

north shore news

East sidewalk opens on Ironworkers Memorial Second Narrows Crossing

Widened east side welcomes users, west side closes for construction

[Brent Richter](#) / North Shore News

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A cyclist heads south on the newly opened east sidewalk of the Ironworkers Memorial Second Narrows Crossing. After more than a year of construction, the sidewalk is now twice as wide with a new safety barrier. The west sidewalk is expected to remain closed until the fall of 2015 while it is widened. Photo Mike Wakefield

There's plenty more elbow room for pedestrians and cyclists on the Ironworkers Memorial Second Narrows Crossing — on one side, at least.

Officials from the province gathered on the bridge Wednesday afternoon to cut the tape on the east sidewalk.

The walkway had been closed since the fall of 2013 so crews could cut off the old 1.2-metre sidewalk and install a 2.5-metre one, along with a new safety fence and LED lighting.

The change has been a drastic improvement, according to Antje Wahl, North Shore committee chairwoman for HUB, the Lower Mainland cycling advocacy group.

"I'm blown away. It's so nice," Wahl said. "It's a difference of night and day from the old one."

The old, narrow and bumpy sidewalk frequently led to close calls and conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians.

"You're actually not having to look at your front wheel or straight ahead the whole time. You can actually enjoy riding across," Wahl said.

The new bridge sidewalks will "absolutely" encourage people to ride more between North Vancouver, Vancouver and Burnaby, Wahl said.

"The old narrow sidewalks were like a test of determination. Only people who are truly dedicated and enthusiastic about biking or exercise would put up with riding the bridge every day to work," she said.

The first one to cross the new sidewalk was a Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure staffer.

"He had brought his cruiser bike that was something like 50 or 60 years old and he wanted to be the first one to ride across," Wahl said.

He was shortly followed by members of HUB and then, the first pedestrian.

This is only the first part of the \$20-million project. No sooner than the east sidewalk was opened, crews promptly closed off the west sidewalk for its revamp.

Cyclists and pedestrians will be expected to share the wider east side until both sidewalks are open, which the ministry is hoping to have happen by the fall of 2015.

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