

Bridge sidewalks to be wider

Ironworkers' upgrade to be tendered in June

BY BRENT RICHTER, NORTH SHORE NEWS APRIL 21, 2013

CYCLISTS traversing the Ironworkers Memorial Second Narrows Crossing will find they have a little bit more elbow room in 2015.

The notoriously slim sidewalks are **due to be widened from the current 1.2 metres to 2.5 metres**, the province announced on Monday, the day before the official start of the 2013 general election.

Beyond the roomier pedestrian sidewalk/bike paths, **the bridge will get a new three-metre high safety fence and a switch to energy efficient LED lighting.**

"The Iron Workers Memorial Bridge is a vital transportation link for North Shore residents going to and from Vancouver. These **upgrades will make commuting safer for cyclists and pedestrians**," said North Vancouver-Lonsdale MLA Naomi Yamamoto in a B.C. Liberal government caucus press release.

The release did not specify how much the bridge improvements will cost or how it will be funded. That information will only be available after the tendering process is complete, according to the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Regardless of the ambiguous funding, the news is welcomed with open arms by HUB, a Metro Vancouver cycling advocacy group.

"For a long time, we have been encouraging improvements because, at the moment, the sidewalks are shared with pedestrians and bikes. They're very narrow. You can't actually pass people safely," said Erin O'Melinn, HUB's executive director

By opening up the bridge, the province will make it more appealing for people to hop on their bikes and see what's on the other side, O'Melinn added.

"There are a lot of great destinations on both sides of that bridge, and there might be somebody that's just starting to ride and it's really not welcoming. The surfacing of the sidewalk is quite uneven," she said. "It's not particularly comfortable. I'm someone that rides every day and if I feel that way, I can only imagine what people feel if they don't ride regularly."

HUB has been lobbying the province, along with Vancouver, Burnaby and North Vancouver to improve the bridge for years and while the news is welcome, there are some lingering requests for the project. Specifically, the group would like to see the construction schedule mitigated so there will be maximum accessibility for cyclists during work or, failing that, a shuttle system set up to safely escort riders across the bridge.

The group would also like improved connections on and off the bridge.

"Currently, it's quite hard to know where to go. The wayfinding is not intuitive and not adequate," O'Melinn said.

The project is expected to be **tendered in June with work expected to begin later this summer.**

brichter@nsnews.com

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