Chapter 6: Transportation Fund (Former Transportation Benefit District) - 2023

In November 2010, 58% of Bellingham voters approved a Transportation Benefit District (TBD) to collect a two tenths of one percent sales tax within City limits for a 10-year period. In November 2020, the TBD was renamed the Bellingham Transportation Fund (T-Fund) and re-approved by 82% of voters.

The Bellingham Transportation Fund provides dedicated funding to the following activities from 2021-2030:
- Enhance and improve pedestrian and bicycle transportation infrastructure
- Resurfacing streets to maintain the City of Bellingham’s investment for all transportation users
- Transit-supportive capital projects considered with asphalt resurfacing and non-motorized priorities
- Citywide transportation impact reductions identified in the Climate Action Plan

Figure 6.1.
In 2020, the Bellingham T-Fund was re-approved with transit identified as one of the priorities for T-Fund expenditures. In February 2022, the WTA Board adopted a 20-year long-range transit plan titled WTA 2040 and the City is partnering with WTA on the following over the next few years:

- Updates to Bellingham Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans
- A Rapid Transit Study on Select GO Lines in Bellingham
- Electric Bus Charging Facilities at the WTA Cordata Station
- ADA Upgrades to 200 WTA Bus Stops Throughout Bellingham
- Expansion of Downtown Bellingham Station WTA Transit Hub

**Transportation Fund - Street Resurfacing**

Bellingham has made a significant investment in providing a public street system throughout the City. Public streets have a functional lifespan that varies according to the amount of use that the street is subject to and, at some point, all public streets require maintenance, repair, and resurfacing. Traditional sources of funding for street construction and resurfacing, such as Street funds and Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) funds, have been significantly diminished through budgeting decisions.

Since 2011, TBD/T-Fund revenue allocated to street resurfacing has helped to replace some of the Street and REET funding lost to other General Fund projects. When streets are resurfaced, pedestrian and bicycle facilities approved in the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans are also installed, whenever possible.
Transportation Fund - Non-motorized Pedestrian & Bicycle Improvements

The City Council annually approves T-Funds for a number of non-motorized transportation projects that have been approved in Bellingham’s 2012 Pedestrian Master Plan (PMP) and 2014 Bicycle Master Plan (BMP) and recommended for construction by Public Works and the Transportation Commission. As shown in Figure 6.1 and the tables below, since TBD/T-Fund revenue became available for the construction of non-motorized transportation improvements in 2011, it has allowed the City to make significant progress in implementing sidewalk, crossing, and bikeway improvement projects in the PMP and BMP.

Figure 6.3 - Vehicle lanes or parking have been removed in favor of installing bikeways on many streets, including Cornwall Avenue, Northwest Avenue, Barkley Boulevard, Roeder Avenue, Chestnut Street, Cordata Parkway (above), N. Samish-Maple-Ellis, West Illinois Street, Meridian Street, Girard Street, Eldridge Avenue, and Lincoln Street.

**Great Success To Date, But More Work To Do In Future**

The City has already accomplished a great deal in the 13 years that the TBD/T-Fund has been available for bicycle, pedestrian, and street resurfacing projects, but there is much more work to be done. The renewal of the T-Fund by voters in November 2020 provided critical dedicated funding to help implement Bellingham’s PMP and BMP in the most expeditious manner possible. While the PMP and the BMP are a key part of the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element, they are not 5-, 10-, or even 20-year plans. They are on-street network plans that are completely dependent on the ability to fund sidewalk, crossing, and bicycle improvements – many of which are beyond the City’s available resources.

The City is currently conducting the public process for Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan Updates.
As in Chapter 4, Figure 4.3. shows Bellingham’s “Low to Moderate Income Neighborhoods” from the 2013-2017 Bellingham Consolidated Plan.

Figure 6.4. Since 2011, 62.4% of TBD/T-Fund pedestrian projects have been in lower income neighborhoods.

Figure 6.5. Since 2011, 76.7% of TBD/T-Fund bikeway projects have been in lower income neighborhoods.