

Skateboarders on Bike Lanes

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Background

The term active transportation refers to any form of human-powered transportation such as walking, cycling, skating, and skateboarding, that promote health, social, environmental, and economical well being¹. According to By-Law No.11449, “Protected Bicycle Lane” is designed by the City Engineer for use by persons on bicycles, non-motorized skates, skateboards, or push scooters². Skateboarding has been legal in Vancouver since 2005². The City of Vancouver has built more than six skating parks and established multiple indoor skateboarding centers³. From the Council strike subsection 77A. (3), skateboarders must wear a helmet for safety purposes⁴. They must not wear headphones or any device that hinder the hearing of sounds⁴. They must also not skateboard half-hour after sunset and half-hour before sunrise, and they must not skateboard in a reckless manner⁴. According to the City’s Streets and Traffic Bylaw (No.6234), there are specific areas in which boarding is prohibited for safety reasons⁴.

Results

- Reason for and frequency of skateboarding:
 - Skateboard mainly for commuting and leisure
 - Mostly three to four days/week
- Likes and dislikes of bike lanes compared to sidewalks:
 - Likes:
 - No pedestrians
 - Smoother surfaces
 - Dislikes:
 - Close to motor traffic
 - Have to watch out for bikers
- Environment factors, accessibility, and convenience of bike lanes:
 - Enjoy smooth bike lanes with nice scenery
 - Hardly any bike lanes in and around UBC
- Perception of safety of bike lanes:
 - Dangerous:
 - Proximity to fast moving vehicles
 - Safe:
 - Decreases the likelihood of hitting a pedestrian
 - Drivers generally know to be cautious driving near bike routes
- Protective gear when skateboarding:
 - No usage due to inconvenience and utilization of sidewalks rather than bike lanes
 - Changes to make bike lanes safer and more comfortable:
 - Wider and smoother bike lanes

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of skateboarders who skateboard to and at the University of British Columbia (UBC) to provide insight on how bike routes can be made more safe and comfortable for them.

Discussion

Skateboarding is typically seen as a recreational activity⁵. However, our results suggest that skateboarding is becoming increasingly more popular as a mode of transportation. Due to the lack of bike lanes on campus, participants often revert to sidewalks.

The smoothness of bike lanes are a definitive factor in providing safety and comfort for skateboarders. According to one participant, surface is important as the *“wheels on a board are small enough that riding quality is affected by bumps, cracks and rocks on the road”*. The largest percentage of skateboarding injuries is related to irregularity in skating surfaces, causing loss of control⁶. Bike lanes allow skateboarders to avoid irregularity in surfaces on sidewalks, and to avoid pedestrian collisions. However, a potential safety concern of bike paths is the greater risk of being involved in a motor vehicle collision. Concerns for their safety meant skateboarders often reverted to using sidewalks to be more cautious. Participants suggested this can be improved through creating barriers between bike lanes and the traffic.

Cyclists are two miles faster than skateboarders⁵. This raises concerns for skateboarders as bike paths are too narrow for overtaking. Due to this, participants’ suggested widening bike paths *“to allow people with different speeds (e.g. bikes vs. skateboarders) to coexist”*.

Injuries are considered normalized in the skateboarding culture, and so skateboarders may be comfortable with the use of little to no safety equipment⁷. Instead of safety equipment, improving pavement quality was considered more effective in reducing injury. One participant said *“smooth pavement would be nice on Main Mall, the tile pattern on the ground is not very good for boarding”*.



Methods

Inclusion criteria: Individuals who skateboard at and around the UBC campus grounds

Sample: Five male UBC students.

Semi-structured interview were conducted with these participants. Eight questions were asked regarding:

- Reason for and frequency of skateboarding
- Likes and dislikes of bike lanes compared to sidewalks
- Environment factors, accessibility, and convenience of bike lanes
- Perception of safety of bike lanes
- Protective gear when skateboarding
- Changes to make bike lanes safer and more comfortable

Analysis

Answers to questions were transcribed and compiled in a table to identify key words amongst answers, and differences in usage of key words amongst participants. Numerical values were used to identify the frequency of occurrence of certain words to create a frequency table from which a bar graph was made.

Recommendations

- Enforce a stricter policy for the use of protective equipment by skateboarders on bike lanes
- Take into greater consideration the quality and smoothness of bike path surfaces
- Widening bike lanes for overtaking
- Increase the number of bike lanes in and around UBC

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