

July 19, 2016

Planning Commission Members
City of Mount Vernon, Washington
Draft 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update

Comments regarding new draft labeled:
Planning Commission 07.19.16 Hearing Draft

Chapter 5- Transportation Element.

Dear Members of the Mount Vernon Planning Commission:

Thank you for accepting these updated public comments referring to the **Planning Commission 07.19.16 Hearing Draft**.

We are grateful to the Planning Staff of the City of Mount Vernon for all of the work that has been undertaken to draft and again redraft the updated 2016 Comprehensive Plan.

Our names are Marie and John Erbstoesz. We have been residents of Mount Vernon since 1975 and we live at 217 E. Division Street. We moved to Skagit County as young healthcare professionals desiring a place that would provide us with opportunities to use our training and skills, offer needed services to the residents of Skagit County and be a good setting to raise a family and enjoy the area. John worked as a family practice MD and I worked as a Consultant in Health Services Planning and Development. Mount Vernon not only met but exceeded our expectations and continues to be where we call home and continue to live after 40 plus years. Many of the attributes such as the natural environment, the small town atmosphere, the friendliness, the rural settings, the access to wonderful outdoor recreation that attracted us to Mount Vernon are still here today but none of these can be taken for granted. Therefore, we are very pleased and encouraged by the overall planning that the city of Mount Vernon has engaged in as it updates its Comprehensive Plan for 2016.

Our careers in health care and our personal interests have highlighted how important it is to have access to health, wellness and physical activities. Public Health and Medical publications repeatedly cite the benefits and importance of regular exercise as a means of improving and maintaining the health of the public. Access to walking and bicycling facilities are among the excellent ways of addressing significant population health issues such as, heart disease, blood pressure, obesity, etc. Just recently on May 16, 2016, the National Institutes of Health released a report titled, "Increased Physical Activity Associated with Lower Risk of 13 Types of Cancer." The existing body of scientific knowledge clearly indicates that a healthy community must have access to and encourage opportunities for outdoor exercise such as walking, bicycling, and just plain playing outside.

An example of the local interest in healthy communities includes Mayor Boudreau's Wellness Month programs. Another is the important effort right here in Skagit County that is focusing on Community Health. In 2015 the Skagit County Public Health and Community Services Department launched The Population Health Trust as a means for creating a plan to improve Community Health throughout all of Skagit County. The Population Health Trust is now working on identifying specific efforts which will contribute to enhancing and sustaining healthy lifestyles in Skagit County.

Therefore, given the current awareness of the importance of Healthy and Active Communities, we are pleased to see that the latest draft of the 2016 Update of the Mount Vernon Comprehensive Plan includes a non-motorized section in Chapter 5 – Transportation Element. Calling attention to and focusing on non-motorized modes of transportation for getting around Mount Vernon will provide opportunities for improving, enhancing and sustaining the health of Mount Vernon’s residents and will also have the added benefit of attracting tourism. Addressing Pedestrian and Bicycle components in the Comprehensive Plan is essential for a Healthy Community.

Specific Suggestions:

The Planning Commission 07.19.16 Hearing Draft states the following underlined Goal:

Transportation Goal 7 – Develop a Mount Vernon specific Complete Streets Policy.

Objective 7.1: Commence a process by which a Complete Streets Policy can be developed by the City. This Complete Streets Policy should accommodate (to the extent possible) all street users with the creation and enhancement of street networks to meet the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, motorists, commercial vehicles, and emergency response vehicles for people of all ages and all abilities.

We definitely support Complete Streets Policies. While the above Goal and Objective are good descriptions of the Complete Streets Concept, we **do not** think that the parentheses (to the extent possible) is appropriate or necessary – that terminology may negate progress toward implementing a Complete Streets Policy. **We recommend deleting the words: (to the extent possible).** In addition, we noticed that no timeline is mentioned. We strongly believe that a Complete Streets Policy is needed and that a specific timeframe for completion should be set. **We recommend a time deadline as the first quarter of 2017. Please add this timeframe for completion of a Complete Streets Policy to the Comprehensive Plan Update.**

As you may know, some members of the Bike/Walk Mount Vernon citizens group have been working toward getting Mount Vernon recognized as a “Bicycle Friendly Community” by the League of American Bicyclists. (www.bikeleague.org) We are in the early stages of this process and our initial application received an encouraging first review. See the attached Feedback for Mount Vernon. One of the key factors cited in the initial review was the recommendation that Mount Vernon adopt a Complete Streets Policy and offer implementation guidance.

We also believe that the Mount Vernon Comprehensive Plan Update could be improved by adding a Transportation Goal for a Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. **Please add a Goal stating that the City Council will direct the staff of the Community and Economic Development Department to develop a Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan with participation and input from user groups such as Bike Walk Mount Vernon.**

A few months ago we visited Bend, Oregon. We were very impressed with the city’s biking and walking trail along the Deschutes River. It was heavily used and definitely added to the positive and lively atmosphere of the downtown area. The city also had many bike lanes on its streets and used roundabouts throughout the city to keep traffic moving and at the same time moving at lower rates of speed. We see many similarities between Mount Vernon and Bend: we have a beautiful Skagit River going through the downtown area and we have a great Riverwalk trail that will be extended. We should continue to emphasize the appeal of the downtown Riverwalk and make getting to it easier and safer for non-motorized modes of transportation.

Mount Vernon is a vibrant and great place to live, work, and play. It is also increasingly becoming a tourist destination. We need to make sure it continues to have appealing attributes and strives to be a healthy community for many generations to come.

Thank you for your service to the residents of Mount Vernon and for considering our comments.

Marie Erbstoeszzer, MHA
John Erbstoeszzer, MD

217 East Division Street
Mount Vernon, WA 98274

July 19, 2016

From: Erbstoeszser [<mailto:erbst@cnw.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, June 28, 2016 3:16 PM
To: Lowell, Rebecca (rebeccab@mountvernonwa.gov)
Cc: Hyde, Bob
Subject: Comments for MV City Council Hearing on June 29, 2016

Hello Rebecca,
Unfortunately, I will not be able to attend the June 29, 2016 - Mount Vernon City Council's Hearing on the draft 2016 Comprehensive Plan. I understand that if you receive comments the day prior to the Hearing, that you will provide them to the Mayor and City Council. Please share the comments below:

Thank you for all of your work on the Comprehensive Planning Process.

Marie J. Erbstoeszser, MHA (retired)
Consultant
Health Care Strategic Development and
Management Advisory Services

217 East Division Street
Mount Vernon, WA 98274

Phone 360-336-5896
Email erbst@cnw.com

June 28, 2016

Mayor Boudreau and City Council Members
City of Mount Vernon, Washington

Comments regarding:
City of Mount Vernon draft 2016 Comprehensive Plan – Planning Commission Review Copy:
Chapter 5- Transportation Element.

Dear Honorable City of Mount Vernon Mayor Boudreau and City Council Members:

Thank you for accepting public comments on the draft 2016 update of Mount Vernon's Comprehensive Plan.

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Marie Erbstoeszter, MHA
John Erbstoeszter, MD

217 East Division Street
Mount Vernon, WA 98274

Hi Rebecca,

When I met with you last Friday, I shared the attached Feedback to the Bike Walk Mount Vernon group about their application to become a “Bicycle Friendly Community.” You asked if I could give you the full name of the organization that does the designations for a “Bicycle Friendly Community.” It is the League of American Bicyclists and their website is www.bikeleague.org

I think that I did mention to you that Anacortes is already designated a Bicycle Friendly Community and we in Mount Vernon are in the early stages of gaining designation. One of the key factors that was cited

on the feedback to the initial application, was the recommendation that Mount Vernon adopt a Complete Streets policy and offer implementation guidance. See the first page of the attachment.

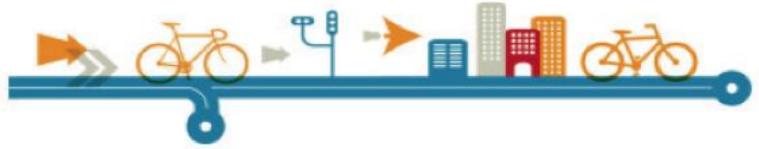
Let me know if you have any other questions about this.

Thank you,

Marie Erbstoesz



BICYCLE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY FEEDBACK



MOUNT VERNON, WA

Fall 2015

Our Bicycle Friendly Community review panel was very pleased to see the current efforts and dedication to make Mount Vernon a safe, comfortable and convenient place to bicycle.

Below, reviewers provided recommendations to help you further promote bicycling in Mount Vernon. **Key recommendations are highlighted in bold.** Underlined phrases are links to further information and resources online.

We strongly encourage you to use this feedback to build on your momentum and improve your community for bicyclists.

There may also be initiatives, programs, and facilities that are not mentioned here that would benefit your bicycling culture, so please continue to try new things to increase your ridership, safety, and awareness.

The cost of bicycle facilities and possible funding options are discussed on the last page of this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Engineering

Adopt a **Complete Streets** policy and offer **implementation guidance**. By adopting a Complete Streets policy, communities direct their transportation planners and engineers to routinely design and operate the entire right-of-way to

enable safe access for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation. This means that every transportation project will make the street network better and safer for drivers, transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists – making your community a more desirable place to live and do business.

Adopt bicycle facility selection criteria that increases separation and protection of bicyclists based on levels of motor vehicle speed and volume.

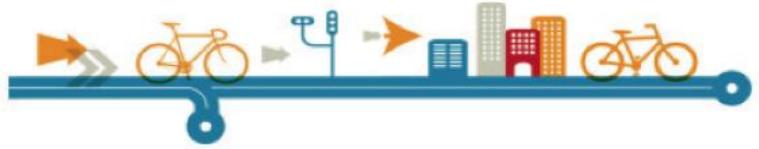
Continue to increase the amount of high quality bicycle parking throughout the community. Ensure that people arriving by bicycle have a secure and legal place to lock their bikes at popular destinations.

Regulations that require bike parking for new developments and major renovations of existing developments can secure private funding. Consider including provisions for assessing bike parking in communities that aren't currently slated for development or revitalization. See this model bicycle parking ordinance for guidance.

Continue to expand the bike network, especially along arterials, through the use of different types of bicycle facilities. On roads where automobile speeds regularly exceed 35 mph, it is recommended to provide protected bicycle infrastructure such as **protected bike lanes/cycle tracks, buffered bike lanes or parallel 10ft wide shared-use paths (in low density areas)**. Note that shared lane markings should only be used on low speed roads. On-street improvements coupled with the



BICYCLE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY FEEDBACK



expansion of the off-street system will encourage more people to cycle and will improve safety. Ensure smooth transitions for bicyclists between the local and regional trail network, and the street network. These improvements will also increase the effectiveness of encouragement efforts by providing a broader range of facility choices for users of various abilities and comfort levels.

Install a bicycle wayfinding system with distance and destination information at strategic locations around the community, integrating preferred on street routes and off-street facilities. Work with surrounding communities to create consistent bicycle wayfinding for connections between communities.

Education

Bicycle-safety education should be a routine part of education, for students of all ages, and schools and the surrounding neighborhoods should be particularly safe and convenient for biking and walking. Particularly as students learn to drive cars; it is important that they continue to learn about safe bicycling practices and how to safely share the road as drivers. **Work with your local bicycle groups or interested parents to expand the Safe Routes to School program to all schools.** Click [here](#) for an exemplary bicycle safety curriculum designed for fourth and fifth grade students. For more information on Safe Routes to School, see the [National Highway Traffic Safety](#)

[Administration's Safe Routes To School Toolkit](#) or visit www.saferoutesinfo.org.

Continue efforts to expand adult bicycle education opportunities. Classes that teach skills that improve bike commuting can help people make what is possible practical. Education can also be helpful for adults who are recommended exercise by health care providers, check to see if any area doctors or hospitals are interested in partnering for education programming. For more information visit: <http://bikeleague.org/ridesmart>.

Ensure that there are bicycle education opportunities specifically for women, seniors, families and other specific demographic groups. By specifically targeting education opportunities to certain groups you can ensure that those groups are better reached and their specific concerns are addressed by the curriculum.

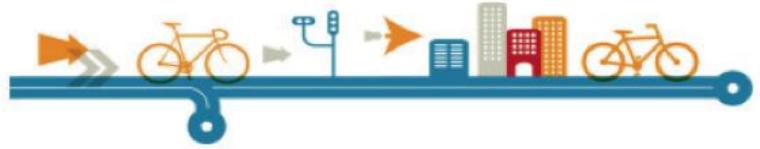
Encouragement

Consider offering a '[Ciclovía](#)' or [Open Streets](#) type event, closing off a major corridor to auto traffic and offering the space to cyclists and pedestrians. [See Open Streets in action](#).

Increase your efforts on Bike to Work Day and Bike to School Day. Create benchmarks for participation and work with local employers to foster competition about participation in Bike to Work day activities. Ensure to widely advertise all bicycle-



BICYCLE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY FEEDBACK



themed community events and programs. For ideas and more information, visit <http://bikeleague.org/bikemonth>.

Provide a variety of targeted bicycle events to engage seniors, low-income residents, and other demographic groups that may benefit from non-traditional or group-specific bicycle events. Targeted events may help to encourage groups that have specific concerns about bicycling or which have not previously been engaged in supporting bicycling improvements.

Encourage Skagit Valley College to promote cycling to students, staff, and faculty and to seek recognition through the Bicycle Friendly University program. Many colleges and universities have embraced the growing enthusiasm for more bicycle-friendly campuses by incorporating bike share programs, bike co-ops, bicycling education classes and policies to promote bicycling as a preferred means of transportation. The community will benefit as well: Communities near BFUs have a higher number of regular bicyclists (as many students bike to campus, shops and restaurants), less congestion around campus, safer streets, and university-hosted public bicycle events, programs, and classes. The League offers many tools to help promote the Bicycle Friendly University program in your community.

Enforcement

Identify a law enforcement officer who would like to be a representative of the police department to the

bicycling community, including engaging with city staff and bicycle advisory committee members on bicycling-related issues.

Ensure that law enforcement officers who are not certified or trained as bicycle patrol officers nevertheless have basic training or experience with bicycling in your community in order to foster great interactions between bicyclists and police officers.

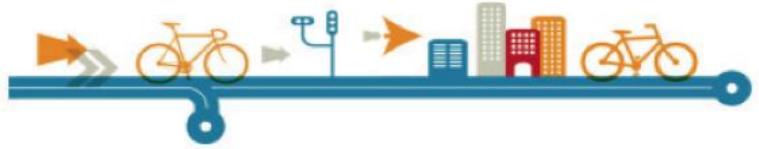
Evaluation & Planning

Continue to develop a comprehensive bicycle master plan in close collaboration with the community to ensure public involvement, information and ownership. Focus on developing a seamless on and off street bicycling network that creates short distances between residential areas and popular destinations. Complement infrastructure planning with encouragement, education, and enforcement programs to increase usage. Develop a clear vision statement and set ambitious but attainable targets. **The overarching goal should be to encourage residents to bike more often for recreation and transportation.**

Create annual goals for implementation of bicycle infrastructure contained in a standalone bicycle master plan or comprehensive plan.



BICYCLE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY FEEDBACK



Continue to conduct community-wide research on bicycle usage, including counting parked bicycles at schools and transit stations (if applicable). Continue to collaborate with Washington State DOT and your Regional Planning Organization to capture data that is useful and comparable with other communities.

Expanding the Bicycle Program Manager's time focused on bicycle projects would help in scaling up your BFC efforts. This staff person should spend more time on reviewing development proposals to ensure that local bicycle/pedestrian requirements are incorporated and to assess bicycling and walking impacts, developing and implementing educational and promotional programs, writing grant proposals, serving as the public contact for bicycling/walking inquiries and complaints, educating other staff about state and federal facilities standards and guidelines, and coordinating with neighboring cities, transit agencies and other departments to implement policies and projects. See [this report](#) on the importance of Bicycle & Pedestrian program staff.

COSTS AND FUNDING OPTIONS

Costs

Building a new roadway for motor vehicles can cost millions of dollars to construct, and many of the pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure facilities are extremely low-cost in comparison.

Use [this database](#) to review up-to-date estimates of infrastructure costs of pedestrian and bicycle treatments from states and cities across the country.

Federal Funding

Since 1992 bicycle and pedestrian projects have been eligible for federal transportation funding. To learn more about what federal funds are available for bicycle projects, use Advocacy Advance's interactive [Find it, Fund it tool](#) to search for eligible funding programs by bike/ped project type or review the same information as a PDF [here](#).

State Funding

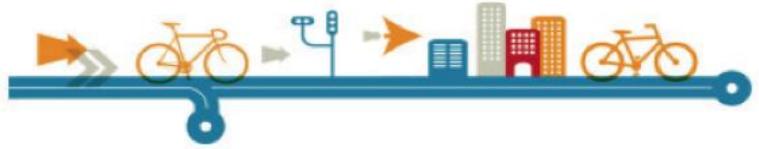
Biking and walking dollars aren't only available from the federal government. States can also have their own revenue sources that can be used to fund active transportation. Use [this report](#) and an [online tool](#) to explore your state's funding sources for bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

Local Funding

Local governments can also create their own revenue streams to improve conditions for bicycling and walking. Three common approaches include: special bond issues, dedications of a portion of local sales taxes or a voter-approved sales tax increase, and use of the annual capital improvement budgets of Public Works and/or Parks agencies. Bicycle facility improvements can also be tagged on to larger projects to create economies of scale that



BICYCLE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY FEEDBACK



results in reduced costs and reduced impacts to traffic, businesses, and residents. For example, if there is an existing road project, it is usually cheaper to add bike lanes and sidewalks to the project than to construct them separately. To learn more about public funding of bicycle infrastructure improvements, visit pedbikeinfo.org/planning/funding_government.cfm.

Resources and Support

[Advocacy Advance](#) offers several tools, resources, and workshops to help advocates and agency staff maximize eligible funding programs.

Hi Rebecca,

Thanks so much for reaching out to many of us last week and setting up some time when we could meet and discuss the Mount Vernon 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update. I really appreciated having the opportunity to talk with you and gain more background about the process and content of the plan and the updated calendar of meetings.

Unfortunately, I will not be able to attend the Planning Commission's Hearing on Tuesday, June 21. I understand that if you receive comments the day prior to the Hearing, that you will share them with the Planning Commissioners. Please accept the Comments below:

Thank you,
Marie J. Erbstoesz, MHA (retired)
Consultant
Health Care Strategic Development and
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Phone 360-336-5896
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City of Mount Vernon, Washington
Planning Commissioners

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