

## RESOLUTION NO.2012-02

### A RESOLUTION BY THE BELLINGHAM TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION REGARDING THE UPDATE OF THE DRAFT FAIRHAVEN NEIGHBORHOOD AND URBAN VILLAGE PLAN

The Transportation Commission has reviewed the draft Fairhaven Neighborhood and Urban Village Plan with emphasis on the transportation and parking chapters and proposed parking regulations. The Commission has the following comments and recommendations:

#### OVERALL COMMENTS

The TC supports planning efforts towards maintaining, clarifying and improving Bellingham's model urban village in Fairhaven. We agree that the vision is critical in building upon those elements to ensure Fairhaven's long-term sustainability and vitality.

When recent Planning efforts focused on adopting one set of design guidelines and standards for all urban villages, they noted, "The new rules focus on creating high quality pedestrian environments that are safe, inviting, comfortable and attractive."

<http://www.cob.org/services/neighborhoods/community-planning/urban-villages-planning/uv-design-standards.aspx>

The TC supports the **Key Planning Goals** identified on page 4 of the Draft Fairhaven Neighborhood and Urban Village Plan. Our comments are intended to strengthen the policies and strategies for those goals – from a transportation perspective.

We recognize the need to properly manage automobile traffic and its associated parking demands and impacts on the Fairhaven Neighborhood. This will be a critical component to Fairhaven's future.

Four categories from Bellingham's working definition of an Urban Village (*see Attachment I*) are especially applicable for transportation consideration within the Fairhaven Urban Village Plan. They are #1 Walkability, #2 Connectivity, #8 Smart Transportation and #9 Sustainability. The Transportation Commission recognizes that an urban village by its nature will have a much stronger emphasis on travel by foot, bike and transit. This includes Comprehensive Plan Goal:

*TG - 20, "Prioritize pedestrian and bicycle facility improvements over auto-oriented improvements within Urban Villages and areas targeted for infill development."*

#### OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Insert as bullet point # 1 on page 4 of the Draft Fairhaven Neighborhood and Urban Village Plan, as follows:

**"An Urban Center (also known as an "Urban Village") is an area that:**

- Prioritizes pedestrian travel within the Commercial Core.
- Etc"

## PEDESTRIAN TRAVEL – SPECIFIC COMMENTS

### Pedestrian Network in the Commercial Core

Bellingham's first Pedestrian Master Plan (nearing completion) is focused on the Primary Pedestrian Network. Fairhaven's Primary Network includes:

- Harris
- 12<sup>th</sup>/Finnegan
- Donovan/10<sup>th</sup> to Harris

These are included in the previously identified Fairhaven Pedestrian-Oriented Commercial Streets. Additional streets not included in the Primary Network, but included in Fairhaven's Commercial Core include portions of:

- Mill
- McKenzie
- Larrabee
- Old Fairhaven Parkway
- 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Streets

Thus, missing sidewalk segments will be addressed either by new/re-development or through funding sources similar to those available for the Primary Pedestrian Network

*(Policy 6.2) "As new development or redevelopment occurs, add sections of sidewalk to fill existing gaps."*

It is important to consider the entire pedestrian network in a dense pedestrian area such as an urban village. The Design Guidelines emphasize the role of the buildings in the streetscape in fostering a vibrant pedestrian experience through building orientation, frontage and human scale design elements.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Insert a new policy statement as follows: Policy 6.2.1 \_\_: Ensure that building and streetscape design requirements in Fairhaven's commercial core address factors affecting the pedestrian experience, such as sidewalk quality, street trees and planting strips, way-finding guidance for visitors, weather protection (awnings), obstacles impeding travel, and pedestrian-scale street lighting.
3. Specify locations for pedestrian improvements within the entire Commercial Core consistent with the Pedestrian Master Plan, such as sidewalk infill, sidewalk widening, and intersections.
4. Insert a new policy statement as follows: Policy 6.2.2 \_\_: Improve pedestrian connections between Fairhaven and surrounding neighborhoods, the Fairhaven commercial core, and the Fairhaven Library consistent with the Pedestrian Master Plan.

### Walking Distances

The Parking Plan cites a 1990 study to support the statement that “users (of parking) typically want to park as close to their destination as possible”. This statement is repeated frequently within the Fairhaven Urban Village Plan. We urge caution in applying this statement universally – because of the many factors that affect trip purpose and walking experiences from auto parking to destinations.

### Arterial Street Cross-Sections

The Design Standards describe a focus toward “human-scale design and development”. In order to further these principles along the arterials, design elements – such as drive lane widths and street trees – that encourage vehicle travel speeds  $\leq 25$  mph would promote a safe and appealing travel environment for all. We do not recommend travel lane widths of 14’ or 16’ – with or without Sharrows.

Harris Street is a great opportunity to strengthen the visual connection between the waterfront & transportation hub (Amtrak, Ferry Terminal & Greyhound) and the Commercial Core. It is an important gateway, therefore, it is important to make it appealing for people to travel on foot and bike (with travel gear) between the Commercial Core and the transit hub or Marine Park.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

5. Harris – Travel lane widths on Harris should not exceed the COB truck route standard of 12’ feet maximum
6. Harris – Include minimum 10’ sidewalks on both sides of Harris (with the proposed street tree buffer between the curb).
7. Harris – If any pocket or center turn lanes are utilized at intersections on Harris west of 10<sup>th</sup>, incorporate a landscaped median for minimized crossing distances and traffic-slowing effects.
8. Consistent with Bellingham's Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans, when adopted, consider separating pedestrian and bicycle facilities from automobile, transit, and truck travel lanes, where right-of-way and cost allows, in appropriate land use contexts, as follows:
  - Wider sidewalks separated by street trees and planting strips in Urban Villages;
  - Non-arterial "Bicycle Boulevards" connecting residential neighborhoods to Urban Villages, activity centers, employment districts, and recreational destinations.
  - Off-street pedestrian and bicycle pathways outside of Urban Villages; and
  - Consideration of protected bicycle lanes ("cycle tracks"), if possible.

### Pedestrian Emphasis

As a model urban village, Fairhaven would be the best location to incorporate several pedestrian-emphasis streets in the Commercial Core. The Transportation Commission heard testimony from the neighborhood about “pedestrian walkways”. We encourage those thoughts.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

9. Explore best locations for pedestrian-emphasis public streets (temporary or permanent) to enhance economic vitality

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## **BICYCLE TRAVEL – SPECIFIC COMMENTS**

Improvements for bicycle travel provide the opportunity to get more people to the Commercial Core for less expense, less noise, less road congestion and less air pollution than the equivalent in motor vehicles. Because these are all concerns expressed for the future of Fairhaven, transportation demand management reduction strategies are crucial.

We want to encourage the majority of people who would bike (especially those with children), but who are cautious and concerned about their proximity to vehicles – and prefer separation of travel lanes before venturing out. “Sharing the lane” with 2 ton vehicles is a discouraging factor for most people when choosing to ride a bike. Considering these people in particular, we add the following recommendations:

## **RECOMMENDATIONS (See #8, above)**

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## **TRANSIT TRAVEL – SPECIFIC COMMENTS**

The TC endorses all robust discussions with WTA to improve access and increase ridership from the Amtrak/Greyhound station, WWU and other parts of Bellingham – including downtown.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

10. Insert new policy statement somewhere on pp 44-45, as follows:

Policy 6.22\_\_ : Encourage WTA to explore possibilities for improving access and increasing ridership from the Amtrak/Greyhound station, Port facilities, Bellingham Cruise Terminal, WWU, and other parts of Bellingham.

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## **AUTO TRAVEL – SPECIFIC COMMENTS**

Much of the concern for auto travel *TO* Fairhaven seems to focus on what to do with the car, once there. The Comprehensive Plan emphasizes policies to reduce parking and shift to non-motorized modes (*see Attachment 2*). We support the Fairhaven Plan’s efforts to align with these Comprehensive Plan policies and goals. We support recommendations to improve wayfinding (especially to assist in finding parking locations & Commercial Core destinations) that would diminish the “drive around in circles” congestion.

### **Auto Parking**

The Transportation Commission supports direction in the plan to improve parking management. All of these strategies should be looked at as proactive approaches to keep and improve the Fairhaven Urban Village’s people-to-people experience. The Transportation Commission supports the described phased approach to parking demand management and its emphasis on the pedestrian experience within an urban village.

With the formation of the Transportation Commission in 2009, most of the responsibilities of the former Parking Commission became part of the TC. The Director of Public Works still retains authority for the fiscal administrative aspects of parking and establishing and administering of Residential Parking Zones.

The TC plans a review of COB parking policy, both on street and off street, during the latter part of 2012. The recommendations arising from that review may be applicable to the Parking Policies included in the Draft Fairhaven Neighborhood and Urban Village Plan.

The Fairhaven Parking Study, indicates that "Overall the existing parking system within Fairhaven is working well." The draft suggests phased steps to be considered when development or other changes occur impacting the parking situation. However, the draft does not spell out the mechanism to implement the Parking Study recommendations (phases).

The TC suggests deleting the Transpo/Parking Study reference on Page 28.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

11. The Transportation Commission recommends forming a Parking Task Force. The Task Force should include members of the Commission, COB Public Works, The Old Fairhaven Association, the Fairhaven Village Association ( Parking District) and the Fairhaven Neighbors Neighborhood Association. Recommendations of the Task Force would be reviewed by the TC and submitted to City for approval.
12. Policy 4.6\_: Future planning for automobile parking should also consider needs for additional pedestrian infrastructure and transit solutions between parking locations and destinations within the Commercial Core, such as additional sidewalks, streetlights, secure parking areas, way-finding for visitors not familiar with the area, and the adequacy of walking surfaces in any unpaved surface parking lots.

PASSED by the City of Bellingham Transportation Commission  
this 13<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2012

Signed   
Chair, City of Bellingham Transportation Commission

Attachments included:

ATTACHMENT 1

**Bellingham Urban Villages...A Working Definition**

ATTACHMENT 2

**Comprehensive Plan**

**Transportation Goals and Policies**

## ATTACHMENT 1

### **Bellingham Urban Villages...A Working Definition**

<http://www.cob.org/documents/planning/urban-villages/what-is-an-urban-village-summary.pdf>

*Urban Villages are activity centers that provide pleasant living, shopping, and working environments; strong pedestrian accessibility; adequate, well located open spaces; an alternative, well connected street system; and a balance of retail, office, residential and public spaces.*

### **Ten Key Principles of the Urban Village**

#### **1. Walkability**

Most things are within a 10 minute walk of home and work  
Pedestrian friendly street design  
Pedestrian streets free of cars in special cases

#### **2. Connectivity**

Interconnected street grid network disperses traffic & eases walking  
A hierarchy of narrow streets, boulevards, and alleys  
High quality pedestrian network and public realm makes walking pleasurable

#### **3. Mixed-Use & Diversity**

A mix of shops, offices, services recreational activities, apartments, and homes  
Mixed-use within neighborhoods, within blocks, and within buildings  
Diversity of people - of ages, income levels, cultures, races and lifestyles

#### **4. Mixed Housing**

A range of types, sizes and prices in closer proximity, such as:  
Cottages; Single family detached and attached; Multi-family; Accessory; Upper floor rentals over retail; Condominiums

#### **5. Quality Architecture & Urban Design**

Emphasis on beauty, aesthetics, human comfort, and creating a sense of place  
Special placement of civic uses and sites within community  
Human scale architecture & attractive surroundings nourish the human spirit

#### **6. Traditional Neighborhood Structure**

Discernable center and edge  
Public space at center, and quality public realm  
Public open space designed as civic art  
Contains a range of uses and densities within 10-minute walk

#### **7. Increased Density**

More buildings, residences, shops, and services closer together  
New Urbanism design principles are applied at the full range of densities

#### **8. Smart Transportation**

A network of high-quality public transit connecting cities, towns, and neighborhoods together  
Design that encourages a greater use of bicycles, rollerblades, scooters, and walking as daily transportation

### 9. Sustainability

- Minimal environmental impact of development and its operations
- Eco-friendly technologies, respect for ecology and value of natural systems
- More efficient use of public infrastructure and services
- Energy efficiency
- More walking, less driving

### 10. Quality of Life

Taken together, these principles add up to a high quality of life well worth living, and create places that enrich, uplift, and inspire the human spirit.



ATTACHMENT 2

**Comprehensive Plan  
Transportation Goals and Policies – Applicable to Fairhaven Plan**

**Goals – Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities**

TG-20 Prioritize pedestrian and bicycle facility improvements over auto-oriented improvements within Urban Villages and areas targeted for infill development.

**Goals - Alternative Transportation Mode Shift**

TG-28 Set target goals to increase the mode share of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit trips and reduce automobile trips as a percentage of total trips, as listed below.

Mode	2004	2010	2015	2022
Automobile	87%	84%	80%	75%
Transit Bus	2%	3%	4%	6%
Bicycle	3%	4%	5%	6%
Pedestrian	8%	9%	11%	13%

*(Note: 2004 data from FTA/Social Data Study)*

**Goals - Parking Supply Reductions**

TG-33 Review parking requirements for major commercial and industrial uses for the purpose of reducing the supply of parking thereby providing a disincentive to automobile use.

TG-34 Establish reduced parking requirements for transit-oriented development within master-planned Urban Villages and along and within ¼ mile of the WTA Primary Transit Network while ensuring that there will be minimal impacts to surrounding residential neighborhoods.

TG-35 Encourage the “unbundling” (separate pricing) of parking spaces associated with residential development in Urban Villages to promote reduction in ownership of multiple automobiles.

TG-36 Encourage the provision of car-sharing with new residential development within Urban Villages to reduce the residential parking demand.

TG-37 Establish parking reduction allowances for residential units in Urban Villages and within ¼ mile of the WTA Primary Transit Network that require each unit to receive WTA bus passes in perpetuity.

**Policies – Transportation Demand Management**

TP-39 Encourage use of non-automotive travel modes by developing parking management plans. Mechanisms to be considered include:

- An emphasis on short-term parking in retail areas;
- Market-based pricing of on-street parking meters to encourage short-term day time parking;
- Incentive-based pricing in garages to encourage long term day time parking;
- Reduction of free or subsidized employee long-term parking availability;
- Re-evaluation of appropriate minimum and maximum parking ratios for development proposals; and
- Elimination of “free” public parking in Urban Villages.

**TP-40** Consider revisions to current zoning code requirements for the area adjacent to the CBD, Urban Villages, and major retail districts, as part of a parking management plan designed to reduce the minimum number of on-site parking spaces required for development and to increase preferential space and lower costs for car pool and van pool parking in private developments.

**TP-41** Consider imposing a maximum number of parking spaces allowed within Urban Villages and along the WTA Primary Transit Network where high frequency transit service exists prior to or concurrent with development.

**TP-42** Support the location of safe new or expanded park-and-ride and car pool lots and support increased safety measures in existing park-and-ride and car pool lots.

**TP-43** Encourage the use of common parking facilities among compatible, adjacent land uses where feasible.

**TP-44** Provide preferential space and lower costs for car pool and van pool parking within the public right-of-way, and public facilities, where feasible