



October 3, 2013

Olympia City Council
PO Box 1967
Olympia, WA 98507-1967

Dear Mayor Buxbaum and Members of the Council:

SUBJECT: Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) Review of Draft 2014-2019 Capital Facilities Plan (CFP)

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee is designated in City ordinance to advise the Council on the encouragement and facilitation of non-motorized transportation. As you review the *2014-2019 Preliminary Capital Facilities Plan*, BPAC urges you to consider re-prioritizing some of the projects that you fund. We believe our City should be investing in cost-effective improvements to our transportation facilities that will serve our Comprehensive Plan vision of an Olympia where people move easily using multiple modes of transportation- walking, bicycling, riding the bus, and driving their own vehicles.

Capital Facilities Plan serves the Comprehensive Plan

It is most important to us that the Capital Facilities Plan support the Comprehensive Plan goals of reducing dependence on auto use, building pedestrian friendly streets and giving priority to alternative modes of transportation. We understand the complexity of state and federal mandates and funding for road construction and maintenance, and we expect City staff to continue to seek compliance with those requirements and avail us of opportunities. We do, however, also believe that Olympia has arrived at a vision and a plan for a transportation efficient community, which is clearly expressed in the Comprehensive Plan.

This coming year (2014) we look forward to the construction of the 22nd Avenue sidewalk between Cain and Boulevard roads, and for the West Bay Drive sidewalk. These projects are both funded from voter-approved *Parks and Pathways* funding and are significant investments in pedestrian facilities. We will be there to celebrate!

We are also excited about other pedestrian projects, which support higher density development areas, such as work on Capitol Way between the Capitol Campus and our downtown. Also, State Avenue resurfacing will include the addition of pedestrian bulb-outs, which should help to manage traffic speed, and make it easier for pedestrians to cross this street. We concur with the addition of future crossing projects in this year's CFP, and we appreciate the opportunity to work with staff to recommend timing and priority of these projects. (page 55)

We as a City have made pedestrian and bicycling improvements over the past five years, \$32 million in investments, 4.3 miles of new sidewalks, 3.6 miles of bicycle lanes, and improvements at 17 pedestrian crossings. *But, here is our concern. In our opinion, most of those projects were*

opportunistic. They came about as adjuncts to road paving projects and many are in low-density suburban areas, not in the areas or corridors that the Comprehensive Plan seeks to emphasize.

How can we meet the vision of the Comprehensive Plan?

We want to take a fresh look at how bicycle and pedestrian priorities are included in the Capital Facilities Plan. We appreciate the opportunity to work with staff and review the priorities we recommend to Council for funding. With our newly updated Comprehensive Plan, this is an ideal opportunity to review the plan for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, which will implement our Comprehensive Plan. BPAC thinks it is very important to fund facilities in our core areas, to encourage walking where higher density development exists or is planned. We also want to be sure to invest scarce funds in environments where transit service exists, and where pedestrians want to walk. We want to help inform decisions to make the wisest investments.

Projects that would support our Comp Plan vision sit on the 5-year project list and the 20-year facilities lists getting no closer to reality. If funding is not adequate to build the work listed in the Capital Facilities Plan then it's time to rethink what we put into the Capital Facilities Plan. We have some ideas.

Bicycle boulevards are a cost-effective way to expand the cycling network

What we heard very strongly throughout the "Imagine Olympia" process is that our citizens want corridors where they can bicycle with their families and feel safe. We know that a great number of people want to bike more, but do not feel safe on a bike lane on an arterial. Our system of trails is excellent, but hardly offers opportunities to ride where most people want to go. Bicycle boulevards, or community greenways can offer that opportunity, a concept with which the cities of Portland and Vancouver BC have had great success. A bicycle boulevard is a low-volume and low-speed street that has been optimized for bicycle travel through treatments such as traffic calming and traffic reduction, roadway signing and pavement markings, and intersection crossing treatments. Our committee is excited about exploring options for less busy streets that could be slightly modified to encourage cyclists. We plan to put it on our work plan for 2014. We hope to develop a pilot plan for this type of facility, and ask for capital funding in 2015.

One cost-effective strategy is Wayfinding. We have been examining wayfinding signage projects where cities across the world have successfully increased cycling and walking. Wayfinding involves clearly marking routes and providing information for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders. Signs are much less expensive than bike paths and sidewalks!

Rework the sidewalk and bicycle facilities priorities to serve the Comprehensive Plan and scale them so that we can afford to build them.

Currently listed sidewalk priorities don't serve comprehensive plan priorities.

The sidewalk priorities listed on page 57 of the CFP are not aligned with Olympia's priorities or vision for transportation. As an example, Phoenix Street, scheduled for a sidewalk, already has a rolled curb and wide shoulder. South Bay Road as it becomes State Avenue already has a bike lane, but it has high speeds and high volumes of traffic. Olympia Avenue, one street to the north, has virtually no traffic, and Martin Way on the other side has bus service every 15 minutes. In order to make highest and best use of limited funds, we recommend revisions to the sidewalk on Martin Way. This type of targeted investment would support our Comprehensive Plan vision for a dense

urban corridor, supported by sidewalk connections. In the coming year, we plan to review the prioritized list of pedestrian facilities with neighborhood groups to develop revised lists of priorities.

Currently listed bicycle projects do not represent bicycle priorities.

In the recent past, bike facilities have generally occurred as other major automobile street projects happen, and indeed, the current list of priorities is directly aligned and subordinate to automobile-based projects. While we appreciate that bike lanes are being incrementally developed in our City, we are very frustrated about lack of predictable progress. The bike projects listed in the CFP are the same ones we objected to last year because of costs that greatly exceed foreseeable funding.

Another example, proposed improvements to Herman Road bring good infrastructure to the low-density suburban fringe of our city. (page 75) However, the bicycle fund is proposed to pay for roadway expansion for a bike lane and additional stormwater management.¹ *Given our recent history of funding bicycle facilities, (\$0 per year), development of the Herman Road bicycle lane with bicycle facility funding is not likely to occur soon.* If this road is indeed a priority, we suggest that a clearer and more realistic financial strategy be considered for this road section. We recommend impact fees, developer contributions and stormwater funding, and save the tiny amounts of bicycle funding available for a project scaled to match available resources. We will ask for a list of smaller bicycle facility projects that are independently programmed to represent bicycle priorities, in coordination with other aspects of the CFP and Comp Plan.

Education and encouragement are important

As a committee, we have discussed that education and encouragement programs are important parts of encouraging a healthy and more sustainable transportation system. Olympia is relatively unique and very fortunate to have a Public Works department that thinks beyond infrastructure, and understands shares and supports this need. We think more effort from the City or from the region to support safety education and encouragement will go a long way to our goal of having more people walk and ride more often. We encourage the City to partner with regional entities to support encouragement and education efforts.

Pedestrian Pathways project coming along

The pedestrian pathways project we proposed and Council approved last year resulted in several projects that appear to be good options to improve connectivity in Olympia for pedestrians and cyclists. We think there may be opportunities to continue to improve this program to develop a smoother process and take advantage of opportunities for partnerships. We will review this program over the next year

1

This project was originally identified in the 1997 Bicycle Facilities Program as being development-driven and developer-funded. That was a plausible funding mechanism at the time, but with the adoption of the Chambers Basin rezoned to address stormwater concerns, there is no longer an expectation of development along Herman Road, but development east and west of there has created unacceptable cycling conditions. This suggests that impact fees from these adjacent developments should contribute to restoring the level of service that previously existed, consistent with Comprehensive Plan Policy PT 8.3.

We spend most of our funding in the low-density suburban areas

From our perspective, the bulk of the CFP spending appears to be partially funded by impact fees matched with grants and spent primarily to develop streets in suburban areas. We believe it is critical to align CFP spending with Comprehensive Plan priorities which call for in-fill development in our main corridors where we want to encourage sustainable growth and high-frequency bus service is already prioritized. We think that a fresh look at CFP criteria used to select projects may be helpful.

BPAC acknowledges the difficulty of determining budget priorities in tight economic times. Just as the City continues to face the realities of limited resources, so do our residents in their private and household budgets. Many Olympia residents use lower-cost forms of transportation, including biking, walking and transit, for both commute and non-commute trips. We think it is important to align our priorities with the economic realities of many of our residents and with the policies in our Comprehensive Plan. Let's explore lower-cost projects, such as bike boulevards and wayfinding, and let's re-align the Capital Facilities Plan to serve our Comprehensive Plan. This will encourage healthier and more efficient multi-modal transportation and add vitality to our urban areas.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our recommendations in the course of your CFP review process. Please feel free to contact Clark Gilman at (360) 401-5489 or clarkgilman@gmail.com or Anne Fritzel at (360) 753-9606 or bicyclegoddess@gmail.com if you have questions or comments.

Sincerely,



FOR **CLARK GILMAN**
Co-Chair
Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee

ANNE FRITZEL
Co-Chair
Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee

CG:AF/lm

\\Calvin\pw transportation\Flow Mobility and Safety\BPAC\2013\BPAC Correspondence\BPAC Letter to Council Re 2014-2019 Draft CFP_10-03-13.docx

ec: Michelle Swanson, BPAC Staff Liaison
BPAC Members