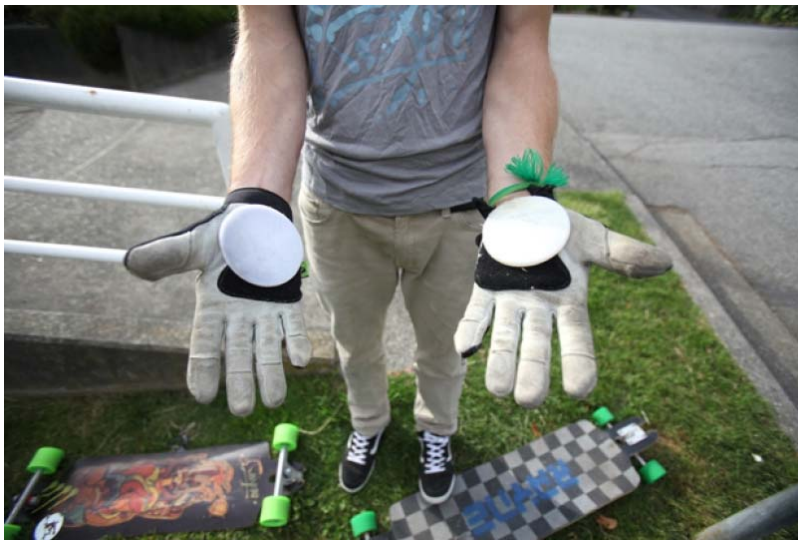


Weekend longboarding race stokes safety concerns

[Brent Richter](#) | North Shore News

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file photo Cindy Goodman, North Shore News

Some Grand Boulevard residents are questioning the wisdom of the City of North Vancouver hosting a longboarding race this weekend – part of the annual youth-oriented CityFest event.

The boulevard will be closed between 19th and 23rd Streets from noon until 4 p.m. Saturday for the race.

"I'm not concerned about the race day. I'm concerned about the fact we're encouraging adolescents to get on their skateboard and use the road at speed and they've got no or little control," said James Marsden. "It seems to me that indirectly the city is endorsing riding on the road. You can't tell a 13-year-old it's OK on Saturday, May 7, but it's not OK at any other time. They're not going to think that way."

Every day, Marsden said he sees Sutherland secondary students bombing the hill on Grand Boulevard on their commute home. The city could be exposing itself to legal liability if any of the riders injure themselves any time in the future after taking part in the race, Marsden suggested.

"I'm a live-and-let-live kind of guy but it just seems to be encouraging something which is inherently dangerous," he said.

But Keenan Macartney, one of the event's organizers and a nationally ranked junior longboarder, said events like the CityFest race are critical for riders to develop safety skills – and he encourages the young and old to come check it out.

"At first glance, people say there's no brakes, there's no control to it and it's pretty much an accident waiting to happen," he said. "I think there has to be some public knowledge around how we can stop, how dangerous it really is."

Longboarding isn't illegal in the city, although certain arterial and particularly steep roads are banned. Grand Boulevard isn't one of them. And there are other sanctioned longboard events on closed roads that riders can apply their skills at, Macartney added.

"Yes this is a race for just one day but it teaches a set of skills that are vitally important for the road and it allows them to conduct it in a safe manner. Will they go out and skate? Hopefully they will and we're trying to facilitate so they do it

in a safe manner every single time,” he said. “I can guarantee every skater out there really doesn’t want to get hurt and doesn’t want to disturb the residents.”

Mayor Darrell Mussatto said he fully supports the event. “I think it would be wrong to penalize all skateboarders because of the actions of a few,” he said.



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