

A Specific Demonstration of Bellingham Transportation Element Goals and Policies Addressing the Ten Major Policy Elements of the National “Complete Streets” Movement

Bellingham’s Transportation Element Visions, Goals and Policies

The introduction, visions, goals, and policies listed below are from the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element (adopted June 2006) and relate to what is now being called the “Complete Streets” movement. The introduction establishes and defines Bellingham’s multi-modal transportation planning approach in the context of achieving urban infill land use goals and policies while the visions, goals, and policies lay out the desire, the targets to aim for, and the practices recommended to achieve the goals. Bellingham’s standard practice is to ensure that all street improvements include facilities for all user groups, wherever possible. Due to the extremely high cost of constructing public infrastructure, however, there are locations and situations where certain facilities are not appropriate or possible, whether due to environmental or financial constraints, or lack of demand for the facilities.

2006 BELLINGHAM COMPREHENSIVE PLAN - Chapter 3 - Transportation Element

Complete Streets Policy Element

1.) Includes a vision for how and why the community wants to complete its streets.

The Transportation Element introduction and the ten adopted Transportation Visions (TV) clearly and extensively describe the vision that the citizens of Bellingham have expressed through many years of public process to create and adopt the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

The Land Use – Transportation Link

Transportation planning is intricately tied to land use and the pattern of development that evolves as an urban area grows. A transportation system includes various travel modes, such as pedestrian, bicycle, bus, automobile, freight truck, marine ferry, railroad, and airplanes. A multi-modal transportation network includes and connects all of these different travel modes in an effective and efficient manner, including connections within and between modes.

The City of Bellingham strives to provide, manage, and maintain a safe, well-connected, and efficient multi-modal city-wide transportation network. The ability for people to travel safely and efficiently, using various means of transportation, contributes to the high quality of life that Bellingham residents enjoy.

Due to Bellingham’s status as the largest population, employment, shopping, and entertainment center in Whatcom County, however, the City transportation network is significantly affected by regional traffic generated from outside the City limits. This presents Bellingham with a significant challenge in using land use and transportation planning policies to encourage infill development and maintain a compact urban area while managing increasing traffic congestion on the transportation network.

Bellingham’s status as the largest urban population center also means that it has the highest concentrations of residential density. Well-connected pedestrian and bicycle networks, as well as convenient high-frequency transit service, often become more cost-effective and efficient as residential density increases in an urban area.

For this reason, Bellingham is striving to employ land use planning policies that support higher density residential areas located close to employment, shopping, and entertainment centers in order to provide Bellingham residents with more opportunities to walk, bicycle, or ride high-frequency public transit.

In addition, the City is working with Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA), to achieve target goals for the next 20 years to increase the mode share of pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit trips while reducing the mode share of automobile trips as a percentage of total trips. The 20-year goals for percentage of total trips are as follows:

Mode	2004	2010	2015	2022
Automobile	87%	84%	80%	75%
Transit Bus	2%	3%	4%	6%
Bicycle	3%	4%	5%	6%
Pedestrian	8%	9%	11%	13%

(Note: 2004 data from FTA/Social Data Study for Bellingham)

Bellingham’s aim is not to eliminate private automobiles, but to encourage the use of other transportation modes, wherever and whenever possible, while reducing the costly transportation capacity demand made by automobiles, and especially single-occupant vehicles (SOV), on City arterial streets. If the target goals are achieved over the next 20 years, then 75% of the total trips made in the City are still anticipated to be made by automobile. Clearly, this requires Bellingham to continue to provide a safe and efficient transportation network for automobiles as well.

Given Bellingham’s circumstances as the major population, employment, shopping, and entertainment center in Whatcom County, the City officials have recognized that the City cannot build its way out of traffic congestion by continually widening arterials to add capacity for automobiles. Instead, the City is attempting to focus transportation funding on infrastructure improvements that will make walking, bicycling, and transit more viable, convenient, and safe.

One of the City’s primary goals is to enhance the public environment at the street level, which is everyone's community space, and design the urban streetscape primarily for people rather than strictly for automobiles.

PART 7: TRANSPORTATION GOALS (TG)

Transportation Visions for Bellingham (related to “Complete Streets”)

TV-1 Bellingham's transportation network is consistent with its position as a cultural and economic center, with particular emphasis on fixed or light rail access connecting Seattle, Bellingham and Vancouver, ferry service to the San Juan Islands, British Columbia and Alaska, and continued use of our waterfront for water transportation.

TV-2 Development patterns that **encourage walking, biking and transit** use are fostered through incentives and zoning regulations, including provisions for developments which **allow people to live within walking distance of shopping and employment**. These provisions may encourage small scale neighborhood centers as well as cottage industry or home occupations.

TV-3 Both pedestrian and bicycle facilities connect living, working, education, and recreational areas throughout the town. New development is designed to be pedestrian friendly. Walking is made easier by requirements for street trees and separated sidewalks on all new or reconstructed arterials except where existing mature vegetation or terrain suggest otherwise. Bicycling as a form of recreation and bicycling as a form of transportation flourishes, using facilities that are well lit and are built and maintained to allow year-round, all-weather use, and allow safe on and off-street travel.

TV-4 Bellingham continues to recognize the need for an efficient arterial system which minimizes through traffic on local residential streets. Transportation grant applications and local transportation funding priorities address multi-modal transportation improvements on City arterials, the Interstate 5 overpasses, and across the Interstate between Samish and West Bakerview.

TV-5 Bellingham reduces noise pollution and increases air quality by reducing its reliance on the automobile and promoting walking, bicycling, and other modes of transportation.

TV-6 Pedestrians enjoy improvements downtown that reduce or eliminate cars on some streets or alleys and provide space for public gatherings, such as a public square.

TV-7 Multi-modal transportation linkages between downtown and the waterfront connect the Central Business District with the Bay and provide a safe walkways and bicycle paths along Whatcom Creek between the Bay and Lake Whatcom.

TV-8 A significant increase in the number of bicycle commutes into the central downtown area reduces the need for new parking spaces while decreasing the congestion, noise and pollution caused by motorized traffic. Lower levels of motor-driven traffic (and a lessened need for parking) frees up street areas for open green spaces, creative commercial activities and cultural events that are increasingly attracting people to the downtown and waterfront area.

TV-9 Whatcom Transportation Authority's Primary Transit Network and high-frequency route enhancements reflect Bellingham's commitment to adjust to changing transportation needs, utilizing public transportation to improve air quality, to decrease parking demand and to reduce reliance on the use of the automobile. Route enhancements may include enhanced service hours, shuttles from outlying areas to downtown and Bellis Fair, a downtown area bus providing both internal circulation and access to parking, and the use of innovative or historic vehicles in downtown and Fairhaven.

TV-10 Transit riders enjoy an increased sense of security on Whatcom Transportation Authority's Primary Transit Network.

Complete Streets Policy Element

- 2.) *Specifies that 'all users' includes pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit passengers of all ages and abilities, as well as trucks, buses, emergency vehicles, and automobiles.*
- 3.) *Encourages street connectivity and aims to create a comprehensive, integrated, connected network for all modes.*
- 8.) *Directs that Complete Streets solutions will complement the context of the community.*

The multiple Transportation Goals (TG) listed below emphasize connectivity for all modes and users given the land use contexts (Urban Villages and transit-oriented development) and transportation purpose and function (truck routes, airports, etc).

TG-5 Coordinate city and county comprehensive plans to encourage land use types, mixes, and densities that promote **balanced and effective transportation systems**.

TG-7 Focus on **improving traffic circulation** and reduce demand for constructing costly system improvements designed to accommodate additional single occupancy vehicle trips.

TG-10 Emphasize, accommodate, and **provide facilities for multiple transportation modes** on Bellingham streets wherever possible.

TG-13 **Provide truck access** to industrial and commercial areas while minimizing the negative impacts associated with **truck routes** through design standards and location.

[Note: Bellingham is one of the few jurisdictions in Whatcom County with designated truck routes]

TG-16 Identify and commit to **connecting 'missing links'** within the land-based transportation network **for all modes of transportation, including pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and motor vehicles**.

TG-17 Work with transportation providers and other jurisdictions to increase the efficiency and convenience of **inter-modal transportation connections** within the regional transportation network.

TG-18 Identify and analyze low-cost opportunities to **increase street connectivity** to create better traffic circulation within neighborhoods and throughout the city.

TG-19 Increase mode share of bicycle and pedestrian trips by providing a **safe, well-connected, and convenient bicycle and pedestrian circulation network** throughout the city.

[Note: In 2011, Bellingham has 57.5 miles of marked bike lanes, 5 miles funded for construction in 2012, and plans for an additional 60 miles for a total of 123 miles of marked bike lanes by 2022. Bellingham transportation planners will plan and create a Bike Master Plan in 2012-2013.]

TG-20 **Prioritize pedestrian and bicycle facility improvements** over auto-oriented improvements **within Urban Villages** and areas targeted for infill development. ***[See above goal TG-19]***

TG-21 **Support the WTA 2004 Strategic Plan** to focus transit resources in Bellingham, but also provide high quality, safe, convenient, accessible, cost-effective transit service throughout the urbanized area of Whatcom County as an attractive alternative to the single-occupancy vehicle.

[Note: The Bellingham Transportation Element was written in conjunction with the 2004 WTA plan]

TG-23 When new development takes place, support WTA high-frequency transit service by encouraging **transit-oriented development** along and within ¼ mile of WTA’s Primary Transit Network within Bellingham and the Bellingham UGA.

TG-24 Support WTA efforts to **meet the public transportation needs of all segments of the community**.

TG-25 Support WTA efforts to meet service standards to **protect average transit service speed on arterials** as identified in the WTA’s 2004 Strategic Plan.

TG-26 Support efforts to **increase public transportation’s market share of total travel** along WTA Primary Transit Network corridors in Bellingham and Whatcom County.

TG-27 Use Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) designed for improving transit services by providing more information at bus stops and on board buses, to enhance the safety of passengers and drivers, and to **provide signal pre-emption for transit vehicles throughout Bellingham**.

TG-28 Set target goals to **increase the mode share of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit trips and reduce automobile trips** as a percentage of total trips, as listed below.

[Note: These mode shift goals were developed by Public Works and WTA transportation planners]

Mode	2004	2010	2015	2022
Automobile	87%	84%	80%	75%
Transit Bus	2%	3%	4%	6%
Bicycle	3%	4%	5%	6%
Pedestrian	8%	9%	11%	13%

(Note: 2004 data from FTA/Social Data Study)

TG-30 Bellingham reduces automobile trips on roadways and increases the efficiency of transportation facilities by **developing and encouraging Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies** to help achieve target goals for transportation mode shift, wherever possible.

TG-31 Encourage public education and funding for **bicycle safety** enforcement.

TG-32 Emphasize and commit to the implementation of infill and Urban Village land use strategies to create residential densities that will support safe, viable, and convenient opportunities to use **transportation modes other than the private automobile**.

TG-41 Include inter-county and international transportation links, such as airports, Amtrak, high speed rail, bus transit and ferries in comprehensive transportation planning in Whatcom County.

Complete Streets Policy Element

4.) Specifies that 'all users' includes pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit passengers of all ages and abilities, as well as trucks, buses, emergency vehicles, and automobiles.

9.) Directs that Complete Streets solutions will complement the context of the community.

The multiple Transportation Policies (TP) listed below emphasize connectivity for all modes and users given the land use contexts (Urban Villages and transit-oriented development) and transportation purpose and function (truck routes, airports, etc).

TP-1 Consider revision of land use plans to allow densities and **mixes of uses that reduce the number and length of vehicle trips** and increase the opportunity to use public transportation and non-motorized modes of travel.

TP-2 Reinforce the link between land use and public transportation by **encouraging transit-oriented development** along and within ¼ mile of WTA Primary Transit Network corridors and near urban villages, town centers, and neighborhood centers.

TP-4 **Provide development incentives** (such as increased density, increased square footage, and parking requirement reductions) for new development located within Urban Villages and along and within ¼ mile of WTA Primary Transit Network corridors **when amenities for transit users, bicyclists and pedestrians are included**, while minimizing impacts to surrounding residential neighborhoods.

TP-5 Encourage land development proposals to **utilize the full capacity of the existing multi-modal transportation system**, especially transit and non-motorized modes.

TP-6 Encourage public and private development proposals to **enhance the street side environment to maximize comfort of the transit user and pedestrian**.

TP-9 **Ensure that alternative transportation modes are included** in comprehensive plans, subdivisions, and other land developments.

Complete Streets Policy Element

10.) Establishes performance standards with measurable outcomes.

TP-11 Establish Level of Service (LOS) standards for a range of multimodal transportation modes to identify deficiencies and need for improvements.

Bellingham’s adopted LOS standard is “**Person Trips Available by Concurrency Service Area” based on arterial and transit capacity for motorized modes and on the degree of network completeness for pedestrian and bicycle modes**, as listed below. The individual thresholds for each transportation mode available in each Concurrency Service Area are listed in Table 1. of BMC 13.70 Transportation Concurrency Management Ordinance.

Motorized Transportation Modes

- **Arterial Streets:** Peak Hour LOS Person Trips Available (PTA) during weekday p.m. peak hour based on data collected at designated Concurrency Measurement Points for each Concurrency Service Area;
- **Transit:** Determine seated capacity, measure ridership, and equate to person trips available via public transit service during weekday p.m. peak hour based on data collected at designated Concurrency Measurement Points for each Concurrency Service Area;

Non-motorized Transportation Modes

- **Bicycle:** Credit person trips according to degree of bicycle network completeness for designated system facilities/routes for each Concurrency Service Area;
- **Pedestrian:** Credit person trips according to degree of pedestrian network completeness for designated system facilities/routes for each Concurrency Service Area; and
- **Trails:** Credit person trips according to degree of bicycle and pedestrian network completeness, where trails serve a clear transportation function for a Concurrency Service Area.

[Note: Bellingham’s Multimodal Transportation Concurrency Program was awarded the 2009 APA Award for Transportation Planning in Washington State for being the first jurisdiction to implement multimodal levels of service in compliance with GMA Concurrency requirements.]

TP-12 To further support the Urban Village and infill strategy of the Land Use Element, the Bellingham City Council has adopted **Peak Hour LOS E at p.m. peak hour, and where specific circumstances warrant, Alternative Peak Hour LOS F for transportation arterials where mitigation is difficult**. The Council may, on a case-by-case basis, consider adopting Peak Hour LOS F, for other arterials as follows:

- 1.) On local arterials within designated Urban Villages;
- 2.) On local arterials that enter/exit the City; and
- 3.) On local arterials where mitigation is not feasible.

[Note: This policy allows, and accepts, local rush hour traffic congestion instead of widening streets and intersections to provide additional vehicle capacity, which does not reduce traffic congestion.]

TP-14 Maintain the concurrency management system to ensure that adequate transportation facilities are available to serve new development. Develop a financing plan that identifies funding necessary to meet identified needs or requires reassessment of the development pattern and forecast if needs cannot be met.

[Note: A Transportation Report on Annual Concurrency (TRAC) is published at the beginning of each year to provide a status report on the city-wide transportation network.]

TP-15 Develop regionally consistent and **equitable transportation impact fees** by which land developers are assessed fair-share contributions for any transportation improvements, **including but not limited to pedestrian facilities, bikeways, or roadways** that are that are identified in the six-year Capital Improvement Financing Plan listed in the Capital Facilities Element.

[Note: In 2011, Bellingham adopted Urban Village Vehicle Trip and Transportation Impact Fee Reductions, accounting for increased pedestrian, bicycle, and transit influence in master-planned Urban Villages to further infill land use strategies and multimodal transportation planning goals]

TP-16 Emphasize **preservation and enhancement of the existing transportation system** in funding transportation programs.

[Note: Preservation of existing arterial streets was identified as the top transportation priority by the Bellingham Capital Facilities Task Force and has become the top priority for Public Works]

TP-17 Transportation **funding for public roads should be directed primarily toward multi-modal improvements** that will enhance safety and circulation within and between urban villages, infill areas, schools, and employment centers within City limits.

[Note: Bellingham's annual Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is 100% multimodal and contains more non-motorized than motorized projects]

TP-18 Transportation funding for widening of public roads at the edges of the City should be minimized and peak hour traffic congestion should be allowed to increase at entry and exit points to the City to discourage single occupancy vehicle work commutes from rural residential areas to urban employment centers. *(See TP-12 also)*

TP-20 Support efforts by WTA, City and County Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committees, and the WCOG to develop an ongoing **public education program for all transportation users in the urban area** to learn about the **rights of pedestrians and other forms of non-motorized transportation.**

TP-21 Coordinate efforts between Public Works, Planning and Community Development, and the Police Department to **protect pedestrians and bicyclists on public streets.**

TP-22 Support pro-active marketing, advertising, and public education efforts by the WTA, WCOG, and City and County Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committees to **encourage major employers and businesses to provide incentives for their employees to use transit, non-motorized transportation, or car-pooling/ridesharing to get to work rather than single-occupant private automobiles.**

[Note: In 2011, Bellingham adopted Urban Village Vehicle Trip and Transportation Impact Fee Reductions, accounting for increased pedestrian, bicycle, transit influence, and opportunities for Commute Trip Reduction and Transportation Demand Management strategies in master-planned Urban Villages to further infill land use strategies and multimodal transportation planning goals]

Complete Streets Policy Element

- 4.) *Is understood by all agencies to cover all roads.*
- 5.) *Applies to both new and retrofit projects, including design, planning, maintenance, and operations, for the entire right-of-way.*
- 6.) *Makes any exceptions specific and sets a clear procedure that requires high-level approval of exceptions.*
- 7.) *Directs the use of the latest and best design criteria and guidelines while recognizing the need for flexibility in balancing user needs.*
- 8.) *Directs that Complete Streets solutions will complement the context of the community.*

The multiple Transportation Policies (TP) listed below emphasize connectivity for all modes and users given the land use contexts (Urban Villages and transit-oriented development) and transportation purpose and function (truck routes, airports, etc).

TP-50 Walking and bicycling facilities should be provided on all new, reconstructed, or retro-fitted arterial streets, where right-of-way allows.

TP-56 Preserve and maintain the existing arterial system to avoid costly reconstruction. [See TP-16]

TP-58 Residential street standards are to be used as a guide in the development process. The actual width of the right-of-way and pavement shall be reviewed on a case by case basis as per BMC 13.04. **Right-of-way and pavement width shall be the minimum necessary to provide for the safe use of vehicles, public transit, bicycles, and pedestrians.**

TP-60 Discourage cul-de-sacs where topography allows and **encourage well-connected streets** in new and existing neighborhoods.

TP-61 Give high priority to developing and maintaining non-motorized transportation facilities that lessen impacts on the environment and reduce energy consumption, such as the **bicycle and pedestrian trails network.**

TP-62 Identify site specific off-street **bicycle/pedestrian facilities** in the Parks and Open Space Element and in the Capital Improvement Program; **on-street facilities should be incorporated into roadway improvement plans.**

TP-63 **Include adequate (e.g., to or exceeding WSDOT standards) facilities for safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian travel in all roadway improvement projects where warranted and/or feasible.**

TP-64 **Utilize appropriate urban design elements to promote a pedestrian environment in areas of heavy pedestrian usage** (e.g., commercial, governmental, business and medical centers, and transit centers).

TP-65 Provide safe, convenient and protected bicycle parking at activity centers such as commercial areas, institutions, parking garages, park-and-ride facilities and transit terminals.

TP-66 **Develop appropriate bicycle treatments on those arterial streets designated as bicycle routes.**

TP-67 Develop compatible bicycle/pedestrian facility standards between the City and County, including consistent maintenance standards and agreements.

TP-68 Maintain a street sweeping program including interagency agreements on sharing services as needed **to ensure that all shoulders, bicycle routes, and designated bike lanes are swept clear of sand, glass, and debris at least twice a year.**

TP-69 Maintain bicycle and pedestrian facility surfaces for comfort and safety.

TP-70 Existing trail facilities should be retrofitted and new trails designed in accordance with the 1990 Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA).

TP-72 Continue to pursue the repair and construction of sidewalks and pedestrian ways, with an emphasis on areas with greater pedestrian use. Some of those areas of the City which deserve priority for sidewalk work include:

- Sidewalks which serve as **routes to City schools and parks.**
- Neighborhoods **adjacent to Western Washington University and the CBD.**
- **Urban villages, neighborhood centers,** and infill areas
- The **more densely populated areas,** especially developing multi-residential areas.
- **Along and within ¼ mile of WTA Primary Transit Corridors**

TP-75 The following measures should be taken to insure **safe, convenient and pleasant pedestrian facilities on city rights-of-way:**

1. The pedestrian "walk" phases of signalized intersections should provide **adequate crossing time for safe pedestrian crossing.**
2. **Sidewalks should, wherever right-of-way, topography, existing vegetation, grade and alignment allow, be separated from the street by a planting strip, rain gardens, or other low impact development techniques, especially where the curb lane is or will become a moving traffic lane.**
3. **Sidewalks should be a minimum of five feet wide and a minimum of eight feet in the central business district, urban villages, and neighborhood centers.**
4. Where brick pavers are used on sidewalks, they should be installed and maintained to ensure safe walking conditions for pedestrians.
5. Asphalt overlays should not be permitted on sidewalks in the central business district.

TP-77 Marked crosswalks should be installed in the following circumstances:

1. Intersections in the Central Business District and Urban Villages.
2. Intersections controlled by traffic signals.
3. School route crossings.
4. Locations with high pedestrian volume, where warranted.

TP-78 Where appropriate, **improve pedestrian crossing safety where trails, footpaths, or pedestrian routes must traverse busy streets.**

TP-79 **Emphasize capital and transportation system management investments that improve the reliability, safety, and attractiveness of the public transportation system.**

TP-80 **Support the public transportation system serving the needs of elderly, disabled, youth, low-income individuals and other persons with transportation disadvantages,** in accordance with adopted standards.

TP-87 **Support multi-modal trips by providing secure bicycle storage facilities,** park and ride lots, other transit facilities, and allowing for the transporting of bicycles on public transit vehicles.

TP-88 **Integrate the public transit system with other modes of transportation including auto, bicycle, and pedestrian travel with intercity bus, rail, ferries and airline facilities.**

TP-91 **Encourage the WTA to develop employer-subsidized transit pass programs in conjunction with major employers.**

TP-92 **Encourage employers to establish employee benefits for ridesharing and transit.**

TP-95 **Support WTA to provide accessible public transit service levels,** both accessible fixed route and demand responsive service which, at a minimum, **comply with or exceed the ADA Act of 1990 and FTA requirements and standards,** including new guidelines and standards that will be developed.

TP-98 Support establishment of an intergovernmental formal public education and outreach process to **promote public awareness of service for seniors and citizens with disabilities and address service availability, training of users, potential users and service providers.**

TP-99 **Encourage the WTA to continue to provide demand responsive service to individuals unable to access and use fixed route transit service, at a minimum, as required by the ADA Act.**

TP-100 **Provide pedestrian amenities that are appropriate for elderly and disabled citizens (e.g., larger signs for visually impaired, benches, etc.) according to the ADA Act.**

TP-101 **Encourage the preservation of rail rights-of-way in accordance with federal standards for maintenance and engineering.**

TP-109 City should **work with Burlington Northern Santa Fe to provide safe, accessible pedestrian and bicycle crossings at trail, street, intersection, and other established pedestrian crossings.**

TP-112 **Provide a recognized route system for trucks to provide truck access to commercial and industrial land uses.** Trucks are to use established routes except when a specific trip purpose cannot be reasonably served by this system.

TP-124 **The City should work with the Port of Bellingham to develop multi-modal facilities,** including small boat launches, providing for safe accessible access to and from Port properties, adjacent areas, and Bellingham Bay.