

February 9, 2012

Peter Hahn  
Director, Seattle Department of Transportation  
PO Box 34996  
Seattle, WA 98124-4996

Dear Mr. Hahn:

On behalf of Cascade Bicycle Club and our more than 14,000 members, 5,000 of which live in Seattle, we appreciate the opportunity to provide initial comments on the scope of the upcoming Seattle Bicycle Master Plan (BMP) 5-year update.

The 2007 BMP put Seattle on the path to becoming a world-class city for bicycling. The plan was a bold step in 2007, and one that helped put us in a leadership position nationwide.

Yet much can happen in five years. Now half-way through the plan, we've seen the quick evolution of best practices for bicycle infrastructure planning and design. We've seen a significant increase in the number of people bicycling. And we've seen the percentage of people who *would like to* bicycle, given the appropriate infrastructure, on the rise.

The 2012 Bicycle Master Plan update brings an incredible and timely opportunity to create and realize a vision for a community that bicycles, where bicycling is normal, convenient and safe for everyone. Now is our opportunity to build from the 2007 plan and be ambitious, creative and bold—if for no other reason than to keep pace with partner cities across the country. There are, of course, multiple other reasons to strive for a community that bicycles: bicycling presents a low-cost solution to our climate crisis and obesity and health epidemic, while offering economic gains for individuals and our community as a whole. In short, investing in bicycling means investing in the future of Seattle.

As the scope of the BMP continues to develop, we look forward to working with SDOT to incorporate new tools, best practices from across the country and the world, and applications in Seattle in the creation of a visionary plan that we are then committed to implement. Meanwhile, we would encourage you to integrate the key overarching principles addressed below.

## **Ten Core Guiding Principles and Concepts**

As Seattle prepares the framework for the Bicycle Master Plan update, we encourage consideration of the following ten guiding principles and concepts:

### **1. Establish a Compelling Vision and Ambitious Goals**

Establishing a vision for the updated BMP is essential in framing the role of bicycling in Seattle's future. As we see it, this vision should be supported within all departments of the city, helping to inform everything from land use decisions to major capital project design.

Looking to our neighbor, Portland, we are inspired by the vision, goals and policies established within the Portland Bicycle Master Plan. There are many lessons Seattle can learn from a city like Portland, where

the bicycle mode split is currently over 8 percent and the city's goal within the Bicycle Master Plan calls for a 25 percent mode split by 2030.

In addition to striving for a 25 percent mode split, the Portland BMP envisions:

*... a city where bicycling is a fundamental pillar of Portland's fully integrated transportation system, with more than a quarter of all daily trips taken by bicycle on the city's world renowned bikeway network. Residents and visitors know they can readily find a low-stress, efficient and comfortable facility—be it a bicycle boulevard, bike lane, cycle track, paved trail, natural surface trail or other well-designed, maintained and marketed bikeway—to get from where they are to where they want to go."*

Portland's BMP Vision and Goals informed the adoption of a strong set of guiding policies, including one that directs the city to *create conditions that make bicycling more attractive than driving for trips of three miles or less*. We encourage Seattle to incorporate a compelling vision and strong goals within the BMP update. Such a vision and goals provide the framework for creating policies and defining a network of bicycle facilities that will enable bicycling to become a mainstream mode of travel within the city.

## **2. Directly Address Safety**

The 2007 Seattle BMP established a goal to reduce the rate of bicycle crashes by one third by 2017. Infrastructure designs that mitigate conflict and increase ridership will be necessary to achieving—and exceeding—this goal and should be central to the updated BMP. Specific to safety, we encourage you to use the following themes to guide the plan update:

- *An integrated network of high quality infrastructure.* Safety is largely a function of roadway design, ranging from the width of the roadway to the speed at which motorists travel. Improving bicycle safety means addressing all of these factors and providing bicycling infrastructure that seeks to reduce conflict between roadway users. Moreover, by creating safer places for people to ride, more people *will* ride. And as more people ride, the safer they become (*safety in numbers*)—and, ultimately, the safer the roads become *for all road users*.

We encourage SDOT to incorporate infrastructure designs that provide dedicated and separated space for bicyclists—such as cycle tracks and buffered bicycle lanes—in addition to providing low volume, low stress routes—such as neighborhood greenways and multi-use trails. A connected network of these facility types will effectively increase the safety of bicyclists through road design as well as through increased ridership.

- *Separation.* The viability of bicycling in Seattle depends on the provision of routes that are both safe and direct. In many cases, routes that provide direct connections to destinations within the city are also routes shared by many users, such as Eastlake Avenue, Dexter and Airport Way. Case studies from around the world demonstrate the potential to increase safety and mode share by providing infrastructure that offers an extra buffer between users, such as cycle tracks and buffered bicycle lanes. We encourage SDOT to ensure that bicycle infrastructure—particularly in areas of higher volume and speed—is planned and designed around this concept.
- *Intersections.* Intersections are a stand-alone category given their importance in the overall functionality and safety of Seattle's bicycle network. Intersections represent locations where user-conflicts happen; designing intersections to facilitate safe and efficient transitions for

bicyclists should be a key focus in Seattle's BMP update, and moreover, a key policy focus for the city. At a policy level, intersection treatments should be implemented that **prioritize the safety of all users**, before the capacity of the intersection. Improving the safety at intersections for bicyclists as well as pedestrians, should be addressed through treatments such as bicycle boxes, right-turn-on-red restrictions, separate signal phasing, and other traffic calming strategies.

### 3. Create Quality Connectivity + Accessibility

The 2007 Seattle BMP established a goal to ensure 95 percent of the population lived within ¼ mile of a bicycle facility. This goal should remain central to the update of the plan, but should further incorporate an emphasis on *quality* and *safety*. Ensuring that Seattle residents have access to not only a bicycle facility, but a bicycle facility that is safe and offers connections to destinations, is critical as Seattle seeks to increase the diversity of ridership. For example, ensuring Seattle's youth can safely access schools by bicycle is critical as the City seeks to improve health and facilitate a mode shift.

Along with bicycle network accessibility, the type of connections offered through Seattle's updated bicycle network should reflect strong connections to key destinations and trip generators, such as transit stops and stations, schools, parks, grocery stores and neighborhood centers. Short trips—those less than 3 miles in length—constitute more than 50 percent of all trips made in cities (with 40 percent under two miles), and moreover, 2/3 of trips are non-commute trips. These are trips that could be made quickly, conveniently and safely by bicycle, given high-quality and accessible infrastructure and connections.

### 4. Design Appropriately to the Context

Seattle is known for great neighborhoods, a vibrant and working downtown, a strong industrial backbone, and diverse populations. Establishing a viable bicycle network that connects people through and within the neighborhoods of Seattle will require an integrated network of varying types of bicycle facilities, appropriate to the context. For example, sharrows along high speed freight routes or arterials may be inappropriate to the context, whereas a buffered facility, such as a cycle track or buffered bike lanes, would create an environment supportive and safe for all modes. Similarly, in neighborhoods, greenways can offer signed and safe connections to local business districts, trails, arterial routes, schools and parks for people of all ages and abilities. Meanwhile, strong connections into and through the downtown core and along arterials connecting neighborhoods will facilitate bicycle commuting as an attractive mode of travel for a greater percentage of the population.

### 5. Innovate

The state of the practice with regard to bicycle infrastructure and planning is rapidly evolving and improving. The 2007 BMP plan's toolbox, as put into practice over the last five years, has consisted largely of standard bicycle lanes and sharrows. While these treatments might have their place in certain situations, cities all over the world and in the United States are employing tools like cycle tracks, buffered bike lanes, and neighborhood greenways or bicycle boulevards. New York City has removed parking and closed major streets for the safety of bicycle riders and pedestrians. The BMP update should serve as a vehicle for beginning to think creatively and innovatively about how Seattle's public right-of-way better serves all citizens. Doing so may require difficult choices and bold leadership—but communities that take a risks and innovate are often rewarded.

## **6. Make Bicycling an Efficient Mode**

The more efficient bicycling is as a mode of transportation, the greater the potential to encourage a shift from driving to bicycling, as time spent traveling is a key determinant in mode choice. Furthermore, improved bicycle efficiency will translate into greater efficiency in mobility for the community at large. Direct and connected bicycle networks, along with bicycle priority engineering at intersections, addressed through signal timing and phasing, and treatments such as bicycle boxes, will facilitate bicycling as an efficient mode of transportation and ultimately a preferred means of travel. As mentioned below (Principle 9), a bicycle level of service framework can assist in assessing the efficiency and safety of bicycle travel along corridors and at intersections.

## **7. Create Opportunities for Education and Encouragement**

Education and encouragement programs are essential to the utilization of the city's bicycle network. In three years of Bike Smart Seattle, for example, over 14,000 people requested information packets about bicycling and over 20,000 people were reached through community events, classes and rides about safe bicycling. Bike Smart surveys indicated that 55 percent of participants were bicycling more than prior to the Bike Smart program. A program of this nature should be part of the BMP update, as it has not only been successful in the past at encouraging mode shift but can help the greater community and all modes understand how to navigate new types of infrastructure more effectively.

## **8. Diversify Cycling**

A successful Seattle Bicycle Master Plan update will result in a more balanced and diversified cycling population across the city, as the demographics and populations represented are indicative of the safety and attractiveness of the city's bicycle network and facility types. Thus, expanding the population of bicyclists means designing bicycle infrastructure and routes to appeal to a diversity of people. For example, research has shown the female bicycle riders are more likely to ride along low-volume, low stress routes, such as neighborhood greenways. Diversifying the population of bicycle riders to include more balanced representation from different demographics will require bicycle facilities that are safe and protected from high traffic volumes and speeds. It will also require that the BMP look at geographic equity in the deployment of the plan across the city.

## **9. Evaluate Regularly**

As Seattle is now five years into the implementation of the BMP, regular evaluation of the existing bicycle network is necessary to better understand the performance of the infrastructure that is being installed throughout the city. For example, Seattle has installed miles of sharrows on corridors with varying roadway characteristics. Evaluating the effectiveness and safety of these facilities in different situations can offer guidance to the City in future bicycle facility design. In addition, we encourage the adoption of a *bicycle level of service framework* as part of the BMP update to provide a system for evaluating deficiencies in the bicycle network and to ensure that city's bicycle infrastructure is affording a high level of safety for bicyclists.

## 10. Integrate fully into the current and future data-driven planning context

The BMP update should be considered within the context other planning efforts underway while maintaining a strong linkage to existing plans and projects that will influence biking across the city. For instance, the BMP network and facilities should support the Transit Master Plan and future light rail stations, along with other major capital projects, such as the Seattle waterfront and SR 520. In addition, Seattle's plans for implementing a Bikeshare system should weigh heavily into the network and facility plans in the BMP update, recognizing that the type of infrastructure and connections offered through Seattle's bicycle network will be critical to the success of Bikeshare in the city.

The update, refinement and implementation of Seattle's bicycle network and facility types should be based in a strong data-driven process, much like was undertaken during the development of the Pedestrian Master Plan. Specifically, prioritizing routes should be based on key criteria and outcomes, including equity, health, mobility and safety, and bicycle facility design should be based on the conditions of the roadway and the intended users.

---

We cannot overemphasize the important and timely opportunity that this update provides. We believe that a bold Bicycle Master Plan that integrates these ten principles will help realize the vision for a community that bicycles, where bicycling is normal, convenient and safe for everyone. A bold plan will build on positive current trends and citizen demand and will create a safer, more equitable and more prosperous community for everyone. And a bold plan will help Seattle identify smart and strategic ways to maximize infrastructure investments that benefit the most citizens and help our city regain a leadership role in the national context to inspire others to follow.

Finally, we hope that the City's commitment to producing a world-class plan is matched with equal commitment to planning and dedicating funding for implementation.

We look forward to collaborating with you throughout the update process. If you choose to go beyond the existing Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board for official technical advisory needs, we request a Cascade representative be part of such a group. Thank you for taking our input and please do not hesitate to contact us with questions.

Sincerely,



John Mauro  
Director of Policy, Planning and Government Affairs

Cc:

Mayor Michael McGinn  
Seattle City Councilmembers  
Goran Sparrman, SDOT  
Tracy Krawczyk, SDOT  
Charlie Bookman, SDOT  
Kevin O'Neill, SDOT

Sam Woods, SDOT  
Doug Cox, SDOT  
Ethan Raup, Mayor's Office  
David Hiller, Mayor's Office  
Blake Trask, SBAB Chair