



Better Environmentally Sound Transportation e-News February 2014

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Happy February!

Spring is coming and lately it seems as though it's coming sooner than later. As the weather [hopefully] warms BEST amps up for another busy spring.

Here is our latest update!

Living Streets Event in Surrey

On January 28th 2014 BEST held its final event showcasing Living Streets participant findings from the 2013 season. The event was a huge success, and was attended by over 40 participants including: members of the community at large, BEST staff and youth volunteers, and City of Surrey officials. The annual goal of the final event is to encourage engagement between City Staff and members of Surrey's communities - especially those that are generally more difficult to engage. The event was a success thanks to the diversity of eager participants willing to share and learn from one another.

With the 2013 year successfully under wraps, the Living Streets program continues headstrong into 2014. The new program coordinator for 2014, Dinah Steele, is excited to take the reins from Beth Hurford.

Beth has made a huge impact during her time coordinating the program, providing a strong foundation for the program's successful implementation. Her presence will be missed. Dinah is keen to fill Beth's shoes, aiming to administer 15 educational presentations for youth and new immigrants across all of Surrey's communities in 2014.

If you are interested in further information about the [Living Streets program](#), including the chance to partake in a pedestrian audit of your own neighbourhood, please contact Dinah at dinah.steele@best.bc.ca or at the BEST office: 604 669 2860.

Looking forward to sharing future Living Streets successes in 2014!



BEST volunteer, Tyler Elnicki, leads a conversation

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Dinah Steele gets a laugh out of a group of Living Streets participants



Beth Hurford presenting some key findings from throughout the year

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Transit Referendum Update

As most of us are already aware, there is a transit referendum looming – that much is for sure. However, the timing of the referendum, even the question itself, remain mysteries. The result of the referendum will be monumental in shaping Metro Vancouver's future and must not be taken lightly.

Metro Vancouver mayors have been voicing their concerns about the poorly organized initiative – very real concerns indeed. However, last week the referendum took a slight turn, which could be for the best as Premier Christy Clark said she was prepared to talk with the Mayors about the referendum's timing; a definite step in the right direction if a successful referendum is to be had.

The willingness to revisit the timing provides mayors some hope that the question itself, something that must be used for a healthy and constructive dialogue leading up to the vote, will be clarified and help mayors build the support they'll need to win this all important referendum.

If the Province and mayors can successfully work together to iron out the details well in advance of the referendum increased transit funding will be far more likely. Pauletta Tonilas, senior manager of public relations for the Regional Transportation District in Denver, a city that experienced a failed, and a later victorious transit referendum says, "...conducting a successful transit referendum really comes down to strong leadership that has the passion and courage to move forward with the initiative." In order to achieve this in Metro Vancouver, the Mayors Council and the Provincial government will have to work together to move the initiative forward and create constructive dialogue in a transparent way. Something all residents of Metro Vancouver will be glad to see and more likely to support.

Discussions pertaining to the transit referendum are happening everywhere. Here is a list of a few articles from this past week (this list is not exhaustive).

[Robertson breaks ranks on transit referendum](#)

[Is compromise possible on transit referendum?](#)

[Clark opens door to talk on new transit referendum date](#)

[Denver's transit-referendum redemption a lesson for Vancouver](#)

If you would like to learn more join the conversation on Thursday, February 6th as City Conversations discusses the "big questions" related to the referendum with Vancouver Councillor Geoff Meggs and SFU City Program



Director Gordon Price

More information here:

[Transit referendum: Should there be one? What will it take to win?](#)

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BEST AGM coming up in May

This year the BEST Annual General Meeting will be held on **Wednesday, May 7, 2014**, from 6:00-8:30 pm at the YWCA Hotel, Royal Bank/Canfor Room, 733 Beatty Street.

At the AGM we will present BEST's financial reports and there will be a presentation on the upcoming Transit Referendum by BEST Board member Emily Willobee. There will also be time for you to speak with the board and staff and to give us suggestions as to BEST's future directions.

If you would like to join BEST, or your membership has expired, please visit <http://best.bc.ca/support-best/join/>.

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Sustainable Transportation - Colombian Style!

Stephanie Williams, [The Bicycle Valet](#) Manager, has been travelling throughout Colombia over the past couple of months. Being a self proclaimed "sustainable transportation nerd," she has been eagerly exploring some of South America's most well known transit cities! She was generous enough to take some time to provide us with this wonderful sustainable transportation story - straight from Colombia. Thanks Stephanie!

Straight from Stephanie herself:

Being a bit of a sustainable transportation nerd, I have to admit that my decision to spend my annual winter break in Colombia was in part predicated on the country's recent international reputation for innovation in transportation in its cities. I was also excited by the prospect of indulging in its other famous export (coffee, of course).

My first stop was Bogota, the largest city and capital of Colombia, where my bucket list included participating in the weekly [Ciclovía](#) (cycle way), riding the [TransMilenio](#), and testing out my rusty Spanish. Of the three, the first proved to be the most successful by far. A little later than anticipated due to obligatory festivities the night before, but better than never, my lovely Couchsurfing host and I put some air in the tires of the family bicycles, and off we went! Ciclovía takes place every Sunday in Bogota (and has since been replicated in Medellin and Quito, Ecuador) from 7am to 1pm, with numerous major and minor roads shut down to car traffic, opening them up to cyclists, pedestrians, joggers, rollerbladers and organized fitness classes.

While many Bogotanas were using the opportunity of car free streets for some hard core road and mountain biking, there were many families spending the day together, learning how to ride bikes, couples on dubious rollerblading dates, and me and my host, rolling along at a much slower pace. Alongside the roads you could find bicycle rental and repair stands, physical health information, fruit and juice vendors, and even balloons, all adding up to a rather festive atmosphere. There were a few missed connections in our route south, but these allowed us to use the excellent separated bike lanes throughout the city. By 1pm I was tired, content and quite a bit sunburnt (due to the high altitude of the city).

With my host off to university the next day, I was on my own for #2 on my to do list: navigate the TransMilenio. This ambitious bus rapid transit system, was introduced in late 2000, and initially cut travel times across the city in half. Today the system, while still efficient in its allowance for easy circumvention of intense traffic, is severely overcrowded. I also did not find it to be very user friendly. Upon locating the nearest station, I paid my fare (which amounted to about \$0.80- there seems to be different prices at different times of the day), went through the turnstiles, and tried to figure it out. First I figured out the direction I wanted to travel (south) and located the right side of the station to stand on (buses pull up to each side). Then I located my end destination on the station map, which showed me I had to take the red line. The next step was determining which letter of the red line I wanted, which corresponds to different routes operating at different times of days, with some being express buses, only stopping at every 5th stop or so (I therefore had to see if my final stop was a major stop, or minor one). Finally, I had to find the right portal to stand at, and wait for the correct letter and number bus to come along to that portal, and then attempt to wedge myself in with everyone else.

Once on the bus, and safely away from the doors, the trip was fast and efficient, if not entirely smooth. It's definitely not a metro. Luckily I was getting off near the end of the line and didn't have a harrowing experience attempting to exit the bus with a million other people trying to board at the same time. Overall, it did the job, and was much better than sitting in traffic. However, I would have to echo many Bogotanas' sentiments that the system needs to be expanded, and rapidly.



The distinct red Transmilenio



A spiffy Transmilenio station indeed



Tires are freshly pumped and she's ready for Ciclovía in Bogota.

HUB - Driver Training Recommendations

Our friends at [HUB: Your Cycling Connection](#) have made wonderful recommendations to improve driver training that will ensure more awareness around people on bicycles. We are so glad to know that the team at HUB is working hard to make streets safer and more enjoyable for all!

For a visual of some of the recommendations that have been made [click here](#).

Thanks HUB and keep up the good work!

[Visit us at best.bc.ca](#)

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