

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor Gutiérrez and Members of the City Council
Jeff Cutter, Interim City Manager

FROM: Joan Davenport, Director of Community Development

DATE: March 15, 2016

SUBJECT: Status of Complete Streets Ordinance, Bicycle Plan, Sidewalk Grants, and
Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Background for this report

At the March 1, 2016, Yakima City Council meeting, three citizens (Chad Dolt, Phil Hoge, and Rob Strader) spoke under “Audience Participation” on topics related to a “Complete Streets” ordinance, the former City of Yakima Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, and various grant applications related to sidewalk and safety programs. In addition, Council Member Dulce Gutiérrez requested a staff summary related to Complete Streets and the items referenced previously by these citizens. This report will provide City Council a summary of these inter-related items.

Concurrent Long Range Planning Process

The City of Yakima has initiated the Community Visioning process for the Comprehensive Plan Update 2040 and the Transportation Plan Update 2040. These plans are required to be adopted by the Yakima City Council before June 30, 2017. As part of this State-mandated, long-range planning process, the overall needs of pedestrians and bicyclists will be addressed. With City Council and public input, priority projects will be identified and a Capital Funding plan developed.

Toole Design Group, a professional bicycle planning firm has prepared the final draft of the Yakima Bicycle Master Plan (YBMP) which was accepted by Yakima City Council on October 31, 2015. The findings and recommendations from the YBMP will be integrated into the City of Yakima Transportation Plan Update 2040. This action will ensure that all the transportation needs of the community and individual street corridors are addressed. This is particularly important on arterial streets that carry heavy freight traffic or have specific safety issues.

The Draft YBMP depicts the existing facilities and suggested improvements. The Draft YBMP Plan presents a series of recommendations including physical improvements, project prioritization, short term improvements, education, enforcement and methods to encourage bicycling in Yakima. Additionally, the Draft Bike Plan includes a Tool Box of approaches as well as example pictures for consideration when developing the bicycle facilities in the City.

Status of Complete Streets Ordinance

In 2015, Yakima Valley Conference of Governments (YVCOG) hosted a stakeholders committee of various organizations in the County related to the transportation policy of “Complete Streets”. The stakeholder committee met numerous times over a series of months. The City of Yakima participated in this group and hosted a citywide forum on May 21, 2015, at the Convention Center with expert speakers to profile this important concept. Complete Streets refers to the concept that roadways should be designed with all users in mind, not just motorists. In 2011, the State of Washington adopted RCW 47.04.320 which established a grant program for communities that adopt an ordinance to implement complete streets program. The grant program has yet to be funded for construction projects.

The City of Yakima indicated to the YVCOG stakeholder’s committee that:

- (1) Adoption of a Complete Streets Ordinance may be an implementing measure from the Transportation Plan Update 2040. Since no project funds have been allocated by Washington State, we are not missing out on any grant funds at this time.
- (2) With appropriate public comment and Council policy discussion, the Transportation Plan Update 2040 should include policy statements and projects that reflect the Council direction on Complete Streets.
- (3) The City staff is inclined to recommend a position that favors a “Complete Streets Network” approach. This approach recognizes that some streets (for safety or freight reasons) may not be appropriate for dedicated multi-use facilities such as bike lanes. In addition, given the scarceness of funds, a priority approach should be developed to guide financial investments.

“Safe Routes to School” and “Pedestrian Safety Grant” Programs

The State of Washington has recently opened the call for sidewalk and safety projects for funding in the 2017-2019 biennium. Grant applications are due in early May 2016. The City of Yakima is fortunate to have two projects currently funded under this program (Garfield Elementary School for \$193,000 and Adams Elementary for \$387,000). The Council has been briefed that successful funding under this program requires support and cooperation from the individual school. Staff has been working with the representatives of McKinley elementary school to develop a project for sidewalk construction on the west side of South 16th Avenue between Nob Hill Boulevard and Washington Avenue.

Priorities for this program have generally been in locations where sidewalk deficiencies exist along school recommended walking routes on busy arterials streets for elementary schools. As the Council is aware, there are many locations within the City of Yakima that lack sidewalk facilities. We have actively submitted grant requests for this program for many years. The grants are highly competitive and funding is very limited.

Past projects funded under this program include the school zone flasher system, sidewalks near Hoover Elementary, and the Tieton Drive safety project.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

On April 5, 1994, by Resolution R-94-37, the Yakima City Council established a Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. Five citizens were appointed by the Council to participate in this Committee, which included one representative from the Yakima Greenway. Also, four professional staff were appointed by the City Manager. Staff representatives from the Police and Parks Departments varied over the years. However, Bob Desgrosellier from the Engineering Division and Joan Davenport, Planning (then Public Works) Departments provided staff support from 1994 until 2010. The Committee was unfunded in 2010, due to financial budget constraints and staff reductions (Resolution R-2010-91) and was eliminated from the Council Committee list at a January 24, 2012, Council Study Session.

City of Yakima Neighborhood and Community Building Committee

The Yakima City Council recently established a new Council committee, the “Neighborhood and Community Building Committee”. One of the intended functions of this committee was to provide a forum for the discussion of transportation needs. The issues discussed in this summary, as well as the guidance for the Transportation Plan Update 2040 could be referred to this Council committee for further discussion and review.