



June 1, 2020

General Government Committee
City of Olympia
601 4th Avenue E
Olympia, WA 98507

Dear Chair Rollins and Councilmembers Gilman and Madrone,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit the 2020 Draft Work Plan for the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC). The BPAC met in May to re-evaluate our proposed work plan. We made the following changes to the draft work plan as discussed in our January meeting:

- Added a focus including “COVID-19-related impacts” to the “Emerging Policy Issues” plan item 1.b.;
- Expanded the anticipated schedule of Traffic Safety topics to span the entire year;
- Removed a briefing on construction zones and temporary traffic control for people walking and biking; and
- Removed an update on the Regional Trails Plan from the Thurston Regional Planning Council.

The BPAC recognizes the City’s budget limitations due to the COVID-19 pandemic and economic slowdown. We understand that the City is focusing on essential services and that staff time available to devote to non-essential projects and initiatives will be limited. For this reason, we removed two items from our work plan.

However, BPAC members see this as a unique period in which Olympia could leverage residents’ renewed interest in walking and biking to promote a shift to sustained, safe, car-free travel. In order to do that, we need more space on our sidewalks, streets and parks to keep everyone safe. Even large city parks and open spaces seem cramped when outdoor recreation demand is high. We’ve found that most sidewalks don’t allow for six-foot social distancing without someone stepping into a street.

Many cities across the globe have considered temporary closing of streets or traffic lanes to promote safer human-powered travel and recreation. We recommend that the City Council consider options like this for our city, too. Many of the city’s new cyclists are interested in biking but remain concerned about safety and interactions with cars. Luckily, there are fewer cars on the road now. But we believe that giving walkers and bikers more space now will help them *continue* to choose car-free transportation even after the pandemic.

The BPAC would be happy to provide feedback on any efforts of this nature that the council wants to explore.

Thank you for time and consideration,

Brittany Yunker Carlson
Chair
Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee