

Bellingham Pedestrian Master Plan Update

Draft Program and Policy Recommendations

Background

The 2012 Bellingham Pedestrian Master Plan (PMP) presented six goals and 30 policies focused on safety, equity, health, connectivity, the environment, and the economy. For the PMP update these goals and policies have been reassessed to ensure close alignment with current City of Bellingham goals as articulated in other planning documents, as well as current best practices for creating walkable communities. The recommended policies aim to inform the way infrastructure improvements are made and how resources are allocated. An objective of this update is to streamline and create actionable policies. The updated set of 18 policy recommendations is categorized into four goals around safety, equity, connectivity and environmental health and climate action.

Policy Recommendations

Goal 1: Safety

Improve pedestrian safety through well-designed facilities along and across roadways, and by promoting safe driving, walking, and bicycling behaviors.

Policy 1.1	Use proven safety countermeasures to proactively reduce the number and severity of pedestrian collisions.
Policy 1.2	Work with the Police Department to a) ensure that officers are trained in the most current laws to protect people walking, rolling, and bicycling, and b) use modern technology such as automated safety cameras to reduce speeding, red light running, and potentially other infractions as enabled by Washington State law through enforcement in an objective manner.
Policy 1.3	Partner with agencies and organizations to educate and raise awareness about laws and rights of pedestrians.
Policy 1.4	Ensure adequate provision of street lighting to increase personal security and safety for pedestrians, wheelchair and other mobility device users, bicyclists, and transit users as they travel along and across roadways
Policy 1.5	Implement Leading Pedestrian Intervals at signalized intersections, focusing first within Urban Villages and locations where there are a high number of vehicle turning conflicts with pedestrians.
Policy 1.6	Address safety issues associated with vehicle speed. Use best practice methods to conduct speed studies and crash analyses on arterials already posted at 25 mph to determine extent to which drivers are exceeding the posted speed and where speed management strategies should be prioritized. Conduct speed studies on arterials with posted speeds 30 mph or greater to determine corridors suitable for a reduction in posted speed and the degree to which speed management strategies need to be deployed. Explore a reduction in <i>prima facie</i> speed limit for residential streets from 25 mph to 20 mph.

Goal 2: Equity

Provide accessible pedestrian facilities for all ages and abilities through equity in public engagement, service delivery and capital investment.

Policy 2.1	Provide diverse opportunities for all residents to participate in making Bellingham a walkable community. Whenever possible, engage vision- and hearing-impaired, non-English speakers, and people with mobility challenges by providing technology, translated materials, and interpreters at public events.
Policy 2.2	Ensure that walking facilities are provided for all residents of Bellingham, including people of different ages, races, ethnicities, incomes, and those with variable or restricted mobility.
Policy 2.3	Focus on improving the accessibility of Bellingham's pedestrian network by removing barriers and upgrading facilities that are non-compliant with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and associated federal guidance. Refer to the City of Bellingham ADA Transition Plan to ensure Priority Facilities identified in that Plan are incorporated into project implementation.
Policy 2.4	Increase the provision of ADA-compliant pedestrian amenities such as benches, fountains, and plaza seating within the pedestrian network where appropriate.

Goal 3: Environmental Health and Climate Action

Implement infrastructure and amenities that support an active, healthy lifestyles, sustains a healthy environment and contributes toward Bellingham's climate goals outlined in the Climate Action Plan.

Policy 3.1	Increase the availability and encourage the use of pedestrian infrastructure to improve the health of Bellingham residents, to help achieve transportation mode shift goals, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from car trips.
Policy 3.2	Improve pedestrian access to transit, schools, healthy food choices, healthcare facilities, support services, and employment destinations throughout the city.
Policy 3.3	Incorporate streets trees and other green infrastructure into projects to improve pedestrian comfort and manage and treat, manage, and conserve stormwater.

Goal 4: Connectivity and Access

Provide a citywide network of accessible, efficient, and convenient pedestrian infrastructure that connects homes, jobs, shopping, schools, services, and recreation areas.

Policy 4.1	Partner with the Bellingham School District and neighborhood schools to ensure that all schools have complete infrastructure for safe walking routes.
Policy 4.2	Improve ADA connections to transit for people walking and rolling by aligning safe crossings with WTA transit stops and completing sidewalk gaps. Complete sidewalks on at least one side of transit corridor streets and provide safe and convenient ADA crossings and access at transit stops.

Policy 4.3	Improve pedestrian connections to and within Urban Villages and commercial centers to improve safety, comfort and convenience for people to walk and roll to meet their everyday needs.
Policy 4.4	Implement ADA-compliant alternative walkways to create comfortable connections where right-of-way and other constraints may make conventional sidewalk construction cost prohibitive.
Policy 4.5	Minimize pedestrian delay at traffic signals within Urban Villages by reducing, or rebalancing signal cycle lengths for vehicles and incorporating a pedestrian walk phase (Leading Pedestrian Interval) into each cycle.

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Program Recommendations

Programs are ongoing activities that further support the implementation of plan goals. Program recommendations also build upon the encouragement, education, enforcement, and evaluation programs listed in the 2012 PMP and include updates that reflect City resources, potential for partnership, and what is likely to “move the needle” in terms encouraging and supporting walking and rolling in Bellingham. The City will seek funding opportunities to implement programs in coordination with pedestrian infrastructure improvements over time.

1. Safe Routes to School Programs

Further collaboration between the Bellingham School District and City departments on Safe Routes to School programming, is recommended to continue ongoing programming, increase the number of students walking to school and improve safety for students who walk. Future programming ideas include volunteer-led crosswalk programs, integration of national and local education programs (such as the education program by WCOG at YMCA camps) into school programming, and School Action Plans developed by schools in collaboration with community stakeholders.

Partners for Safe Routes to School programs include Bellingham School District, City of Bellingham (Public Works, Police), Whatcom County Health Department, Whatcom Council of Governments, Bellingham Police Department, Bellingham Transportation Commission, and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board.

2. Monitoring Driving Speed

Promote the current Speed Reader Board Loaner Program (aka speed trailer) and further deployment. Continue to deploy the speed trailer on streets where speeding is an issue or local residents have complained about speeding problems.

Potential partners for Speed Reader Board Loaner Programs are City of Bellingham (Public Works, Police), Bellingham School District, and Bellingham residents.

3. Traffic Safety Campaigns

Expand existing traffic campaigns targeted at all road users, particularly to mitigate dangers to pedestrians. Maintain and update current campaigns including 2017-2019 Travel with Care and 2021-2023 Protecting Mobility for All accordingly. Key messages to emphasize in traffic safety campaigns include the following:

- Every corner is a crosswalk.
- Yield to pedestrians in crosswalks, even on multi-lane streets.
- Speeding kills; reduce your speed to protect pedestrians.
- Red light running is extremely dangerous and leads to serious and fatal crashes.

Potential partners for Traffic Safety Campaigns include City of Bellingham (Public Works, Police), Bellingham School District, Western Washington University, Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA), NWRC Senior Information and Assistance, Whatcom County Health Department, and Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG).

4. Walking and Transit Incentives

Encourage and incentivize more people to walk and bike through education and encouragement activities such as special events and social media campaigns. Continue and expand marketing campaigns including transit provision for city workers. Continue to provide Whatcom Transit Authority (WTA) bus passes for all employees and allocate

funding to support Whatcom Smart Trips. Seek opportunities to partner with companies and local employers for walking to work incentives.

Potential partners for walking and transit incentive programs include WTA, WCOG, Bellingham/Whatcom Chamber of Commerce, and businesses.

5. Open Streets and Street Activation

Continue and expand Open Streets (programs that temporarily open streets to people for walking, rolling, and other activities by closing them to cars) in Bellingham. Increase frequency of Open Streets and promote and support themed walks and events in the public realm such as Bellingham Downtown Art & Gallery Walks on the first Friday of each month, Bellingham Interactive Historic Walking Tours, and Downtown Sounds street concerts. Seek opportunities to partner with health care providers whose missions include facilitating physical activity for sponsorship. Engage schools and youth, and senior organizations for all-ages programming. Facilitate logistics including traffic closure management strategies and informing residents along the route about temporary closures.

Potential partners for Open Streets and Street Activation programs include City of Bellingham (Public Works), Downtown Bellingham Partnership, Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism Board, Bellingham/Whatcom Chamber of Commerce, local businesses, artists, and community groups.

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