



CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION



1 Introduction

Bellingham envisions itself as a city of urban villages and well-established residential neighborhoods, where connected walkable neighborhoods shape everyday life and people on foot are afforded as much respect as people driving. Within these pockets of active life are streets and sidewalks that compare with those of the greatest walking cities in the world. Parents will go out for a walk with their children for pleasure, grandparents will stroll to a park for exercise, and teenagers will walk to the bus stop on their way to school. People of all ages and abilities will enjoy the ease and pleasure of accessible and inviting pedestrian facilities.

The recommendations, tools, and policies presented in the Bellingham Pedestrian Master Plan form the building blocks of great streets in Bellingham. Building great streets will connect neighborhoods and communities, linking the region's history, culture, economy, and natural environments. Implementing the Plan will give residents and visitors the option to replace motor vehicle trips with walking and transit trips, thus reducing auto travel on area roads, leading to improvements in air quality, health, and livability.

“ [Livability is] being able to take your kids to school, go to work, see a doctor, drop by the grocery or Post Office, go out to dinner and a movie, and play with your kids at the park —all without having to get in your car.” – Ray LaHood, United States Secretary of Transportation

Bellingham is a community where residents already walk frequently. Prior investments in walking infrastructure have supported many residents' desires to walk for both transportation and recreation. In order to enhance the experience and continue to increase walking, a strong commitment to invest in pedestrian infrastructure will be needed to improve safety and provide facilities to more areas of Bellingham.

This Plan provides the basis for a connected network of facilities and programs for walking that, when developed and implemented, will further support and encourage walking for transportation, recreation, and health throughout the community. The projects recommended in this Plan supplement our existing pedestrian network and strong trail system by identifying needed improvements within the public street infrastructure. Recommendations for off-street trail improvements are included in the Park, Recreation and Open Space Chapter of the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan. The infrastructure and programs recommendations, design tools, and policies presented in this Plan will help the City of Bellingham realize the vision for a more walkable community.

This Plan is ambitious in its recommendations for infrastructure and programs to achieve the vision for walking in the City of Bellingham. The Plan calls for development of nearly 80 miles of sidewalks, 58 improved crossings, and a robust set of studies and programs to support and encourage walking over the next 20 years.

The Pedestrian Master Plan Vision:

The residents of Bellingham envision a community that invites people of all ages and abilities to walk for enjoyment, exercise, and daily transportation by providing a safe, convenient, and attractive pedestrian environment.

1.1 Plan Goals

The Pedestrian Master Plan identifies strategies, projects, and programs to achieve the following goals:

- **Safety:** Improve pedestrian safety through well-designed facilities along and across roadways, and by promoting safe driving, walking, and bicycling behaviors.
- **Equity:** Provide accessible pedestrian facilities for all through equity in public engagement, service delivery, and capital investment.
- **Health:** Develop a pedestrian network that promotes active, healthy lifestyles and sustains a healthy environment.
- **Economic Sustainability:** Enhance economic vibrancy by creating a safe and aesthetically pleasing walking environment with easy connections to commercial centers and inviting public places for people to socialize.
- **Connectivity:** Provide a citywide network of accessible, efficient, and convenient pedestrian infrastructure that connects homes, jobs, shopping, schools, services, and recreation areas using sidewalks, crosswalks, shared-use paths, bridges, tunnels, and signage.
- **Multi-Modal Transportation:** Develop high-quality pedestrian facilities that provide access to all other modes of transportation.
- **Land Use and Site Design:** Employ land use planning and site design requirements that are conducive to pedestrian travel and result in a mode shift away from automobile trips to walking trips.



1.2 Plan Components

This Plan document includes the following components:

Chapter 1 Introduction: Presents the vision for the Plan and the benefits of a walkable community. In addition, it summarizes the planning process including the steps taken to develop the Plan through public input, policy review, and existing conditions review.

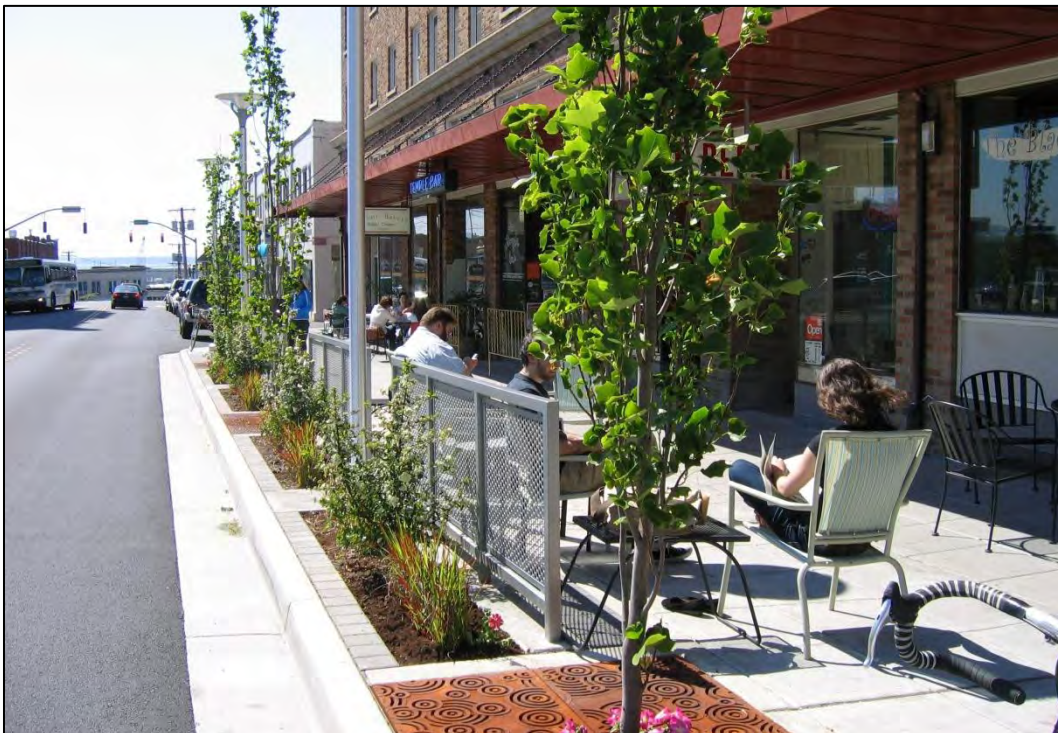
Chapter 2 Policy Recommendations: Provides policy guidance for pedestrian facilities and priorities.

Chapter 3 Pedestrian Network Recommendations: Identifies methods for analysis and sets forth a framework of recommended facilities (sidewalk, intersection improvement projects, facility studies, neighborhood off road connections) for a complete pedestrian network to serve residents throughout the city.

Chapter 4 Design Guidance: Provides a summary of best practices for pedestrian facility design and resources to support the building of the network identified in the Plan.

Chapter 5 Recommended Programs: Outlines education, encouragement, and enforcement programs to support walking.

Chapter 6 Implementation: Includes funding options, maintenance recommendations, and performance measures, defined to support long term accomplishment and realization of the vision for walking in Bellingham.



1.3 Public Benefits of Pedestrian Transportation

A pedestrian-friendly environment directly contributes to health, economic, environmental, and cultural benefits that impact all residents. When more people walk as part of their daily activities, communities reap the following benefits:

- Higher levels of individual health and wellness
- Better air quality and lower levels of carbon and noxious emissions
- Higher quality of life
- Reduced traffic congestion and exposure to crashes
- Healthy business districts with increased dollars staying in the local economy
- Lower costs for roadway maintenance
- More equitable access to community resources for all

The following section summarizes the benefits of creating a walkable Bellingham for all residents.

1.3.1 Health and Physical Activity

A growing number of studies show that the design of our communities—including neighborhoods, towns, transportation systems, parks, trails, and other public recreational facilities—affects people’s ability to reach the recommended daily 30 minutes of moderately intense physical activity (60 minutes for youth). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “physical inactivity causes numerous physical and mental health problems, is responsible for an estimated 200,000 deaths per year, and contributes to the obesity epidemic.” The increased rate of disease associated with inactivity reduces quality of life for individuals and increases medical costs for families, companies, and local governments. Walking offers a way to integrate physical activity into busy schedules, and has been demonstrated to improve chronic health conditions as well as to contribute to emotional well-being.

“Individuals must choose to exercise, but communities can make that choice easier.”
– Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

1.3.2 Community and Quality of Life

The prevalence of walking in a community has been described as a barometer of how well that community is advancing its citizens’ quality of life. Areas that are busy with people walking are considered to be environments that work at a human scale and foster a heightened sense of community. These benefits are difficult to quantify, but when community residents are asked to identify civic places that they are most proud of, they tend to name places where walking is safe, easy, and common such as a popular greenway, a riverfront project, a neighborhood market, Main Street, or downtown.

Walking is a good choice for families. A safe walking environment enables a young person to explore her neighborhood, visit places without being driven by parents, and experience the freedom of personal decision-making. More trips on foot mean fewer trips by car. In turn, this means less traffic congestion in the community. There are also more opportunities to speak to neighbors and more “eyes on the street” to

discourage crime and violence. It is no accident that communities with low crime rates and high levels of walking and bicycling are generally attractive and friendly places to live.

1.3.3 Economic Sustainability

Cities are increasingly recognizing that the pedestrian environment is a key element of economic vitality and vibrancy. Walkable neighborhoods typically have active streets that promote commercial exchange, while providing safe and efficient ways for residents to travel on foot. While improving the walking conditions in a neighborhood or urban village can positively impact the vibrancy of the area, it is generally the case that economically vibrant areas are more pleasant and more popular places to walk.

From a real estate standpoint, consider the positive impact of sidewalks and greenways, which are essential components of a complete pedestrian network. According to the recent CEOs for Cities report, 2009 *Walk the Walk*, “houses [in neighborhoods] with above-average levels of walkability command a premium of about \$4,000 to \$34,000 over houses with just average levels of walkability in the typical metropolitan areas studied.”

The walking environment’s contribution to quality of life or livability has a profound impact on attracting businesses and workers as well as tourism. In addition to increased property values, improved walking environments have been correlated to increased retail sales and economic development opportunities.

In addition, school districts can realize financial benefits by working to make walking safe and attractive. A combination of improved infrastructure and programs can greatly improve the walking environment. Schools with increased numbers of students walking can reduce their overall transportation budget for buses. The transportation funds saved can then be reinvested to support walking or other needed programs.

“Much of what we do in Community Development is focused around creating places for people. When we feel comfortable walking downtown or in our neighborhood, not only do we get the benefits of reducing traffic, limiting our environmental impact, or simply getting our heart pumping - businesses also thrive from the increase in pedestrian shoppers, and the social fabric of the community is strengthened from the hundreds of spontaneous interactions that simply can't occur when we're sitting in our cars.”

- Darby Galligan, Steering Committee Member, City of Bellingham, Planning and Community Development

1.3.4 Environment

When people choose to get out of their cars and walk, bike, or take transit, they make a positive environmental impact and improve air quality. People choosing to walk rather than drive are typically replacing short automobile trips, which contribute disproportionately high amounts of pollutant emissions. These emission reductions benefit all residents, whether they choose a walking trip or not. They reduce their vehicle miles traveled, reducing traffic, congestion, and the volume of pollutants in the air. Other environmental impacts can be a reduction in overall neighborhood noise levels and improvements in local water quality as fewer automobile-related discharges wind up in local wetlands, streams, rivers, and lakes.

In 2009, the National Household Travel Survey found that roughly 40% of all trips taken by car are less than two miles. By taking short trips on foot, rather than in a car, citizens can have a substantial impact on local traffic and congestion. A complete pedestrian network that connects homes, schools, parks, downtown, and recreation and cultural destinations can encourage walking.

1.3.5 Equity

Accessibility and economics are inherently tied to equitable transportation solutions. While some residents choose not to own a motor vehicle, others cannot afford one. For those who cannot use other modes of transportation, the ability to walk safely is essential. For young people, walking affords a sense of independence, and for seniors, walking is an effective means to stay active both physically and socially. In addition, people living with disabilities are more likely to be pedestrians, as some physical limitations make driving difficult. Equitable services and investments provide the same opportunities for all people.



1.4 The Planning Process

This section summarizes the planning process used to develop the recommendations of the Pedestrian Master Plan.

1.4.1 Project Management

The project management team consisted of representatives from the City of Bellingham's Public Works and Planning and Community Development Departments, as well as the consulting team. The project management team worked together throughout the 14-month project to guide the technical work and review project deliverables.

1.4.2 Steering Committee

The Bellingham Pedestrian Master Plan Steering Committee was created to advise the project team on context and content of the Plan throughout the planning process. Steering committee representatives were chosen to represent stakeholders in pedestrian needs and desires for the city, but also included members of agencies that will be integrally involved in implementation of the Plan's recommended facilities and programs. Steering Committee members participated in three formal meetings to review project deliverables.



Steering Committee Members Participate in a Mini Walking Audit

"I became involved in pedestrian advocacy, not because I want to be a planner or an activist, but because I want to walk to the store, the park, downtown, my friends' houses, and the bus stop for as long as I am physically able. I expect to live longer and be healthier because of it."

- Carol Berry, Steering Committee Member, Western Washington University, Sustainable Transportation

1.4.3 Public Involvement

The overall goal of the civic engagement process for the Bellingham Pedestrian Master Plan was to engage citizens in defining the issues most relevant to walking in Bellingham. The project team worked to create a variety of platforms where residents could get information about the Plan and give input to help guide recommendations. The involvement consisted of public workshops, an online survey, and information posted to the City website.

Public Workshops

There were two formal public workshops held during the planning process. The workshops were intended to provide information about the Plan to a broad audience.

The first workshop took place in May 2011. Approximately 60 people attended the workshop at City Hall. The goal was to introduce the planning process to residents and gather baseline data to inform the development of recommendations.

Elements of the workshop included the following:

- An advanced presentation on walkable communities and implementation issues from Dan Burden, a national advocate and expert in walkable communities
- A visioning exercise to help frame direction of the Plan
- A mapping exercise that provided an opportunity to review existing conditions and gather input on the gaps in the existing system

An open house to review the draft plan was held in May 2012.

Elements of the open house included the following:

- A brief presentation on the vision for the Plan and its role in transportation planning for the city
- An open house meeting format with poster boards to illustrate key elements of the Plan
- City staff and project consultants available to answer questions about the Plan and implementation



This graphic is a representation of the ideas expressed during the visioning exercise at the first public workshop. Larger words represent ideas expressed most frequently.

1.4.4 Public Survey

An online survey was administered between May 11 and June 15, 2011. Over 800 individuals took the Bellingham Pedestrian Plan Community Survey. The survey gathered information on preferred pedestrian facility types, existing walking behavior, the strengths and weaknesses of the existing pedestrian environment, and neighborhood attitudes toward walking as a transportation and/or recreation mode. Participants in this survey were not chosen at random and are not a statistically valid sample. However, the opinions expressed by survey participants provided a greater understanding of the perceptions regarding walking in Bellingham. Participants in the survey were predominantly female (74 percent) and between the ages 31 and 64 (82 percent).

Key Survey Findings

The majority of respondents felt that the existing pedestrian environment is doing a “good” or “fair” job of meeting their needs as individuals who choose to walk for transportation/recreation, but that there was significant room for improvement.

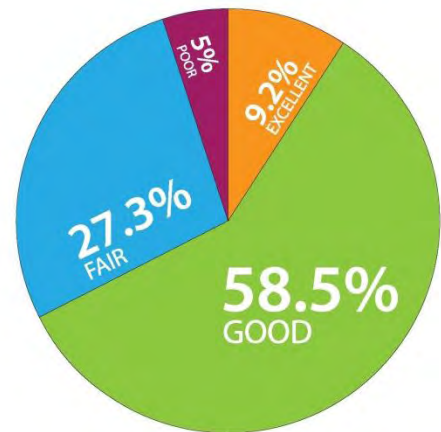
Bellingham residents are interested in improving the pedestrian network because of the following:

- They recognize the health benefits of daily exercise.
- They would like to walk more.
- They enjoy walking in their community.

Key issues facing pedestrians included the following:

- Difficult crossings
- Areas of sidewalk gaps
- Streets with high traffic volumes without adequate facilities to safely and comfortably accommodate pedestrian travel

A copy of the Community Survey Summary is included as Appendix A.



Overall rating of existing pedestrian conditions in Bellingham from survey respondents



1.4.5 Existing Conditions Review

Walking is an enjoyable, energizing, environmentally friendly, and low-cost form of transportation. The pedestrian infrastructure, consisting largely of sidewalks, crossing treatments, and shared-use paths, is a fundamental part of any transportation system, connecting people not only to destinations, but also to other transportation modes such as transit and driving. The following section describes the current state of various community elements that impact and support walking in Bellingham.

Walking Rates

Data from the three year estimates of the 2010 American Community Survey show that 7.3 percent of commute trips in Bellingham are made by walking. This is significantly higher than the national average of 2.8 percent. Table 1-1 compares Bellingham's commute trip walking rates with Whatcom County, Washington State, and national rates.

Table 1-1: Percentage of Commute Trips in Bellingham by Mode

Location	Walk	Drive	Transit
Bellingham	7.3%	77.1%	6.2%
Whatcom County	4.3%	83.3%	3.2%
Washington	3.5%	83.6%	5.6%
United States	2.8%	86.2%	5.0%

Source: American Community Survey 2010

*Drive includes carpool.

Additional data on walking rates in Bellingham were collected in a 2009 Socialdata USA survey. The survey was conducted for Whatcom Council of Governments to gather information on resident travel patterns using household trip diaries, telephone interviews, and in-person interviews. Information gathered include mode choice (walking, bicycling, transit, driving), trip purposes, and distances travelled. Transportation behaviors of Bellingham area residents were analyzed to look at the potential for shifting some automobile trips to non-motorized modes of travel. This travel survey measured all trips rather than just commute trips. Table 1-2 shows walking rates and other modes for all trips.

Table 1-2: Percentage of All Travel in Bellingham by Mode

Location	Walk	Drive	Transit	Bicycle
Bellingham	12.0%	76.0%	5.0%	6.0%

Local Pedestrian Counts

The City of Bellingham conducts bicycle and pedestrian counts annually at various locations. These short-term counts provide a useful snapshot of the relative levels of pedestrian activity. The locations summarized in Table 1-3 were counted in both the morning and afternoon in 2011. They are sorted in decreasing order of activity during that period. Local bicycle and pedestrian counts are completed annually each fall.

Table 1-3: Pedestrian Activity at Locations throughout Bellingham

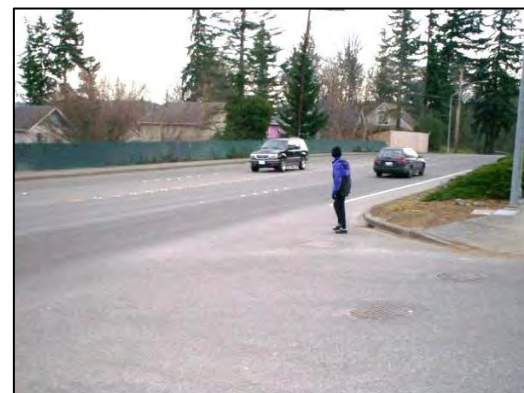
Location	2011 Total
Holly Street at Railroad Avenue	915
21st at Bill McDonald Pkwy	816
Railroad Trail (behind Haggan/Barkley Village)	245
Lakeway at Grant	203
South Bay Trail at Wharf Street	189
Samish at Byron	186
Lakeway at Lincoln	184
Cordata at Westerly	175
12 th at Fairhaven Pkwy	167
Cornwall Avenue at Alabama Street	112
Dupont at 'F'	100
Fraser Street at Racine Street	71
Meridian at Birchwood	62
Northwest Avenue at McLeod Rd	59
E. Illinois at Memorial Park	58
Meador at James	52
Squalicum at Guide Meridian	40
James at E. Orchard	14

Road Network

Like many northwest municipalities, Bellingham was consolidated from multiple original communities, which has resulted in transportation network irregularities throughout the city, as it was originally platted by several different entities. The Central Business District and primary downtown area have a well-connected grid street pattern that allows for good pedestrian connections. The commercial core of the Fairhaven neighborhood south of downtown also has a relatively consistent grid road network that provides connectivity for all modes.

Outside the city core, particularly east of I-5, the road network has a more irregular pattern with small residential streets feeding into larger arterials, which are typically high speed and high traffic volume corridors. Many existing sidewalks are directly adjacent to roadways and lack separation for pedestrians. Controlled crossings are infrequent, causing significant out of direction travel for pedestrians who are uncomfortable crossing without a traffic signal or flashing crosswalk. In addition, there are many areas with curvilinear and cul de sac style development that do not provide connections to neighboring streets. The lack of consistent connectivity and long block sizes present a constraint to comfortable walking. A number of Bellingham's older neighborhoods further from the city center lack sidewalks, as they were built to reflect a more rural feel. In some areas, where traffic volumes and speeds are low, the lack of formal pedestrian facilities does not significantly diminish the walking environment. In fact, some neighborhood residents prefer having streets without sidewalk facilities.

The I-5 corridor is a significant barrier to cross-town mobility for pedestrians between east and west Bellingham. Areas adjacent to I-5 are characterized by high-speed motorized travel at access points to the freeway with limited crossing opportunities.



The road network ranges from a typical grid in the downtown to disconnected single streets in the more rural areas of the city.

Sidewalks and Crossings

Bellingham's pedestrian network consists of a system of sidewalks, off-street pathways, and trails. Sidewalks are included on both sides of streets throughout most the downtown core of the city. Sidewalk coverage and connectivity are generally good west of I-5, including amenities such as wayfinding signage, interpretive signs, and waste receptacles. Sidewalk coverage on the east and north side of I-5 is less consistent.

A number of the main commercial areas in the city are located along arterials with high traffic volumes and speeds. Sidewalks are not always complete and in most cases there is limited separation from motorized traffic. This makes for an uncomfortable experience for pedestrians trying to access services by foot.

The same challenge is apparent along some of the primary high frequency transit routes. High speeds and limited buffers discourage pedestrian travel on these important corridors. Some of these corridors also lack adequate crossing opportunities. In some cases, there are significant gaps of over 1,500 feet between controlled crossings.

In Washington, it is legal for pedestrians to cross at all intersections whether marked or unmarked except where crossing is expressly prohibited.

Marked crossings reinforce the location and legitimacy of a crossing, and are essential links in a pedestrian network. There are a variety of other amenities used to provide pedestrians with adequate crossings at intersections and key mid-block locations, such as parallel striped crosswalks at signals, countdown signals, pedestrian-actuated beacons with audio/visual warnings, bulb-outs, and median refuge islands that reduce crossing distances. Figure 1-1 depicts the locations of supplemental crossing treatments in place, such as flashing beacons.

The City is investing in improving crossings near schools through the use of school zone flashing beacons and high visibility crosswalks as shown in Figure 1-1. In addition, improved crossings on arterials improve the ease of pedestrian movement on along important corridors. The downtown has curb extensions, high visibility crosswalks, pedestrian scale lighting, and others features that support walking. The neighborhood of Fairhaven has a pedestrian-oriented commercial center and a connection to the City's trail network.



Sidewalks coverage and design varies throughout the city

Trails

The City has a robust system of shared-use trails that provide walking opportunities for recreation and transportation. The City's Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan recommends an interconnected system of high-quality, accessible shared-use trails and greenway corridors. Major trail corridors that serve a transportation, as well as recreation, function include the Railroad, Whatcom Creek, South Bay/Boulevard Park, and Interurban Trails. Throughout the city there are also short trail connections that provide key pedestrian routes at the neighborhood scale. These off-street pathways and trails provide additional connections throughout the city, including short-cuts within large blocks and accessible routes across barriers.



Transit

Connections to transit are an important aspect of the pedestrian network, which allow those on foot to access needed or desired services that are not within walking distance. Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA) provides transit services to Bellingham and greater Whatcom County. WTA's GO Lines provide high-frequency service every 15 minutes on weekdays. These routes serve primary destinations as summarized below:

- The BLUE Line provides direct connections between downtown's Bellingham Station and Sehome Village via Western Washington University and Bill McDonald Parkway.
- The RED Line travels between downtown's Bellingham Station and Fairhaven along State Street. This route connects to Amtrak and ferries in Fairhaven.
- The GREEN Line travels between downtown's Bellingham Station and Whatcom Community College (at Cordata Station) via Northwest Avenue.
- The GOLD Line travels between downtown's Bellingham Station and Whatcom Community College (at Cordata Station) with service to Sunnyland Square, Barkley Village, Sunset Square, and Bellis Fair Mall along the way.

While improvements to pedestrian access and mobility are key ingredients to supporting and increasing WTA transit ridership, the City of Bellingham has committed to protecting and maintaining average transit speed on arterial corridors. Therefore, it is critical to examine the positive benefits that pedestrian improvement projects may provide and to weigh them against the potential negative costs that they may have on the WTA transit system and service that the City has made a commitment to protect, maintain, and enhance.



Schools

Schools generate large numbers of trips, particularly during commute hours. Many school trips could be taken by foot or on bike, if connections around schools were designed for pedestrians. The Bellingham School District is the largest school district in Whatcom County, serving over 10,000 students. There are 13 elementary schools, four middle schools, and four high schools throughout the city. Improving pedestrian connections to these schools and providing education and encouragement programs will likely result in increased walking among younger and less experienced pedestrians in Bellingham. Increased walking rates can improve safety for all by decreasing motor vehicle congestion around schools.

There are three post-secondary institutions in Bellingham. Western Washington University is located south of downtown. It is the largest post-secondary institution with over 14,000 students. Whatcom Community College, with 7,000 two-year program students and upwards of 12,000 students throughout the year is located in the northern portion of the city in the Cordata neighborhood. Bellingham Technical College, located in the Birchwood neighborhood, currently has over 8,000 students attending classes. These institutions are also major employment centers and generate significant pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and automobile trips.

Land Use

Bellingham's downtown, Fairhaven, and other planned urban villages illustrate the direct relationship between land use and urban design and the walking environment. In these areas, the physical character of the community supports walking and all modes of transportation. However, other areas of Bellingham have physical characteristics that are more automobile oriented, resulting in difficult conditions for pedestrians, poor access to transit, and a lack of destinations and services within walking distance to residences.

In the commercial areas along Meridian, Lincoln/Lakeway, and the Sunset Square area, the services and commercial businesses are predominantly automobile oriented, making it difficult for pedestrian travel.

Single and multi-family residential zones are spread throughout the city. Large tracts of single-family residential homes exist on the outer southern and eastern edges of Bellingham. These areas have generally good access to open spaces and natural areas, but limited nearby access to commercial services.

Western Washington University and Whatcom Community College cover significant land area and are major pedestrian trip generators for students and faculty as well as residents using the facilities for recreation.





1.5 Plan and Policy Review

The City of Bellingham through past planning efforts has defined a clear goal to increase walking by residents and visitors. This Plan is intended to address remaining obstacles to increased walking, such as deficient facilities, concerns about safety, attractiveness and appeal, and a lack of connectivity. The Pedestrian Master Plan, as guided by existing and proposed goals and policies, sets forth specific obtainable strategies that will result in tangible improvements over the next 20 years. The following section summarizes the policy guidance and past planning efforts that informed the goals and strategies in this Plan.

Federal Level

The Federal Highway Administration has given clear direction to local jurisdictions to include pedestrian transportation as part of all transportation planning, design and construction. Due consideration of the needs should include, at a minimum, the presumption that pedestrians will be accommodated in the design of new and improved transportation facilities.

U. S. Department of Transportation guidance to local jurisdictions states that, “Congress clearly intends for pedestrians to have safe, convenient access to the transportation system and sees every transportation improvement as an opportunity to enhance the safety and convenience of walking.”

State Level

Washington State Transportation Planning Documents, including the Washington Transportation Plan and the 2008 Washington State Bicycle Facilities and Pedestrians Walkways Plan, provide guidance for developing pedestrian networks. These documents guide planning for pedestrian facilities throughout the state, and they are generally supportive of the development of pedestrian networks.

In July 2011, the Washington State Legislature passed the *Complete Streets Bill* (ESHB1071). The Complete Streets Bill recognizes the importance of planning for main streets that provide safe access for all users and also protect and preserve a community’s character. The bill specifies that a grant program be established to fund complete streets projects. Specific goals of the bill include improving health by increasing walking and biking; improving safety with wider sidewalks, and street trees; protecting the environment and reducing congestion by providing alternatives to single-occupant vehicle driving; and preserving community character by involving citizens in the transportation improvement process. At the time of this Plan, a grant program had not been established to provide funding for complete streets implementation.

Regional Level

The Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) was organized and established by its member agencies, including the City of Bellingham, in 1977. It serves to facilitate and encourage cooperation among counties, cities, and other entities such as ports and non-governmental organizations. An Executive Board comprised of local elected officials controls the activities of WCOG.

The mission of the WCOG is to provide general and special governments with an organized means of providing a more unified response to significant issues in Whatcom County. WCOG is the region’s Metropolitan Planning Organization and Regional Transportation Planning Organization under the

Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA). WCOG is charged with meeting transportation planning requirements specified in the GMA and by the U.S Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration.

WCOG also administers the regional Commute Trip Reduction, Whatcom Smart Trips, and Everybody Bike programs, and oversees related projects including trail development and scenic byway designations.

City of Bellingham

The City of Bellingham has a rich history of community development, which includes planning from the neighborhood to the citywide level. As such, numerous documents were reviewed for relevant policy direction. The large number of pedestrian related goal and policy statements reflects the City's dedication to pedestrian-scale development and planning. For the purposes of understanding the community's commitment to pedestrian access, the Comprehensive Plan is the key document. Bellingham Comprehensive Plan policy is to include sidewalks and on all new and, where possible, on reconstructed arterial roads.

"One of the City's primary goals is to enhance the public environment at the street level, which is everyone's community space, and design the urban streetscape primarily for people rather than strictly for automobiles."

– Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan

The list of local documents reviewed includes the following:

- Council legacies and strategic commitments
- Transportation Commission pedestrian plan vision & values statement
- Comprehensive Plan, Framework Goals and Policies
- Comprehensive Plan, Transportation Element, Part 7, Transportation Goals
- Relevant sections of all neighborhood level planning documents
- Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan

A matrix of existing pedestrian policies in the 2006 Comprehensive Plan and other relevant federal, state and local plans is included in Appendix D.