

# Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE)

## Transportation Planning/Pedestrian Bicycle Councils

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## Pedestrian and Bicycle System Planning in Bellingham, WA

Bellingham, Washington transportation planners are creating a mode-specific Pedestrian Master Plan and in Spring 2012 will begin working on a Bicycle Master Plan. Bellingham is a progressive small city (2011 population = 81,070) located along the far northwestern inland coast of Washington State, 85 miles north of Seattle and 45 miles south of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. As the primary center for employment, shopping, entertainment, education, government, and medical services, Bellingham plays an important role in the development of the entire Whatcom County region.

Planning under Washington's Growth Management Act, Bellingham has adopted an internally consistent Comprehensive Plan with a transportation element containing multimodal transportation goals and policies designed to support alternative forms of transportation and compact mixed use urban infill development prescribed by the land use element. Multimodal goals and policies in the transportation element also support public transit, which is not a city service. City transportation planners work hand-in-hand with the regional transit agency, Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA), to incorporate high-frequency (15-minute headway) transit service routes into citywide planning efforts for mixed-use urban villages and transit-oriented development.

Long-term mode shift goals adopted in the transportation element serve as targets for continuously working to reduce the percentage of total trips made by single-occupant vehicles while increasing the percentage of total trips made by pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders.

<u>Mode</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2022</u>
<b>Automobile</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>Transit Bus</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Bicycle</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Pedestrian</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>13%</b>

*(Note: 2004 data from FTA/Social Data Study for Bellingham)*

In support of the multimodal transportation element and the long-term mode shift goals, Bellingham transportation planners are now engaged in creating a mode-specific Pedestrian Master Plan (PMP) and in Spring 2012 will begin working on a Bicycle Master Plan (BMP). When completed in mid-2012, the PMP will identify a city-wide "pedestrian network" integrating on-street sidewalks with Bellingham's extensive off-street Greenways multi-use trail system. A community survey was conducted in 2011, which elicited 830 responses from neighborhood residents resulting in a long list of pedestrian improvement requests and concerns. The PMP will identify pedestrian network deficiencies, include a

prioritized list of capital improvements to correct pedestrian network deficiencies over time, and identify options for funding. In addition, the PMP will update the City's standards for crosswalks, sidewalk widths, and create a menu of appropriate pedestrian crossing treatments based on land use and transportation contexts.

In similar fashion, City transportation planners will seek community input for the BMP to clarify the citywide bicycle system, deficiencies in the bicycle network, and a prioritized list of capital improvements to correct bicycle network deficiencies over time, and identify options for funding.. In 2011, Bellingham currently has 62.5 miles of marked bicycle lanes on arterial streets, 60 additional miles of planned bicycle lanes, and plans for 1.2 miles of "bicycle boulevards." The BMP will update the City's standards for bicycle lanes, will include new bicycle facilities and treatments, such as "bicycle boulevards" on residential streets, "sharrow" markings on limited arterial streets, and way-finding symbols on citywide bicycle routes, as well as a menu of appropriate bicycle facilities and treatments based on land use and transportation contexts.

It is fully anticipated that the needs and deficiencies identified in both the PMP and the BMP will have costs far in excess of Bellingham's ability to fund capital improvements. Fortunately, in 2010, Bellingham voters approved a [Transportation Benefit District](#) (TBD) funded by a two-tenths of one-percent sales tax collected within the City limits of Bellingham with funding directed specifically to non-motorized pedestrian and bicycle capital improvements, as well as supplemental transit service in Bellingham provided by WTA through a contract with the City. The TBD revenue will be collected for a 10-year period (2011-2020) and will greatly assist Bellingham to complete the citywide pedestrian and bicycle networks identified in the PMP and BMPs, will support WTA's efforts to provide a robust urban transit system, and will help to achieve and sustain the City's long-term transportation mode-shift goals.

The Bellingham PMP, BMP, and TBD will also be integrated into two important regulatory programs that Bellingham has created to implement the multimodal transportation approach and Urban Village infill land use strategy in the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan. In 2008, Bellingham transportation planners and transportation consulting firm [TranspoGroup, Inc.](#) developed and adopted a new [Multimodal Transportation Concurrency Program](#) that includes level of service (LOS) measurements for pedestrian, bicycle, multi-use trails, and public transit in addition to the traditional auto-centric volume to capacity (v/c) ratio LOS standards used by most jurisdictions. Bellingham's Multimodal Transportation Concurrency Program won the [2009 APA/PAW Award](#) for Transportation Planning in Washington State.

In 2010, Bellingham developed and adopted economic incentives called [Urban Village Vehicle Trip/Transportation Impact Fee \(TIF\) Reductions](#) to lower the cost of development in areas promoted as the most appropriate for growth based on the availability of multimodal transportation facilities and transit service. The vehicle trip reductions are based on a blend of methodology from the ITE Trip Generation Manual and accepted trip generation research and are only available for use in select Urban Village mixed use areas that are well-served with pedestrian, bicycle, and transit service.