

## PREST: Two-wheel commute brings out the competition

[Andy Prest](#) / North Shore News

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Laugh all  
**YOU WANT**  
Andy Prest

A change of scenery seems to have moved me right into the middle of a vicious biker war.

I used to be a biker. Back when I lived on the mean streets of East Kitsilano, I would put on my biker gear and set out over Lions Gate Bridge on my way to work at the North Shore News. I can still recall the wild wonder in the eyes of passersby as I sped along in my neon green rain jacket, neoprene tights and moisture-wicking booties. And if there was ever trouble, I wasn't shy about ringing that handlebar bell. I was b-b-b-bad to the bone. Ding Ding!

I gave up the biker lifestyle after moving to North Van and settling into a place within walking distance of my work. But then last month, work decided it wanted to leave the tony heights of Central Lonsdale and get back to the gritty world closer to the ports.

The move meant that while our office was much closer to North Vancouver's most extensive collection of broken shopping carts, it was farther away from my house. As a result, I've oiled up the chains, pumped up the tires and practised my smug "Oh, I zipped right by that traffic jam!" face for my return to the biking world.

It's been great getting back on two wheels, although I've noticed that things have changed a bit in the half-dozen years that I've been away. There are more dedicated bike lanes, and it seems that there are more cyclists out there using them.

And then there's this: I was zipping along a flat stretch of road this week when another cyclist quickly caught up to me and then zoomed right past, leaving me in the dust. As the bike passed, however, I couldn't help but notice the rider. It was a tiny woman, maybe 65 years old. And she was barely pedalling!

I know cycling is supposed to be the healthy transportation choice, but those benefits must be muted just a little bit if you die of shame.

As the woman sped away from me, I did what any sane, reasonable, sensible young fellow would do – I pedalled my butt off to try to catch up to her and pass her back. As I got a little closer, however, I heard a distinct whirring sound. And there it was – a little motor attached to her bike's frame.

I couldn't believe it. Who has ever heard of a cyclist cheating to try to gain an advantage? That sort of thing would never fly in the Tour de France.

Then I found out that some competitive cyclists actually have been caught with little motors hidden inside their bicycles. One received a six-year ban after being caught going electric at a world championship cyclo-cross race earlier this year. What is going on in the cycling world? Lance Armstrong didn't die for this.

I suppose my 20-minute daily commute is a little bit different than the world championships, but it still was a shock to be passed so brazenly by someone who wasn't working as hard as I was. But it appears that electric bikes are definitely here to stay now, and apparently some cyclists get enraged by the site of them on dedicated bike lanes, cursing them to get back onto the road and face down the trucks and buses like any self-respecting 70-year-old should.

Thinking about it a little more, I've come to realize we should all just share our little lanes as best we can. Not everyone is fit enough to get up and down those North Shore hills under their own steam, so if a neat little motor does the trick to get someone out of an SUV and onto a bike, that's a win. More people out there on two wheels means more pressure on governments to increase cycling infrastructure and more butts in the air for drivers to focus on – crowded bike lanes are safe bike lanes.

And I'll just have to learn to nod and smile as little old ladies blow by me. Keep on zooming, old gals. I know us bikers can look tough, but under that spandex you'll find that we're nothing but insufferably smug.

Just kidding! Under that spandex, we're full of heart! Just like Lance Armstrong, who I can confirm is not actually dead. Except on the inside. Ding ding!

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