

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

Technical Review Committee Interview: Bellingham Police Department and Washington Traffic Safety Commission Target Zero Managers

In-Person Meeting at BPD: Wednesday, September 28, 2022 – 2:30pm to 3:30pm

- Chief of Police Rebecca Mertzig, BPD
- Lt. Claudia Murphy, BPD Special Operations/Public Information Officer
- Doug Dahl, WTSC, Communications Lead
- Carr Lanham, WTSC Target Zero, Region 11
- Chris Comeau, Transportation Planner, Public Works

Guiding Questions for BPD & WTSC staff about Pedestrian-Bicycle Plan Updates

- **How do BPD and WTSC support walking, biking, and rolling in the work each organization does?**

BPD collaborates with the Washington Traffic Safety Commission by way of an interagency agreement. The purpose is to provide funding from USDOT for a traffic safety grants. In 2021-2023, BPD and WTSC are collaborating on a public safety campaign titled [Protecting Mobility for All](#). Through this grant BPD is able to fund police training and high visibility emphasis patrols specifically aimed to keep vulnerable users – people walking, biking, and rolling - safe. This current campaign also extends the work done in the 2017-2019 [Travel with Care](#) public safety campaign.

- **Are BPD and WTSC providing widespread education about State law changes regarding vulnerable users? If so, please explain how.**

Yes, the BPD and WTSC staff created several videos through the Protecting Mobility for All safety campaign. A “Roll Call” police training video titled [Pedestrians and Cyclists](#) was created speaking to the definition of ‘vulnerable road users.’ BPD Officer Rob Brandland narrates this video and it is being shown at shift briefings at agencies around the state.

BPD and WTSC staff created several Public Service Announcement Videos, as listed below:

- [PSA1: Sharing the Road with Bicyclists 1](#)
 - [PSA2: Sharing the Road with Bicyclists 2](#)
 - [PSA3: Sharing the Road with Pedestrians](#)
 - [PSA4: Sharing the Road with School Children](#)
- **Is BPD providing education and training to officers on the latest changes to State law regarding safety for people walking, biking, and rolling? If so, please explain how.**

BPD is showing the roll call training video, which had a great deal of content on the new laws regarding vulnerable road users, at all BPD shift briefings.

- **What do BPD and WTSC see as the primary needs and/or concerns for enforcing state laws designed to protect more vulnerable road users?**

Concern – inconsistent traffic enforcement due to lack of staffing. This will (and has) increased road users speeds and careless behavior, which can lead to increased crashes.

Needs Funds for Lidars for officers, as well as in car moving radar.

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

BPD would like to collaborate with Public Works staff to gain a better understanding of the purpose and timing of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and street markings. Examples would be green bike boxes, green dashed transition lanes at intersection.

- **Does BPD and WTSC think walking, biking, and rolling can be made safer around Bellingham?**

Yes, there are always further things which can be done to make walking, rolling and biking safer in town. Some of it is to educate the bikers and rollers about their responsibilities to be safe, i.e., not riding/rolling in areas they should not. The City has a Pedestrian Master Plan and a Bicycle Master Plan to increase sidewalks, crossing improvements, and bike lanes throughout Bellingham.

- **How can BPD officers and Public Works transportation planning staff best collaborate on public safety and traffic enforcement issues moving forward?**

Staying in touch and ensuring that communication lines stay open between PD and PW staff. Keeping PD informed when large projects are being planned, recognizing we do not have a dedicated team of officers who are assigned to traffic emphasis right now and patrol is the primary unit who conduct enforcement issues or work the emphasis patrols. Providing the PD with advanced warning and educational material when large projects are put in place.

- **Given decreased law enforcement staff and resources, how will the enforcement of traffic safety laws regarding vulnerable users be prioritized by BPD?**

As we prioritize all our calls, based on staffing availability, calls holding and unallocated time by the officers.

- **Public Works receives emails on a regular basis from bicyclists complaining about personal vehicles, as well as food and package delivery vehicles, parking temporarily in the marked bicycle lane on North State Street. This forces bicyclists to ride into moving traffic, which many riders are not comfortable with, and defeats the purpose of having dedicated bicycle lanes. Will BPD realistically be able to enforce traffic laws on this illegal behavior in downtown Bellingham?**

We are in the beginning stages of training two of four parking enforcement officers, who can cite for such a violation. Their focus will be the downtown and Fairhaven areas for meter violations, so they will be on this particular street most days (Mon-Sat). They are able to enforce this violation and will be encouraged to ticket if seen. We believe this violation has increased as there has been virtually no enforcement for several months, other than some officers being called to a specific problem.

- **Given decreased law enforcement staff and resources combined with the emergence of artificial intelligence technology, how do BPD and WTSC feel about automated safety cameras used to observe, detect, and enforce traffic safety laws on Bellingham’s streets? See below.**

Definitely worth further discussion, especially for school zones and high traffic crash intersections. Part of the discussion would need to be staff to review each of the violations prior to issuing the applicable traffic citation.

Excerpt from [2022 Local Road Safety Plan](#), page 30

- Consider changing the Bellingham Municipal Code (BMC) to allow the use of automated [Speed Safety Cameras](#) in school zones, as well as at signalized intersections to prevent red-light running. Many cities in Washington already do this and [research by the Active Transportation Safety Council](#) documents both the efficiency and effectiveness of this technology. Given the recent staff reductions at the Bellingham Police Department, the use of this proven safety countermeasure seems especially pragmatic and timely. While this may generate public controversy, the use of automated traffic law enforcement using cameras on public streets is an effective technological tool for public safety in an era of strained and diminished public resources for the enforcement of traffic laws and several cities in Washington are now employing and expanding use of this safety technology (See articles below).
- Crosscut article (1/31/2022): [Effectiveness of traffic cameras Seattle, Lynnwood, and Bellevue](#)
- City of Kirkland (2/7/2022) Memo expanding [2019 School Zone Safety Camera Program](#)
- King TV (3/2/2022) [News on Seattle DOT automatic traffic camera program](#)