

Comments on the Pedestrian Master Plan Draft

I think having sidewalks along streets for pedestrians to utilize is important, but this draft goes far beyond providing a path for pedestrians to utilize ie sidewalks. It also has some statements not backed up by facts and seems to push an agenda to the detriment of vehicles. For example, on page 1-2, second paragraph, it states street and intersection designs accommodate high speed traffic but “the drawback of this focus is that the pedestrian infrastructure of sidewalks, intersection crossings, pedestrian signals, and other elements no longer accommodates people of all ages and abilities, leaving them open to injury...” So all our crossings at signals are defective??!! The rest of this document reflects the same lack of accuracy and reasoning.

Pg 1-8 The quality of the walking experience. (one of the bullets) If I am trying to get somewhere, I am not so concerned about land use and building design. I want a short, direct path. Looking in windows is for shoppers, who most likely drove to the store or district and are then walking around. So how about recognizing the importance of good traffic flow so those drivers who become pedestrians when they get to their destination are not impeded getting there.

Pg 1-9 (bullet 5 of best practices) On street parking The draft mentions angled parking and cars slowing down out of concern for possible conflicts with parked cars. The angled parking is unsafe compared to parallel as the driver cannot see the traffic they have to back into and if an accident occurs, they are the one liable. It is interesting that in Colville, the DOT, which administers the main road thru town, eliminated angled parking since it was unsafe. This draft promotes it as a way to create a hazardous condition that will slow drivers down.

Pg 1-10 paragraph 2 “on arterials, it is common to find narrow sidewalks with widths of 5 feet or less.” I find it interesting that the old standard of 5’ is now considered narrow! Yet in the new Division Gateway project, the sidewalk is much narrower at every street tree that was planted. Having a wide sidewalk and then planting street trees seems counter-productive as pedestrians are not going to walk on the sidewalk in the path of the trees. Either make it a planting strip with trees or no trees if the right of way does not exist. 5’ is enough for two people to walk side by side. Also, a lot of downtown has minimal sidewalk due to the “frontage zone” this draft mentions. The tables and chairs make a very narrow through zone, less than the 5 feet.

Pg 1-13 The draft complains in the first paragraph that signalized intersections “introduces pedestrian delay and conflict”. How about a signalized intersection allows for the safe passage of pedestrians who have to wait their turn like everybody else. The next paragraph mentions

how to improve pedestrian comfort and safety. High visibility crosswalks are mentioned. Why? Everyone at a traffic signal already knows pedestrians may cross there. A normal crosswalk striping is sufficient as the signal already highlights the area. "Prohibiting right turns on red" just to accommodate pedestrians unless it is a high ped volume location is going to aggravate drivers having to stop when there are no peds. They are forced to sit idling a polluting car and you are contributing to the increased pollution that results.

Pg 1-15 last paragraph. Small curb radii reduce turning vehicle speeds. But you don't address trucks trying to turn a corner and needing a larger radii, so their tires go over the curb and sidewalk, which is less safe for pedestrians and results in the concrete getting broken up over time.

I can go on and on regarding this document but realize it will probably have no impact on the individuals who drafted this as they have their agenda in place and there are too many points to go over on this draft. I was out of town when you had the open house on the 16th. Hopefully you will still take more comments before adopting this. One last comment - on page 1-8, you use the figure that 4% of citizens walk to work, so how about the 96% of us that don't. How come you are designing for the minority and not the majority of citizens.

Sincerely,

Bob

[9.22.15 – EMAIL COMMENT]