

North Vancouver's Capilano Road to be closed for months

Non-local traffic told to stay clear of water main project

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Steve Billington, community liaison officer for Metro Vancouver gets ready for upcoming road closures on North Vancouver's Capilano Road. photo Mike Wakefield, North Shore News

Capilano Road residents and commuters are being warned: Brace yourself for months of road closures and detours.

Residents may have noticed some construction equipment and small detours in the area starting this week but, come Labour Day, non-local traffic is being advised to stay away entirely as Metro Vancouver and the District of North Vancouver replace underground water mains.

Capilano Road will be closed in 200-metre sections between the Cleveland Dam and Edgemont Boulevard from September until January 2016. During that time, non-local traffic will be detoured onto Ridgewood Drive and Montroyal Boulevard, connected by Highland Boulevard.

The project is needed to ensure a safe water supply for the next 100 years, said Goran Oljaca, Metro Vancouver's director of engineering and construction.

"(The water mains) were built in the 1930s. . . The pipelines at that time were designed to survive 50 to 100 years. It's in its 80s already and on top of that, seismic standards have changed over the years and we are required to design waterlines to withstand earthquakes and be operational after earthquakes. The existing pipe is not able to do that," Oljaca said. "I think it's safe to say Capilano Road is open to local traffic only to avoid potential confusion and everybody else should use the detour route."

Mitigating the traffic impacts of the project is proving to be almost as big a task as the job itself, said Steve Billington, Metro's community liaison officer.

"Someone pointed out this is a traffic management project more than it is putting a two-metre diameter pipe in the

ground, which is a big enough project," Billington said.

Billington has reached out to residents, schools' parent advisory committees and businesses along the detour route to try to accommodate their concerns.

The streets on the detour route have the capacity to hold the extra vehicles but the contractor is bringing in extra traffic control staff to be posted in the difficult "hot spots" and there will be temporary traffic signals and four-way stops added to some intersections to accommodate the changes.

It also means TransLink's 232, 236 and 247 buses will be following the same detour and Coast Mountain Bus Company is setting up a shuttle bus to drop Capilano Road residents off at the nearest stop on the detour.

Residents along Capilano Road and its side streets will be given passes that allow them onto Capilano Road although not into the work zone. Metro is providing extra passes to households that have regular visitors like nannies or caregivers. Less-frequent visitors will have to roll their window down and be waved in by traffic control personnel.

Residents will also be given special accommodations for parking, emergency services and access during the periods when their driveways and cul-de-sac entrances are cut off.

While the neighbourhood itself will certainly be affected, the majority of the traffic on Capilano Road is headed to and from Grouse Mountain, Billington said. Metro will be posting signs along the Upper Levels Highway to let visitors know.

As soon as the Capilano Road portion of the project is done, crews will begin digging a massive pit at the corner of Edgemont Boulevard to install a series of pipes and valves for the district's water system. That project is expected to bring new detours and last until May 2016.

It's a long timeline and Billington said he expects he'll receive complaints, but, he added, these projects don't come along every day.

"The pipe is designed to last 100 years," he said. "We won't be back for a very long time."

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