

**Summary Notes on Pedestrian & Bicycle Master Plan Updates from
Whatcom County (WC) Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC)**

Technical Review Committee (TRC) Conversation with City Staff

May 11, 2022 from 6:00 – 7:30pm

WC BPAC members and County and City staff present:

- Sonja Max – South Hill, Bellingham
- Sunny Beaver, Roosevelt, Bellingham
- Gary Malick, Marietta, Whatcom County
- Pete Sharp, Roosevelt, Bellingham
- Sandy Phillips, Custer, Whatcom County
- Walter Hudsick, Fairhaven, Bellingham
- Kelly Kendall, Columbia, Bellingham
- Patrick Alesse, Birch Bay, Whatcom County
- Stephen Zylstra, Sunnyland, Bellingham
- Jason Ardt, Whatcom County Public Works
- Chris Comeau, City of Bellingham Public Works

Meeting began with minutes from previous meeting being approved by members. City of Bellingham Transportation Planner Chris Comeau gave a brief introduction describing the creation of the 2012 Pedestrian Master Plan and the 2014 Bicycle Master Plan, the role of these mode-specific plans, their adoption into the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan, the success with implementation of these plans to date, as well as lessons learned through implementation, and how and why the City is beginning updates to these plans now. [Toole Design Group](#) and [TranspoGroup](#) have been hired to assist City staff with the updates of these important plans.

Chris emphasized that the 2012 Pedestrian Master Plan did not include the Bellingham Urban Growth Area (UGA), portions of which have since been annexed to the City, but the 2022 update to the Pedestrian Master Plan will include all of the Bellingham UGA. Chris asked WC BPAC members to introduce themselves and to briefly describe what their particular interest was for the plan updates, especially within the Bellingham UGA, which is under the jurisdiction of Whatcom County.

The members in attendance, listed above, introduced themselves and expressed several themes of interest, including the following:

- More separation of bikes from moving vehicles: Buffered or physically separated bike lanes.
- The possibility of a continuous bikeway from Britton Road area to Sunset Drive (SR 542).
- Eldridge Avenue: Speeding vehicles, lack of bike lanes, removal of parking, vertical posts.
- West McLeod Road: Needs a sidewalk between Dana Street and West Maplewood.
- Monroe Street: Traffic calming needed. Monroe is a collector arterial street. City does not install physical traffic calming devices like speed humps on arterial streets.

- **Geneva UGA (East):** Pete Sharp asked about the disconnection of Oriental, York, and Lowell streets, especially for pedestrian and bicycle movements, were discussed. Chris Comeau explained that when this subdivision was built between 30-40 years ago, City residents living along Electric Avenue claimed that connecting these streets would result in “cut-through” vehicle traffic between Lakeway Drive and Electric Avenue and therefore these streets would never be connected to allow vehicle access to Electric Avenue. This short-sighted reaction has forced all vehicle traffic onto Lakeway Drive.
- **Tweed Twenty/Brownsville UGA (Northeast):** Dan Kostrzewski asked if County or City zoning would allow small neighborhood commercial centers/markets to allow shorter trips to the store to be made by walking and biking in the Tweed Twenty/Brownsville UGA. Comeau explained that due to Lake Whatcom Watershed restrictions on impervious surfaces, it was very unlikely that this kind of commercial development would be allowed by the County or the City.
- Walter Hudsick mentioned that several countries in Europe have been using pervious concrete and asked if Bellingham could do that. Chris pointed out that the bike lane along Northshore Drive in the Silver Beach Neighborhood is made of pervious concrete for the benefit of the Lake Whatcom Watershed. Chris also explained that the City encourages the use of pervious concrete and asphalt wherever possible, but that there are very few areas in Bellingham that allow the use of pervious materials because the underlying soils do not infiltrate adequately.
- Gary Malick asked about the possible collaboration with Lummi Nation regarding bicycle connections with the City. Chris said that while that could be a possibility, the Lummi Nation connects to County roads rather than City streets. Perhaps a multi-agency collaboration could be considered for a regional trail between northwest Bellingham, Lummi, and Ferndale.
- **Alderwood UGA (Northwest)** was discussed with extensive interest in a safe route to the newly reconstructed Alderwood elementary school. Sonja described local streets with no sidewalks bordered by deep ditches. Jason Ardt with Whatcom County staff provided some background on how the County views sidewalks and crosswalks this area, the School District’s responsibility for mapping walking and biking routes to schools, and the District’s and County’s determination that these streets were considered safe for students to walk and bike to school on.
- **Samish UGA (Southeast):** Samish Way/Galbraith Lane Crossing: WC BPAC members asked about the status of this project and Jason Arndt explained the County’s plans to restrict parking along both sides of Samish Way for safety. The WMBC parking lot is expected to be open on Friday, May 13, 2022, but the County is unlikely to complete the flashing crosswalk at Galbraith Lane until sometime in 2023.
- WC BPAC members asked about improvements to Samish Way in City limits between Lake Padden Park and the Samish Urban Village. Comeau explained that several years ago, Bellingham Public Works maintenance crews rehabilitated the shoulders of Samish Way to smooth out the walking and riding surface from the I-5 northbound off-ramp to Lake Padden. The construction of concrete curb/gutter and sidewalks along this lengthy section of former State Highway 99 would cost well-over \$10 million dollars and is very unlikely to happen.
- **South Yew Street** from Tacoma Avenue at Wade King elementary school to Samish Way is not safe any way you look at it for people walking or riding bicycles. Jason Ardt explained that this is not in the Bellingham UGA, is a County road, and prior attempts to widen the road and/or add sidewalks have resulted in exorbitant cost estimates due to right-of-way acquisition and reconstruction of culverts under the roadway for fish passage. It is not likely to be improved.

Chris Comeau finished by assuring the WC BPAC members that there will plenty of opportunity for public comment and input throughout the [Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan Updates](#). As stated above, the Pedestrian Master Plan Update is first in 2022, followed by the Bicycle Master Plan Update in 2023, but there is expected to be plenty of cross-over public input between the two plans during the entire update process.

- An online Community Survey and an online Interactive Web Map will be available to the public on May 18 or 19, 2022 on the [Engage Bellingham website](#).
- Chris announced that the first in-person public open house will be on **June 1, 2022 in the new gymnasium at Shuksan Middle School from 6:00 to 8:00pm.**
- All property owners, renters, students, businesses, employees, shoppers, visitors, and anyone who walks, bikes, rolls, rides a bus, or drives a vehicle can sign up with an email address at this [web site link](#) to receive email notifications of public engagement opportunities throughout the 2022-2023 plan update process.
- The [Bellingham Transportation Commission](#) serves as the oversight review body for the plan updates and the [City Council](#) will receive updates on the planning process each quarter.
- City staff and consultants are meeting with topic-oriented Technical Review Committees (TRC) to gain the institutional/organizational perspective of those who they serve. Examples are Ped-Bike Advocacy groups; Bellingham School District; Whatcom Transportation Authority; Affordable Housing organizations; Public Safety (Police, Fire, EMS); etc.
- City staff and consultants intend to meet with as many of the 25 local Neighborhood Associations as possible by grouping into 5 or 6 logical geographic divisions of the City. These meetings will be scheduled after the first Open House has been completed.
- Spanish translators will be available at public meetings and many plan updates materials will be translated into Spanish with an option to translate into other languages via Google Translate.
- Anyone can always email questions and information requests to:

Chris Comeau, FAICP-CTP, Transportation Planner

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