



Meeting Summary

Climate Action Plan Task Force

City of Bellingham

October 2, 2019

6:30 PM, 210 Lottie Street

Attendees. Task Force members: Lynne Murphy, Rick Nicholson, Mark Schofield, Jill MacIntyre Witt, Charles Barnhart, Erin McDade, Christine Grant, Derek Long, Don Goldberg. Staff/Consultants: Renee LaCroix, Clare Fogelsong, Mark Gardner, David Roberts.

Major Topics:

Transportation and Land Use Measure Approval. The Transportation and Land Use Work Group presented its recommendations to the Task Force. In order to meet the City's Council's target, internal combustion engines need to be phased out by 2035, as this represents 32% of all GHGs. During this time, the City must switch to electric and non-motorized modes of transportation. In order to get there, both incentives and disincentive are needed. Also, a mix of short-term and long-term strategies is needed. Lastly, additional resources will be needed to accelerate the transition. In terms of emissions, while mode share shifts help, vehicle electrification is also needed. EVs are three items as efficient as internal combustion vehicles (ICE) and vehicle electrification would result in a 78% carbon reduction.

The following measures were discussed and received approval from the Task Force for inclusion in the final report to the City Council. Where there was substantive discussion of a measure, it is briefly summarized below. Some concerns were expressed regarding some measures, and suggested changes to the scope of the measure or for changes to the language in the report text are briefly summarized below, when applicable.

Transportation Measures

- **Measure #1 Ban the Operation of Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) Vehicles Within the Bellingham City Limits by 2035.** Some areas, e.g. Oxford, UK, are endorsing this approach with no-ICE zones that get larger over time. In the longer term, switching to EVs is a cost-negative measure since EVs are so energy efficient and require less maintenance.
 - Concerns or suggested changes: Add that there are stormwater and public health benefits in the report narrative. There is a need to figure out affordable options for low income families. The availability of used vehicles helps with this.
- **Measure #2 Ban the Sale of Internal Combustion Engine Vehicles in Bellingham by 2035** (working with a coalition of other Local Governments in Washington State). A number of jurisdictions globally have adopted this measure, with bans kicking in at the late 2020s or early 2030s. Such measures will result in a greater variety of EV's for sale.
 - Concerns or suggested changes: Note that state policy changes would also help this measure.

- **Measure #3 Impose a Moratorium on the Approval of Applications for New Gas Stations.** These represent a pollution risk and remediation costs are going up.
 - Concerns or suggested changes: Add language re: incentivizing EV charging at existing stations or creation of new EV stations. Consider the impacts on developers of this change.

- **Measure #4 Ordinance Mandating that all Local Public Transportation Vehicles, both Publicly and Privately Owned, in Operation in the City of Bellingham be Fully Electric by 2035.** WTA supports this but paying for it is an issue. Increasing financial support would require a public vote. Buses can be replaced with electric versions as they are retired. Since an average of 5 buses are replaced every year, all would be replaced by 2035. This measure has a net cost savings over time. Converting to natural gas-only buses results in a small reduction. Buses are cheaper elsewhere (e.g. Norway) but the U.S. requires 80% U.S. manufactured components.

- **Measure #5 Implement Electric Vehicle and E-Bike Group Buy Programs.**

- **Measure #6 Enhance Requirements for New Construction to Include Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment/Conduit in Parking Areas.** Currently one charger is required per 20 spaces. This should be increased, such as to one per five, or one per four.
 - Concerns or suggested changes: Note that adding fast chargers may require upgrading of electrical infrastructure, and this has cost implications.

- **Measure #7 Provide Incentives for Adding EV Charging Stations to Existing Multifamily Complex Parking Areas.**
 - Concerns or suggested changes: Note that condominium buildings should be included, but may present special issues as residents must agree to the change.

- **Measure #8 TNC Electrification Program and TNC Charging Stations.** Dedicated stations could be created. Working with WTA may be helpful.

- **Measure #9 Fast-Track the Update of the Bike Master Plan with a Focus on Completing the Network by 2030.** The Bellingham bike share mode has been stagnant in recent years. There is a need to fill in gaps in the network to attract riders.
 - Concerns or suggested changes: Note that it will be important to educate people on how to drive near bicycles. Education for school-age bikers is also important and has worked well at some schools.

- **Measure #10 Prioritize Physical Bike Lane Separation (50% of bike facilities by 2030).** There are less expensive options such as Austin at \$20,000 per mile.
 - Concerns or suggested changes: Need to look at impact on existing planning processes.

- **Measure #11 More Funding for Education and Encouragement Programs Related to Active Transportation.**
 - Concerns or suggested changes: Note that funding for this has been a challenge. Note also that community groups can play a role in communication, reducing costs.

- **Measure #12 School Crossing Guard Program.** The perception of the safety of walking has gone down. Many schools have major traffic congestion. Some schools are located in areas where traffic patterns are unsafe for children. The City works with the school district to manage this. Volunteers can help and changing the culture of a school is possible. Some schools elsewhere require a permit to drop off and pick up a child.
 - Concerns or suggested changes: Note that volunteers could cut costs of a program. This should be connected with the Safe Routes to School program. There is a need to improve neighborhood safety. Perhaps broaden the title of the measure.
- **Measure#13 Change Parking Minimums to Parking Maximums for New Development.** Required parking can raise costs by 12% to 25%. Too much parking causes sprawl and encourages car ownership. Less parking will result in greater residential density and more units.
- **Measure #14 Ordinance Requiring Unbundled Parking in all Rental Housing.** Providing a parking space without a separate charge for parking results in an increase of 27% in vehicle miles traveled.
- **Measure #15 Expand Residential Overnight Parking Permits.** These would only be created near denser residential zones where parking could be an issue.
 - Concerns or suggested changes: Note the neighborhoods would need to request a zone.
- **Measure #16 Increase the Cost of Hourly Metered Parking and Increase Parking Ticket Fees.** The goal would be to make the system at least cost-neutral. Currently the City loses money.
 - Concerns or suggested changes: Note that some businesses will be concerned this will result in a loss of customers.
- **Measure #17 Raise City Employee Parking Fee.** This would be a case of the City living by example. Right now parking costs nothing.
 - Concerns or suggested changes: Note that specific policies should not penalize the less abled. Note that the City could add incentivizes for employees to walk or bike to work.
- **Measure #18 Free Parking for Electric Vehicles (to be phased out over time).**
 - Concerns or suggested changes: Note that this could negatively impact churn of cars into and out of parking spaces. A penalty should be added if cars exceed a time limit. This measure could benefit the wealthy; conversely, EV costs are dropping.
- **Measure #19 Fundraising Effort.** This could include hiring a grant writer to help fund the effort.
 - Concerns or suggested changes: Note that there could be partnerships with financial institutions or community investment corporations.
- **Measure #20 Whatcom County Greenhouse Gas Reduction Hub.** This would include dedicated staff and could include partnerships with other organizations. This group could carry out the other recommendations. Within the City, the staff could report to the Mayor.

- Concerns or suggested changes: Suggest change wording to be more generic, not focus on creation of new department. Could this also include creation of an RCM program?
- **Measure #21 Extend the Transportation Benefit District (TBD) and Dedicate a Portion of Future Funds to Implement the Approved Climate Change Measures.**

Land Use Measures. Population growth is only partially responsible for increases in VMT. Three-quarters of the increase is due to land use choices. Going forward, we could see a reduction in emissions of between 15% to 20% with better land use choices.

- **Land Use Measure #1 Expand Urban Village Zones in Existing UV's and consider adding new UV's.** Incentivize more density and consider requiring minimum density requirements. Increase Floor Area Ratio (FAR) to allow more residential units. Challenges include that this would impact and may be opposed by nearby residences.
 - Concerns or suggested changes: Note that there are many co-benefits of increased density. For example, smaller units can reduce energy use.
- **Land Use Measure #2 Increase Density in Transition/Residential Multi (a.k.a. Missing Middle) Zones.** Matthei Place in Fairhaven is a good example of what is possible. City staff are looking at consolidating numerous zoning types to three broad categories. Under certain circumstances buildings would be allowed to be built to higher densities. For example, being closer to transit is one factor that could result in higher density.
 - Concerns or suggested changes: Include information on how this could lead to increased property values. Please clarify how the density bump-ups would work. Consider adding a requirement for minimum density levels.
- **Land Use Measure #3 Pilot "Pavement-to-Plazas" and "Living Streets."** Boulder, CO is a good case study. Pearl Street was converted to pedestrian-only in 1977 and has been a big success. Copenhagen had no pedestrian-only streets in the 1960s but has many now. These zones can be a center for art, culture, and families. Downtown Sounds in Bellingham demonstrates that such changes could be popular in Bellingham. Railroad street would be a good candidate. We could start with weekend-only closures to cars. Other benefits include health effects of walking.
 - Concerns or suggested changes: Note that both young people and older residents want this.

Other Business. Don Goldberg reported back from a recent trip made to Norway representing the Port of Bellingham. The state is developing a partnership with Norway on Marine Trades. Most of Norway's power is from hydro. Half of vehicles sold are electric. This is supported by high taxes on diesel and internal combustion vehicles. About one quarter of the County's ferries are electrified and they have developed charging systems that can charge at 5 megawatts in 8 minutes. They also have quick-charge systems for buses. Some long-haul ferries are hybrids. Locally, All American Marine in Bellingham is the first U.S. company to build a hybrid ferry.

Public Comments. Members of the public provided the following comments.

- Be bold. Kid want their future. The issue should be about people not money.

- Earlier expressed concern that Task Force was not being ambitious enough but those concerns are allayed. Needed changes will be resisted by those with money. There needs to be a more aggressive target for bicycle share mode than 12% by 2035. Note that lane separation may increase car speed. The school district should be using public buses to get kids to school. This helps integrate the purposes of the two systems and creates more transit riders. The Task Force work will need to be supported in front of the City Council.
- Thanks for the hard work. Pushback is happening. People are reacting now but don't know the facts. We need more City resources to make this work.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:00 PM. The next meeting will be on October 16 at 6:30 PM in the City Council Chambers, 210 Lottie Street.