

November 5, 2007

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Dear Janet Bagnall,

That was a great and inspirational article you wrote about riding on the new De Maisonneuve bicycle artery. Every regular bicyclist, every person with a minimum of ecological consciousness in Montreal is surely delighted about this extraordinary and long-awaited new contribution to local bicycling commuting.

For me the new path is an epiphany; the realization of a dream we bicyclists have cherished since the founding of Citizens on Cycles (Le Monde a Bicyclette) in 1975. It is comparable to the joy the bicycle community felt in the Spring of 1991 when, after many years of intense cyclofrustration because of lack of inter shore bicycle access over the St. Lawrence River, and after much campaigning by Le Monde a Bicyclette, the 600,000\$ landfill bicycle bridge was built between Notre Dame Island and St. Lambert.

Indeed "CITY OFFICIALS DESERVE thanks..." many thanks.

I now live in the country so I have not yet bicycled on this new gift to the city, but I will pedal on it in few days.

The new bicycle artery cries for extensions and connections

When connected to the section in Westmount, it stops at Vendome and resumes at Decarie and goes all the way to Concordia University campus Loyola. I believe, just as is the case of the recent bicycle path on Prince Arthur, there will be a great amount of users. But, unfortunately, when we arrive at Vendome from the East or from Decarie from de Maisonneuve on the West we will find ourself in a dangerous and unacceptable situation.

There is no bicycle path — a missing link — on the five-block area on de Maisonneuve there and the boulevard becomes bidirectional. Remedying this missing bicycle link is urgent and could be solved by diverting the path there a few meters southward alongside the railway tracks.

Berri is at the eastern terminal of the new artery.

From there the North South bike artery takes us to Riviere de Prairie and Laval. Via the bicycle paths on Berri southward, Blvd Rene Levesque and Notre Dame the bicyclist reaches the Eastern extremity of the Island of Montreal in safety - All together a remarkable cylo-infrastructure!

Via Prince Arthur, Milton bike paths, the McGill campus a great many bicyclists arrive at the Roddick gates at Sherbrooke and McGill College. Clearly, what is needed is a safe bicycle path on both sides of McGill college, easily created by banning parking there from Sherbrooke to the De Maisonneuve artery bike route.

The big question! Bicycle parking downtown.

Now that it is becoming safe to bicycle to downtown where will the thousands of office workers in those many high rise office buildings park their bicycles for their day at work? Where do you park your bicycle? Does the Gazette provide safe bicycle parking?

How ironic it is that Westmount is being uncooperative. It was Westmount itself that began traffic calming de Maisonneuve. Before 1978 De Maisonneuve blvd traffic ran generally at high speeds westwards through the middle of Westmount Park. There had been some near accidents involving children. Westmount City Council simply closed the Blvd there and put up barriers at both entrances to enforce the ban. I wrote an article about that small but historic event in the bilingual newspaper Le Monde a Bicyclette the quarterly publication of Citizens on Cycles.

An appropriate name for the new bicycle artery would be in order.

Many in the bicycling community are proposing the Claire Morissette Bicycle Path. Have you heard of Claire Morissette and her connection to bicycling advocacy? Michelle Lalonde in the Gazette and Lisa Fetterman in the Globe and Mail both wrote outstanding and inspirational obituaries about Claire this summer.

Claire Morissette was the co-founder with me of Le Monde a Bicyclette /Citizens on Cycles in 1975. For 20 years Morissette was the coordinator and **executive director of our organization** and frequently the editor of our newspaper. Our goal was to make Montreal a bicycle friendly city by struggling for Metro access for bicycles, extensive island wide safe bicycle paths, massive safe bicycle parking, inter riverbank bicycle access, accommodations on certain bus lines like those in Ottawa via racks on the front end of buses, access to commuter trains and extensive bicycle riding programs in primary and secondary school curricula. etc. Available at MAB home page www.lemab.ca For 20 years Morissette was the coordinator and executive director of our organization.

However, Blvd Maisonneuve cyclable was always a preoccupation of Claire's and our organization. Claire/ we organized **three targeted cyclodramas** and a large political meeting concerning the need for a bicycle path on de Maisonneuve after we had measured its size and judged it's suitability to become Montreal's first east-west bicycle artery.

In the early 1980's we bicycled to De Maisonneuve just east of Atwater with orange city construction workers suits and with a rope and other surveying equipment surveyed the south side of the boulevard.

In early October 1987 Claire and I bicycled on **our special event carpet** which had written on one side, Piste Cyclable and on the other side Bus Lane for 30 minutes on the north side of de Maisonneuve between Metcalf and Peel. **Josh Freed, the Gazette journalist** and now columnist covered the cyclo drama. Among other words, Freed prophetically wrote: "Don't laugh, for soon you will be riding on the path yourself". Well now, we can but it took more years than we anticipated to make the bike artery a reality. A picture of the event can be seen in Claire's book Deux Roues, Un Avenir.

The more conventional political event took place a little later and **during the Mayor Dore administration**. The bicycling consultation Claire/we organized took place in a room inside the United Church on City Councillor Street just north of Ste Catherine on a weekday evening. The purpose of the consultation was to determine which street or streets the bicyclists wanted for the next bicycle paths and prioritize them in order of preference. There were around 40 bicyclists in the room and two alderman of the ruling municipal party then the RCM. The unanimous first choice for the cross town path was de Maisonneuve Blvd.

The proposal for naming the new bike route Claire Morissette was initiated by Le Monde a Bicyclette at Claire's funeral. Cyclo Nord Sud, which has sent 22,000 used Quebec bicycles to 22 countries in South America and Africa wants the path named. Claire Morissette, the founder and president of Cyclo Nord Sud, and is lobbying for that. Vélo Québec wants that the new bike path be named after Claire Morissette.

A petition asking that this be done and is circulating among local bicyclists. Claire Morissette devoted over 20 years of her life to obtain bicycle facilities in the Montreal region and it seems both just and logical that the new de Maisonneuve artery be named after her so that this and future generations of local bicyclists will always remember her while pedaling on the Claire Morissette bike artery.

As a fellow bicyclists we would appreciate if you and the Gazette could back the campaign for naming the new bike artery after Claire. It will be certainly less controversial than renaming Park avenue Robert Bourassa.

Also, I appreciated your informing readers of that absolutely beautiful initiative previously unknown to me in England concerning the British Sustainable Transport Strategy .

Sincerely,

Robert Silverman
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