

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

'Other Urban Repair Squad' (O.U.R.S.) Hits Victoria Again:

Cycling Activists Paint "Guerrilla Sharrows" in Response to Slow Expansion of Bike Lanes

June 24, 2010 - Coast Salish Territories, Victoria –Victoria's Other Urban Repair Squad (O.U.R.S) has painted more "sharrows" along a busy commuter route in Victoria. The markings run along a street linking downtown and Camosun and University of Victoria campuses.

"It's been nearly a year since we painted the sharrows on Hillside and there's been no action at all from the CRD in terms of providing more bike lanes," says Yukon Duit, spokesperson for the group. The Hillside sharrows were subsequently painted over by City workers last July.

Sharrows – short for "Shared Use Arrow" – are bicycle-and-chevron markings indicating a shared use lane. The markings are used in cities across North America and Europe on roadways that are too narrow to incorporate a full bike lane.

Sharrows were adopted last year by the Transportation Association of Canada, which approves standards and guidelines for road design and markings across Canada. The markings have not been officially adopted by any of the municipalities in the CRD, although they are used to designate major bike routes in many other cities in Canada - most notably in Montreal and Vancouver.

"It's clear that despite touting Victoria as the cycling capital of Canada, the CRD and the City do not see cycling infrastructure as a priority," states Duit. "None of the City of Victoria's \$189-million 2010 budget has been allocated to the Sustainability Department, yet nearly \$69-million will be spent repairing major vehicular roadways into the city and \$3-million will be spent on automobile parkades."

The City of Victoria 2009-2028 Capital Plan Project Budget allocates \$2-million for a bike lane along Yates from Government to Wharf. Duit, however, says that the funds are misdirected.

"That's a lot of money to spend on one block – and a lane on a downtown commercial block does not do much to support commuter cycling," notes Duit. Alternatively, bike lanes along the Hillside-Lansdowne corridor would encourage cycling among the University of Victoria and Camosun College communities which see over 34,000 students and 5,000 faculty and staff accessing the campuses during the school year. Studies have shown that the biggest barrier to getting more people on bicycles is the perception of danger on the road due to inadequate cycling infrastructure.

The sharrows were painted 2 weeks ago. "I feel much safer having [the sharrows] there," says commuter cyclist Idid Itoo. "Cars and trucks are definitely responding differently, and giving me more space on the road."

"We know from our experience that painting bike lanes is cheap. You can buy a lot of paint with \$2-million, so we thought we'd show the CRD how it's done. Again," says Duit. "For its part, the City is making decisions in the dark, without the input of the cycling community, and at a snail's pace" claims Duit, pointing to the shutting down of the City of Victoria Cycling Advisory Committee nearly two years ago.

O.U.R.S Victoria is part of a larger international network of Urban Repair Squads across North America, Europe and South America that encourages people to reclaim ownership and stewardship of urban spaces by constructing urban infrastructure through direct action.

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For more information:

To receive more info on the whereabouts of the new sharrows or to see photos email:
oursvictoria@graffiti.net

O.U.R.S Victoria media (2009):

<http://www.mondaymag.com/articles/entry/to-diy-or-not-to-diy/food-and-life/>
www.timescolonist.com/travel/Sharrows+need+official
www.timescolonist.com/news/City+crews+obliterate+guerrilla+road+marks
www.timescolonist.com/travel/City+erases+more+bike+sharrows+Hillside
www.timescolonist.com/travel/Cycling+activists+leading

Urban Repair Squad (Toronto) <http://urbanrepairs.blogspot.com/>

An earlier report by City of Victoria Councillor John Luton on the success of sharrows in Montreal: http://cyclfac_toolbox-3wc.thecyclistwebhouse.com/sharrows/Index.htm

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O.U.R.S. Victoria