

[The BC Commuter Challenge is on - register now!](#)



April 2016



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Dear Readers,

Off Ramp was created in the late 90s as a student leader mentoring program designed to increase the number of teens walking, cycling, and taking transit to school. This month we look back at this innovative, award-winning program with a special 25th anniversary story by founder Arthur Orsini. We'll also look at the Arbutus Greenway (Are we happy? Yes!) and tell you what Commuter Challenge and The Bicycle Valet are up to. On the Members Desk: In April we have our AGM, which all members are invited to attend, as well as a MEC Club Night, which gives BEST members the opportunity to purchase MEC gear at a discount. Another couple of good reasons to [join BEST!](#)

BEST's 25th Anniversary

Off Ramp: Teenagers lead the way

by Arthur Orsini



Off Ramp was a student leader mentoring program to increase the number of teenagers walking, cycling and taking transit to high school. From 1999 to 2004 I had the privilege of directing the leadership efforts of hundreds of student leaders across Vancouver, Victoria and beyond in regional training workshops and on-site support within their own school communities.

It's tough to measure the expanding ripples of that type of outreach, but over the years I've bumped into former Off Ramp leaders who've shared stories of how BEST's opportunity has shaped their outlook,

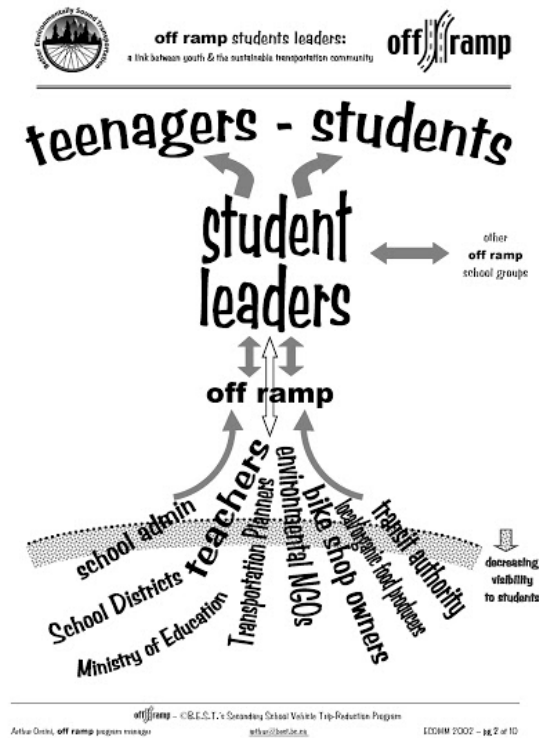
course of study, and life choices. In 2013, I saw Kate Jongbloed - a star of Off Ramp's early years:

"Being involved in Off Ramp and meeting older mentors (not that old!) I learned that activism could be a career to pursue, not just a hobby. The skills in presenting, and youth engagement are things that I've used in several volunteer positions and paid work. To this day (at 27) I've never owned a car. I choose where I live based on how I can use transit, biking and walking to get where I need to get to."



The name Off Ramp was chosen after a series of discussions with the student leaders in the earliest pilot schools. They liked the 'vagueness' of the name's reference to going off the beaten path; the sense of making a change in the way we do things; and of not just continuing to go in the same direction.

As an extra-curricular program, Off Ramp ran outside of the classroom - most often as an extension of the Environmental Club. At that time there was very little effort being directed to sustainable transportation issues for teenagers. It seemed that pop can recycling and beach clean-ups were the main efforts. When BEST was awarded Climate Change Action Funding, I was hired to adapt our workplaces program for a teenage audience. Off Ramp began with a primary aim to reduce vehicle-trips to school, but as a youth engagement effort a foundational goal became apparent: to generate tools and a student leader mentoring framework to promote sustainable transportation. In turn, the Off Ramp leaders were then tasked with the goals of changing attitudes and circumstances so that their peers would increasingly walk, bike and take transit to secondary school.



The events and activities put on by the Off Ramp leaders aimed to draw the attention of their peers and challenge the youths' dependence on their parents for a ride, or permission to borrow the car. In addition to on-site meetings and support leading up to a variety of events, regional workshops were held twice a year to bring together the half dozen student leaders from each of the participating schools. (Over the years, this ranged from eight to 13 schools.) These workshops cultivated peer-support, inspiration and mutual learning. At the top of the motivating factors of those students attending was the wish to enhance their leadership skills.

The program won the "Sustainability and Youth" award from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2000 and our tools and program framework were borrowed by communities across Canada, the USA, Australia and New Zealand. The decrease in vehicle-trips to school was a reflection of each school community, with increased carpooling in the suburbs and a shift to more walking trips in the more densely populated urban areas.



Off Ramp evolved over the years according to funding needs and guidelines; during my time the secondary school program later became 'hundred and one ways for youth to take action on sustainable transportation.' After I went to Auckland, New Zealand to start up a high school program there it became 'I'm doing my Part', then 'Colour My World'.

I am hugely proud of my years working at BEST. The culture of this organization and the

support of its leaders made for a truly great program. Off Ramp helped to raise the bar for all environmental programs aimed at secondary schools by strengthening the need to cultivate youth leaders rather than distribute pre-package program binders to teachers.

“Ian you bastard, now I have to walk to school!”

...said Jason to Ian, an Off Ramp leader at his school after their walking event at Riverside Secondary School in Port Coquitlam, BC.

Arthur Orsini is now an Active Transportation Facilitator for Vancouver Coastal Health.

The Arbutus Greenway: Music to our ears!



BEST was delighted to hear the news that the City of Vancouver has purchased the 9 km/42 acre Arbutus Corridor from CP Rail. The corridor, which runs from False Creek to the Fraser River has been the subject of heated debate and negotiation between the two parties for decades.

In announcing the \$55M purchase Mayor Gregor Robertson said this is “Vancouver’s chance to have a New York-style High Line, a repurposing of what was freight railroad...It will be an incredible opportunity for people to walk and run and bike along the greenway.” It is expected that the corridor will also include light rail.

Needless to say this announcement was music to the ears of BEST – like the Central Valley Greenway (initiated by BEST in the early 1990s), the newly-named Arbutus Greenway fits right in with our vision of Vancouver as a city where people are able to walk, ride, and use transit through a series of vibrant, healthy neighbourhoods.

The City intends to open an Arbutus Greenway Project Office to coordinate the design process and facilitate public input. It is anticipated that portions of the Greenway will be completed by the end of 2017, with the remainder being completed by the end of 2018. We are eager to participate in this process as it unfolds.

For more information and to sign up for updates, go [here](#).

The Bicycle Valet: The season begins!



*At the FIFA Mexico v. Canada game:
Volunteering has its perks!*

[The Bicycle Valet](#) had a great first month in March, with volunteers enjoying themselves at the Modo Spring Run-Off, Whitecaps games, and the FIFA Men's Qualifier match between Canada and Mexico! Wondering where we'll be next?

[Sakura Days Japan Fair](#) April 9 & 10

[Vancouver Sun Run](#) April 17

Laura Secord Elementary School's Earth Day April 20

[Party for the Planet](#) April 23

[Whitecaps](#) home games April 2, 23, 27

And [more...](#)

Wanting to [get involved](#)? We have a **Volunteer Training Session** coming up on April 19th at 6pm at Granville Island. We'll have a quick fun training set, and then head to the nearby pub for a beer/ beverage of choice! Get in touch with Sinéad Stinson at sinead.stinson@best.bc.ca to sign up, or for any other questions about The Bicycle Valet.

* * *

The Bicycle Valet announces new logo design

The Bicycle Valet is very excited to announce that we have a new logo! Designed by the wonderful [Kailani Sutton](#), this new logo moves past simply explaining what we do, and emphasizes that we do indeed offer a secure place to keep your cherished bicycle (skateboard/ stroller/ paddle board/ longboard/ push scooter/ kayak ... anything active transportation!).

We've safely parked 125,345 bikes since 2006, never having lost one – we really are the safest place to park your bike! So, if you see this new logo around town, don't worry, it's still the same amazing Bicycle Valet, with a fresh new look.

NEW
Logo



Old Logo



Commuter Challenge: Winners, Prizes, Contests!

Congratulations! You are a sustainable commuter who cares about your community and the environment. Wouldn't it be nice if someone recognized your efforts? Well if you happen to love the BC lifestyle we've got plenty to offer you!

The BC Commuter Challenge takes place June 5-11, during National Environment Week. Participant prizes include bouldering lessons, climbing gym passes, whale watching, ziplining, MEC & Patagonia gear, tickets and passes to VIFF, MOA, MOV, VSO, Canadians Baseball, Sea to Sky Gondola and [much MUCH more!!!](#) The March early bird prize goes to **Prism Engineering Ltd.** from Burnaby BC. Thanks for your commitment!

Get involved by [registering your workplace](#) and getting ready to commute! Win more prizes by entering our April photo contest on [Instagram](#) & [Twitter](#).

For more information about the Challenge, including registration and sponsorship, contact Steve White at 604-669-2860 ext 200, stephen.white@best.bc.ca.



MEC Club Night: Stock up on some great gear



Another [MEC Club Night](#) is coming up in April, and once again BEST members are invited! Club Nights are a great opportunity to purchase the clothes and gear you will be needing this spring and summer, as members of BEST/MEC receive 10% off regularly-priced in-stock items.

Date: Thursday, April 14 from 7:00pm – 9:00pm
Location: MEC Vancouver, 130 West Broadway

To attend, please RSVP to sinead.stinson@best.bc.ca.

Participants need to be a member of BEST and Mountain Equipment Co-op in order to make a purchase. If you are not a member of BEST, you can [join online](#), or contact Sinead Stinson at 604-669-2860, Ext. 207. If you are not yet a member of MEC, you can purchase a \$5.00 membership that evening. We hope to see you there.

BEST AGM: Please join us

The BEST Annual General Meeting will take place on **Wednesday, April 27, 2016**, from 6:00-8:30 pm at the YWCA Hotel, Canfor Room, 733 Beatty Street, Vancouver.

The AGM is a great opportunity for members to speak with the board and staff and to give suggestions as to BEST's future directions. We are also very pleased to announce that the City of Vancouver will present on the future of the Arbutus Greenway Project.

If you would like to attend, please RSVP by **Wednesday, April 22, 2016** by calling 604-669-2860, or email sinead.stinson@best.bc.ca. If your membership has expired you can [renew online](#), or you will have the opportunity to renew at the meeting.

Please join us!

Age-Friendly Communities: Great places to live



Here at BEST we firmly believe in vibrant and healthy communities for people of all ages. The reasons why age-friendly communities make good sense economically, socially, and personally are laid out in a [recent report](#) by the Portland State University Institute on Aging. Drawing on research conducted by academics, government agencies, non-profits, and corporations, the authors examine the opportunities and benefits that having seniors age at home give to all members of the community. Their conclusion: That the benefits gained by recognizing the value of seniors and enhancing their opportunities to engage and contribute to their communities far outweigh any costs.

The authors of the report define age-friendly communities as having safe and accessible public transportation options; affordable, accessible, and safe housing; pleasant and safe parks and outdoor spaces; quality community and health services; sufficient employment and volunteer opportunities; and engaging social activities and events for everyone. In these communities the needs and preferences of older adults are taken into account. They are respected, and their knowledge, skills, resources, and contributions are sought out and integrated into the fabric of the community. Basically, an age-friendly community is a great place to grow up and grow old.

As the goal of our [STAR](#) program is to help seniors remain active, contributing members in the places they call home we read the PSU report with interest. If you would like to read "The Case for Age-Friendly Communities" we've posted it on our STAR website -- go [here](#).



BEST is pleased to support the [2016 Canada Census](#).

Look for your census package in the mail in May 2016.
Questionnaires can be completed on-line or on paper.

Proud Community
Supporter 
2016
CENSUS

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS:



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!

Get in touch with us! info@best.bc.ca | 604.669.2860 | best.bc.ca

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