



## Chapter 5

# Chapter 5: Program Recommendations

Program recommendations (strategies) are intended to support Plan goals, policies and actions. They are important for developing a community culture that is supportive of bicycling as a safe, viable and comfortable mode of transportation. Recommendations are organized by the “5 Es”: education, enforcement, engineering and encouragement, which are covered in this chapter; and evaluation, which is covered in Chapter 6. While organized into the “5 Es,” it should be recognized that some programs address more than one “E” and have multiple benefits.

## Education

The bicycle network is designed to provide safe and convenient access for bicyclists throughout Bellingham. Like facilities for other transportation modes, the network of bicycle facilities must be used appropriately to be safe and effective. For example, bicycle facilities are designed under the assumption that bicyclists ride the correct direction on streets and stop at red traffic signals and stop signs. Motorist education and awareness is also critical to ensure bicycle safety. Motorists should yield to bicyclists when turning, provide sufficient space when passing, and should not drive or park in designated bicycle lanes. Education for bicyclists and motorists on how to use and interact with bicycle facilities and how to follow the rules of the road is essential for the safety of all users.

### Strategy 1: Expand bicycle education opportunities.

**Purpose:** Increase safety and comfort of roadway users of all ages and abilities.

**Audience:** Bellingham and Whatcom County residents

**Potential Partners:** Bellingham Police Department, Bellingham Parks and Recreation Department, Whatcom County Health Department, everybodyBIKE, Bellingham School District, Western Washington University, Whatcom Community College, Bellingham Technical College, and local bicycle clubs

**Program Description:** Offering and effectively publicizing bicycle skills courses to community members of all ages can help encourage safe biking habits. Strategies for increasing participation in courses may include offering courses through employers, and offering a variety of course formats (e.g. full-day, half-day, or weekly for several consecutive weeks). A clear, centralized information source such as a page on the City website can help increase awareness of these events. Courses should be planned for a wide





range of abilities and ages. In addition, the City should consider working with colleges in Bellingham to integrate bicycle safety courses into the orientation programs held at the beginning of each school year.

### **Strategy 2: Provide education for motorists.**

**Purpose:** Increase safety and comfort for vulnerable roadway users by educating motor vehicle drivers about rules of the road, specifically laws pertinent to bicyclists and pedestrians.

**Audience:** Bellingham residents

**Potential Partners:** Bellingham Police Department, Bellingham Public Works Department, Western Washington University, and everybodyBIKE

**Program Description:** Develop an informational campaign aimed at motorists. Utilize local driver training schools, public service announcements, and the City of Bellingham Website to disseminate information about the laws related to sharing the roadways with all users including laws related to motor vehicle behavior around pedestrians and bicyclists. Announcements can focus on laws such as the three foot law (if passed locally) and state law requiring motor vehicles to stop for pedestrians in unmarked crosswalks.

### **Strategy 3: Provide bicycle education through the Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS).**

**Purpose:** Encourage children to bike and walk to school through education and safety improvements.

**Audience:** Parents, children, school faculty and staff, bus drivers, and school neighbors

**Potential Partners:** Bellingham School District, Bellingham Police Department, Bellingham Public Works Department, Whatcom County Health Department, everybodyBIKE

**Program Description:** Bellingham has implemented Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs at a small number of schools funded by WSDOT SRTS grants. The program encourages students to bike and walk to school where they are not currently doing so, while making it safer for students who are already biking and walking. A key component of the program is educating students on safe bicycling (and walking) behavior. Safety messages need to be reinforced over time, especially as adolescents near driving age.



In order to facilitate a district-wide SRTS program, a full- or part-time SRTS Coordinator should be assigned to work with the Bellingham School District. The SRTS Coordinator should facilitate an oversight committee composed of key stakeholders. A district-wide plan should provide a strategy for extending the SRTS program to all of Bellingham's schools, to update school walking routes and educate students of all ages about bicycle and pedestrian safety. The SRTS Coordinator could also help to match certified bicycle instructors with the School District and investigate funding opportunities to compensate the

instructors. Institutionalizing the SRTS program in all schools would complement current everybodyBIKE program offerings such as bicycle skills courses and bicycle safety assemblies for elementary students.

#### **Strategy 4: Distribute information on proper use of bicycle facilities.**

**Purpose:** Encourage safe and predictable riding behaviors.

**Audience:** Bellingham residents

**Potential Partners:** Bellingham Police Department, Bellingham Public Works Department, Bellingham Parks and Recreation Department, Whatcom Transportation Authority, Whatcom County Health Department, everybodyBIKE, Western Washington University, Whatcom Community College, Bellingham Technical College, local bicycle clubs and shops, and the Washington Department of Motor Vehicles

**Program Description:** As Bellingham continues to improve its bicycle network, information should be provided to encourage the correct use of more familiar facilities (e.g. bike lanes, shared lane markings) as well as facilities that are new to Bellingham (e.g. bike boulevards, cycle tracks). Information on bicycle facilities should be distributed in multiple mediums so it is accessible to as many users as possible. This information should be posted on the City’s website and at popular recreation and transportation centers (e.g. bus stations, signs at popular bike trails). Another distribution method the City should consider is the use of quick response (QR) codes that direct users to resources on the internet. Temporary signs should be used alongside new facilities in order to educate users about proper use.

### **Enforcement**

Enforcement is an important component of improving roadway safety for all users. Enforcement efforts should complement, and in most cases, be preceded by educational efforts. In fact, law enforcement has an important role to play in educating roadway users about behaviors that improve or diminish roadway safety. Enforcement efforts should be balanced (i.e. target all roadway users, not one group) and focused on those behaviors that are known to cause crashes. For bicyclists, riding at night without lights, riding the wrong way (against traffic), and failure to follow traffic controls are among the behaviors that should be targeted. For motorists, not providing adequate space when passing bicyclists, not yielding to bicyclists, and parking or driving where there are dedicated bicycle facilities are among the behaviors that should be targeted.

#### **Strategy 5: Promote safety through City of Bellingham Municipal Code.**

**Purpose:** Increase safety through revisions/additions to the Bellingham Municipal Code.

**Audience:** All roadway users

**Potential Partners:** Bellingham Police Department and Bellingham Public Works Department

**Program Description:** The Bellingham Municipal Code should be reviewed to ensure it promotes safety and comfort for bicyclists, pedestrians, and motorists alike. For example, laws regarding helmet use should be revisited; a “go on red” law, which permits bicyclists to proceed through a red light after not

being detected for two light cycles should be considered, as well as a law establishing a minimum passing distance between motor vehicles and bicycles (e.g. a “3-foot law”).

#### **Strategy 6: Enhance and increase the Bellingham Police Bicycle Patrol.**

**Purpose:** Encourage strong community relationships between officers and bicycle users to increase safety and compliance.

**Audience:** Bellingham residents

**Potential Partners:** Bellingham Police Department

**Program Description:** Police officers regularly use bicycles to patrol areas in downtown Bellingham and nearby neighborhoods. This practice should be continued and expanded. Officers on bicycles become familiar with the bicycling environment and can help to develop respect and understanding of bicyclists’ operating characteristics and needs within the Police Department. Furthermore, ensuring the safety of trail users is a task uniquely suited to bicycle patrols. While there are likely to be fewer warnings issued on off-road facilities, such an environment provides officers with a venue to distribute educational materials and encourage safe riding habits.

### **Engineering**

The quality of bicycle facilities has a direct impact on the experience of bicyclists, and will therefore have a significant influence on the ability of the facility to attract and sustain use. Well maintained, high-quality facilities have been demonstrated to attract higher levels of users than poorly designed and maintained bikeways that offer inadequate separation from high speed traffic. Likewise, interconnected systems with minimal gaps are essential.

#### **Strategy 7: Educate staff on best practices in bicycle facility planning, design and implementation.**

**Purpose:** Provide planning and engineering staff with the best current practices in bicycle facility planning, design and implementation.

**Audience:** Public and private sector professionals who work on transportation projects

**Potential Partners:** Bellingham Public Works Department, Bellingham Planning and Community Development Department, Bellingham Parks and Recreation Department, and Whatcom County

**Program Description:** Policies and standards related to the planning, design and implementation of bicycle facilities should be communicated to staff in appropriate departments to ensure they are effective. Agency staff and consultants should have opportunities to attend training sessions on bicycle planning, design and implementation. These training sessions should occur on an annual or semiannual



basis in order to ensure that all new staff is properly trained, principles are reinforced, and new practices are disseminated.

## Encouragement

Bellingham benefits from an enthusiastic bicycling community. There are several bicycling clubs and organizations that promote bicycling and organize group rides in and around the city. The presence of these groups increases awareness and encourages new users. In addition to promoting recreational cycling, the City and its partners have implemented a variety of programs that incentivize bicycling for transportation needs, specifically targeting the reduction of single occupancy vehicle trips.

### Strategy 8: Partner with local businesses, colleges and bicycle organizations to encourage bicycling.

**Purpose:** Provide resources to local businesses and organizations to encourage bicycling.

**Audience:** Bellingham businesses, organizations, and colleges

**Potential Partners:** Whatcom Smart Trips, Whatcom Transportation Authority, Western Washington University, Whatcom Community College, Bellingham Technical College, local bicycle clubs, and local businesses

**Program Description:** Bellingham already has several programs and organizations that encourage bicycling, such as Whatcom Smart Trips, everybodyBIKE, and local bicycle clubs. Whatcom Smart Trips should continue its efforts to reach the general public and employers. This should include education of



employers on the Bicycle Commuter Tax Reimbursement, information and local examples of employers who offer incentives to encourage employees to bike to work, and special awards/recognition for local employers with successful bike commute programs. Whatcom Smart Trips may also play a role informing businesses about the League of American Bicyclists "Bicycle Friendly Business" recognition program. Local bicycle clubs and colleges could coordinate efforts to promote student bicycling through events and campaigns.

### Strategy 9: Update routes and add interactive features to the City's bike route map.

**Purpose:** Increase awareness and promote use of the City's bicycle network.

**Audience:** Bellingham residents and visitors

**Potential Partners:** Bellingham Public Works Department, Bellingham Parks and Recreation Department, Whatcom Transportation Authority, Whatcom County Health Department, Whatcom Smart Trips,



Western Washington University, Whatcom Community College, Bellingham Technical College, and local bicycle clubs and shops

**Program Description:** As the recommended bicycle network is implemented, updates to the City's bicycle map will be important to ensure residents and visitors are aware of the extent of the network. The map should be available in a variety of formats including PDF, and online web map. Web map applications could include route planning (origin/destination), and a route difficulty rating system based on distance, traffic, and terrain. Additionally, the City could consider partnerships with local organizations or colleges (e.g. WWU) to develop mapping resources that would provide a more in-depth understanding of Bellingham's bicycle network.

#### **Strategy 10: Pursue the League of American Bicyclists' Bicycle Friendly Community Gold, then Platinum status.**

**Purpose:** Encourage a culture that recognizes bicycling as a viable mode of transportation.

**Audience:** Bellingham residents and visitors

**Potential Partners:** Bellingham Public Works Department, Bellingham Planning and Community Development Department, Bellingham Parks and Recreation Department, WCOG programs

**Program Description:** The League of American Bicyclists' Bicycle Friendly Community Program (BFC) provides incentives, hands-on assistance, and award recognition for communities that actively support bicycling. A Bicycle Friendly Community welcomes bicyclists by providing safe accommodation for bicycling and encouraging people to bike for transportation and recreation. Bellingham achieved silver level status under this Program in 2007 and will continue to improve upon this designation through the implementation of recommendations in this Plan.



#### **Strategy 11: Create an Open Streets Event.**

**Purpose:** Encourage biking, walking, and physical activity by providing a car-free street event.

**Audience:** General public, generally within a particular community but can be promoted citywide

**Potential Partners:** Bellingham Public Works Department, Bellingham Police Department, Bellingham Planning and Community Development Department, Bellingham Parks and Recreation Department, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, Whatcom Smart Trips, Whatcom County YMCA, Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism Board, PeaceHealth, active living retailers (e.g. running, walking, recreational equipment stores), Bellingham Farmer's Market, Whatcom Community Foundation, Whatcom County Health Department

**Program Description:** Open Streets programs temporarily close streets to automobile traffic so that people may use them for walking, bicycling, dancing, playing, roller skating, and more. They provide a safe space for people to ride and to learn just how easy it can be to get around on two wheels. While leisurely riding, participants can discover buildings, neighborhoods, and places they've never noticed

before. Open Streets events encourage physical activity and social interaction, and boost local businesses. They can be one-time events, weekly, or monthly, and are generally very popular and well-attended. The City should partner with other community agencies to develop a pilot event, using information and resources provided by the Open Streets Project initiative (<http://openstreetsproject.org/>).