

## Whatcom County Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee

June 8, 2022, 6pm, Hybrid Meeting Format

### Minutes

**Members present:** Sonja Max, Stephen Zylstra, Sunny Beaver, Patrick Alesse, Pete Sharp, Sandy Brewer, Kelly Kendall, Robin Thomas

**Excused:** Gary Malick, Walter Hudsick

**Staff present:** Jason Ardt (Public Works)

**Special Guest:** Alex Jeffers, Conservation Director for Whatcom Land Trust

**Public present:**

Sonja Max called the meeting to order at 6:08 pm.

1. Public comment: None
2. **Approval of April meeting minutes.** Minutes were unanimously approved.
3. **Co-Chair Updates-** Draft RFQ is going to John Hutchins. Bike to Work day was good, lots of folks came and they had snacks, will plan to do it next year. Frank Boteler from Sudden Valley is concerned about mountain bikers on Lake Whatcom Boulevard and is concerned for their safety. The chairs gave him some suggestions and recommended that he write a letter to the county and to identify the segment of roadway more specifically.
4. **Alex Jeffers from the Whatcom Land Trust re: Stewart Mountain Community Forest initiative** – The WLT is looking to purchase 5500 acres of private forest land on the southeast side of Stewart Mountain, draining into the south fork of the Nooksack, which is an impaired waterway. There are potential trailheads on the east side, current open trailheads on the west side. There is 2 miles of shoreline to the South fork river, and some very old trees. There have been 6 different landowners in the past 30 years, with timber harvests accelerated by absentee landowners. The Nooksack Tribe has produced studies on the watershed and these resulted in some timber management plans. Public access has also been confusing

due to changing land owners. Forest management has focused on short-term profits over long term management for forest health. Phase 1 acquisition is set to happen this summer with Whatcom county contributing \$1.5m. There is 5,000 acres remaining and they are investigating grants to purchase that. The tribe, local government, and a few residents are working with the National Park Service on visioning for the area. A local advisory team is also working on community outreach, management and involvement. They meet twice a month and it is a big team that is figuring out how the future ownership, and management is going to work. This is a large area and will need to be managed for thinning, timber harvest and access. There is some access connections from Y road, and the Chantrelle Trail and they are working on planning with DNR and Whatcom Parks to connect those, but that is not part of the plan to date. The full purchase price for the 5500 acres is about \$15m. Stuart Mt. is about 28,000 acres with about 14,000 in private timber ownership. They would like a letter from BPAC in support of the project as well as looking for donations.

5. **Alderwood Elementary SRTS discussion-** There is an ongoing issue of families complaining about lack of walking and riding access to the school. This was also discussed last meeting with Chris Comeau and Jason Ardt. Safe routes are determined by the school. Kelly thinks that some of the nearby roads could be converted to one way streets to add space for walkers or bikers. Jason does not think it's ever been done, but possible. There may be possibilities for sidewalks, and Jason is going to meet with the operations person at the school to address some of the problems. The roads there are not high speed or volume roads and there is a shoulder, Jason does not think they are especially dangerous, and the school district has said it is a safe route. Alex mentioned that there are some undeveloped city right-of-ways in the area that could be used for safer routes. Brian asked what is the definition of a safe street, and there is no clear methodology in the case of schools. Alderwood does not meet current urban standards, and it has not been annexed by the city. For safe routes to schools there is a manual that determines the designs that are considered safer, and Jason has a copy of this he can share. The schools have not pursued getting input from the city and county engineers to help with this planning.
6. **Draft Comp Plan Priorities** – There are segments of the update to the plan concerning transportation. The update is to address future growth expected

in the next 20 years. There is a section to incorporate a goal to reduce vehicle miles traveled, encourage public transportation, improve bike and ped infrastructure included in the current route map and regional trail plan. They also are including adding electric transportation modes.

7. **Announcements** Patrick has been working on getting garbage cans out of the bike route in Birch Bay, and is having some success. There is no update to the letter regarding the Samish Way crossing.