

## Whatcom County Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee

September 16, 2020

### Minutes

**Members present:** Sonja Max, Stephen Zylstra, Sunny Beaver, Pete Sharp, Patrick Alesse, Alec Howard, Gary Morris, Kyle Morris, Eileen Kadash

**Staff present:** Jason Ardt (Public Works), Doug Ranney (Public Works)

**Members absent:** Robin Thomas

Stephen Zylstra called the meeting to order at 5:45 pm.

Jason introduced Doug Ranney, Interim Traffic Manager with Whatcom County Public Works.

Doug has been with the County for seven years.

1. Gary moved to approve the minutes of the August 19, 2020 BPAC meeting. Patrick seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.
2. Sonja said Pete is working on a route map. Sonja is working with him on this. Robin has also offered to map the crash info provided by Jason. Pete is looking at levels of traffic safety. According to a survey conducted by the Washington State Active Transportation Program, only 12 percent of likely cyclists would use bike lanes that are not buffered. A discussion about this ensued. Although 12 percent seems quite low, Sonja pointed out that a lot of people don't feel comfortable with a single painted line. It depends on traffic speed and stress level.

Jason indicated that to install a bike lane, Whatcom County requires a minimum of 5 feet of paved shoulder.

3. Sonja said that she and Stephen have a proposal to present to the Committee. Given the issue of Public Works not wanting to implement bikeways that are not on street in the public right-of-way and the Parks Department only planning bike routes within parks, we are missing out on opportunities that other counties are taking advantage of. There is also money in the Paths and Trails Fund that is not being used.

Sonja and Stephen want to bring this issue to the County Executive and County Council. Jason suggested getting Executive Sidhu's support before bringing this to the County Council.

Gary asked if there is some sort of mandate requiring Public Works to only provide bikeways in the roadway right-of-way and Parks to provide bikeways only within parks. Jason said there is language in the County's Comp Plan that requires Public Works to maintain a certain Level of Service for vehicles. Pete pointed out that bicycles are

vehicles, according to state law. Jason said that Public Works builds bicycle and pedestrian facilities only in the UGA's, not in the rural areas.

Eileen said that person-trips should be the unit of measure, not motor vehicle trips. Jason noted that the City of Bellingham has adopted this change, but not Whatcom County.

4. The next item of business was the update on the Marine Drive speed reduction request. Jason reported that he and Dave Hower from Public Works went out with Kevin Moyes, a sergeant from the Traffic Unit of the Sheriff's Department, to look at Marine Drive. The sergeant said that since they don't get speeding complaints, the Sheriff's Department doesn't patrol Marine Drive for speed. There is a need for consistent speed limits. Currently, west of Bancroft the speed limit is 35 miles per hour. Public Works is proposing to change that to 30 mph. From Alderwood to the Marine Drive Bridge, Public Works is proposing to change the speed limit from 40 to 30 mph. They believe changing the speed from 40 to 25 mph is too big a change.

Three traffic counts were completed in the last two months by Public Works. They looked at traffic volume, speed and vehicle characteristics. Any vehicle going 10 mph or faster was included in their counts. The counts were conducted in three different spots: east of Bancroft Rd., east of Wynn Rd., and east of Old Marine Drive.

Sonja and Gary thanked Jason for his efforts.

There was some discussion about whether more could be done to keep motor vehicle drivers from passing cyclists on the bridge. Alex indicated that recently, as a motorist, he had a close call with a cyclist on the bridge when the oncoming car swerved into his lane to pass the cyclist. Pete asked if a physical barrier could be erected, but Jason said that would present a whole different set of issues.

Stephen suggested putting up a sign for motorists indicating that passing a cyclist on the bridge would result in the fine being doubled. Jason said that fines for traffic violations are set by state law. A "Do Not Pass" sign could theoretically be erected, however.

The Marine Drive speed reduction request will be introduced at the County Council on September 29, and a public hearing on this issue is scheduled for October 13. Gary asked how the community can submit comments. Jason noted that since the Council meetings are being held by Zoom right now, there are instructions on the County Council's website for different ways the public can submit comments on agenda items.

Gary mentioned that he has been very impressed by the professionalism of Public Works on the Marine Drive speed limit issue.

Pete noted that Gary also deserves thanks for pursuing this change, especially since he knocked on so many of his neighbors' doors during the pandemic. Gary said that out of the 100 households he visited, there was only one that declined to respond and one that did not agree with the proposal. There was very strong support from the community for a reduced speed limit.

5. Other Business

- A. Jason asked the committee where they thought a pedestrian crossing (a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon Crosswalk) should be installed along Marine Drive. Right now the thinking is to locate it between Cliffside and Alderwood. However, Jason thinks it should be closer to the Port's park, and perhaps there could be an additional crosswalk installed closer to the bridge or the Lockwood property in Phase 2. The committee agreed that putting the crosswalk closer to the park would be best.
- B. Alec has been sitting on the Transportation Work Group of the Climate Action Advisory Committee. He will bring a list of actions being considered by the work group to the October meeting of the BPAC. Alex mentioned that the time frame for finalizing the County's Climate Action Plan has been delayed from this Fall to April or June of 2021 because of Covid.
- C. Jason mentioned that there is one opening on the BPAC for an additional member. He believes Suzanne Mildner is not aware of this. Sonja will contact Suzanne.
- D. Sonja mentioned that there would be an upcoming Airport Trail stakeholder meeting on site with the consultant to narrow down the route.
- E. Sonja announced that the Washington Bike, Walk and Roll Summit, initially slated to be held in Spokane, will instead take place online on October 5. Anyone interested should go to [cascade.org](https://cascade.org) to register.

6. Stephen Zylstra adjourned the meeting at 7:49 pm.