

# north shore news

## MCALeer: Here's how to slip by our traffic snarl

[Brendan McAleer](#) / North Shore News

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Recent reports indicate that traffic on the North Shore, particularly Highway 1, has gotten worse and will not get better anytime soon. Columnist Brendan McAleer is here to provide a few tips on how to avoid the daily gridlock grind. File photo North Shore News

So what are we gonna do about the North Shore traffic situation?

If you're like me, you read Brent Richter's report "Highway 1 no longer making the cut" in the July 5 edition of the North Shore News with a mixture of interest and horror. It's bad now, and it's only going to get worse. We've all seen the jams. If you're lucky enough to be commuting in counterflow traffic, coming back westbound towards Lonsdale after 3 p.m., then you've crested that hill, seen the tailbacks, and whispered silently under your breath, "Oh, the humanity." There is a fifth horseman of the apocalypse and he rides a stalled steed.

What do we need? Less traffic. More co-commuting. A better interchange around Main Street to replace the Hieronymus Bosch bottleneck that so often occurs. More transit at peak periods, not just to handle demand, but to create interest - after all, as pointed out by at least one tradesman, not every single worker commuting into the North Shore needs a full van-load of tools.

What do we need? Not one thing - everything! We need better cycling commuter routes for those who are willing to trade cycling's drawbacks (you can get a bit whiffy on the North Shore hills) for its benefits (costs nothing, feels great, you don't develop a flabby physique like, well, me). We need more buses carrying more people across the water - we could even use an east-west rail system that follows the old Lynn Valley tramway and loops right across the water to link up with Rupert Station.

Wouldn't it be great if we could just build all that ... for free? Sadly, no, these things cost huge amounts of money, and who feels more overburdened than the Canadian taxpayer? It's not that we wouldn't shell out to pay for something worthwhile, it's that you expect us to give money to the people who would shut a bridge for a yoga-thon, sell water resources in a drought to companies like Nestle for a coupla bucks per million litres, and can't figure out how to sell a B.C.-brewed six-pack of beer in a grocery store. So let me not add fuel to the fire by revealing my own clever tax-payer-funded solution to the problem (imagine a giant car-firing electromagnetic railgun, and a huge pillow on the other side of the inlet: for a small fee, you could - but wait, I've said too much already). Instead, let me offer a few suggestions as to how you, personally, can fight the North Shore traffic.

The obvious solution is to move to the North Shore, and live close to where you work. If such is part of a future plan for you, please see my earlier columns: "The Best Cars With Which To Rob A Financial Institution," and, "The Best Vans For Living In Down By The River" (foreword by Matt Foley, motivational speaker).

- a) No such jobs on North Shore
- b) Most cannot afford to live on the North Shore -cjk

Stats suggest that this is something people are doing more and more. Granted, our little slice of heaven is an expensive place to live, but when the cost of hundreds of litres of fuel saved and perhaps a second vehicle made redundant, it's actually something of a bargain. Not to mention avoiding the dental bills caused by grinding your teeth in traffic.

Another, simpler way to go about moving your work/live situation closer to home is to petition your employer to let you work from home a few days a week. This is more an appeal to employers than workers: why, I ask you, do people have to drive an hour each way to sit in front of a screen all day? So that they can discuss the latest *Game of Thrones* episode during coffee break? They can just do that on Facebook anyway.

For those of us who already live and work on the North Shore, the advice seems to run along the lines of, "Do we really need to make six trips in a day?" Well, you might not, but I do. Brain like an accident at a colander factory. Before I leave the house, however, I simply pull up Vancouver's traffic map on Google, or the GVRD conditions map ([gvrld.com/traffic](http://gvrld.com/traffic) (<http://gvrld.com/traffic>)). Technology might be a woe when dealing with distracted driving, but it does provide the casual errand-runner with the ability to instantly gauge conditions, and stay off the Upper Levels when everything turns red. However, many of us have to also get kids to and from school or activities, and thus can't choose to linger at work an extra half-hour or so to let things calm down. Thus, the necessity of inventing your own secret escape route.

Traffic along the major North Shore routes can be terrible, and the clots spread outwards from the highway to plug up the usual suspects. That's why you need to pull up your map and create your own personal set of alternate routes that would ordinarily be slow enough for people to avoid. This takes some trial and error, and a willingness to ignore your GPS, but there are at least several ways to get from west to east along side streets and little-used roads with speed humps. Even if you're driving slow at respectful side-street speeds, that's still faster than stopped in gridlock. I've got a few of my own tucked away - and I'm taking 'em to the grave.

Traffic is bad enough now, and only getting worse, to the point that it should actually be a factor in choosing your next vehicle. If you're stuck making a commute during peak hours by either the constraints of your work or family home life, then stuff like radar-guided automatic cruise-control becomes more than just a luxury. Honda, for instance, has just crammed all manner of semi-autonomous driving features into their new Pilot, and you can expect to see a proliferation of this technology coming throughout many more mainstream vehicles. Sometimes it'll be only available at the top-tier trim of a car, but if it makes your driving less of a misery, then it's probably worth it.

Lastly, all the usual advice applies about making any drive more bearable. Make sure your podcast archive is up-to-date. Pack a book so if there's a snarl you can head for a park and wait for it to clear. Don't drink ten cups of coffee and skip your bathroom break before heading out.

How will we solve the North Shore traffic problem? Government-legislated car-firing rail-guns. But that's big picture stuff. In the short-term, the best thing you can do to make sure you don't get stuck in your car is check current conditions, pack a little entertainment with you, dodge peak hours if you can, and have an escape route or two in your back pocket.

*Brendan McAleer is a freelance writer and automotive enthusiast. If you have a suggestion for a column, or would be interested in having your car club featured, please contact him at [mcaleeronwheels@gmail.com](mailto:mcaleeronwheels@gmail.com). Follow Brendan on Twitter: @brendan\_mcaleer.*

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