

TO: MAYOR & COUNCIL

FROM: COUNCILLOR GU

SUBJECT: BIKE PLAYGROUND

PURPOSE: To seek Council approval to direct staff to explore the establishment of a bike playground in Burnaby.

RECOMMENDATION

WHEREAS learning to ride a bicycle as a child is shown to lead to improvements in motor skills, coordination, balance, social skills, cardiovascular fitness, musculoskeletal strength, and self-esteem and confidence;

WHEREAS there are no designated places in Burnaby for children to learn how to ride a bike, safe places for children to practice riding a bike, or opportunities to bridge the gap from riding in enclosed spaces to riding in urban areas;

WHEREAS early engagement and education in cycling proficiency can support the change in travel behaviour away from single occupancy vehicles towards active transportation, in turn supporting the Council-adopted 2050 goals to reach carbon neutrality, eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries, and have $\frac{3}{4}$ of all trips be by active transportation and public transit.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT staff explore suitable site(s) for the establishment of a bike playground close to existing bike infrastructure and according to global best practices, and explore opportunities for funding from other levels of government and institutions such as TransLink, Ministry of Transportation and Transit, Vision Zero BC, and ICBC; and,

THAT staff report back to Council with identified site(s) for further direction, with enough time to ensure funding application deadlines in September 2025 can be met.

BACKGROUND

A bike playground (also referred to as: bike garden, traffic playground, and traffic garden) is a concept that has been implemented around the world, including in places

such as Copenhagen, Seattle, Montreal, and Chandigarh (India). In D.C., there have been 20 bike playgrounds installed since 2018.

Bike playgrounds are typically miniature versions of a city – they include child-sized versions of roads, sidewalks, bus stops, roundabouts, intersections, benches, and traffic signs that approximate our city streets. Their purpose is to provide a safe, protected, and comfortable space for children to learn how to ride a bike, to play on a bike (with others, or by themselves), and to gain confidence and competency in navigating infrastructure that mimics an urban environment.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS

\$20,000 of funding has already been secured for this project from Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), which is flexible and can go towards either hard (e.g. construction) or soft (e.g. design) costs.

Additionally, preliminary discussions have been had with all the following bodies to ensure the project meets funding eligibility criteria. These funding streams have deadlines in September-November 2025, which provides enough time for project definition and application, should Council support the project and should there be a suitable site available.

1) TransLink Funding:

Confirmation has been received from TransLink staff that the bike playground could be considered a collaborative project between the City of Burnaby and TransLink, which would create opportunities for accessing funds through Local Government Funding Programs, up to a maximum of \$500,000.

2) The Ministry of Transportation and Transit (MOTT) Funding:

The B.C. Active Transportation Infrastructure Grants Program provides cost-sharing opportunities for network planning grants and infrastructure grants. Funding from these grant programs supports the development and upgrading of active transportation infrastructure for all ages and abilities, up to a maximum of \$500,000. Verbal confirmation has been received from MOTT staff for project eligibility.

3) Vision Zero Funding:

Projects eligible for Vision Zero funding will make roads safer and better for people. Submissions are up to a maximum of \$20,000. This includes improving current road designs, changing areas used by cars to create better spaces for walking and biking, and projects focused on public education and road safety planning.

4) ICBC Road Safety Grant:

Projects that improve the safety of vulnerable road users including children, pedestrians and cyclists are eligible for community grants from ICBC. Projects can be funded with a cost share of 50-75%.

There are staff at both TransLink and MOTT who have expressed interest in supporting this project.

DISCUSSION

The City of Burnaby, under Council's leadership, has committed to ambitious goals of carbon neutrality, Vision Zero (eliminate all traffic fatalities and serious injuries), and $\frac{3}{4}$ of all trips to be made by public transit and active transportation, by the year 2050. In order to meet these targets, significant efforts need to be made towards building the skills and comfort for people to use active transportation as a mode of travel. By addressing this skill development at a young age and supporting children to have opportunities to access play through bikes, both children and their parents can feel more comfortable in making the transition towards bikes as transportation.

There are very limited spaces in any urban environment, including the City of Burnaby, that are designed exclusively for children, other than schools and park playgrounds. Play and movement are fundamental for the healthy physical, mental, and social development of children, and creating more spaces to support their needs will only augment the wellbeing of youth in Burnaby. Further, learning to ride a bicycle as a child is shown to lead to improvements in motor skills, coordination, balance, social skills, cardiovascular fitness, musculoskeletal strength, and self-esteem and confidence.

Sites to consider would include underutilized urban areas such as parking lots, ideally next to existing All Ages and Abilities cycling infrastructure. Other jurisdictions have converted spaces as small as two tennis courts into welcoming bike playgrounds.

CONCLUSION

A bike playground would support recreation opportunities for an important target demographic (children) in the City of Burnaby, while also building the education, skills, and engagement necessary to achieve the City's transportation and climate goals.

Respectfully submitted,

COUNCILLOR GU