

Protected bike lane meant to improve safety

By Nanaimo News Bulletin

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Cyclists can steer clear of traffic in Nanaimo's hospital district with the first-ever protected bike lane.

The City of Nanaimo has opened a pilot cycle track northbound on Boundary Avenue.

With a push in the new Transportation Master Plan to encourage more alternative transportation, city crews have been expanding the local network of bike lanes. But this new cycle track is different than the typical lane. While painted lines are typically all that separate bikes and moving traffic, this track is wedged between the sidewalk curb and parallel-parking stalls. There's also a painted buffer to prevent doors from swinging into the path of bikes.

It's an extra level of separation, according to Gordon Foy, the city's transportation manager, who says it's a facility that cities across the province have been creating over the past five years, including Vancouver, and meant to encourage people to use bikes. He has heard concerns from people who wanted to ride, but didn't feel comfortable travelling with traffic and wanted more separation.

There have been complaints about the new road scape on Boundary Avenue, including from letter-to-the-editor writer John Pike, who called the new parking and bike lane a "design fiasco" and a safety hazard to cyclists and vehicle operators, pointing out that vehicles parked a lane width from the curb place cyclists at risk from passenger doors opening. Drivers are at risk of having to cross the bike lane to get to the sidewalk.

But Leo Boon, chairman of the Greater Nanaimo Cycling Coalition, sees the track as a great thing. There are "thousands of people" interested in cycling and living a healthy lifestyle but they're also looking for areas to use that are safe and comfortable and one of their main concerns is that motorists won't give cyclists the amount of space required, nor the right of way. They want protection, he said.

"In most cities in the world they have protected bike lines. In fact, Montreal and Vancouver are dotted with them all over," Boon said. "It's something that's coming down the pipeline and you will be seeing much more of."

The new cycle track is a test for the city and will help give it a better sense of when to apply them. It was paid for with \$120,000 from BikeB.C., a provincial cost-sharing program, and done this summer in conjunction with other road works, including crosswalk improvement at Boundary Avenue and Nightingale Crescent.

For more information, including a diagram on what a one-way cycle track looks like, please visit [www.nanaimo.ca/goto /hospitalarea](http://www.nanaimo.ca/goto/hospitalarea) or www.bikesense.org/blog/

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