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February 2015



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## Dear Readers,

This month our newsletter leads off with a message from our Board, setting out the BEST position on the upcoming transportation referendum. The campaign is well underway (and heating up), and given what is at stake we think it is imperative that everybody who supports sustainable transportation in Metro Vancouver continue to speak out for a “Yes” vote. We hope you will read our Board’s message, and share it with your friends.

But that is not all you will find in our newsletter: Read on and you’ll hear about The Bicycle Valet’s latest news, some upcoming events, and last but not least a road story about cycling in India featuring two well-known BEST faces!

## Transportation Referendum: A message from the BEST Board

The Board of BEST supports a “Yes” vote on the Metro Vancouver transportation referendum because we, as a region, cannot afford to wait another decade for much-needed transit and transportation improvements.

“But TransLink! It’s a mess!” some may say.

It’s true that TransLink has a negative public image. It’s easy to pick hot button issues and use them to try to discredit TransLink and everything it does. Some of these are real and valid issues, but is that the whole picture?

TransLink has been through multiple independent audits, including several mandated by the province. Auditors recommended some efficiencies, but have generally regarded Translink as a well-run organization. TransLink delivers more rides, more hours of service over a greater area than transit systems in Toronto and Montreal, and has an excellent world-wide reputation. Notably, TransLink is also responsible for maintaining a major regional road network and several major bridges.

Many of TransLink's challenges (PR and otherwise) have to do with its governance structure, criticized because it does not directly place management and financial oversight on elected representatives accountable to the taxpayer. Provincial legislation outlines rules for the TransLink governance and financial oversight, and only the province has the authority to make changes. And most would agree that governance reform is needed to build in greater transparency and accountability.

Many people seem to think that voting \*against\* transit improvement funding translates into a vote \*for\* TransLink governance reform. The thing is, the public is not being asked about TransLink or its governance in this transportation plebiscite. We're being asked whether we think it's worth paying an extra .5% sales tax (about 35 cents per day) to fund transit and transportation infrastructure improvements that are a crucial investment in mobility and livability for our region.

The message that a stack of "No" ballots sends is we think the important transportation improvements outlined in the [Mayor's Plan](#) simply aren't a funding priority. Meanwhile, our regional population grows, traffic congestion worsens, and the pressure increases on a transit system that has no funds to expand.

BEST has joined the [Better Transit and Transportation Coalition](#) because it's time to say \*yes\* to investing in transportation for our growing region.

*- Board of Directors, Better Environmentally Sound Transportation*



**The BTTTC invites the media and supporters of the "Yes" vote in Metro Vancouver's upcoming transit and transportation referendum to a campaign event:**

**Time: 12 noon, registration at 11:30 a.m.**

**Date: Thursday, February 5**

**Location: SFU, Segal Building, 500 Granville Street, Vancouver**

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## The Bicycle Valet: Gearing up for 2015 season

We've given out our prizes to the two winners out of the hundreds that responded to the 2014 Annual Bicycle Valet Survey. Robyn M. and Miriam S. (pictured) each won two booklets of one-zone transit tickets. Thank you to everyone who took the time to answer the survey!

We are now in the process of organizing for the 2015 season, which promises to be our busiest yet. If you are interested in learning more about The Bicycle Valet and how you can volunteer with us or have us come to your event visit [here](#), or contact Stephanie Williams at [bicyclevalet@best.bc.ca](mailto:bicyclevalet@best.bc.ca).



*Miriam S. completed the Bicycle Valet survey - and won big!*

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## **Bike Café series continues**

This month SFU's Bike Cafés again invite the cycling community and others to get together to discuss the sustainable evolution of our city. The Cafés take place along major commuter cycling routes at two cyclist-friendly coffee bars – Musette Caffé in Chinatown and Tandem Café at 16th & Heather.

### **February 10 @ 6:00 p.m., Musette Caffé, 75 East Pender Street**

Topic: Cycling and Generational Politics

Moderator: Gordon Price

### **February 26 @ 6:00 p.m., Tandem Café, 3195 Heather Street**

Topic: Cycling and Automated Vehicles

Moderator: Richard Campbell

For more information on these and future Bicycle Cafés, visit [here](#).

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## **Workshop: Mobility, Air Quality, and Health**



On March 25, 2015 the BC Lung Association presents the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Air Quality & Health Workshop: The Future of Mobility, Air Quality, and Health.

The movement of people and goods around cities, countries, and the planet impacts the health of populations via air pollution, physical activity, climate forcing and other pathways. New ideas and new technologies in transportation have the potential to bring about a paradigm shift over the coming decades, which could improve health at the global scale.

This workshop will present ideas, research, and case studies from international experts who are challenging the status quo of mobility. Participants will be inspired to think about the possibilities while being challenged to consider what it would take to implement them.

For more information and to register visit [here](#).

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## **Road Story**

### **Cycling in India: In praise of Mr. Bicycle**



*By Stephanie Williams*

India has long been on the top of my travel list; for many backpackers, it's the ultimate destination, a place known to evoke emotions of love and hate at different times or in the same moment, of intense smells both pleasant and putrid, and colours and people everywhere. So when BEST's former Executive Director, Margaret Mahan, invited me to come visit her while she was studying Sanskrit (!), I bought a plane ticket to India!

(That's me to the left and Marg to the right in the above photo).

After relaxing on the beaches of Goa for a week or so, Marieke (my travel buddy) and I jumped on a train to meet up with Marg at a small ashram outside of Gokarna, just below the State of Goa on the west coast of India. Having now not been on a bicycle for two weeks (one year for Marg), we took it upon ourselves to overhaul three of the five abandoned bikes, and explore the village surrounding the ashram. With virtually no tools available, it seemed this was a job for the local bicycle expert, dubbed Mr. Bicycle by me, a studious looking man in glasses and a longhi. Like all shop-owners living a balanced life, Mr. Bicycle did not open in the afternoons until 4pm, after the heat of the day had lifted.

The first day of our visit to Mr. Bicycle saw us manage to get air in all of the tires, and one of the seats fixed. The brake cables, pads, pedal and other seats would be a job for "tomorrow". Sure enough, upon our late afternoon visit, Mr. Bicycle pulled out a brand new pedal and brake cables and went to work. Our task seemed to consist of waving to the whispering school children riding home on their bicycles. By day three it was evident we had a flat tire on one of the bikes, but two were ready to go! Marieke and I hopped on the bikes and headed to the beach! Alas, five minutes down a rocky dirt path we soon heard the loudest POP!, which half the village came out to inspect. Luckily there was another bicycle repair man about 100 metres down the road, who patched up our tire in ten minutes for twenty rupees (\$0.40 CAD).

The last day of our visit to the ashram I tried to get the third bike fixed, but alas, Mr. Bicycle had taken the day off. But overall, we felt pretty good about getting two bikes ready for the road, having a couple of great experiences that could only happen on the seat of a bicycle, and learning the lesson to always keep your bicycle well maintained!

*(Stephanie Williams is Manager of BEST's The Bicycle Valet. She returns this month from her travels, all rested and raring to go for another season!)*



*Getting around like a local in Gokarna.*

## THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS:



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**Thank you for your continued interest in BEST!**

Our Mission:

To advance the transformation to sustainable transportation

Our Vision:

Vibrant, healthy communities built around sustainable modes of transportation

As Canada's new [Anti-Spam Legislation](#) came into effect July 1st 2014, we are in the process of updating our mailing lists and documenting subscriber consent. We currently send you electronic communications that you have opted into in the past, or because you have participated in one of our events, utilized our services, or supported us in some way. We will continue to send you news and updates about our organization, but please note that you are free to unsubscribe at any time. If you would like to give us your permanent (until you unsubscribe) express consent, please click [here](#).

We hope you will choose to stay with us at BEST!

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Get in touch with us! [info@best.bc.ca](mailto:info@best.bc.ca) | 604.669.2860 | [best.bc.ca](http://best.bc.ca)

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