

Whatcom County Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee
Call-in Virtual Meeting (*video available on BPAC webpage*)
Wednesday, June 17th @ 5:45PM

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

Staff Present: Jason Ardt (Public Works), Jon Hutchings (Public Works), Jim Karcher (Public Works), Mike Donahue (Public Works)

1. Meeting was called to order by Stephen and Sonja at 5:46PM
2. Eileen moved to approve minutes from February meeting with one spelling change, Robin seconded

(Marine Drive RR crossing for pedestrians and cyclists)

3. Gary provided a summary of his interactions with the WA Utilities and Transportation Commission about obtaining a safer pedestrian crossing of the railroad tracks near bridge 172 on Marine Drive, as the bridge is currently not very safe for pedestrians. Gary contacted the Washington State Utilities and Transportation Commission, who in turn contacted BNSF, who then destroyed the existing crossing and erected barriers to prevent continued use.
4. Jon explained that getting local RR crossings are very difficult and local govts don't have much authority to make it happen. However, BNSF wants to close other at-grade crossings (either Wynn Road or Country Lane) so the County may be able to use that as leverage to get approval from BNSF for a new crossing at this location. He emphasized that this is a long process. Jon also noted that he had briefed the Council about this crossing and they were supportive of BPAC's attention.
5. Jon reminded us of possible frustrations from neighbors if the RR crossing at Wynn Rd is closed as part of this process; Pete said it seems more likely that neighbors most impacted by a crossing closure would be more upset by the fact that this is occurring as several other crossings in the area are not only staying open, they are being reconfigured so that train whistles aren't necessary
6. Jon noted that to create a new crossing, there are many admin steps to move forward and BPAC should work with public works to identify specific concerns and steps to move this forward. This RR crossing would be part of Phase II of the Marine Dr. project.

7. BPAC's considerations include whether to pursue a trail connection to the crossing at Wynn Road or pursue a new at-grade crossing below Marine Drive to be the primary bicycle/pedestrian route over the railroad tracks.

(Marine Dr. speed reduction at bridge 172)

8. Gary shared his petition to the County Council to reduce the speed limit to 25 mph over bridge 172. He will work on obtaining signatures from neighbors soon.
9. BPAC unanimously voted to send a letter of support for the speed limit reduction along with the aforementioned petition when it is submitted.
10. Jason noted that he, Jim and Mike visited the bridge and there will be an engineering review for the Council. He mentioned that the County can move the existing signs blocking the access to the bridge sidewalk. Jon added that opening the rail to expand room for peds/bikes was not feasible due to the construction of the bridge. Additionally, removing the raised concrete walkway is not feasible due to its integrated construction with the concrete bridge deck. Jason noted that he had summarized the history of the Marine Dr. project and the options for BPAC to review.
11. If the speed limit reduction is passed, painted shared lane markings may be added to the pavement to alert drivers that bicycles are sharing the lane. Currently the speed limit is too high for shared lane markings to be acceptable. There is currently no standard for the use of shared lane markings on county roads.
12. There was an open discussion about options to slow the drivers down on Marine Dr. over the bridge and if that was legal.
13. Mike mentioned the Dept of Public Works Engineering may not support speed reduction at that location but the Council could override that decision. Jason noted all speed reduction proposals go through a public hearing with Council and BPAC could testify.

(Other items)

14. Jason mentioned that BPAC needs to identify any projects they want added to the next version of the TIP in September of 2020; BPAC will work with Jason on the process. Jim noted that TIP projects are being discussed and reviewed presently.
15. Joe Rutan left the department and accepted a job elsewhere. Jim Karcher is now the lead County Engineer.

16. BPAC members received an email from Jason with 60% engineering plans for sidewalks and bike lanes on Marine Drive between the city limits and Alderwood (Phase I). Due to time constraints, will committee members please email feedback directly to Jason by Friday, June 26.
17. Stephen asked the BPAC to start thinking about BPAC priorities over the next 6 months; and what is feasible given the various limitations from the covid-19 epidemic. That includes any new projects BPAC may want to see on the TIP.
18. Eileen asked that the Bay to Bay Trail discussion is added on the agenda for the next meeting. She will send out an email to all BPAC members.
19. Alec requested BPAC members provide input on the County Climate Action Plan strategies; he will provide a list to review and consider.
20. Meeting adjourned at 7:40PM