

# BELLINGHAM PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE MASTER PLAN (PMP-BMP) UPDATES, 2022-2023

## Interview: Bellingham School District (BSD) Administrative Staff

Online Meeting: Monday, August 15, 2022 – 10:00am to 11:00am

- Jessica Sankey, Executive Director of Operations, BSD
- Curtis Lawyer, Director of Capital Projects, BSD
- Rea Anne Thon, Director of Transportation (*Was not able to attend*)
- Chris Comeau, Transportation Planner, City of Bellingham Public Works

## Guiding Questions for BSD staff about the Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan Updates

- **How does BSD currently support walking, biking, and rolling in the on-going work that it does?**

The BSD encourages all students living within one-mile of their local school to walk and bike to classes and BSD provides parents with information on walking and biking to each school. Rae Anne Thon is the current, and long-time, Director of Transportation at BSD, but she is planning to retire in the near-future. When her position is filled, it will include both school buses as well as active transportation (walking, biking, rolling) to school. While Rae Anne's retirement will result in the loss of significant institutional knowledge, she has run a well-organized system that will make the transition for her replacement easier.

- **What are BSD plans to designate and map walking, biking, rolling routes to each school?**

There are many resources available on the [BSD Transportation web page](#), including older (2017) maps for walk routes to school and an old map of bike routes, neither of which reflect current attendance area boundaries. See examples at end of document. In 2019, the BSD began a community process to update the walk and bike maps to schools to reflect 2019 school attendance area boundary changes, but this was interrupted by the COVID-19 global pandemic. Currently BSD does not have in-house staff capacity to produce maps, but does have the ability to contract with other organizations for mapping.

- **How can City Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans assist BSD with its work around schools?**

The City has produced maps of the 2022 attendance area boundaries for all elementary, middle, and high schools draped over the citywide pedestrian and bicycle networks (See page 3). These maps show the existing inventory of sidewalks and bikeways throughout Bellingham as well as recommendations for sidewalks and bikeways on the citywide pedestrian and bicycle networks. It should be noted that the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan updates identify schools as one of the topmost criteria for location based needs for sidewalks, crossings, and bikeways, along with transit, urban villages, and parks.

- **What are some specific steps that BSD could take to encourage walking and biking to schools?**

BSD can encourage more sustainable forms of transportation to and from schools, such as walking, biking, riding school buses, and riding WTA transit buses. BSD can continue to work with Whatcom Smart Trips to help parents understand the public health and climate benefits of not driving kids to school. BSD can continue to explore the feasibility of establishing a crossing guard program made up of both student and parent volunteers. The City understands the current staff resource challenges that BSD faces, but if resources can be identified, these are high benefit/low cost safety programs.

- **What are some specific steps that City could take to encourage walking and biking to schools?**

The City Parks Department could look into the feasibility of providing overhead LED lighting on Greenways multiuse recreation trails through forested areas leading to schools. In 2015, the City converted all street lights from incandescent bulbs to light emitting diodes (LED), which saved significant amounts of energy and provided better street lighting overall. The City can continue to:

- Strive to improve safety for people walking, biking, and rolling on public streets;
- Discourage single occupancy vehicle trips;
- Encourage ride sharing and WTA bus riding
- Continue to work with Whatcom Smart Trips on encouragement and educational efforts; and
- Coordinate efforts between City, WTA, & BSD staff to “normalizing’ walking and biking to school;

- **Does BSD have concerns about active transportation infrastructure being installed in Bellingham?**

Generally, BSD is very supportive of all that Bellingham is doing to construct active transportation improvements near schools, such as flashing crosswalks and roundabouts, and would simply like to see more of it. BSD would like to see separated or protected bike lanes wherever they are considered feasible throughout the City.

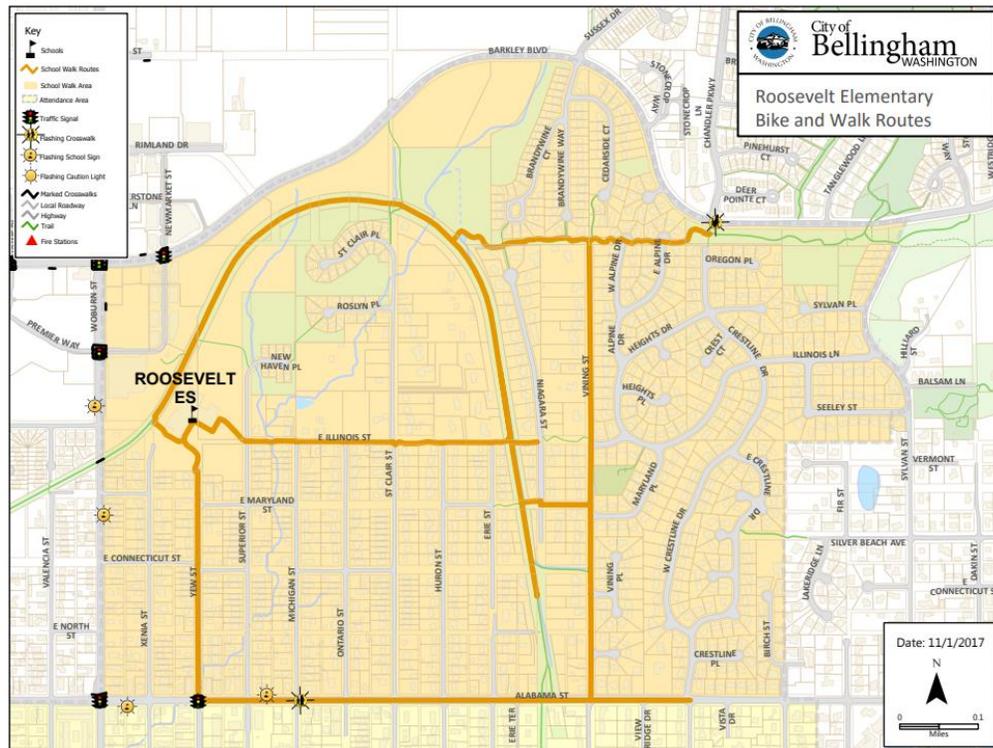
- **Does BSD think walking, biking, and rolling can be made safer around Bellingham? If so, how?**

BSD encourages the City to provide more education about the expectation for public use of infrastructure and street markings, such as HAWK signals and green bike boxes, to school kids and all transportation users.

- **Given decreasing law enforcement staff and resources combined with the emergence of artificial intelligence technology, how does BSD feel about automated safety cameras in school zones used to observe, detect, and enforce traffic safety laws on Bellingham’s streets?**

BSD is generally supportive of automated safety camera technology, but understands that it could also create controversy. BSD staff is interested to know if automated cameras could be used to ticket drivers for near-misses (Ex. Driver not stopping or slowing for a child in a marked crosswalk).

The [2017 Roosevelt ES Walk Route Map](#) on the BSD transportation web page is shown below



The Autumn 2022 Roosevelt ES Attendance Area and Sidewalk Inventory Map is below.  
 Solid purple and blue = Sidewalks existing in 2022; Dashed purple = Sidewalk recommended

