



February 11, 2005

Mayor and Council
Vancouver City Hall
453 West 12th Ave.
Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are writing today in support of the Chilco St. and Cardero St. bikeways.

The West End has great potential for bicycling, thanks to its density and proximity to the downtown core. To date, bicycle use has been limited by busy arterial streets and bicycle-unfriendly traffic calming. The existing West End miniparks and diverters do a wonderful job of limiting car access and improving pedestrian comfort, but they unfortunately make through access difficult for bicycles. Since the arterials are clogged with heavy vehicle traffic, cyclists have limited options. Consequently, this project and the upcoming Comox/Helmcken greenway represent big improvements for the cycling community in this neighbourhood. Once these routes are completed, the West End will be a much more bicycle-friendly neighbourhood.

Some residents have complained about the Chilco St. bikeway, with complaints focused on conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists in the miniparks. Some have suggested moving the bikeway, either to Denman St. or another minor street in the West End.

The City of Vancouver's 1999 Bicycle Plan aimed for "enhanced integration on local streets" by "identifying a quiet side street parallel to a major transportation corridor, and installing traffic calming devices and signals to favour the movement of cyclists." In the West End, traffic calming is already prevalent, typically in the form of miniparks. In the corridor near Denman St., every quiet side street includes one or more miniparks. There is no way to build a bikeway in this area without introducing some potential conflicts between cyclists and minipark users.

In discussions with city staff, we did request consideration of other routes in the Denman St. corridor, but staff found that Chilco St. was the best option: it had less conflicts in its miniparks, and offered a gentler grade than other nearby streets. We agree with staff that Chilco St. is the best possible street for a north-south bicycle route near Denman St.

Some of our members suggested changes to the stop signs adjacent to the miniparks on Chilco St. and Cardero St., allowing cyclists to proceed through without stopping. Stop signs favouring bike routes are common on existing bikeways, and there are precedents on the Adanac route and elsewhere. However, we recognise that the West End miniparks are a special case, since they are much more heavily used than similar-sized parks in other parts of the city. The city engineering department would prefer to keep the stop signs in place, requiring cyclists to stop before entering the minipark, and hence ensuring a slower speed through the minipark. We are willing to accept this compromise, and we believe this will be sufficient to mitigate conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians in the miniparks.

Overall, the Chilco and Cardero routes are well-designed and useful routes. We believe the designs have been carefully thought out, and do a good job of balancing the needs of bicycle users against the needs of non-cycling residents. The routes will be a valuable addition to the city's bicycle network, serving many users: local residents accessing shopping, school, or work; west side or Downtown South residents connecting to the Lion's Gate Bridge or shopping in West End stores; north shore residents travelling downtown or elsewhere in Vancouver; recreational users travelling between the English Bay seawall and the Coal Harbour seawall, or entering Stanley Park; tourists returning from Stanley Park to the bicycle rental shops at the north end of Denman St. Also, these routes improve the connections between the emerging downtown neighbourhoods, knitting the fabric of the city together.

We urge you to approve the Chilco St. and Cardero St. bikeways on Feb. 15. We look forward to further progress in implementing the Downtown Transportation Plan.

Sincerely,

H-JEH (Jack) Becker
Chair, VACC Vancouver Committee
Director, Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition

Please address future communications to the VACC contact person on this issue:

David Pritchard