

**Meeting:** Electoral Area Services Committee – November 6, 2025  
**Delegation:** Steven Earle, Gabriola Transportation Society  
**Subject:** Safety for Pedestrians and Cyclists on Gabriola's Ferry Hill  
**Summary:**

*October 2025:*

## **Safety for Pedestrians and Cyclists on Gabriola's Ferry Hill**

*Presented by the Gabriola Transportation Society*

### **SAFETY FIRST:**

Public access to and from the Gabriola Island village core to the BC Ferry Terminal at Descanso Bay is dangerous. With no separated pathway, pedestrians, cyclists and those with mobility challenges, are forced to share congested and narrow roadways with cars, trucks and commercial vehicles.

The terminal is at the bottom of a steep hill - known locally as "Ferry Hill" - that runs approximately 650 m along North Road from the terminus of the 1.5 km Gabriola Village Pathway.

Limited lighting along Ferry Hill results in poor visibility, especially during winter months. There is no signage warning drivers to watch for pedestrians and cyclists, no marked pedestrian crosswalks, nor separation of vehicle, pedestrian and cyclist traffic.

The terminal configuration, moreover, channels pedestrians disembarking from the ferry onto the right side of the road up Ferry Hill with their backs to oncoming traffic - a hazardous practise that contravenes the Highways Act.

BC Ferries is aware of these hazards and identified the need for improved pedestrian and cyclist safety in their *2019 Descanso Bay Terminal Development Plan*. No improvements have been implemented as terminal re-development is on indefinite hold.

### **WHAT WE ARE ASKING FOR:**

#### ***Safe pathway:***

Extension of the grade-separated 2 metre wide Village Pathway for 650 m from the North-South intersection along the southwest side of North Rd to the Descanso Bay terminal.

#### ***Working with other Agencies to Improve Safety:***

We suggest that RDN work with BC Ferries, MOTT, Islands Trust, the Gabriola Chamber of Commerce, and first responders - RCMP, Gabriola Fire Dept, BC Ambulance Service - to improve safety on Ferry Hill with measures including the 650 m trail, plus pedestrian crosswalks across North Rd at the junction with South Rd, and at the Descanso Bay terminal, and improved signage.

## **COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR SAFE PATHWAYS:**

### **Gabriola OCP Bylaw No 166 Section 7.1 -**

*To encourage the provision of a network of public pathways island-wide and safe pedestrian access along the Island's main roadways;*

### **Sustainable Gabriola:**

A 2020 community forum organized by *Gabriola Talks* urged the creation of a dedicated pedestrian and bicycle pathway between the Village and the Ferry Terminal to encourage pedestrian and cyclist trips and decrease vehicle emissions and congestion.

### **Gabriola Ferry Advisory Committee:**

In March 2023, the Gabriola Ferry Advisory Committee expressed concerns about pedestrian and cyclist safety at the Descanso Bay terminal and recommended improvements. Those recommendations were shelved with the disbandment of the Ferry Advisory Committees.

### **Community support:**

*I fully support the Gabriola Transportation Society's safe roadways initiative and its goal to enhance pedestrian and cyclist safety,"*

**Gabriola Fire Chief Will Sprogis**

*"I wholeheartedly support the Gabriola Transportation Society working to improve the safety and accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists who must use the roadway from the village area to get to the ferry terminal at Descanso Bay.*

**Islands Trustee Susan Yates**

*"I support creating a multi agency committee including BC Ferries, MOTI, RDN and Islands Trust to address immediate safety concerns around the terminal, and to plan for extending the existing Village path for pedestrians, cyclists and the mobility challenged from the Village down Ferry Hill to the ferry terminal."*

**Nanaimo-Gabriola Island MLA**

**Sheila Malcolmson**

*I fully support multi-agency cooperation to address transportation corridor connections and safety at our ferry terminal.. Extending the existing Village path down Ferry Hill to the ferry terminal is a clear, long-term, and beneficial infrastructure investment for the RDN."*

**Gabriola Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Erin Udal**

*"The Gabriola RCMP supports the proposed expansion of the Ferry Hill Pathway. This would greatly improve safety for the public who are walking as well as the motorists."*

**Gabriola RCMP Detachment Commander, Cpl Eric O'Brien**

## **WHAT OTHER ISLANDS ARE DOING:**

In 2024, the CRD completed a 2.3 km pedestrian and bicycle pathway connecting Mayne Island's Village Bay ferry terminal with Miners Bay.

Plans are in place for future pathways connecting local population centres with ferry terminals including a 10 km pathway on Galiano Island, a 7 km path on Saturna Island, and a 20 km pathway on Salt Spring Island.

**Action Requested:** That RDN extend the Gabriola Village Pathway down North Road to BC Ferries' Descanso Bay Terminal.

*Please note: This delegation plans to attend in person.  
They will have a presentation.*