

Attachment # 1

**Feedback on Strategies for
Public Engagement on Cycling Infrastructure
Memo**

Memorandum

To: Erica Tiffany and Michael Leong Date: January 27th, 2023

From: Steven Mater File No: 09.1860.01
(DOC #2214767)

Subject: Feedback on Strategies for Public Engagement on Cycling Infrastructure

The City of New Westminster is currently implementing new cycling infrastructure across the City, including the Agnes Greenway, the Rotary Crosstown Greenway, and the New Westminster Secondary School (NWSS) Cycling Connector. The City is also in the process of beginning the implementation of the Active Transportation Network Plan which will see cycling facilities constructed across the City over the next five (5) years.

Construction of the new cycling facilities along Sixth Street for the NWSS Cycling Connector, which included removal of some on-street parking, began in Fall 2022. Following this, business owners expressed concerns regarding the loss of parking as well as the public engagement process, stating that they were unaware of the incoming cycling facilities and were not properly consulted.

The City conducted two rounds of public engagement in relation to the NWSS Cycling Connector, one in Fall/Winter 2021 and the second in Winter 2022. An additional walkabout focused on engaging with businesses along Sixth Street was conducted in December 2022. A variety of tools were utilized for each round of engagement to provide information on the project and raise awareness of the opportunities for the public to participate in the engagement process.

Fall/Winter 2021 Engagement Synopsis

- A project page was set up on the City's BeHeard online platform
- A five-minute project video was uploaded to the City's BeHeard website and YouTube channel
- Direct mail distributed through Canada Post to 2,811 addresses within close proximity to the study area
- Included information about infrastructure improvements and a map outlining the area of the Rotary Crosstown Greenway improvements and the NWSS Cycling Connector.
- An email and letter were distributed to 22 impacted stakeholder groups.

- Included was an invitation to engage with the project team directly
- A “business walkabout” was conducted
- Stakeholder letters were delivered to 24 businesses on Sixth Street between Seventh Avenue and Eighth Avenue.
- One-on-one connections were made with 19 business owners, managers, or staff to ensure that they knew of the incoming improvements, and had the opportunity to provide input. Contacts were invited to participate in a focus group.
- Two posts published to the City’s Facebook account.
- One post and four stories were published to the City’s Instagram account.
- Two tweets published from the City’s Twitter account.
- The improvements were regularly promoted to in the City’s weekly newsletter, which is distributed by email and also printed in The Record Newspaper
- Two newsletters were distributed to over 1,800 Be Heard subscribers.
- The first newsletter went to over 1,900 emails.
- The second newsletter went to more than 2,500 emails.
- 20 Posters and signage were designed and distributed throughout the project area.

Winter 2022 Engagement Summary

- New 30-minute project video uploaded containing design recommendations and key features for the Rotary Crosstown Greenway upgrades and for the NWSS Cycling Connector, as well as an overview and timeline of the projects and what was heard in the first round of engagement.
- Email distributed to 26 impacted stakeholder groups at the launch of the second round of engagement.
 - Included information on the project background, what was heard in the first round of engagement, and invited stakeholders to participate in an engagement event.
- A “Business walkabout” was conducted for a second time.
 - Stakeholder letters were delivered to 26 businesses or organizations on Sixth Street between Seventh Avenue and Eighth Avenue.
 - One-on-one connections were made with 28 business owners, managers or staff to invite them to participate in a focus group and ensure they know of the designs being presented for the transportation improvements.
- Two posts were published to the City’s Facebook account.
- Two stories and one post were published to the City’s Instagram account.
- Three tweets published via the City’s Twitter account.
- The second round of engagement was regularly promoted in the City’s weekly CityPage newsletter, which is distributed by email and printed in the Record newspaper.
- An email newsletter was sent to 2,945 Be Heard subscribers.
 - Included a short description of what was heard in the first round of engagement, and invitation to review the recommend designs for the Rotary Crosstown

Greenway and NWSS Cycling Connector. Subscribers were able to provide feedback through an online survey and pop-up event.

- Project posters were distributed to 20 locations throughout the project area.

Research

Under direction from Council to review the engagement process in light of the concerns from residents and business owners, staff consulted with transportation professionals from across North America to understand what other communities are doing to conduct effective public engagement for municipal bicycle infrastructure projects.

City of Burnaby

Staff spoke of the importance of engaging with stakeholders prior to construction and following construction. This helps build trust with citizens, as they feel that they are continually contributing to an ongoing project.

Staff also emphasized the importance of maintaining strong documentation of the entire engagement process, with quantifiable data. This includes keeping track of addresses or persons contacted, attempts to contact people, the number of responses on surveys, when engagement was performed, the structure of the engagement session, etc.. All this data can be useful to confirm which parties have been engaged and the extent to which they were engaged. Keeping detailed records can also help explain decision-making behaviour, and increase transparency.

When the public is not supportive of the project, the emphasis needs to focus on finding ways to get these groups to buy in. This can be done by maintaining continual dialogue while also being able to share information and data that might help the public embrace the new infrastructure.

Staff mentioned how important it can be to be upfront with the timeline of the project in the initial engagement, and to commit to working with and engage with the public. It is also important to clearly communicate the extent of potential changes based on public feedback. This helps increase the transparency of the planning process, and allows the public to know the degree to which changes can be made based on their feedback.

The public messaging relating to a project can also be very important to helping promote a general acceptance of an infrastructure change. Staff spoke to being thoughtful with terminology that is used. New cycling facilities are often referred to as “temporary” or “interim”, but these terms can be inaccurate in some cases. There needs to be an emphasis on the materials or structures being used to create the bike lane as being temporary, but that the general route and plan is permanent.

When asked how to best respond to comments from the public regarding the lack of users in bike lanes following construction, staff again noted the importance of collecting data; mentioning that bike counters at busy intersections can help to track the volume of users of the new facilities, and allow for more detailed messaging to the public.

Staff also mentioned how effective launch events, and community events can be for driving acceptance and use of the facilities. Collaborating with local stakeholder groups such as HUB

Cycling, or schools to host bike lane opening events, or bike to work/school week events can be effective in driving new use of the bike lanes, and help to dispel the notion that people never use the bike lanes. Staff recommended raising awareness of these events through tools such as social media, flyers, or newspaper ads.

Regarding concerns that the removal of on-street parking spaces results in drastic drops in business revenue, staff noted that it is helpful to conduct a parking study along the street prior to construction. The results can be used to show businesses where their customers are arriving from, and help demonstrate that on-street parking directly in front of businesses may not be as impactful as originally assumed. It can help to build a general business case to show local business owners that the implementation of a new cycling facility may not negatively impact their business.

City of Calgary

Staff spoke about the initial process of connecting with local business owners in the area of the cycling corridors. Staff in Calgary initially conducted a business walkabout to personally connect with business owners and inform them of the design and implementation plan for the cycling corridors. Staff brought flyers containing project information as well as parking area maps that would show all the available parking stalls from within a 5-minute walk of each block. This was meant to immediately show some business owners, who might be concerned over losing on-street parking, that there is sufficient parking for their business in the immediate vicinity.

For the 6 km of new bicycle lanes in their downtown area, staff held over 100 engagement sessions with the public, as they wanted to “over engage” given the contentious acceptance of the project by Council.

Regarding how to manage the messaging provided to the community, staff suggested the language and level of engagement (in relation to the IAP2 framework) is very dependent on the political backing of the project. For communities with council approval and a general acceptance of cycling in the community, as opposed to Calgary, engagement of the informing level is sufficient. Staff stated the importance of being upfront about the goals of the public engagement so that respondents are aware of how strongly their opinions will be factored in. It is important that people are aware ‘you are not asking permission’; you are trying to inform them of an incoming change to the streetscape and see if they have concerns that could modify the design or materials in order to find effective solutions, but not the overall plan.

Staff reiterated how effective data can be in demonstrating the benefits that the cycling facilities have had on the community. Calgary has eco-counters installed along the corridors in order to track the usage of the new facilities. Staff were then able to create a number of before vs. after data sets to show the facilities have generated a change in modal behaviour, and they could also be used to show business owners that the facilities are attracting more people to their area than previously. It was also mentioned how important providing parking facilities for bikes can be, as these are absolutely necessary for riders to actually stop along the corridor and visit the businesses present.

Staff also stated that Calgary created education and encouragement guides that were meant to help people feel more comfortable with new bike lanes. Education was provided for new riders

and for drivers who were not used to driving with cyclists on the road. There were also ads posted to bus stops in the area so that people were aware of the new facilities. All of this was meant to promote the lanes and get people using them, as the visual sight of people using them helps grow overall acceptance.

In addition to these measures, Calgary also ensured celebrating the opening of lanes with launch events and celebrating the millionth rider. This just helps slowly grow acceptance in the long-run as people will naturally become more confident that the cycling lanes are being utilized. Continuing to promote the bike lanes even after completion will help generate general acceptance of cyclists in the community, and demonstrate to skeptics that the investment in cycling is paying off.

Specifically for New Westminster through the development and implementation of the ATNP in the next 5 years, staff recommended creation of a Bike Yearbook. The cycling yearbook is meant to provide transparent monitoring of progress towards improving cycling conditions across the city. The yearbook is an accountability tool and takes a big picture view of cycling, documenting information on the number of bicycle riders, cyclists safety trends, and covers the additions to the cycling network over the past year. The yearbook could also cover recent bikeway projects and efforts relating to education and encouragement.

Portland Bureau of Transportation

Staff indicated that the most effective way to engage with businesses on bike infrastructure is to be very upfront about the City's motivations for putting a bike lane near their business, what the overall vision for the project is, and how the City believes this bike lane will benefit their business in the long run. This can help businesses understand why the city is pursuing this form of infrastructure development, and help build acceptance for the project from the outset. It is very important to be upfront about the permanence of the project as well; if there is council support to implement the project and the municipality is just looking for feedback on the design, we need to make sure all participants in the engagement process are aware of that.

Using parking demand studies to justify why some on-street parking can be removed has proven effective in Portland. Relying on data to show evidence of parking supply and parking demand rates is useful to demonstrate to businesses and citizens that there is still sufficient capacity of parking stalls in the area surrounding the cycling infrastructure. It is not only businesses who fear the removal of parking space, but also citizens, so everyone needs to understand that there is alternative parking stalls available.

Finding businesses who are actually in support of the bike lane, and working with them to promote the new piece of infrastructure can be effective as well. Portland held special promotional events with businesses along the corridor to provide 5% off for citizens who arrived via bicycle/active transportation.

Staff also reiterated the importance of having sufficient bike parking amenities. If we want people to use the bike lanes (which helps build general acceptance) then we need to ensure all users have the ability to utilize the mode without fear of there not being available parking spaces.

This is an area where the municipality can work with businesses to ensure there are bicycle parking spaces close to their store entrance.

When meeting with businesses it can also be effective to point towards other case studies across North America that demonstrate the economic benefits associated with bike lanes. There are case studies from Vancouver that even show how a BIA that was formerly resistant to bike lanes have now become champions of bike lanes even with the removal of on-street parking spaces.

Activating the space is also very effective in driving acceptance; it can help if business owners can visually see users on the infrastructure and this might mitigate their fears that “no one uses the bike lane”. Some ways to activate the space include: bike to school week, bike to work week, launch events, etc.

City of Edmonton

Staff noted that one of the first steps to garnering community support for the new bike lanes in their downtown area (one of the first in the city of that scale) was making contact with the Downtown Business Association, the Oilers Business Organization, and other local business owners. By gathering them and keeping them updated on the project and potential impacts to their businesses at each location along the network, they were able to act in sort of an advisory role for the project. This in turn helped create some increased community support for the projects as these stakeholders became champions for the project, and they had a sense of ownership over the project so they wanted to see it succeed.

Staff also stated that it was important to keep in mind throughout the process of implementing a bike network that the first few months will likely be the most challenging in terms of the amount of pushback City staff and Council are encountering. People are emotional about changes to the road network, and it is important to approach the problem with a reliance on data to show the effects of the cycling infrastructure improvements, and be patient. People are resistant to change overall, and we should keep that in mind when people complain about the loss of parking, or congestion; they will adapt to the changes in infrastructure, and parking in particular is often a topic that is the focus for resisting the acceptance of overall infrastructure change.

Edmonton also hired a cycling street team to conduct intercept surveys to engage people on the street, people leaving businesses, people riding their bikes, people driving, etc. to note how they reached the downtown area, their normal mode of transportation, as well as their opinions on the cycling infrastructure. Staff provided QR codes to direct participants to a website to share information and an online survey. They were also able to distribute promotional materials (network maps, educational brochures, etc.) as well as ‘swag’ such as bike bells, or bike lights. In addition to collecting feedback, this also helped create a general buzz in the community around the new bike lanes.

Aligning with what other communities have described as an effective strategy, Edmonton created parking maps that noted the location of nearby parking (public or private) that were present

within a 5-minute walk from the different sections of the corridor. This helped to demonstrate to business owners that there was still available parking in the immediate vicinity, and these owners were able to use these maps to show customers where parking spaces in the area were available. The City did convert some unregulated or lightly regulated curbside zones on intersecting streets into regulated parking with a pay station in order to add some more on-street parking availability in the area.

Staff described encountering people believing that the change in street design was temporary, so they started using the term “adaptable” in their messaging, noting that the infrastructure being put in place was adaptable, but the overall design and route were not. Noting to the public that changes could be made to the design in order to better support the needs of businesses and users along the corridor, staff believe that helped people become more accepting of the cycling corridor as they felt the City could still be responsive to issues that arose from the corridor.

Staff also spoke to the importance of integrating bike parking along the corridor, and even finding opportunities to work with businesses to implement personalized bike parking racks, which was helpful to encouraging more cycling to the area.

City of North Vancouver

Looking at post-implementation mitigation strategies, CNV staff found it effective to continue trying to educate the public and businesses on cycling infrastructure; how to use it, how to navigate around it, the overall vision for the project. They noted that once the project has been implemented, it is hard to make any substantial overhauls, so it is important to be consistent in your messaging and efforts to normalize the bike lanes. Engagement with businesses should continue even after a project is complete. This will help to build trust over time, which will likely help in future projects as it can help keep animosity towards the active transportation projects low.

Working with local BIAs and bringing them into the design process can also help, as they might be able to see the benefits of the bike lanes and advocate to businesses on behalf of the city, and the same businesses can be confident they have a party in the process advocating on their behalf. CNV also conducted door-to-door walks to connect personally with businesses, similar to the ones conducted in New Westminster.

To help businesses accept the changes to the street landscape, project teams often created pamphlets containing information and maps about parking spaces available in the areas (see Figure 1). They serve as useful visuals for owners, and can be distributed to customers, making it easier to communicate parking options should they choose to drive to the area.

When conducting public engagement with the public, it is important to be as upfront and honest about the expectations and level of engagement the project team is expecting from the public. In order to avoid confusion, CNV focuses on defining their engagement questions and their scope depending on the project. For projects in advanced planning stages, feedback is focused on very

specific aspects of the design. Projects at a high level without any specific routes or designs already established is conveyed to the public. This minimizes confusion about the engagement process, and be as transparent as possible about the overall planning process.

To further avoid confusion, the City of North Vancouver has tried avoid using terms like “pilot” or “temporary”, instead opting to use the language aligned with their quick-build materials, and how the utilization of these types of materials align with broader city goals such as cost efficiency. You can also show how these materials make it easier to tweak the design based on feedback and data collection. One goal was to avoid the issue of the public not trusting the term ‘pilot’ and minimize the number of people who believe the project will be fully removed.

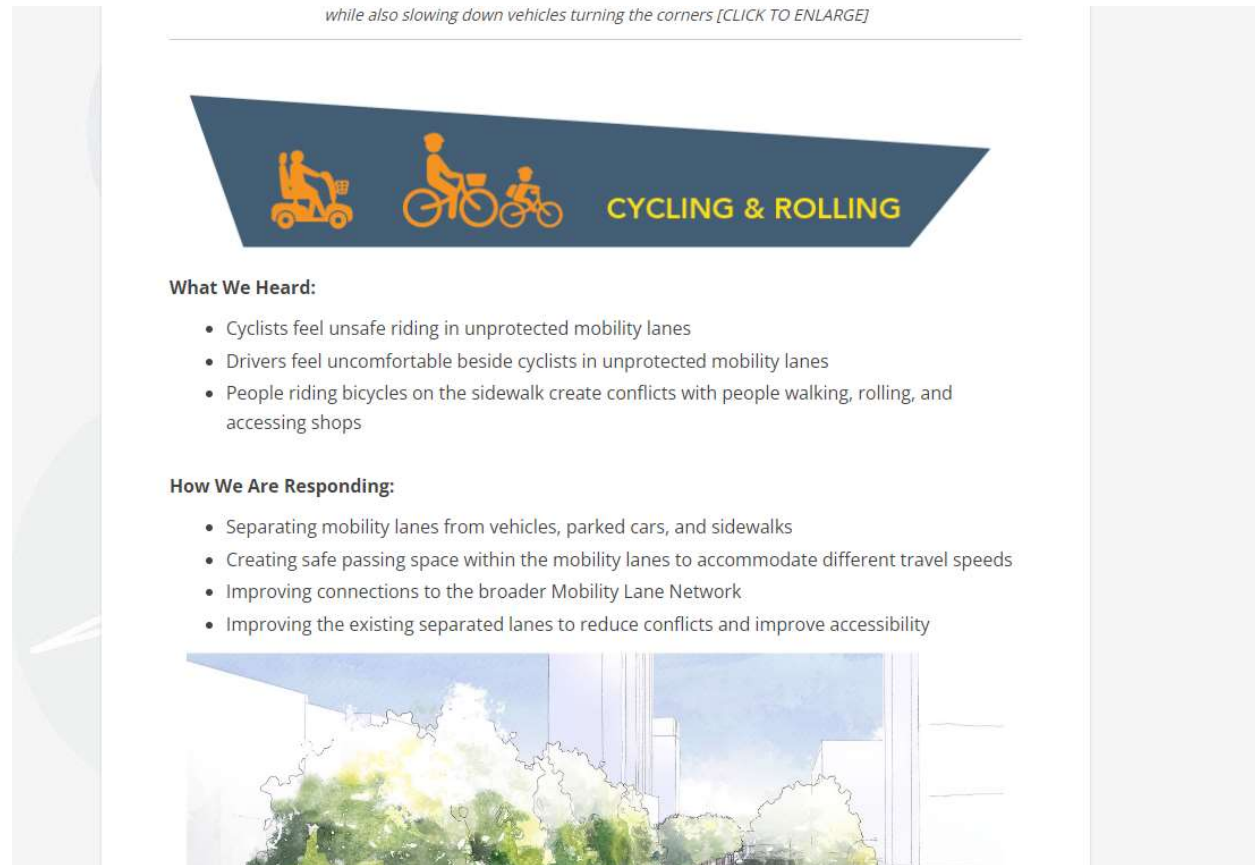
They emphasized the importance of really relying on the policy direction that has been given from Council in regards to creating a safer and more comfortable cycling and pedestrian network. That political approval has given staff direction to pursue these types of projects and it is important people are aware of that; it is not just a major project that the City has decided to undertake unilaterally. Can also state how these projects align with broader city goals, particularly those related to climate change mitigation (7 Bold Steps for Climate Action).

When documenting the summary of feedback and engagement, they also recommended to structure it in a way that makes it easier to understand how feedback was incorporated into the project. They try to structure their feedback summary as “Respondents said this ____, so we did this ____” (Figure 2). They also publicly post questions and responses from the public to their LetsTalk project page. This is meant to reduce the amount of similar questions they receive as citizens are able to read through responses that have been provided to previous questions.

Figure 1: Parking Map example from CNV



Figure 2: Screenshot of CNV LetsTalk Feedback Website



City of Toronto

Staff noted that it was imperative to get to know the audience for the engagement.

Staff recommended that the project team conducting public engagement communicate with elected city officials to understand their expectations for public engagement with their constituents. Staff could work with council to understand what strategies they think would be most effective, specific parties that should be engaged with, and what elements can be included for effective public engagements.

Staff also recommended avoiding using language such as “temporary” or “interim” to describe cycling projects, as they often cause confusion. Instead, their projects used either “pilot” or “permanent” depending on the approval for the project type granted from Council.

Staff noted project teams and elected officials should be prepared to receive and deal with feedback for 12-18 months following completion. This is to say that engagement does not stop once the project is completed and that there should be continued engagement to mitigate continued pushback.

Creating an open data website to share key metrics about the cycling infrastructure was noted as an effective way to demonstrate the success of the cycling infrastructure investments. This website could include project details and timelines for installation and share data following installation. The data shown on the website could include cyclist volumes, differences in travel times, collision impacts for all modes, etc., and provide a platform available to the public to learn about the benefits of cycling infrastructure.

Staff also stated that an effective strategy to engage with businesses is to hold business only drop-in engagement meetings, where the project details and potential impacts can be explained in more detail to each stakeholder along the cycling corridor. This would allow business owners the flexibility to meet with city staff when it best suits their schedule, and they can understand the project on a more detailed level so that they are not surprised when implementation occurs.

Conclusion and Takeaways from Discussions

The City of New Westminster should continue to closely monitor and document public engagement activities. Maintaining well-documented, and quantifiable data that demonstrates the extent of public engagement conducted for a project is useful to confirm which stakeholders were engaged and to what extent. Keeping proper records will also enable confident decision-making, and increase transparency.

Hosting business-only drop-in engagement sessions was recommended as it allows business owners to work directly with City staff in a more personal manner, providing opportunities to help build their support of the cycling infrastructure, and allow the City to directly address concerns.

Conducting public intercept surveys can be particularly effective for creating an environment to engage with citizens who do not typically participate in the planning process. By speaking with residents on the street, the City may be able to gather a diverse set of viewpoints related to any given project. Given the investment in cycling infrastructure, it is important for a wide range of the public to be represented in the planning and decision-making process.

One recommendation that was consistently brought up in the discussions was to utilize data to support the implementation of the bike facilities. It is especially useful to be able to demonstrate the demand on the existing on-street parking to address perceived issues for businesses concerned about the loss of nearby on-street parking. For projects involving the removal of on-street parking, it is important to be able to show business owners that the City has completed parking analysis on the area that demonstrates there is nearby parking available to accommodate demand. Multiple project teams completed parking occupancy studies to help quantify and locate available parking in the surrounding area relative to their business and the cycling corridor.

Project teams should be as upfront as possible with all information regarding the project and the level of engagement expected from the public. Referencing the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Engagement, it should be made clear where along the spectrum that a project's engagement falls

within. This helps identify what is expected from the public, which should provide more fruitful discussions, given that all parties will be operating with a common understanding of expectations. It is also key to avoid creating high levels of resistance due to confusion about how feedback is being factored into the planning process. When publishing feedback summaries on the BeHeard platform, it could be structured in such a way that makes it apparent how feedback from the public directly altered the original plans (e.g. “we heard X, so we did X”).

A piece of advice that has arisen from other communities is to be careful with the wording used to describe a project. For the NWSS Cycling Connector specifically, there seems to be confusion about whether or not the bike lane itself is temporary. Other municipalities have experienced similar problems and opted to utilize alternative language besides “temporary” or “interim” in order to reduce the potential for confusion over the permanence of the cycling facilities. These terms can be inaccurate and can cause stakeholders to believe that it’s likely the previous streetscape will be restored, which, in turn, can increase the resistance to the proposed changes. For future cycling projects, project teams should consider following the example Edmonton provided in using the term adaptable; the design and the materials may be adaptable to local circumstances, but the overall plan and route selection will remain in place.

The City of New Westminster should also put more focus into holding launch events and promotional events for our cycling network. When new cycling lanes are completed, the City should celebrate this and encourage cyclists to utilize the new facility. This can help mitigate concerns regarding the lack of use by promoting the new cycling facilities and cycling initiatives in general. The City should also participate in regional cycling events such as “Bike to Work Week” or “Bike to School Week”. These type of events promote cycling as a viable mode of transportation, promote the usage of our cycling network, and help generate an overall acceptance of cycling.

As the City begins the implementation of the Active Transportation Network Plan over the next 5 years, there should be an increased focus on data collection to monitor the usage of the cycling facilities and growth of cycling in New Westminster. This can help with providing detailed messaging to the public to demonstrate the value of the investment the City has made in cycling facilities. The City of Calgary heavily relied on data to promote their cycling facilities, installing eco-counters along the cycling corridors to track cyclist volumes. They were able to create before vs. after usage charts, year-over-year metrics, and make the data available online through their public data portal. Calgary also published a yearly Bike Yearbook, which provided transparent monitoring of progress towards improving cycling conditions across the city. The yearbook serves as an accountability tool and takes a big picture lens to cycling in the city, documenting information on the number of cyclists, safety trends, and additions to the cycling network.

Overall, interviewees noted that the City of New Westminster conducted extensive public engagement on the NWSS Cycling Connector that runs along Sixth Street. Many of the other

municipalities stated that resistance to these types of changes is natural, and that there is often the most amount of pushback in the early stages of project implementation. As more cycling infrastructure is implemented, people gradually become more accepting but attitudes do not change overnight. These types of projects are a long-term investment in your community and they are meant to improve mobility conditions for all users, not just cyclists. These projects are not implemented unilaterally by city staff and there has been council approval with the vision of transforming the ways people move in New Westminster and tackling our climate goals. Residents, council, and staff should feel confident that these plans have been developed based on engagement with all relevant stakeholders and while not everyone may agree on the particulars of any given project, these projects as a whole will bring value to New Westminster in the long run.

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