

Whatcom County Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee  
January 20, 2021

Meeting called to order at 5:45 pm

Members present: Eileen Kadesh, Sunny Beaver, Gary Malick, Patrick Alesse, Sonja Max, Alec Howard, Pete Sharp, Robin Thomas, Stephen Zylstra

Staff Present: Jason Ardt (Public Works)

Member(s) of the Public: Sandy Phillips, James Aiken, Samuel Jamis

Approval of minutes from December 16, 2020 meeting

- Jason: change City of Bellingham to WMBC regarding funding and the Galbraith Lane project
- Eileen moved approval; Gary seconded. Approved unanimously with Jason's changes.

2021 Work Plan Update- Stephen

- Use the work plan as an interim plan until the route map is complete and the priority projects are re-evaluated through the lens of the map.

Mapping Update- Pete

- Incorporation of stress criteria is very subjective, as such a composite score combining all the three main criteria is being developed
- We'll need to determine point ranges for speed limits, presence of bike lanes and/or shoulders, and traffic volume.
- The goal should be to identify at least one safest route between each population center and request that Public Works impose speed limit reductions and/or add bike facilities.
- See Pete's Draft Document at end of minutes
- Jason: Public Work's understanding of the map is that it will provide recommendations for improvement. Since they can't make improvements everywhere, we should start with connections between the cities.
- Robin: Suggested that crash data also be used to evaluate the roads.
- Eileen suggested that the map show hills; Pete said it could be an overlay with a topographic map
- Sunny, Eileen, and Gary offered to help Pete out with the mapping project
- Sandy, public member, also willing to help evaluate routes (blanketbill@comcast.net)

Two-Stage Left Turns- Gary

- Showed a video of a safer way to make a left turn from a one-way arterial to another
- Example: In the City of Bellingham, there are markings for two-stage left turns at the intersection of State and Magnolia Streets
- Jason mentioned that the county only has three intersections with traffic lights and since none of them are one-way, this likely wouldn't apply to county projects.

#### Bicycle Parking-Gary

- The only area in Whatcom County with requirements for Bicycle Parking is the Birch Bay Resort Commercial District (Whatcom County Code 20.64.653 #2)
- City of Bellingham has very extensive requirements and standards for bicycle parking
- Suggested that we approach the Planning Commission about incorporating requirements parking and also contacting Cliff Strong, the Planning department's liaison to BPAC.
- Eileen suggested that requirements should include locations such as schools, hospitals, and parks, and not just residential developments.

#### Safety Discussion- Robin

- Provided committee members with a document containing an overview of agencies handling safety and planning in active transportation.
- Suggested that it would be good for committee members to familiarize themselves with relevant data and materials and become more conversant with the standards.
- The group discussed the possibility of inviting Doug Dahl to speak about Target Zero goals at a future meeting.
- WSDOT active transportation plan is currently accepting public comments

#### Update on Recent Traffic Fatalities- Jason

- Jason reviewed all collision reports and reviewed the scene of all incidents
- He did not find anything roadway-related that contributed to the collisions
- None of the drivers were impaired
- Birch Bay Lynden Road & Percie Rd: the victim ran out of gas and was struck while walking to the gas station. Driver was not cited
- Slater & Lake Terrell Rd: collision treated as a possible suicide; driver was not impaired but was cited for DWLS
- N Enterprise Rd, South of Birch Bay Lynden road: resident was walking out to a mailbox in the rain and was struck. Driver was not cited
- Lindsay Rd, Sumas (non-fatality): A cyclist was clipped by a semi-truck passing too closely and received minor injuries. The driver was cited for not yielding to the cyclist.

#### WSDOT Active Transportation Plan Update- Sonja

- Will report back from scheduled webinars
- Will request a copy of Appendix D from the plan, which shows how WSDOT evaluates stress on state highways.

#### County Climate Action Committee Update-Alec

- Will send out some actions items for BPAC input ahead of the February meeting

The meeting ended with a video about the Haxton Way trail, a fond send-off for Eileen, and an amusing story about Pete's friend riding his bike into a really deep puddle near Kope Road.

## DRAFT Level of Traffic Stress Document

All three criteria for levels of traffic stress (LTS) discussed at [December] meeting are equally valid—some may think one is more valid than the other but nonetheless they are all valid and there is no “right” criteria. So it would be arbitrary and too subjective to try to choose one criteria or a combination or excluding one. This is an evolving process after all. Again, the three criteria are speed limit, presence of a bike lane or similarly wide shoulder, traffic volume.

The best solution I can come up with is to have a composite score for each road. Each criteria would have a 4-point range—1 being no stress, 4 being outright terrifying or potential to cause severe injury or death—for a 12-point scale. A 1 would be as safe as safe could be with separate, designated non-motorized paths and a 12 would be E. Pole Rd at 5pm in a driving rainstorm as the sun somehow sets on the horizon in front of drivers. This would enable road safety ratings to be more objective and comprehensive.

### Up for discussion:

—**Speed limits:** We’d need to nail down speed limit ranges and what qualifies as 1, 2, 3, 4. For now, let’s say a 1 is 30mph or under, a 2 is 35mph (the county speed limit unless otherwise posted so in theory the most common), a 3 is 40 and 45mph. And we reserve 4 for 50mph.

—**Bike lanes/shoulders:** For presence of bike lanes: a 1 would be a path separate from the road way (e.g. the boardwalk along Haxton). These are very rare. A 2 would be proper bike lane/route with 5’ shoulders or more or a shoulder with painted stripe 5’ or more. A 3 would be a shoulder not otherwise designated an official bike lane/route but wide enough to give a cyclist the sense that they have their own lane, that drivers aren’t having to consciously steer their car around the cyclist. 3’ seems like a reasonable, conservative number. the average road bike handlebars are about 18” so an extra 18” on top of that provides some wiggle room to have some degree of a comfort zone. Again it’s only a 3 so not everyone would go this route. A 4 would be minimal to no shoulder. A driver would likely have to steer around a cyclist to avoid a collision.

—**Traffic Volume:** A 1 would be no cars as it’s a separate path. A 2 would be 1-2,500 cars/day. A 3 would be 2501-7500 cars and a 4 is 7501 and up.

For example:

1. Hampton Rd: The speed limit is 45 for 3 points. There is a proper bike route for 2 points. Traffic volume is high for 4 points for a 9 point score—on the stressful side.
2. Haxton Rd: Mostly 50mph for 4 points. 5’+ wide shoulder with texture grooves for 2 points. Volume likely in 3 range for 9 again.
3. Aldrich Rd: speed of 35mph for 2. No bike lanes for 4. lower volume for 2. 8 points
4. Olsen Rd: speed of 35mph for 2. 3’ shoulders for 3. low volume for 2. 7 points total
5. Hannegan: speed of 50 for 4, official bike route for 2, high volume for 4. 10 total.

As part of the mapping, it would be a good idea to identify one official, safest route between each population center to have as a guide and then people can deviate as they wish based on their decision making process. As part of this we’d want to ask the county to impose, say, a 30mph speed limit on any road that is part of the official route along with a usable shoulder or, ideally, a separate path if speeds can’t be lowered.

In this system many, if not most, county roads would have LTS in a fairly high range—rarely lower than 6, typically 7-9, lesser often 10+. But this enables all 3 criteria to be considered. And it helps address the inherent dichotomy of roads like Hannegan where, yes, there's an official bike lane but thousands of cars are roaring by at 50mph+ highlighting the fact that there needs to be a more nuanced approach to classifying road safety. And at the same time, the rarity of low stress roads illuminates the fact that we have very few options that are low speed limit, with bike lanes, low volume—in short, truly safe. We need to classify roads based on what can be (stresses less than 4 let's say) not just comparatively based on what's available now. Otherwise there is no incentive to improve.