

Whatcom County Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee

May 11, 2022, 6pm, Hybrid Meeting Format

Minutes

Members present: Sonja Max, Stephen Zylstra, Gary Malick, Sunny Beaver, Patrick Alesse, Pete Sharp, Walter Hudsick, Sandy Brewer, Kelly Kendall

Excused: Robin Thomas

Staff present: Jason Ardt (Public Works)

Special Guest: Chris Comeau—City of Bellingham Transportation Planner

Public present: Dan Kostrzewski

Sonja Max called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm.

1. Public comment: Dan K. observed that west of I-5 has a well-connected bicycle network, but east of I-5 is not well connected. It feels unsafe traveling along Hwy 542 to destinations near the Britton Road area and he asked the committee to consider improved connectivity to the Northern Heights neighborhood.
2. **Approval of April meeting minutes.** Gary moved to approve. Sunny seconded. There were no changes made. Minutes were unanimously approved.
3. **Bike and Pedestrian master plan for city—Chris Comeau. Interface between county and city.** The first pedestrian master plan was completed in 2011 and the bicycle plan in 2013. It's a 10-year cycle so it's time for an update. "We do this based on what places the people tell us they want to get to". Pedestrians is fairly straightforward but with bikes there is a spectrum of different types of infrastructure—bike lanes, buffered bike lanes, etc. With the updating there won't be major changes but rather enhancements. The pedestrian plan will be worked on and completed through 2023 and subsequently the bike plan, both of which will be rolled into the 2025 comprehensive plan. With all of this in mind "there are always more needs than money" and Chris gave examples of the costs of some of the projects, all of which were in the multiple million-dollar range.

Chris was present tonight to get BPAC's perspective and insight. For context, BPAC is considered a topic-oriented "technical review committee" by the city. Other such technical review committees that city staff and consultants are meeting with include school district, affordable housing entities, Whatcom Transportation Authority, police, fire to gain a better perspective. Of note, there is a survey and web map for the public to look at and weigh in on.

- a. Gary asked about **Eldridge** plans. Chris said changes to this where some high profile accidents have taken place is approximately 1.5 years away or more. Chris said the current concept is to build infrastructure similar to that in Cordata—protected bike lanes to separate users. This would entail removing street parking which some residents oppose.
- b. Sandy asked about **McLeod** and the possibility of sidewalks. Comeau said the request for a sidewalk

on McLeod Road was acknowledged as already being identified in the 2012 Pedestrian Plan and while a developer may add a small section of sidewalk from Dana Road to Home Road on the north side of McLeod Road, the cost to construct sidewalk from Dana Road to West Maplewood Road is over \$1 million dollars.

- c. Dan Kostrzewski had questions about the Silver Beach/Northern Heights area in order to ascertain whether it might be possible in the Tweed 20/Brownsville UGA for some **commercial development** to take place to minimize the need to drive into town for any needs. Chris Explained that due to restrictions on impervious surfaces intended to protect the watershed that such development is unlikely.
- d. Walter asked about what the future of **pervious surfaces** might be in Bellingham—surfaces used in Europe that have made bike infrastructure more possible. Chris said it has been used in various places in Bellingham (Silver Beach bike lanes for example) but since runoff is such a concern in our watershed this technology has its limitations because the underlying soil isn't always adept at absorbing runoff.
- e. Gary asked about how we might be able to facilitate more interaction between the **Lummi nation and the city**. Since the county has jurisdiction between the two it's not typically relevant though certainly not opposed, said Chris. Perhaps there could be a multi-governmental cooperative effort to create a more extensive path.
- f. The possibility of physical traffic calming on Monroe was discussed. Since it's an arterial, said Chris, physical traffic calming is not possible.
- g. The concept of a trail connecting Britton to the Sunset commercial area was brought up. Comeau said the request for a bikeway (of some sort) between Britton and Sunset (most of which is in Whatcom County) was acknowledged, but not likely to happen.

Sonja brought up several specific topics related to city and county interface that Chris & Jason addressed:

- a. **Samish Way crosswalk**. Maybe done late 2022. A permit is in the works to allow a trail to be built from the parking area to Samish crosswalk. Jason explained that the goal is for the restriction of parking along Samish Way to coincide with crosswalk. The new parking lot has 184 spaces which is expected to not be enough at peak times. How is this addressed? Signage and enforcement may not be adequate to deter parking along the road. Folks might need to park at Lake Padden lots. Pete added that some of the more capable mountain bikers might need to start riding their bikes to the trails instead of driving, to alleviate pressure.
- b. **Alderwood Elementary School**. The school is surrounded by streets with no sidewalks and bordered by deep ditches. This is not conducive to walking or biking to school. Jason said that the school district considered the existing roads as "safe routes to school" and didn't consider any improvements necessary. "They've said the roads are fine". Chris said that improvements were discussed when it looked like the area could be annexed, but residents have not petitioned for annexation and it doesn't appear to be moving forward at all.

- c. **Samish Rd to town.** Some people have said they don't feel safe. Chris said that crews a few years ago spent time rehabbing the shoulders to make it more rideable/safe, but there are no plans for any major changes due to exorbitant cost.

- d. **Yew Street Road** from Tacoma Ave to Samish Way, in front of Wade King Elementary School. This is not safe any way you look at it for people walking or riding bicycles. Jason said this is the UGA "reserve", is a county road, and prior attempts to widen the road and/or add sidewalks have resulted in exorbitant cost estimates due to culverts, fish passage and topography. It is not likely to be improved. Per Jason: It is no longer in the City of Bellingham UGA but it is in what is call UGA "Reserve". From the City's annexation strategy document: "There are currently two areas that are designated as "UGA reserve". UGA reserve areas are not included within a UGA, but are identified as potential areas that can replace land that, for a variety of reasons, is unlikely or cannot to be annexed. One or both reserve areas could also be added to the UGA if population growth exceeds the adopted forecast. The South Yew Street Reserve was designated by the County in 2009. The S. Caitac area was designated in 2016. The City studied these areas extensively during the comprehensive plan update process. Both areas are appropriate for eventual annexation once it is determined that additional capacity is needed. Both areas present challenges for the City to provide the full range of urban services. The Caitac area can accommodate a significant number of new housing units and at less cost than the Yew Street area in terms of providing the necessary urban infrastructure and services."

Chris finished by assuring the committee that there will plenty of opportunity for public comment and input. As stated above, the Pedestrian Master Plan Update is first, followed by the Bicycle Master Plan Update. The first public open house will be on June 1st at Shuksan Middle School from 6-8pm. An interactive online map will go live soon. People can sign up via Engage Bellingham to receive engagement notifications.

5. **Co-chair Updates.** RFQ for consulting work to help with population center mapping and planning has been drawn up by Walter. Jason needs to take a look at it and will forward to Doug Ranney.

Regarding the Lockwood property trail concept, Greenways may need a funding partner. Sonja will ask County Parks if there is any interest in helping with this.

Bike to Work/Bike Anywhere day is May 20. BPAC's booth will be open 7:30am to 9:30am at the county building. Multiple people have volunteered—Kelly will pick up some food at Great Harvest, Walter will be there early to help setup. Sunny will be rolling in later to help tear down. Sonja and Stephen will be there as well.

6. **Announcements.** The committee will reassess the letter to the city regarding the crosswalk at Galbraith Lane, taking into consideration the discussion tonight. Alex Jeffers from the Whatcom Land Trust will talk to us next month about the Stewart Mountain Community Forest initiative—a sustainable forest plan that will include recreation potential. Details to come.