



Alliance for a Livable and Sustainable Community

3555 Strawberry Lane, Richland, WA 99352 www.alsctc.org

July 22, 2020

To: Erin Braich, Senior Transportation Planner

From: Executive Board of the *Alliance for a Livable and Sustainable Community**

Re: Recommendations for the July 2020 Draft Active Transportation Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft 2020 Active Transportation Plan (ATP). The Alliance for a Livable and Sustainable Community promotes and advocates for livable and sustainable principles and practices in the Tri-Cities region. We strongly support the goals of the ATP to advance regional transportation policies through implementation of active transportation in the Benton-Franklin region. The plan does a good job of the stated purposes: describes the need for active transportation; provides guidance and resources for local jurisdictions for developing their bicycle and pedestrian plans; describes how the region is working together to support active transportation; and articulates the multiple benefits of active transportation. Below are some areas of improvement that our board members agree would strengthen the plan and help guide our region in this essential planning.

I. Community Engagement

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in the Active Transportation Plan Working Group. This collaborative effort between BFCOG, local jurisdictions, and established stakeholders is an inclusive and participatory process. The plan serves as a primary educational one to build public awareness and support for an active transportation system. The benefits to active transportation as a reflection of our communities' values should be emphasized in the introduction of the plan as detailed in the 2016 Active Transportation Plan:

“Attention to bicycling and walking issues in the Benton and Franklin Counties has significantly increased in volume and importance in the last decade ... Public encouragement and citizen advocacy for improved conditions for bicycling and walking in the metropolitan area have demonstrated strong support for increased planning, funding and Implementation of shared use paths, sidewalks and on-street facilities. Organizations and agencies in Benton and Franklin Counties that have come out in support of enhanced bicycle/pedestrian access include the Benton-Franklin Community Health Alliance, the Benton-Franklin Health District, the Alliance for a Livable and Sustainable Community, Visit Tri-Cities and Bike Tri-Cities.”

Additionally, barriers to active transportation as well as the importance of pedestrian movement, and pedestrian-scale planning, should be addressed. It is discussed in the 2016 plan as follows:

“If pedestrian movement is to evolve as a mode, it will take more than just the design and construction of sidewalks. It will require coordination of public transportation options and design of urban areas allowing shopping and socializing within pedestrian-scale communities.

Many people cite existing conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists as the reason for not using these alternative modes. Existing conditions include trip barriers (distance, fear of safety, inadequate facilities, and environmental factors) and destination barriers (security, facilities, lack of employer support). For bicycling and walking to increase as partners in the transportation network, usable facilities must be in place, along with the land use designations to support them. A bicycle and pedestrian friendly transportation network will provide increased travel and recreation options for individuals and families.”

We strongly support establishing a Regional Active Transportation Committee that will meet quarterly with representation from local jurisdictions and community organizations. We hope that this will provide a consistent and accessible way to receive resident input and suggest solutions that favor pedestrian and bicyclist comfort and safety. This will help meet Goal 1, to “Increase the Number and Frequency of People Choosing Active Transportation in the Region.” Establishing a Regional Active Transportation Committee could help local jurisdictions become recognized as a Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists, which could help promote tourism in our region. We understand the limitations that social distancing requirements due to Covid-19 have placed on public meetings. We would like to offer our assistance and work with our affiliates to help build strong community support and awareness of the many benefits of active transportation as the plan is presented to the public. We recommend that traditionally under-represented stakeholders in transportation planning, such as youth, elderly, economically disadvantaged, and people of color are intentionally engaged in the review process to ensure that we have an active transportation system that is safe and comfortable for people of all ages and abilities.

II. Regional Benchmarks, Data, and Accomplishments

In addition to highlighting the benefits and public support for active transportation, more could be done to highlight some of the recent improvements made in support of active transportation in our community. For example, Richland has added miles of new shared lanes to their major streets. It would be nice if an overview introduction to the document could be added in which the jurisdictions could highlight major projects completed since the last plan.



The plan states (page 4) that it is intended to articulate the multiple benefits of active transportation, with discussions about these benefits beginning on page 10. Unfortunately, there is limited quantitative information in this section and only one reference for the numbers presented. Quantitative information and solid references are available to support this claim (see the graphic above). Additionally, data should be presented and tracked on the number of households with no vehicle, and the percentage of the population with disabilities, such as available in the American Community Survey Data.

III. Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

Please include a discussion of the importance of equity, diversity and inclusion in transportation planning. This is particularly important in community engagement. Additionally, we should focus efforts where it is needed most such as where economically depressed neighborhoods frequently need safe bicycle and pedestrian routes to simply let residents get to work, school or public transportation points.

As mentioned above, the League of American Bicyclists provide a framework for recognition as a Bicycle Friendly Community. This includes the 6 essential elements: engineering; education; enforcement and safety; evaluation and planning; and equity, diversity and inclusion. Equity, Diversity & Inclusion are the essential lenses through which all other elements must be viewed. Learn more about the League's award program and the cornerstone of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion here: <https://bikeleague.org/equity>. The ALSC Board would be happy to help with efforts to achieve this recognition for the region and offer additional suggestions on meeting the 6 essential elements.

IV. Public Health and Safety

Thank you for addressing the environmental and health benefits of a robust active transportation network. The connection with speed and level of traffic stress is discussed; please also include an explanation of the safety benefits of slower traffic speeds to active transportation users. The 2014 WA state Bicycle Facilities & Pedestrian Plan focuses on “reducing injury and death” and fatal speed limits and auto-centric street design must be reassessed and instead emphasize what is safe for our most vulnerable road users.

V. Policy Guidance

The WSDOT Active Transportation Plan provides a way to use public engagement to shape recommendations for policy decisions, investments, and improvements. The statewide plan will consider where we are now, where we want to go, and how we are going to get there in the coming years. It coordinates with local and region plans. Please include a discussion of statewide active transportation planning and how it impacts local plans; for example, what WSDOT is doing to facilitate safe passage across Highway 240 for cyclists and pedestrians. It would seem that WSDOT has to play a central role in regional connectivity.

VI. Additional General Comments on the Plan and Specific Regional Active Transportation Issues

- The maps are helpful and informative; however, their resolution is too low to zoom in to areas of interest or provide links within the text to such high resolution images.
- (Page 6), Richland: “pedestrian friendly waterfront and downtown” ought to be changed to “multi modal connectivity between waterfront, downtown, and surrounding neighborhoods “
- Also consider adding 2017 Comp Plan: Goal 5 Policy 2: “Promote Bicycle & Pedestrian circulation throughout the community by connecting with the infrastructure and Park and Recreation trail system.”
- TE Goal 1: Provide an efficient and multi- modal transportation network including road, trail, rail, water, and air, to support the City’s land use vision and existing needs.
- Regional safety toolkits and guidelines should ensure that regular maintenance does not result in access or a net loss of bicycle infrastructure.
- ALSC Board members participated in the City of Richland’s Connectivity Study Advisory group and recommended that the City prioritize active transportation. The City gave a high priority to recommendations that focused moving cars on George Washington Way rather than making it more pedestrian/bike friendly. An argument can be made that this was a step backwards for active transportation in the Richland’s Central Business District. George Washington Way remains the central determinant for multi-modal transportation in Richland.
- Figure 4 shows a low stress route connecting Richland and Pasco. It could be noted in the text that this figure also illustrates that there is no equivalent low stress route connecting Richland and Kennewick.
- One concept to encourage cyclists and pedestrians in north Richland is to open a slab of the Richland Greenbelt Sound Barrier to allow bike/pedestrian access to Terminal Drive via the existing bike/ped signal on Highway 240. This would facilitate safe access to business. It would also give cyclists and pedestrians an alternative access point rather than having to cross Highway 240 at Van Giesen which is a dangerous crossing in all directions, but especially for eastbound cyclists or pedestrians leaving the Port area on the Van Giesen exit.

Thank you again for the opportunity to participate in the Active Transportation Plan working group and to comment on the draft 2020 Active Transportation Plan.

Sincerely yours,

James A. Wise for
 The Executive Board of the Alliance for a Livable, Sustainable Community
 James A. Wise, Ph.D., President

**Mission: The Alliance works to promote and advocate “livable and sustainable” principles and practices in the Tri-City region by bringing stakeholders together to create and maintain a community-wide collaborative effort for*

improved quality of life in our community. Affiliation with the Alliance for a Livable and Sustainable Community recognizes shared values and a commitment to community collaboration. The affiliation does not affect the governance or independence of any affiliated organization. Positions taken by the Alliance are not necessarily those adopted by its affiliates. Similarly, affiliates may adopt positions that are not those of the Alliance.