

Commissioners
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
2099 Beach Ave.
Vancouver, BC
V6G 1Z4

August 11, 2020

Dear Park Board Commissioners,

We are writing in regard to the horse-drawn tram currently permitted on the roadway within Stanley Park. In recent public discussions, the presence of the tram has been raised as an issue concerning access to the park by motorists and cyclists. Specifically, concerns have been expressed about traffic being slowed in the lane currently allocated to motor vehicles, leading to motorists unsafely passing the tram in the lane allocated to cyclists.

This situation is putting the safety of cyclists, motorists and the horses at risk. In our view, this risk can be eliminated by removing the horse-drawn tram from the roadway, as the hazard posed by the tram to cyclists, the horses themselves, and tourists in the tram cannot be adequately mitigated. The introduction of “pull-outs” to allow traffic to bypass the tram is unlikely to address the risks posed by frustrated motorists. It will only result in the tram repeatedly re-entering the traffic stream, which could increase the hazards to all users. The cycle lane has also been narrowed in places to accommodate the pull-outs, creating an additional safety issue and restricting space for wider pedal-driven traffic such as cargo bikes, trikes and trailers.

We recognize that the current traffic configuration in the park is temporary and that the Park Board is considering ways to ensure maximum accessibility for all park users. The presence of the horse-drawn tram is a clear obstacle to achieving that goal, as it adds an unnecessary complication to an already complex situation. It is difficult enough for the park to accommodate two competing forms of 21st century traffic (cars and bicycles) without a 19th century mode of transportation being thrown into the equation.

We also recognize that the tram is a draw for tourists but alternative vehicles, such as pedal-driven rickshaws, could serve this purpose and safely share the lane allocated to cycle traffic. These are popular in many tourist destinations around the world that have discontinued the use of horses in their jurisdictions. Pedal-driven rickshaws would also provide potential jobs, are environmentally friendly, energy-efficient, and a cost-effective transport system.

Withdrawing the horse-drawn tram from Stanley Park would:

- Eliminate a traffic hazard for motorists, cyclists and horses
- Allow for an expansion of unimpeded cycle traffic, responding to data demonstrating the increasing use by cyclists and meeting a [Key Green Vancouver Goal](#)
- Retain access for families and those with [mobility challenges](#) who are reliant on motor vehicles

As an organization dedicated to animal welfare, we are opposed to putting animals at undue risk of injury or death. The presence of horse-drawn vehicles that are slowing motor vehicle traffic risks the health of the horses through exhaust inhalation, and causes them mental distress, which can make them unpredictable and potentially dangerous to park pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles.

These risks, and the long hours horses spend on hard pavement in all types of weather, has led many cities to ban such vehicles – most recently, [Montreal](#). The removal of the horse-drawn tram from Stanley Park would demonstrate a commitment to science-based policy regarding safety.

Finally, if there are any questions regarding the potential risks faced by cyclists, pedestrians and tourists by the continued operation of a horse-drawn tram, please review a [2016 incident](#) in which a horse pulling the tram was spooked by traffic noise in Stanley Park and bolted off the roadway, nearly taking the tram over the seawall. Such incidents could easily occur in future, particularly with a more complex and variable environment, such as the roadway changes due to COVID-19, which makes the continued presence of the tram an accident waiting to happen.

The Vancouver Park Board has an opportunity to make Stanley Park safer for pedestrians, cyclists, horses and motor vehicles and should remove the horse-drawn tram as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Amy Morris
Executive Director

Kaeleigh Phillips
Campaign Director

