

Whatcom County Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee
March 17, 2021

Meeting called to order at 5:46 pm

Members present: Patrick Alesse, Sunny Beaver, Alec Howard, Sam Jamis, Brian Johnson, Kelly Kendall Sonja Max, Pete Sharp, Robin Thomas, Stephen Zylstra

Staff Present: Jason Ardt (Public Works)

Member(s) of the Public: Sandy Phillips, Carr Lanham

Approval of minutes from February 17, 2021 meeting

- Alec moved approval; Stephen seconded. Approved unanimously

Update from Stephen

- The committee is planning to ask the county for funding for a consultant to help re-write the current Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan
- We are still awaiting word from the county if we can use their IT resources/staff for setting up/maintaining the BPAC website.
- Stephen and Sonja are planning to look at the Wynn Rd-Marrieta connection on Friday 3/19 at 1:00PM

Update from Carr Lanham on Bicycle and Pedestrian Fatalities

- In response to questions from his previous presentation, he presented additional NHSTA data from 2018.
- In WA State, 2.9% of the total traffic fatalities were bicyclists; ranked 42 out of 50 nationally (<https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812884>)
- 18.7% of total traffic fatalities were pedestrians; ranked 36 out of 50 nationally (<https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812850>)

Group Discussion on possible/desired improvements to Bicycle/Pedestrian facilities on selected county roads

- According to Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (BLTS), 81% of cyclists prefer stress level 1 (separated path) or level 2 (buffered bike lane)
- The discussion centered on the needed improvements to various county roads in order to achieve a stress level of 1 or 2.
 - Pete inquired about rumble strips. Jason indicated that they are present on the designated Bike Routes in the county (Birch Bay-Lynden Rd, Hannegan Rd). In order for a road to have them, the speed limit must be at least 40 mph, as the vehicle traffic speed helps to keep them from filling up with debris. There also needs to be a 5 foot paved shoulder.
 - Sonja asked about the possibility of flex-posts on some of the higher speed arterials. Jason said that they would likely be destroyed by snow plows.
 - Brief discussion on re-channelization of roads, i.e. can the driving lanes be narrowed to allow for a wider shoulder and/or bi-directional path.

- Stephen asked if shoulder width corresponds with speed limits; Jason said speed limits are based many factors, one of which is traffic volume.
- Alec asked if there are any laws that require shoulders; per Jason: there are Road Standards that have been adopted and the county must follow. They can be found here: <https://www.whatcomcounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/975/Road-Standards-PDF?bidId> Deviation from the standards **may** be approved through a variance.
- Brian asked about the cost of improvements and how the permitting issues work; Jason said that many projects would trigger storm water and other improvements, increasing the overall project cost. For example, if a roadside ditch were to be removed to make way for a paved shoulder (impermeable surface), the water may need to be piped to a retention pond, which might involve the purchase of an adjacent property. Jason later estimated that ditch removal could cost as much as \$2 million per mile.
- The group generally agreed that the following improvements would be the minimum to improve bike routes: more frequent sweeping, more signage (many standards/liability with signs; It's possible to add "Share the Road" signs or Guide signs); wider white lines and/or double white lines. Standard is 4" for non-bike routes and 6" for bike routes. Cost would be only factor to use the 6" stripe.
- Jason said that it is possible for high speed roads such as Haxton Way to be designated as Bike Routes. In the case of Haxton, the county would need to work with the tribe to achieve this.
- Alec mentioned that he felt safer on a road that had grass and trees (Marine Dr, for example) on the side rather than a ditch. He also asked why the gravel shoulders are not paved. Jason answered that they cannot pave up to the edge of the ditch.
- Kelly asked about who determines speed limits. Jason answered that the County Council changes them by Ordinance. He also made the point that speed limit reduction doesn't necessarily slow people down.
- Brian observed that more wide open space equals faster traffic and that we should be looking at narrowing traffic lanes.
- Robin made the point that anything short of a barrier is not really an improvement and would feel most comfortable if traffic was actually going 35 mph where it is designated.
- Stephen wanted to somewhat differentiate between safety and perceived safety. i.e., do visual barriers such as a double line seem safer?
- The group created a brainstorm document summarizing this discussion (attached)

Further Discussion on Potential Improvements

- Patrick suggested that the completion of the Bay to Bay trail will improve the connection between Birch Bay and Blaine; He volunteered to take pictures of Lincoln Rd
- Possibility of a flashing light on the bridge over California Creek on Drayton Rd
- Sonja mentioned that even though Blaine Road is a state highway, it needed to be addressed, specifically decreasing the speed limit.
- Jason said that we might reference The Crash Modification Factor warehouse when approaching the County Engineer about projects, i.e. safety improvement realized by narrowing a traffic lane from 12' to 11.' He also has all county data on traffic volume and counts
- Stephen asked if the county has made projections for future traffic levels. Jason said they use 2% increase per year.
- Jason also shared the Road Service Request Form which is found on the public works website.
- Sonja shared a map created in ArcGIS based on the data from our riding homework

Meeting Adjourned at 7:51 PM

Roads with:

- High speeds (40-55 mph)
- High traffic volume (5,000+ cars/day in 2036)
- Existing wide shoulders or bike lanes

(Birch Bay Lynden, Hannegan, Hampton, Haxton, etc.)

BLTS 1-2 Solutions Brainstorm:

- sweeping more often (Haxton)
- more prominent signing announcing bikeways (regular intervals or larger) / local sign? take on liability for different signs/ spraypainted stencil?

- More space/more distance between cars & bike path/lane

- separated path



Roads with:

- Med/high speeds (35-45 mph)
- Med/high traffic volume (1,000+ cars/day in 2036)
- Narrower but bikeable shoulder (2-4' wide)

(Bancroft, Country Lane, Marine Dr., etc.)

BLTS 1-2 Solutions Brainstorm:

- more frequent sweeping
- more bike signage
- widening shoulder/add buffer
- narrower lane (min 11' for collector/arterial)
- flex posts (can cause more problems for group rides too)
- more trees, lessen peripheral visibility, creating visual barriers



Roads with:

- High speeds (40+ mph)
- High traffic volume (10,000+ cars/day in 2036)
- No bikeable shoulder

(Harborview Rd, Drayton Rd. Blaine Rd., Sweet Rd)

BLTS 1-2 Solutions Brainstorm:

- Get Bay to Bay trail through
- flashing light on bridge?
- separated path? wider shoulder?
- decreasing speed?



Roads with:

- Moderate speeds (25-35 mph)
- Med/high traffic volume (1,000+ cars/day in 2036)
- No shoulders or bike lanes

(Hoier Rd., Marine Dr., Curtis Rd., etc)

BLTS 1-2 Solutions Brainstorm:

- signage - stencil/sign/more frequent
- wider shoulders



BLTS 1-2 Solutions Brainstorm

(same layout but low traffic roads - under 1,000 cars/day - is this different?):

- add shoulders on blind corners
- add signage/stenciling warning drivers