather than what it has been evolving into – a higher speed commuter vehicle route with upwards of 5,000 vehicles/day in places. We recommend that Richardson return to serving the needs of the neighbourhood, rather than the needs of adjacent municipalities.

Background and Analysis

Among people who don't currently cycle regularly, 60% cite safety concerns as their primary reason. The goal of Victoria's emerging AAA network is to "...support and encourage more people who live, work, play and visit Victoria to ride bikes." Safety and perceived safety must be the primary design consideration.

Advisory Bike Lanes are a largely untested design, and are not recognized as AAA. Experience in the few North American cities where they are being tried, such as Ottawa, seem very mixed. Advisory Bike Lanes will be tested on a short section of Humboldt Street, part of which is in Fairfield. We encourage the City to thoroughly review experiences with that section before expanding the use of Advisory Bike Lanes.

The design that is planned for the north – south Vancouver St corridor is a Neighbourhood Bikeway – a shared street that uses frequent traffic diverters to keep vehicle speeds low and volumes below 1,000 per

day. We strongly believe that the design used on Vancouver should be continued to Richardson St, for multiple reasons:

- AAA safe design
- familiar and consistent
- best suited to residential neighbourhoods.

To achieve the lower vehicle volumes of a Neighbourhood Bikeway, Richardson would require a number of vehicle diverters (more than proposed for the Advisory Bike Lanes). In reviewing this, the Task Force believes that the result will be a smoothly functioning local street system, where most vehicles making longer trips through the neighbourhood will be diverted in small numbers at each diverter, onto north-south corridors, and onto east-west arterials such as Pandora / Oak Bay Avenue, Fort, and Fairfield.

The only alternative AAA design for Richardson, we heard from the City staff, would be physically separated bike lanes. That design would be more expensive, is best suited to higher speed vehicle arterials, and bike or motor vehicle lanes in some locations would have to be below minimum widths.

Addressing Potential Concerns

The Task Force knows that many people who drive in or through Fairfield Gonzales will be concerned about ease and speed of travel. Also, people on many streets are concerned about keeping traffic on their streets slow, safe, and low volume.

The Neighbourhood Bikeway design would divert a large proportion of Richardson traffic out of Fairfield Gonzales entirely, at Cook Street and Foul Bay Road. The intent is to stop the use of Richardson as a commuter route, and encourage commuters to use east-west arterials such as Pandora / Oak Bay Avenue, Fort, and Fairfield. The remaining lower volumes, which originate locally, would be diverted north-south at multiple points, so there would be no major impact on any one of the north-south routes. There would also be no incentive for drivers to take shortcuts through residential streets to get back to Richardson.

Furthermore, the City of Victoria is committed to reducing overall vehicle speeds throughout the City. We support slower vehicle speeds in Fairfield Gonzales. Travel times would only be a marginally longer for most drivers.

Benefits

Returning Richardson St to its role as a safe, inviting, neighbourhood connector that's attractive for trips to school, trips to neighbourhood shops, and as a bike connector to the downtown network, makes our wonderful neighbourhood even more inviting.

Recommendation

We therefore recommend that the Board of Fairfield Gonzales Community Association accept this report and forward it to The City of Victoria staff and elected officials.