

Cycling cause for concern on roads

Foothills: Signs to raise awareness for drivers, cyclists

By Krista Conrad
Staff Reporter

Safety concerns have led the MD of Foothills to put up signs outlining rules for motorists and cyclists during two cycling events planned for this weekend.

The M.D. of Foothills has worked with organizers of the two events to ensure that residents and cyclists are aware of potential danger and delays.

"It's always a hot topic at this time of year," said M.D. Councillor Suzanne Oel. "We do have a beautiful favourite destination circuit, especially around Priddis, and we're always concerned about how cyclists and drivers interact."

A cycling group of over 100 riders from Calgary will be racing through the Priddis area on Aug. 7 for a timed race event.

The M.D. of Foothills approved the circuitous route beginning and ending in Priddis, and running south on 224 St. W, west on Plummers Road, north on 240 St. W, and back east on 184 Ave. W.

Executive members of the Calgary Crankmasters Cycling Club have agreed to the terms, including signage and single-file riding, set out by the public works department of the M.D. to ensure safety of all residents and riders.

"We'd like to use this as an example, to help promote the fact that we have a beautiful area, but there are also concerns with its use," said Oel.

Sharing Foothills roads extends to regular weekend and evening use, when many recreational cyclists visit the area to enjoy scenic rides, she said.

With additional vehicles parked along roadsides or in parking lots, as well as many bikes riding the shoulders, the M.D. is tak-



WHEEL FILE PHOTO

A pair of cyclists ride through the Foothills during the 2014 Ride to Conquer Cancer. The growing number of cycling events using roads in the region has led the MD of Foothills to put up signs outlining safety rules for drivers and cyclists.

ing permanent action to promote vigilance for riders and drivers.

"We have ordered signs to create awareness," said Oel. "They will remind cyclists to ride single file only and caution drivers that there may be cyclists on the road."

Oel said the M.D. is aiming to create goodwill with surrounding neighbours and educate the public to help reduce safety concerns.

"It seems like the traffic out here is only increasing, so we want to increase awareness of the issue before it's too late," said Oel. "After all, a cyclist always loses when there's an incident, and we don't ever want to see that."

Particular attention has been paid to cyclist safety in the wake of the death of cyclist Deric Kryvenchuk on Highway 7 outside of Okotoks on May 4.

Events like the

Crankmasters race are still encouraged, but coordinators must have their routes and plans approved by the M.D. of Foothills events coordinator, public works infrastructure, and protective services to ensure proper measures are taken.

One of the safety measures that must be in place is adequate advanced warning signage for drivers.

"We always have safety concerns every time there's an event on our roads," said Jeff Edgington, supervisor of public works and infrastructure for the M.D. of Foothills.

With a circuit such as the proposed route for the Aug. 7 race, sightlines and turning corners alongside traffic pose the greatest concern for the M.D.

The Crankmasters, and other similar groups, are directed to ensure all oncoming traffic is aware that there is a cycling event

happening on the M.D. roads.

"They are required to provide flag people and signage to make sure traffic in opposite directions understand that bikes could be there," said Edgington.

The Ride to Conquer Cancer, which takes place on Aug. 8 and 9, also runs through the M.D. of Foothills, through Bragg Creek to highway 22 from Priddis to Turner Valley and east on highway 7 to Okotoks.

Edgington says that the ride can create traffic issues for area residents, due to the sheer number of riders travelling the highway.

"The Ride to Conquer Cancer tends to create fairly intense delays on our roads," he said.

The M.D. is confident that adequate signage and flag people along the routes of the two races, and future events, will help reduce safety issues.

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In the three years that the contest has run, Gustafson has noticed a general shift in renewal schedules.

"We opened our gym in December 10 years ago, so we had a large influx of registrations then," he said. "But over the last three years a lot of people started renewing early to get in on the promo so now we see more action in September."

Racette says that the program has garnered a lot of popularity over its three-

year run, especially since September is one of two time periods most people tend to make the decision to get active.

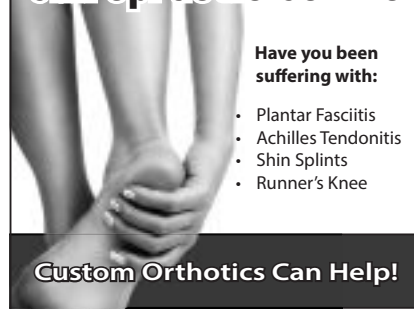
The other common month for new memberships is January, she said.

"It's generally been well received by the community and we hope it stays this popular," said Racette. "It's great to see people buying passes and committing to being active."

For more information about the Passholder Travel Contest, visit www.okotoks.ca or drop by the Okotoks Recreation Centre at 99 Okotoks Dr.

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