



STEFANIA SECCIA photo

Luke Des Cotes, a Langara commerce student, rides his bike to school to avoid paying the monthly costs of owning a car.

Bikers and busers abound

Statistics Canada reveals people are getting out of cars

By STEFANIA SECCIA

More and more young people are taking transit and cycling, according to a Statistics Canada 2006 census data report released Wednesday. The consensus is that the change is due to increased eco-consciousness and lack of funds.

The study revealed 32.5 per cent of young workers are reportedly using alternative and sustainable modes of transportation, which is up from 29.5 per cent in 2001.

People between 35 to 44 are nearly 10 per cent less likely to use alternative modes of transport.

However, it doesn't explain why younger people are increasingly changing their transportation gears.

TransLink's public information officer Drew Snider said many factors are involved, including a heightened awareness of the environment and the eco-

nomical costs of things like gas and parking versus the convenience of taking a bus. He said the new stats prove that more work needs to be done. However, Snider said people are still using their cars in areas like Surrey where not enough transit is provided.

"We've been on the right track so far but still need to provide more service to satisfy enough areas," Snider said.

However, Jason Emmert, manager of community engagement and policy at Smart Growth B.C., said it takes more than eco-awareness to stimulate people to change their transport patterns.

Emmert said a big factor is a young person's income compared to the older bracket's paycheques. It's about weighing the reliability of transit and cost effectiveness of owning a car. But he does agree that younger people are becoming more aware of their environmental footprint.

"In 2001 there was no Al Gore, Inconvenient Truth [or] wider conscientious-

ness," Emmert said.

Smart Growth B.C. is a non-governmental organization trying to promote a social and environmental responsibility in land use and development. Emmert said this report fits well into work they're already doing to attain wider sidewalks and connecting bike routes.

Arno Schortinghuise, media representative for Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition, said young people are very green-conscious, adding that a lot of people started cycling during the 2001 transit strike. He also said that the "carbon tax is a good start," because it makes it more difficult to afford a car.

The VACC is a non-profit society whose volunteers try to create a better environment to encourage cycling in the city. One of the programs offered is a commuter cyclist skills class to teach cyclist road safety and conduct. It is also doing a metro-wide bike-to-work week at the end of May.

STATS busing & biking

- Young people aged 25 to 34 were more likely to use green modes of transportation
- In 2001, 7.5 per cent of commuters in B.C. used public transit
- In 2006, 10.3 per cent of commuters in B.C. used public transit
- Car commuters dropped from 73.8 per cent in 2001 to 72.3 per cent in 2006

Source: Statistics Canada

TransLink to use Facebook

Bus company develops online rider application to ease transit ridership

By MELISSA SMALLEY

TransLink has developed a Facebook application designed to help transit riders find out when their next bus will arrive.

Bus riders who use the social networking site can add the Next Bus application and pick which routes and stops they frequently use. A schedule will then be added to their profile showing the arrival times of the next six buses for a particular stop.

"It's part of our customer service strategy of getting the info out through as many different avenues as we can for what's convenient to our customers," said TransLink's Cam Telford.

But not all bus riders think the Facebook application will be a helpful tool.

Jesse Embree takes the bus every day and says he doesn't rely on bus schedules.

"I trust that the buses will come," he said. "I use Facebook for social interaction, and I definitely would not have TransLink as my friend."

The introduction of the Facebook application follows the Next Bus text message service introduced by TransLink in December.

Fix rape help — advocates

Sexual assault relief workers want city police better equipped for victims

By JEFF LAWRENCE

The day before a meeting between Health Minister George Abbott and a women's health committee, a spokesperson for an organization from the committee claimed Vancouver police are not doing enough to investigate sexual assault reports.

"We have cases at present that I know of where women have filed a [sexual assault] complaint, they've made a report, and the file has not been opened," Irene Tsepnopoulos-Elhaimer, executive director of Women Against Violence Against Women's rape crisis centre, said yesterday.

VPD officers do not file those reports because the legitimacy of the case is left up to their own discretion, which is often influenced by stigma surrounding sexualized violence, Tsepnopoulos-Elhaimer claimed.

"[Officers] should be getting trained so that everyone understands what sexual assault is about," she said. "Protocols should ensure that when a woman has the courage to report, that it's not a discretionary issue."

WAWAW is one organization that makes up the Vancouver Women's Health Advisory Committee, which will speak with Minister Abbott today about women's health issues including sexual assault emergencies.

VPD spokesperson Const. Jana McGuinness refused to respond to Tsepnopoulos-Elhaimer's claims, but said that sexual offence reports are governed by strict procedures.

McGuinness said officers who deal with reports of sexual assault must refer every incident to the Sexual Offence Squad, which assists in determining if criminal charges should be pursued.

"We take these offences seriously, from the most minor reports to the most brutal ones," she said.

McGuinness refused to comment on the criteria the Sexual Offence Squad uses in determining whether a report should have criminal charges pursued.

Golf course seeks more money

“Four or five months it's so wet out here it's not much fun to play

STAN DIXON

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However, the drainage problem is not a main objective in the marketing plan that was given to the board, although Stan Dixon, superintendent of Langara Golf Course, said it should have been.

Dixon said business has been suffering for fifteen years because of the drainage problem.

When the golf course was first renovated, they didn't incorporate sand into the construction of the fairways, creating a drainage problem, Dixon explained.

"After they did Langara in 1993, they realized they made a mistake and incorporated sand when they were constructing the fairways at McCleery and Fraserview. Therefore, they have better drainage than we do here," said Dixon.

Dixon has been looking into solving

the problem, but the solution comes with a big cost.

"There is a plan in place and we got a quote from a contractor that has worked at Capilano Golf Course, and it will be fairly costly — close to a million dollars," said Dixon. He added that the park board is hoping to approve the plan, but Dixon won't know until October.

Despite the large amount, Dixon said the renovations should pay for themselves.

Dixon said that any money spent on proper drainage for the course will be equaled by profits within four or five years.

"Even if you shell out a million dollars, you could increase your rounds by an addition of 10,000 per year," he said.

Dixon also tried alternative methods to solve the problem by using a machine that punches hole in the ground

and fills them up with sand. He said they have done this five or six times to some of the fairways, but it's not a long-term solution.

"Unless you have the infrastructure for the drainage in place, it's not going to do that good of a job," said Dixon.

Until the course is fixed, golfers at Langara will have to make do with the greens conditions, or find another place to swing their clubs during the boggy months.

"Basically, people right now only play this golf course six months of the year," said Dixon.

"The other four or five months, it's so wet out here it's not much fun to play."

On Tuesday, park board chair Korina Houghton said the board was looking for ways to improve the city's golf program because right now its profits have gone down.