

Whatcom County Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee

January 8, 2020

Members present: Sonja Max (Co-Chair), Sunny Beaver, Gary Malick, Patrick Alesse, Eileen Kadesh, Jason Ardt (Public Works)

Guests: Jon Hutchings (Public Works Director), Mike Donohue (Public Works), Pete Sharp (has applied to be a BPAC member)

Members absent: Stephen Zylstra, Kyle Morris, Tara Satushek, Alec Howard

1. The meeting was called to order by Sonja at 5:47 pm.
2. Sonja mentioned that Stephen had to miss the meeting because of a family medical emergency. She also mentioned that Mark Owings is resigning from the committee so there will be an additional vacancy.
3. The minutes from the December 18, 2019 meeting were approved with a couple of minor corrections. Gary moved to approve the minutes; Sunny seconded the motion.
4. Sonja passed out a list of proposed future actions for BPAC that she and Stephen had developed. One of the first actions was:

...Refocus BPAC priorities more toward projects/efforts that will support the completion of multi-modal trails such as the Nooksack Loop Trail, the Kendall Connectivity Trail and a connector trail to Glacier (possibly expand in future to include multi-modal trails alongside additional state highways such as Highway 9).

Gary noted that the Kendall Trail is the responsibility of the State, not the County's jurisdiction. However, Sonja stated that we need a closer relationship with the State. Jon Hutchings mentioned that sometimes it is unwieldy trying to work with the State. There is too little money to go around.

Jon indicated that the top priorities for Whatcom County Public Works are: 1) transportation safety and 2) preserving existing investments. He reminded the committee that as we have discussions about changes we wish to recommend, we should try not to displace existing priorities. He also said that when there is a change in focus desired by the committee, Public Works can't respond that quickly since it works on a 5 – 7 year cycle.

5. Sonja asked if there is one particular person in Public Works that writes grant applications. Jon indicated that his staff on the third floor of the Civic Building are involved in this.
6. Sonja and Stephen would like to see the committee develop a better map of bike routes to be made available online. Pete indicated that he has lived in Bellingham for nine years, yet there are lots of short neighborhood trail connections that are not widely known. It would be great to have these documented.

Sonja also mentioned once again the STRAVA Heat Map. She promised to send a link to this map to the rest of the committee. Jon said it would be helpful to know the number of cyclists using different County roads.

7. Jon mentioned that off right-of-way trails are not a legal purpose for road fund dollars. Gary brought up the fact that other cities such as Vancouver, B.C. encourage bicycle corridors that serve as alternatives to other streets. Jon said Public Works can't finance something like this out of earmark funds.
8. Jon reminded the committee it reports to the Executive, therefore Executive Sidhu should be kept apprised of developments and be on board before approaching the Council to undertake any actions.
9. Sonja told the committee that she and Stephen have already started meeting with staff from different agencies, including Hugh Conroy, Director of Planning for the Whatcom Council of Governments, Mike McFarlane, Whatcom County Parks Director, and Sharon Shewmake, State legislator representing Whatcom County. Mike McFarlane indicated that a lot of BPAC's goals overlap with the goals of the County Parks Department. Sharon Shewmake is also very supportive of BPAC's goals. She is especially passionate about seeing the Kendall Connectivity Trail completed. (Jon noted that when there are commitments made, like implementing the Kendall Trail, there are other priorities that don't get attention.)

Sonja said she and Stephen hope to meet with Satpal in February, and they will meet with Jon Hutchings again next month, as well.

10. There was a short discussion about having Public Works staff bring projects to the committee when they are at the 60 percent design stage. In the next year the following projects will be at that stage:
 - A. Samish Way/Galbraith Lane crosswalk
 - B. Marine Drive bike lanes between Locust and Alderwood
 - C. Hannegan/Smith Rd.

11. Jon appealed to the committee for continued support for the ADA planning effort. He reminded committee members that we are responsible for more than just bicycle transportation. Mike Donohue is in charge of ADA planning.
12. Jon would also like to see the committee support analysis of high-risk rural roads that will develop into bicycle corridors. This sometimes involves road widening with a need to take people's property.

Patrick noted that making roads wider is not always the best solution.

13. There was a question about what the \$100,000 of grant money for unanticipated expenses can be used for. Jon indicated that this fund can only be used for capital projects, not for education or other operating expenses, such as maps. Jon said this does not mean Public Works cannot support education. He suggested the committee develop a list of priorities for an education campaign. Patrick indicated he would be willing to work with Gary on this.
14. Eileen suggested that each committee member take on a pet project and perhaps could be in charge of one of the meetings. The member could invite guest speakers, suggest action steps, etc.
15. Jason recommended that the committee develop a work plan for the year. He also said we should continue work on updating the bike/ped plan.
16. There was more discussion about developing a new map, and questions came up about the GIS capabilities of the County. Eileen said that Matt Paskus was really interested in this about a year and a half ago, and there were guest speakers from both Whatcom County and WWU who gave a presentation. Eileen promised to find her notes from this discussion and share them with the committee.
17. Eileen mentioned that we should continue pursuing the Safe Routes to School program with Whatcom County school districts.
18. Sonja adjourned the meeting at 7:05 pm.