

Vancouver provides fresh air for cyclists' tires

BY ZOE MCKNIGHT, VANCOUVER SUN MARCH 18, 2013



The city has installed this air station for cyclists at Science World and another in a Strathcona park at a cost of \$6,000.

Photograph by: Jason Payne, PNG, Vancouver Sun

Adding a few bike pumps in Vancouver is a small price to pay to increase cycling in the downtown core, advocates say.

Earlier this month, the city installed two air stations along some of its busiest bicycle routes, one in a Strathcona park near Union Street and another at Science World, at a total cost of about \$6,000.

"It's a very small expense in the grand scheme of things. If you look at what's spent on cars and car

infrastructure and the road network, versus bike infrastructure, it's a very small amount," said John Ingram, an independent urban planner who cycles to work in Gastown daily, most often on the Adanac bike route.

According to the City of Vancouver's \$70-million transportation budget for 2013, \$54.7 million will be spent on roads this year and \$11.8 million on walking and cycling infrastructure.

The pumps should be considered similar to other cycling amenities provided by the city, such as bicycle racks, Ingram said.

Avid cyclist Alex Walker said he would use the pumps.

"I think it's a great idea, especially since they started charging for air at most gas stations," he said, adding he hopes amateur cyclists will make sure they know the required pressure for their specific tires.

And others worry the pumps will not accommodate the less-common Presta valve, but the one at Science World does have an adapter, although they can be tricky to use.

For that reason, one bike mechanic said the pumps might not be totally effective, but he appreciates the gesture.

"I think it's really good that the city's extending themselves to this degree of supporting people and cycling," said Dave Danchilla, manager of Dream Cycle on Commercial Drive, just blocks from the Adanac bike route.

"It's what people need; they need to feel supported for confidence and comfort," he said.

He pointed out Vancouver has plenty of water fountains across the city as well, which many cyclists in his bike shop say they appreciate.

Danchilla said he hopes the city won't have to pay for cyclists blowing out an inner tube from incorrect use or miscalculated air pressure.

"I can foresee someone getting mad at the city because the tire blew off their rim," he said.

"And pressure for a bicycle tire can range from 55 up to 120 (pounds per square inch). There's going to have to be faith every single person knows the pressure for their tire."

Besides the necessary technical know-how, critics say cyclists should have the sense to buy their own pumps.

"I'm not sure when it became fashionable for government to take care of every possible little need of their taxpayers," said Jordan Bateman, president of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, which has criticized the city's spending on dedicated bike lanes and the \$1.9-million subsidy for a bicycle sharing program.

"This idea you have to have expensive bike pumps sprinkled throughout the city ... seems a bit ludicrous," said Bateman, who added he lives in Langley and does not regularly ride a bike.

zmcknight@vancouver.sun.com

© Copyright (c) The Vancouver Sun