



Planning & Development Services

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Supplemental Staff Report #4 Non-Motorized Transportation

To: Planning Commission
From: Kirk Johnson, AICP, Senior Planner, Team Supervisor, Project Manager
Re: 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update: Non-Motorized Transportation
Date: May 20, 2016

This memo provides updates for the Planning Commission's consideration of non-motorized transportation ("NMT") projects for its recorded motion. At its May 17 meeting, the Planning Commission added a recommendation to remove all of the unnumbered NMT projects from the proposed [2016 Comprehensive Plan Transportation Technical Appendix](#) (pages 58-60 and 91-92). After issuing that recommendation, the Planning Commission decided it may revisit the issue at its May 24 meeting. **The Department strongly advocates that the Commission carefully read this memo, which provides additional background on the substance and origin of these projects, and modify its recommendation.** The Comprehensive Plan and GMA itself require NMT projects be included.¹

GMA Requirements for Capital Facilities Planning

The Growth Management Act requires that a county's Comprehensive Plan include comprehensive land use and financial planning for capital facilities, which include transportation and park facilities.² The County's capital facilities planning requirements are met through several components of the Comprehensive Plan:

- Chapter 8, Transportation
- Chapter 10, Capital Facilities
- Appendix C, Transportation Technical Appendix
- 2016-2021 Capital Facilities Plan
(updated annually, and contains the Transportation Improvement Program)
- Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan

¹ Specifically, Goal 8A-6: "Provide a safe and efficient network of trails and bikeways, including both on- and off-road facilities that link populated areas of the County with important travel destinations...."; and policies 8A-6.1 through 8A-6.10 (or 8A-6.12 as proposed), and RCW 36.70A.070(6).

² The proposed Capital Facilities Profile includes a thorough overview of the purpose of capital facilities planning.

GMA directs us to place transportation facility planning in its own element, and prescribes explicit additional requirements. Specifically, RCW 36.70A.070(6) requires that the transportation element contain, among other things:

- A multiyear financing plan based on the needs identified in the comprehensive plan, the appropriate parts of which shall serve as the basis for the six-year [Transportation Improvement Program].
- Identification of state and local system needs to meet current and future demands. Identified needs on state-owned transportation facilities must be consistent with the statewide multimodal transportation plan required under chapter 47.06 RCW.
- Pedestrian and bicycle component ... include[ing] collaborative efforts to identify and designate planned improvements for pedestrian and bicycle facilities and corridors that address and encourage enhanced community access and promote healthy lifestyles.

The proposed 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update splits the transportation element between the transportation chapter (which contains goals and policies) and the [Transportation Technical Appendix](#), which contains the technical data: facilities inventory, land use assumptions, travel forecasts, Level of Service (LOS) standards, current and future transportation needs, and a transportation financial plan.

6-Year vs 20-Year Planning

As we discussed in the last meeting, the needs assessment and financial planning occur on two different timescales in the Comprehensive Plan:

- On the 20-year scale, which is the planning period for the entire Comprehensive Plan, we must have a facilities inventory, comprehensive needs analysis, travel forecasts, Level of Service (LOS) standards, and a financial analysis.
- On the 6-year scale, we must have a defined list of projects and detailed financial planning. For transportation facilities, this data is largely contained within the six-year Transportation Improvement Program (“TIP”). The TIP is updated every year, and is an integral part of the [County’s six-year capital facilities financing plan](#), which is also updated every year and adopted simultaneously with the County budget.

The Planning Commission recommendation to pull the NMT projects from the 20-year needs list was apparently a reaction to a few [public comments](#) (a minority of commenters on non-motorized transportation) advocating that outcome. Those comments advocated for removal of these projects on the basis that they had not gone through the public process for addition to the 6-year TIP. The commenters misunderstand the process on several levels:

- The process for addition of a project in the 20-year plan (public hearing before the Planning Commission and approval by the Board of Commissioners) is essentially the same as the process for inclusion in the TIP.
- Inclusion of a project in the Comprehensive Plan (specifically, the Transportation Technical Appendix) is identification of it as a potential need over the next 20 years. Inclusion of a project on the TIP is identification of the project as something the County reasonably may construct in the next six years. The inclusion of a project in either planning period does not constitute a commitment that the County will fund or construct that project.³A project should usually

³ Transportation Element policy 8A-6.3.

progress from the 20-year list to the 6-year list, not the reverse as the commenters advocate. By its very nature, the 20-year project list includes more projects than the 6-year TIP, and the projects on the 20-year list can be described at a more conceptual level.

- Most of these projects have already been included in other prior-adopted plans.

Finally, new trails and trailheads require special use permits (and therefore, additional public process) to be permitted in almost every zone.

Origin of NMT Projects

With the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, the Board decided to eliminate the County’s 16-year old Transportation Systems Plan as a standalone document in favor of integrating it into the Comprehensive Plan itself.⁴ The primary responsibility for developing the list of non-motorized projects and the associated map was assigned to Public Works, who have the most knowledge of the County’s existing transportation system. As the text of the new consolidated Transportation chapter and the Transportation Technical Appendix developed, Public Works staff identified the proposed non-motorized projects using its best professional judgment and drawing on multiple factors and sources of information, including:

- Existing or proposed projects identified in adopted plans including the SCOG Regional Transportation Plan;
- Already designated and utilized bicycle and pedestrian routes and facilities;
- Logical corridors between population areas including cities and towns, urban growth areas (such as Bayview Ridge), and Rural Villages;
- Areas where the County owns property or unused right-of-way that would be supportive of non-motorized facilities;
- Safety concerns brought to the County’s attention by non-motorized users; and
- Potential connections to existing and planned non-motorized facilities in adjoining counties and in cities and towns within Skagit County.

Recommendation

The Department has spent a significant amount of time with Public Works and Parks in the last few days to obtain more information on each of the NMT projects in question for the Planning Commission to consider as it works through this issue. In the table that follows, we propose removing several projects, and propose changes to the remaining projects’ titles and descriptions to more accurately reflect the nature of the projects. After reviewing the table, we believe the Planning Commission will find that each of the projects proposed to be retained is either very straightforward safety improvement or a project from an existing plan. Only the studies could potentially include property acquisition, but the County does not intend to acquire property through condemnation, nor has it done so in the past for non-motorized projects. We recommend the Commission add the following to its recorded motion to incorporate these changes:

RC-1. Replace the unnumbered non-motorized transportation projects on pages 58-60 and 91-92 of the proposed Transportation Technical Appendix with the information from the attached table.

⁴ There is no GMA or other statutory requirement for anything called a “Transportation Systems Plan.”

Project	Location	Description	Project Cost	Recommendation & Rationale
Bicycle Route 5 (Coast Millennium Trail) Safety/Mobility Improvement Study ⁵	Southern County line to Bayview State Park	This is an existing A-north / south multimodal transportation corridor from the southern County line north to Bay View State Park which passes through the Town of La Conner and Bay View utilizing County roads and the existing Padilla Bay Trails . The projects would include paved shoulder widening, trail improvements, and signing along the corridor. Connects or will ultimately connect to bicycle routes in Whatcom and Snohomish Counties.	\$7,000,000 \$200,000	Retain, but change from project to study. There is already significant use of this corridor by bicyclists. The study would consider potential safety and mobility improvements to make the existing road more bicycle friendly, through shoulder and signage improvements. There is strong interest in Bicycle Route 5 in La Conner and Edison, as it brings many cyclists to the communities who frequent local businesses and services.
North Fork Bridge Safety Project	North Fork Bridge	Improvements to the bridge to increase driver awareness and bicyclist safety; located on Bicycle Route 5 (Coast Millennium Trail). The project would install rider activated flashing beacons and signs warning motorists of bicycles on the bridge.	\$7,000	Retain. This is a safety project on an existing bicycle route (BR 5) and road and bridge facility. It has been brought to the attention of Public Works staff by bicyclists who feel the narrow bridge is unsafe for bike passage. It is the only direct way to get from Fir Island to La Conner.
Existing Bicycle Route 14 Shoulder Enhancements	Mount Vernon to McLean Rd. Pock Park Rest Area	Bicycle Route 14 is an existing. A-east/west multimodal transportation corridor from Mount Vernon to the McLean Pocket Park and Bicycle Route 5 (Coast Millennium Trail) utilizing McLean Road. The project would include shoulder maintenance and widening where needed with the addition of signing.	\$100,000	Retain. This corridor is already heavily used by bicyclists. The project would involve improvements to the road shoulder and improved signage. Enhancements would be completed when the road is scheduled for general road improvements or rebuilding.

⁵ A designated regional bike route is a route that Skagit County in collaboration with cities, towns, and user groups identified as existing corridors that are used by non-motorized users, especially bicyclists. Following guidance from WSDOT, the routes are named and numbered to be consistent with what other counties and local jurisdictions had named the routes.

Project	Location	Description	Project Cost	Recommendation & Rationale
McLean Road Rest Area Pocket Park	Best Road and McLean Road	A rest stop with amenities for the bicycle/pedestrian community positioned at the intersection of Best Road and McLean Road and centrally located between Skagit County's major destinations. This rest area project-park would include bicycle racks, picnic area, toilets, and informational signing of bicycle routes and trails in the area.	\$300,000	Retain. This project would be located on property already owned by Skagit County. Local area residents and property owners have expressed support for this project, which has been on the TIP in past years when the County was actively seeking grant funds.
Bayview Ridge Spur	City of Burlington to Bay View Ridge	An alternative parallel multimodal transportation corridor to USBR 10 that connects the City of Burlington to Bay View Ridge and Bicycle Route 5 (Coast Millennium Trail). This project would construct a multi-use trail connecting to other existing and planned routes and trails.	\$3,780,000	Remove. This project can be removed as a separate item, and can be considered as part of the US Bicycle Route 10 (Coast to Cascades) Corridor Study discussed below.
Swinomish Indian Tribal Community Safe Routes	Swinomish Indian Tribal Community to La Conner and La Conner Schools	Improvements to Tribal, Town, and County roads and sidewalks from the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community to La Conner and La Conner Schools to increase bicyclist and pedestrian safety for residents and students. This project would make pedestrian and bicycle improvements to the existing road system that include flashing crosswalks, bicycle lanes, signing, and pavement markings.	\$800,000	Remove. This is primarily a Town of La Conner, Swinomish Tribe, and La Conner Schools "safe routes to schools" project that includes only a small portion of County road. The project has already been funded, is being constructed this year, and can be removed from this list.
Burlington to Edison Multi-Modal Pathway (Tiger Trail)	City of Burlington to the Town of Edison	A separated non-motorized trail adjacent to State Route 11 connecting the City of Burlington to the Town of Edison and Bicycle Route 5 (Coast Millennium Trail). This project would acquire right-of-way/easement adjacent to SR 11 for a separated multi-use trail, connecting the Allen, Blanchard, Bow, Edison area to the City of Burlington and other planned bicycle routes and trails.	\$8,900,000	Remove. A study of this corridor may make sense in the future, given existing and future usage; however, this item should be removed at this time.

Project	Location	Description	Project Cost	Recommendation & Rationale
Avon Multimodal Cutoff	SR 20 east of Burlington	An east / west multimodal corridor from City of Burlington to the intersection of Higgins Airport Way and State Route 20, utilizing unopened county right-of-way. This project would construct a trail from the Pulver Road area to Higgins Airport Way connection to the Port trail system utilizing existing County owned right-of-way.	\$3,000,000	Remove. This project can be removed as a separate item, and can be considered as part of the US Bicycle Route 10 (Coast to Cascades) Corridor Study discussed below.
Peterson Road	Bayview Ridge from Avon Allen Rd to Higgins Airport Way	Improve/widen roadway to urban standards adding sidewalks or trail.	\$3,900,000	Add. This project is in the County’s adopted 2016-2022 Six-Year TIP and the adopted SCOG Regional Transportation Plan ⁶ (project 55) but was inadvertently left off the 20-year project list.
Guemes Ferry Trail	Ferry terminal to Edens Rd	A separated trail located on Guemes Island, adjacent to Guemes Island Road, that connects the ferry landing to Schoolhouse Park. The project would improve safety and mobility for a growing number of bicyclists and pedestrians. This project would construct a multi-use trail connecting the Ferry Terminal to the Community Center and Park near Edens Road. Where possible it would utilize adjacent right-of-way along Guemes Island Road.	\$1,400,000	Retain. Guemes Island residents have expressed strong interest in this proposed trail, including more than 500 signatures in support, and have been working with the Parks and Public Works departments for the past year to move it forward. Several comments in support of the project were received through the 2016 Update public comment process, and none in opposition. See attachment.
Cascade Trail – Wiseman Creek Boardwalk	East County near Hamilton	Boardwalk through Wiseman Creek area to reduce impact to fish and increase recreational value of trail.	\$300,000	Add. This project is included in the County’s adopted Parks and Recreation Plan and in the adopted Regional Transportation Plan (project #79) but was inadvertently left off the 20-year project list.

⁶ “Skagit 2040 [the Regional Transportation Plan] was developed through a cooperative process that involved the Skagit Council of Governments, as the Metropolitan Planning Organization and Regional Transportation Planning Organization, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Northwest Region, the public, the Technical Advisory Committee and ongoing transportation planning efforts of Skagit County’s 8 cities and towns, 2 ports, transit agency and 4 tribal governments that constitute the MPO-RTPO planning area.” Executive Summary, Skagit 2040, Skagit Council of Governments, p. 2.

As further described in the plan introduction: “Beginning in March 2015, public input to inform the Plan update was obtained through a series of meetings, information booths, consultations, briefings and other opportunities to provide input. SCOG’s Technical Advisory Committee participated in the development of a draft Plan that was released to the public for further comment during a 14-day review period from January 26 – February 8, 2016. The final Skagit 2040 Regional Transportation Plan was formally adopted by the TPB on March 16, 2016.”

Project	Location	Description	Project Cost	Recommendation & Rationale
US Bicycle Route 13 (Cascade Centennial Trail Corridor Study)	State Route 9 and County Roads	This is an existing A north/south multimodal transportation corridor from the southern County line to the northern County line adjacent or parallel to State Route 9 and County roads. The proposed project envisions path would consist of a 10-foot paved trail and a grass shoulder for equestrian use, consistent with the Snohomish County trail sections . The corridor study would consider issues including available right of way, property impacts, shoulder widths, and alignment . Coordination with Snohomish and Whatcom counties would also be appropriate to link to their facilities .	\$26,610,000 \$200,000	Retain, as a corridor study, with reduced dollar amount. This project is included in the adopted Skagit County Parks and Recreation Plan, in the adopted Capital Facilities Plan, and in the adopted Regional Transportation Plan (project #63). It ties to several City of Sedro-Woolley projects that are also in the RTP; and to existing or planned trails in Snohomish and Whatcom counties. The Centennial Trail in Snohomish County is extremely popular with the public. The Skagit County project would support pedestrian, bicycle and equestrian use, similar to the Centennial Trail in Snohomish County. This corridor study is distinguished from the Centennial Trail project (Big Rock to Clear Lake) already included in the adopted 2016-2022 Six-Year Tip (project #4) and the adopted Regional Transportation Plan (project #54).
US Bicycle Route 10 (Coast to Cascades Trail Corridor Study)	State Route 20 corridor	This is an An existing east/west multimodal transportation corridor from Fidalgo Island to the Town of Concrete and east County line utilizing State Route 20, City and County roads and trails. The study is would consider include shoulder widening where necessary and trail construction and/or existing trail improvements.	\$20,000,000 \$200,000	Retain, as a corridor study, with reduced dollar amount. US Bike Route 10 is an existing cross-country bicycle facility recognized and authorized by local jurisdictions through which it passes, including Skagit County. The Cascade Trail portion of this project is included in the adopted Skagit County Parks and Recreation Plan and in the adopted Capital Facilities Plan. This entire corridor project is included in the adopted Regional Transportation Plan (project 62).



PROPOSED GUEMES ISLAND ROAD TRAIL

- *VISION** In 2013 the Guemes Trail Committee proposed the development of a 1.4 mile shared-use trail on the east side of Guemes Island Road between the ferry dock and Schoolhouse Park.
- *SAFETY** This particular stretch of road has long been unsafe for pedestrians and bicyclists. The high traffic volume and speed during ferry runs paired with an extremely narrow road bed, no shoulders and deep ditches is a recipe for disaster.
- *SOCIAL/ RECREATIONAL** The Guemes ferry, Anderson's store, the church, library and community hall are all part of a social network that islanders have long enjoyed. A mile up the road is Schoolhouse Park with all its amenities which will soon include a performing stage.
- *ALTERNATIVE** There is a growing need to provide alternatives to motorized vehicles. With more people using bicycles for transportation and walking for health reasons, this trail will provide a safe and scenic pathway.
- *SUPPORT** The Guemes Trail Committee gave presentations to the various island organizations and has gathered over 500 'signatures of support' from potential trail users as well as islanders who see this trail as a needed and worthy project. Skagit County officials asked that a formal proposal be written. This was submitted June 2014. After a meeting with the county it was determined that the committee could commence with drawing plans and making a trail Inventory. These documents were submitted in Sept. 2014.
- *FUNDING** The following steps need to be followed in the development of this trail. (1) acquiring county permission to use easement (2) undertaking necessary construction details and research. (3) construction of the trail (4) operations and maintenance of the trail. All of this requires funding. With the creation of the Recreational Trail Program, RTP, federal funds are available through grants. Other state and local grants will also be applied for. As with other projects on Guemes Island, private donations will be welcome. All donations are tax deductible. This trail project is under the 501(c) 3 non-profit status of the Guemes Island Library.

FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN HELP MAKE THIS TRAIL A REALITY. PLEASE EMAIL OR CALL 293-6548
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