The James Street Corridor, stretching from Orchard to Kellogg Street, serves as a vital corridor in a rapidly growing area of Bellingham.

The corridor lacks necessary active transportation and transit facilities to serve the city’s growing population. With multiple large-scale residential developments planned along its spine, the corridor is in need of upgrades to better serve all modes, including vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles, and transit.

The corridor’s current rural, arterial design is inconsistent with future land use patterns anticipated by the City, and there are currently three intersection improvement projects along the corridor underway to address mobility and safety. However, providing active mode facilities such as sidewalks, trails, or bike lanes remain to be completed.

Increasing modal choice along James Street is critical for the viability of the corridor as part of the city’s transportation network, and essential in serving the evolving needs of a growing and diverse population of all ages, abilities, and income levels.

WHAT WAS THE CITY’S PROCESS?
The City of Bellingham worked with Transpo Group, a transportation consulting firm, to prepare the study. A wide range of options were considered to bring safe, comfortable active transportation mobility to the James Street corridor. Two options were identified, and evaluated to identify a preferred alternative.

OTHER CORRIDOR PROJECTS

Orchard Street Extension and Signal Improvements (2020)

Telegraph Road Signal Improvements (2021)

Bakerview Road Roundabout (2023)
WHAT ALTERNATIVES WERE ANALYZED?

CITY OF BELLINGHAM STANDARD SECTION
- 11-foot vehicle lanes with 5-foot on-road bicycle lanes separated from traffic by a single stripe
- Curbed shoulders requiring full-corridor storm drainage systems
- 5½-foot sidewalks immediately adjacent to curbs

SHARED USE PATH
- 11-foot vehicle lanes with a 10 to 12-foot wide bi-directional shared use path on one side
- Vegetated planting strip between path and roadway used for stormwater conveyance and treatment and separation from traffic
- Curbed shoulders in locations where additional sidewalk is needed on the other side of the road

CONCEPT A: STANDARD SECTION
This concept would implement the City’s adopted arterial cross section for the full corridor. This option is familiar to drivers and active users in Bellingham. Each mode (vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian) is separated by striping and/or physical barriers. The section would be directly compatible with other development and transportation projects connecting to the corridor. Users on both sides of the street would have direct access to active transportation facilities and connections to transit stops and other destinations throughout the corridor.

CONCEPT B: SHARED USE PATH
The shared use path provides for active mode connections physically separated from traffic but combined in a single pedestrian and bicycle facility. This option allows for implementation without modification to the existing roadway, limiting the costs for stormwater conveyance and additional right of way.

The shared use path is a higher comfort facility but does not provide direct connections to active mode users on the opposite side of the street. Short stretches of sidewalk are needed to connect development, and users would need to access the nearest crosswalk to access the shared use path. Standard sections and intersections on the corridor would need to be modified to be compatible with the shared use path.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER:
- Direct access to sidewalks and bike lanes from both sides
- Compatible with existing and future development
- Requires full corridor stormwater conveyance
- Bike lanes next to 35 mph traffic with no buffer

ESTIMATED COST
(2025 $ value):
- $24.1 million*

$18.6m active transp. improvements
$5.5m culvert replacements

FACTORS TO CONSIDER:
- High comfort facility for users of all ages and abilities
- Does not require modification of existing roadway or stormwater conveyance
- Requires additional crossings for access to both sides of the road
- Does not preclude sidewalk on the opposite side of the road

ESTIMATED COST
(2025 $ value):
- $14.2 million*

$8.7m active transp. improvements
$5.5m culvert replacements

*costs do not include any costs associated with intersection improvements at Orchard, Telegraph or Bakerview Roads.
WHAT OTHER ISSUES WERE CONSIDERED?
In addition to the physical location of the facilities, estimated cost, and stormwater conveyance, other considerations of a preferred alternative included:

FISH-PASSABLE CULVERTS
Three water bodies cross under James Street, each currently contained within a culvert designed and constructed prior to current knowledge about the impacts these structures have on fish in our waterways. The feasibility of replacing these crossings with fish-passable culverts was considered.

WETLANDS AND CRITICAL AREAS
Several wetlands and critical areas, including steep slopes and wetland buffers, are present adjacent to the existing James Street roadway. Limiting the impact to these areas, for both construction of new facilities as well as new side slopes, was a consideration.

VERTICAL PROFILE
The vertical profile of James Street near the intersection with Gilbert Drive, north of Orchard Street, is a significant vertical curve which restricts sight distance for drivers and can cause discomfort and safety concerns for active mode users, regardless of facility type. Reshaping this vertical curve and improving visibility was a consideration for both alternatives.

CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT
Existing development was considered to ensure that access and mobility was increased for all existing residential development in the corridor. Future development was considered for compatibility with the section and ensuring that connections to James Street was intuitive and feasible for these future sites.

FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS
Other improvements were considered and integrated into each alternative. They include:
- Orchard Drive – new street and signal with crosswalks
- Telegraph Road – new signal with crosswalks
- Bakerview Road – new roundabout with single-direction crosswalks and refuge islands on each leg

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN CORRIDOR CONNECTIVITY: PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE, CONCEPT B

LEGEND
- Bike Movements
- Ped Movements
- Existing Crosswalk
- New Crosswalk
- New RRFB
- New Roundabout
- New Signal
- Existing Bus Stop
- Existing Development
- Future Development
- Creek

Existing wetland at Baker Creek
James Street vertical curve near Gilbert Drive
COMPARING CONCEPTS

The following represent the five factors that most separated the two alternatives and lead to the selection of a preferred alternative. The preferred alternative meets the City’s goals, and most satisfies these critical criteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>Segment 1</th>
<th>Segment 2</th>
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SATISFACTION OF CRITERIA

- ● Exceeds desirable criteria
- ○ Meets desirable criteria
- ○ Does not meet desirable criteria

Based on the analysis and comparison of the evaluation criteria shown above, the preferred alternative is:

**PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE = CONCEPT B: SHARED USE PATH**