

City Plan Commission Recommendation, Findings and Conclusions on a Proposal to Adopt a New Master Bike Plan, Changes to the Comprehensive Plan and a New Planned Bikeway Network Map

April 22, 2009

RECOMMENDATION: The Spokane City Plan Commission recommends moving the proposed bicycle-related Comprehensive Plan Amendments to the City Council. In making this recommendation, the Plan Commission makes the following findings and conclusions:

FINDINGS:

1. In May 2001, the City of Spokane adopted its Comprehensive Plan under the Growth Management Act (Chapter 36.70A RCW or “GMA”).
2. The Comprehensive Plan and the entire legislative record relative to its initial adoption and subsequent amendments thereto, including environmental review documents, are incorporated into these findings and conclusions by reference.
3. The City’s Comprehensive Plan is required to be consistent with the Growth Management Act. A 2005 amendment to the Growth Management Act requires a, “Pedestrian and bicycle component to include collaborative efforts to identify and designate planned improvements for pedestrian and bicycle facilities and corridors that address and encourage enhanced community access and promote healthy lifestyles” (RCW 36.70A). Revisions are proposed to the existing bicycle-related policies in Chapter 4 Transportation and the Planned Bikeway Network map to address this provision of the Growth Management Act.
4. Chapter 36.70A.130(2) of the Revised Code of Washington notes that amendments to the Comprehensive Plan may be considered more frequently than once per year under certain circumstances. RCW 36.70A.130(2)(b) states, “...after appropriate public participation a county or city may adopt amendments or revisions to its comprehensive plan that conform with this chapter whenever an emergency exists or to resolve an appeal of a comprehensive plan filed with a growth management hearings board or with the court.” The extensive public participation process for the Master Bike Plan is discussed in number 14 below.
5. Spokane Municipal Code Section 17G.020.010 “Comprehensive Plan and Development Standard Amendment Process” identifies terms and conditions for Comprehensive Plan amendments. Under most circumstances, recommendations for amendments to the Comprehensive Plan may only take place on an annual basis.
6. Spokane Municipal Code Section 17G.020.010E “Amendment Exceptions” outlines conditions under which the Comprehensive Plan may be amended more often. Provided that all of the amendment criteria have been met, the following type of amendment may be considered more frequently than once a year: Section 17G.020.010E4 “Whenever an emergency exists.

The plan commission will review a potential emergency situation, with advice from the city attorney's office, to determine if the situation does, in fact, necessitate an emergency comprehensive plan amendment. Findings must demonstrate a need of neighborhood or community-wide significance, and not a personal emergency on the part of a particular applicant or property owner. Potential emergency situations may involve official, legal or administrative actions, such as those to immediately avoid an imminent danger to public health and safety, prevent imminent danger to public or private property, prevent an imminent threat of serious environmental degradation or address the absence of adequate and available public facilities or services."

7. The criteria for an emergency amendment require a demonstration of community-wide significance. The Master Bike Plan addresses bicycling improvements throughout the city.

8. The second criterion for an emergency amendment is to address the absence of adequate and available public facilities or services. Presently, the city of Spokane bikeway network lacks connectivity and is not adequate in terms of providing available facilities that will encourage increased bicycling. The Bike Master Plan will serve as a guide to the actions of various local agencies to make improvements. In addition, the adoption of this plan as an emergency amendment will ensure that Spokane is considered for potential federal or other funds allocated for bicycle improvements when the next opportunity becomes available. The City should adopt this bicycle plan prior to the 2009 construction season to ensure that no opportunities to erect bicycle facilities are missed.

9. The proposed Master Bike Plan also contains a series of actions, which support the Master Bike Plan goal and policies, and will serve as a guide for the functions of the bicycle/pedestrian coordinator, a new position that will be hired by the City in 2009.

10. Reviewing the bicycle-related Comprehensive Plan amendments outside of the annual amendment cycle is justified because Spokane lacks adequate bicycle public facilities. Although bicycle facilities have been planned in Spokane for decades, a lack of funding has long been cited as the reason for not implementing new facilities. To be eligible for funding sources, an up-to-date plan needs to be in place. The United States Federal Government has discussed a stimulus package that would include money for non-motorized transportation projects. Delaying the adoption of the bicycle-related Comprehensive Plan amendments so that they are adopted along with the annual amendment applications may jeopardize eligibility for available funding.

11. Many citizens believe that the streets are too dangerous for bicyclists. Implementation of the Master Bike Plan will create a cycling environment that will make transportation safer for both automobiles and cyclists.

12. The operation of a bicycle results in an emission-free transportation experience. The bicycle-related Comprehensive Plan amendments work to create a safe and efficient bicycle network. Similar improvements in other cities have shown an increase in cyclists. Thus, these amendments will have positive environmental impacts.

13. Spokane's Planning Services Department created a workgroup to analyze Spokane's cycling policies and needs. The group consisted of representatives from numerous City agencies, advocate groups and other agencies. The meetings of this group began during the last quarter of 2007 and lasted through 2008.

14. Spokane's Planning Services Department gathered public input at three open houses held in April 2008. Nearly 350 people attended this series of open houses to provide input. The

Master Bike Plan Workgroup used input from 1200 survey responses. Additionally, Spokane's Planning Services Department gathered ideas from various listening posts held throughout the year, and collected e-mail/phone responses from stakeholders. More than 70 people attended an open house in November.

15. The Plan Commission held a public hearing on the Master Bike Plan on January 28, 2009. The Master Bike Plan consists of changes to current Comprehensive Plan language, an addition of a new section in Chapter 4 Transportation, and changes to Map T.R. 2 Regional Bikeway Network.

16. Bicycles are currently mentioned in Chapter 4 Transportation of Spokane's Comprehensive Plan. Some of the policies in section 4.4 have been modified for the sake of clarity, consistency and modernization. Language in section 4.5 has also been modified for the same purposes.

17. This amendment proposal includes the addition of new bicycle-related goals and policies. These goals and policies are supported by an action plan that outlines specific actions that city agencies should take to implement the plan.

18. In the existing Comprehensive Plan, Map T.R. 2 Regional Bikeway Network outlines the proposed bikeway network. Under the proposed amendments, this map will be renamed "Planned Bikeway Network." When implemented, the new routes identified in the map should provide safer and more direct connections for cyclists.

19. On January 14, 2009, the responsible official issued a determination of non-significance (DNS) under SEPA (Chapter 43.21C RCW) relating to this Ordinance and notice of said DNS was published in the Spokesman Review on January 14, 2009 and January 21, 2009.

20. The Plan Commission hereby adopts the foregoing as its findings.

21. On February 25, 2009, the Plan Commission, by a vote of 6-0, recommended approval of the Master Bike Plan to City Council.

CONCLUSIONS:

Stan Stirling made the motion that the Plan Commission forward the Master Bike Plan Comprehensive Plan amendments to the City Council as an emergency Comprehensive Plan amendment with a recommendation for approval, including the text and map changes to the draft Master Bike Plan as discussed and agreed upon by the Plan Commission during deliberations on February 25, 2009. Motion seconded by Asher Ernst.

This recommendation includes changes to the draft Master Bike Plan Comprehensive Plan amendments as follows:

- Include the following underlined text on page 2 of the Master Bike Plan Supplement:

Although studies and accurate statistics about bicycling habits are difficult and expensive to collect obtain, two recent reports contained useful information for this bike planning process. First, the Spokane River Centennial Trail Gaps report completed by Alta Planning and Design in December of 2007 identified key projects that would close current gaps along the Centennial Trail. The analysis identifies the potential cost and

benefit of several alternatives for each of the gaps. Spokane's Master Bike Plan Map includes one of those alternatives for each of the four identified gaps. This study should be referenced as the projects near the time for construction. Second, in November of 2007 a report about cycling habits in Spokane was published.

- Include the following underlined text on pages 11 and 12 of the Master Bike Plan Supplement:

Portions of the Bikeway Network identified as “short-term” are recommended to be implemented in the next 6 years. Other segments of the network ~~will~~ may require a longer period to implement due to their higher complexity. The completed Bikeway Network will connect all parts of the city and will provide a bicycle facility within one-half mile of most Spokane residents.

- Include the following underlined text and exclude the text identified by a strikethrough on page 11 of the packet containing the proposed changes to the current language of the Comprehensive Plan.

~~The alignment selected from this study utilizes the abandoned High Bridge piers in the Spokane River. The connection from the proposed bridge to Riverside State Park will follow the existing bike route along Riverside Drive and Government Way, with connection at the Military Cemetery trailhead on Government Way. From the proposed bridge west, the trail will be constructed as a shared-use pathway following Ohio Avenue. A subsequent study funded by The Friends of the Centennial Trail in 2007 was conducted by Alta Planning and Design. This study identified a preferred trail route utilizing an abandoned railroad right of way that parallels Summit Blvd., travels on Summit Blvd. and modifies Pettet Drive to accommodate trail improvements. This route would rejoin the existing Centennial Trail at T.J. Meenach Bridge.~~

Bikeway Network Maps

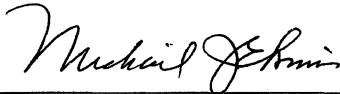
Bicycle Facility Network Development Maps- Spokane's bicycle facilities network, identified on the graphic by red lines, includes bike lanes, multi-use trails, bicycle boulevards, marked/shared roadways, shared use lanes, and other facilities. These maps do not include the residential streets that serve to connect the bicycle facilities network. The development of bicycle facilities is expected to take place over the course of the next 20 years. A number of unforeseen circumstances may affect the way that Spokane's bike network will develop. The Bicycle Facility Network Development Maps are not intended to define a specific time frame for the development of bike facilities within the city. These maps represent how the network may develop over time recognizing that the network cannot be created immediately. If an opportunity to develop any of the facilities on the map arises, that opportunity should be pursued.

1. **Existing Network Map-** This map shows all of the existing bike lanes and multiuse paths in Spokane at the time of the adoption of the Master Bike Plan.

2. **Short-Term Opportunities Map** - These opportunities may be chances to add bicycle facilities to planned street bond projects if funding is found. These are also considered “high priority projects” that could be completed easily and would significantly improve Spokane’s bikeway network.
3. **Mid-Term Opportunities Map** - The mid-term opportunities are further connections to the short-term facilities. These projects may need more analysis to determine the most appropriate route.
4. **Long-Term Opportunities Map** - The long-term opportunities are projects that are more difficult to complete, require a lot of money (Ex. Bridge improvements, tunnel construction, large sections of trails completed, etc.) or are less of a priority shown by the feedback from the open houses.

The Plan Commission, by a vote of 6-0, recommends moving the Draft Master Bike Plan Comprehensive Plan Amendment to City Council.

These findings were approved on April 22, 2009.



Michael Ekins, President
City Plan Commission