



Alliance for a Livable and Sustainable Community

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

March 1, 2020

To: City of Richland Planning Commission: Kyle Palmer, Chair; Marianne Boring, Vice Chair.
Members: Michael Mealer; Francesca Maier; Phillip Townsend; Phillip Keuhlen.

Pete Rogalsky, Public Works Director
Spencer Montgomery, J-U-B Engineers
Caroline Mellor, Langdon Group

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

Re: Recommendations for the Richland Connectivity Study

The Alliance for a Livable and Sustainable Community (ALSC) would like to thank the City of Richland and the consultants who led this project for the opportunity to participate in this progressive and informative example of citizen involvement in City transportation planning. We believe that vigorous public engagement is a critical element of planning and design solutions that provide the environmental, economic, health, and social benefits for a just society.

The project team was tasked with creating and analyzing alternative strategies for activating the City Council's vision of a downtown and waterfront district more conducive to walking and bicycling. Members of the ALSC participated in the workshops and conducted their own background research on the issues of the study. As an organization focused on sustainability principles, we are not fans of plans to increase traffic speeds and density. And yet we realize the exigencies of traffic demand produced by the geographic layout of the city and that the purpose of this Downtown Connectivity Study is to advance the City Council's vision for a pedestrian-friendly waterfront and downtown, while maintaining or enhancing the vehicular travel flow through downtown.

Our board members agree that the key element to establishing an economically vibrant Central Business District is the creation of public spaces that people want to be in. Public safety, traffic-calming, and community placemaking must be prioritized in order to achieve the City's vision. Many of our board members expressed concern about the couplet because wider lanes or one-way streets encourage higher speeds. One of our members proposed the "Road Diet" plan in the workshops, and after further discussion by our board we have found many features of the road diet would make the roads safer for pedestrians. Two-way streets and on-street parking encourage drivers to slow down, watch for people and bikes, and possibly take alternative routes that allow for higher speeds such as the by-pass.

We recommend that the option selected by the City remove barriers to multi-modal transportation, plan for complete streets and encourage active transportation, elements that are an integral part of sustainable development including:

1. Removal of barriers to active transportation by including infrastructure that safely accommodates bikers and walkers.
2. Removal of barriers to mass transit and shared transportation such as insufficient densities of residential areas, unused downtown parking, bus routes separated from the busiest areas with infrequent service, and a lack of mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods near transit stops.
3. Use of traffic calming strategies such as: street striping, planters, bollards or other barriers that clearly demarcate lanes for motorized vehicles from those to be used by walkers or cyclists, or making temporary changes to traffic patterns to avoid the real world consequences of any long term, more permanent changes, e.g., increased use of secondary streets or driving through residential neighborhoods to avoid traffic on the primary routes. (These and other traffic calming ideas are described in the 'Traffic Calming Toolkit, <https://www.pps.org/article/livememtraffic>).
4. Reducing speed limits: To be most effective, traffic calming measures should be paired with reduced traffic speeds. Every 1 mph reduction in vehicle speeds on urban streets results in a 6 percent decrease in traffic fatalities. For example: if a driver hits a pedestrian or bicyclist at 20 mph or less, there is an estimated 95 percent survival rate; at 30 mph, a pedestrian has only a 5 percent chance of walking away without injury and the death rate jumps to 45 percent.
5. Integrate and minimize the impact on the natural environment: The final design should enhance the use of open public spaces, and preserve natural spaces and habitat. These have been shown to be essential components of a thriving downtown area. In addition, the presence of street trees provides natural cooling, cleans the air and can reduce energy demand for air conditioning on buildings adjacent to these natural features. This will also allow for a better connection with Howard Amon Park nearby and create more comfortable pedestrian environments.

We appreciate the work being done by the City of Richland and the consultants, and for taking our suggestions into account as you move forward with the revised traffic plan. Please contact us if we can provide additional input on these or any related aspects of the project.

Sincerely yours,

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.*