

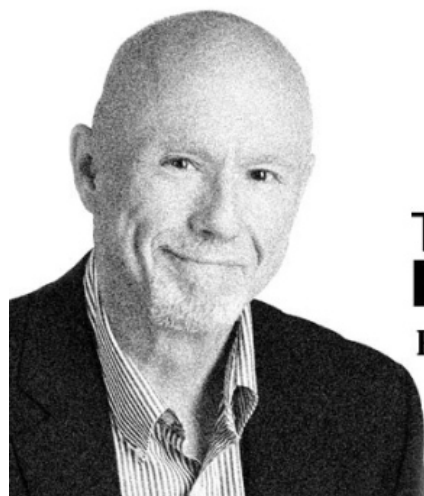
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SULLIVAN: Bully for bikes, but what about the bridge?

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The
NORTH SIDE
Paul Sullivan

Another great milestone in the history of North Shore transportation occurred recently as the \$7-million Lions Gate-Stanley Park bike thing was completed.

Now those of us crawling our way toward our homes and places of business can watch the cyclists whiz by in complete safety, secure in the knowledge that we'll still be stuck in traffic long after they wring out their socks.

I think there's something wrong with this picture, but I'm not quite sure what it is.

Only a troll would begrudge safe passage for those brave few who commute by cycle, and judging by the social media comments on the bike lanes through the park there are plenty of trolls. We don't need another one.

But what about all those people whose safety is jeopardized daily because they're late for work, doctor's appointments, flights from YVR, or trips with B.C. Ferries, and could get fired, bleed out, have a heart attack or spontaneously combust because a fender-bender on the stupid bridge has it completely plugged and everyone just has to sit there?

You'd think that someone would have noticed by now; all those gridlocked bodies are starting to smell.

You'd also think that someone would do something, right? My favourite idea is to build a bridge for convenient, consistent, sustainable rapid transit that connects to the current SkyTrain system. Some people want to see a tunnel. Others want another bridge for cars. These are all options with pros and cons.

But what they all have in common is they are routinely ignored. Somehow it's OK that thousands and thousands of people can't get where they need to go because first we need a safety fence for cyclists. Priorities, people!

I know, I know. Even at \$7 million, it's a lot less expensive to provide peace of mind for the cycling community (of which I am a proud, mud-spattered member) than it is to spend gazillions to solve the riddle of the bridge.

It's not like this is a new problem. You may not know that the Burrard Inlet Tunnel and Bridge Company was established in 1892 to build a tunnel under the First Narrows and a bridge over the Second. Various misadventures

(e.g. two World Wars) ensued and the business was finally shut down in 1966, an obscure symbol of epic futility.

There are some people who are happy with the status quo because they think squeezing thousands of cars through a three-lane bridge will limit development and force the North Shore to remain in its pristine natural condition. Like that's happening. All those people pre-buying (or whatever they call it) condos in Lynn Valley or even Squamish are thinking about the traffic on the Lions Gate as they scramble to secure a foothold in real estate heaven. Uh-huh.

There are some people who think it's a ridiculous idea to run a freeway through the jewel that is Stanley Park. Back in 2000-2002 there was serious talk about closing the bridge in 2030, but only if a decent replacement was built. That was at the same time the bridge was overhauled and the NDP government, in its wisdom, decided to keep it to three lanes and avoid the need to cut down 29 trees.

Of course, not long after that, in 2006, a massive windstorm rampaged through the park and took down 10,000 trees, but that was an act of God, who doesn't need to get re-elected.

Of course, they've just spent \$7 million for the bike thing, so you can bet that whatever else changes by 2030, the "iconic" Lions Gate Bridge will still be there. And we'll still be stuck in traffic.

Speaking of icons, as I write this, all the premiers of our great nation are assembled over town to talk about — among other things — money for things like bridges. Mr. Trudeau 2.0 holds out the promise of finally dealing with aged, obsolete and inadequate infrastructure. Can you say Lions Gate Bridge?

Of course, Premier Clark would have to agree. And for some reason, she doesn't seem to like spending on transit. Or maybe it's because she has a private plane to take her wherever she wants to go. Transit, shmansit.

Was that my outside voice?

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