

Associated Students of Western Washington University Master Plan

-November 2011-

Over the past several years, Western Washington University has become renowned for its environmental activism and awareness. Simultaneously, increased use of alternative transportation modes has led to increased concern over the safety of the greater campus transportation network. The Associated Students Transportation Advisory Committee (ASTAC), through its experiences and interactions with the student population and the greater community and with a larger emphasis on sustainable and accessible transportation, has identified areas within the realm of greater campus population that need attention.

Outlined below are recommendations for the improvement and future expansion of Western Washington University's main campus. These suggestions are meant to increase the accessibility, sustainability, safety, efficiency, and aesthetic value of the campus, as well as ensure that the university is in compliance with local, state, and federal regulations.

Section 1: Campus Pedestrian Improvements

Western Washington University is a pedestrian oriented campus, with pedestrians taking the highest priority over all other modes of travel. Pedestrians must have a safe, clear path for travel both on and off campus. In order to continue to build on the pedestrian focused nature of campus and to create a better environment for pedestrians, the ASTAC recommends the following improvements:

1. **South Campus Path Improvements:** Better connect the dorms of Fairhaven and Buchanan Towers to the rest of campus. Currently, the few options that do exist present hazards due to vehicular or bicycle traffic, or due to weather conditions.
 - a. Buchanan Towers to Fairhaven College path presents particular problems in poor weather due to its dirt construction and the hilly terrain it covers. Drainage along the pathway should be improved, and lighting is needed in the area.
 - b. South College Way Sidewalks needs improvement to avoid flowing water in poor weather conditions. Similarly, the connector path from the rear of Buchanan Towers to the street needs to be paved to improve its overall safety and utility.
 - c. Fairhaven Trails between the Fairhaven Commons and both East College Way and the staircase along South College Way need to be clearly marked, paved, lighted, and must also separate pedestrian and bicycle traffic.
2. **South College Way Crosswalk:** Install permanent lighted and flashing crosswalks near Buchanan Towers and South College Drive. Another option available is the closure of South College Drive and the installation of a pedestrian activated traffic signal at the heavily used crossing.
3. **Garden Street Crosswalks:** Create improved crossing across North Garden Street by adding lighted, flashing crosswalks at Pine and Oak Streets behind Nash and Mathes Hall.
4. **High Street Improvements:** Improve the pedestrian nature of High Street through campus by increasing the number and size of sidewalks along the corridor.
 - a. Wilson Library passage to be improved by building a sidewalk along High Street to the crosswalk in front of the bus stop at Haggard Hall.

- b. Construct pathways near the High Street bus stops that are currently impromptu dirt trails.
 - c. Turn gravel strips on east side of high street to a widened sidewalk or planting strip.
 - d. Increase lighting at the intersection of Oak and High Street.
5. Ridgeway Improvements: Increase the pedestrian connectivity of the Ridgeway dorms by creating safe new pathways and crossings between popular campus facilities.
- a. Highland Drive crossing to be improved between the Ridgeway Dorms and the bus stop on Highland by installing a lighted, flashing crosswalk.
 - b. Create a new and formal trail with stairs between the Ridgeway Dorms and the Campus Recreation Center while restricting access elsewhere on the hill.
 - c. Add sidewalks to the west side of Highland Drive
6. Pedestrian corridors, stairs, and wheelchair ramps around campus must be cleared quickly in the event of snow to ensure safe travel for pedestrians

Section 2: Campus Bicycle Improvements

Bicycling has become an increasingly important mode of transportation for Western students. Proper bike paths and bike infrastructure both on and off campus are critical for encouraging more Western students to use this environmentally friendly travel option. In light of the increasing need for improved bike infrastructure, the ASTAC recommends the following:

1. Creation of a Cross-Campus Bicycle Network: Use existing bike lanes, roadways, and the creation of new bike paths to create a complete a network of bicycle-friendly corridors.
 - a. Improve East College Way to better protect the safety of bicycle riders and create a critical link in the Cross-Campus Bicycle Network. E. College Way should be the main route for cyclists traveling through campus.
 - i. Increase bicycle signage on East College Way to encourage cyclists to take this route
 - b. Recreation Center and Bill McDonald Parkway pathway should be marked and separated from pedestrians as much as possible. Efforts should then be made to link this path to High Street via the Miller and Bond Hall corridor thereby creating another crucial element of the Cross-Campus Bicycle Network.
 - c. Miller and Bond Hall corridor should be restricted to bicycles and pedestrians only, with bicyclists given a clear pathway and appropriate pedestrian precautions. Signs and other crossing notifications need to be installed to ensure the safety of users of both modes.
 - d. A North Campus connection must be created to link the north end of East College Way to High Street.
 - e. Continue to update and revise the “walk zones” and “shared paths” on Western’s Campus Bicycle Map
2. Bicycle Storage and Parking: Additional covered or partially covered bike parking and storage areas must be constructed in close proximity to buildings to ensure that any student that wishes to take a bicycle to campus either as a commuter or resident has convenient and secure options for storing their bicycle.
3. Add bike rails to outdoor stairwells on campus to give cyclists an easy way to carry their bicycles up stairs

Section 3: Campus Transit Improvements

The use of public transportation on Western's campus has increased dramatically over recent years with the introduction of the universal bus pass. In order to foster a community that heavily uses their public transit options for travel to and from campus, and to create a transit system that is more attractive and comfortable for the entire Western community (thereby gaining more riders), the following on-campus improvements are recommended by the ASTAC:

1. High Street Shelter Improvements: Construct permanent, lighted bus shelters on the north side of High Street next to the Viking Union. This shelter should be of the same construct as the shelter next to Haggard Hall and will provide better cover from inclement weather and a more inviting transit experience.
2. Buchanan Towers Transit Shelters: Install and improve the bus stops near Buchanan Towers by sealing the existing bus shelter on the north side of Bill McDonald Parkway and by installing a shelter on the south side of the street.
3. Ridgeway Transit Shelters: Install a permanent and lighted bus shelter adjacent to Kappa on the corner of Highland Drive and West College Way. This would help provide ridgeway residents with a safer, convenient, and more comfortable transit experience.

Section 4: Campus Traffic and Parking

The way that Western addresses parking and the movement of vehicles is key to determining what mode of travel Western students will take. In order to create a campus that moderates the use of the single occupancy vehicle and provides viable alternative to driving, the following improvements are recommended by the ASTAC (in conjunction with other non-vehicle improvements):

1. "Kiss-and-Drop" Locations: create one or more "kiss-and drops" on campus that allow for efficient passenger loading and unloading to compensate for East College Way restrictions.
 - a. North-end "kiss and drop" should be located just off Highland Drive in the PAC lot.
 - b. South-end "kiss and drop" possible location could be in the location of the C lots by Fairhaven College.
2. On-Street Parking: Work with the City of Bellingham to install and patrol meters at street-parking locations to allow for casual visitor and commuter parking.
 - a. Meter locations on the reconfigured spaces along Highland Drive from High Street to West College Way.
 - b. Possible meter locations on the south end of campus on 25th Street near the entrance of Sehome Arboretum.
3. Residential Parking: Preserve the existing number of Residential Parking spaces currently available on campus. These spaces should not increase with increased residents on campus and should not necessarily continue to exist in their current locations.
4. Student Commuter Parking: Eliminate a significant portion of all current on-campus student commuter parking spaces.
 - a. Increase the safety, sustainability, efficiency, and aesthetic value of all existing parking spaces at Lincoln Creek Park and Ride and continue to provide these spaces free of charge.
 - b. Increase the number of metered spaces available for visitors and casual commuters by using space freed by the elimination of permitted commuter spaces.

- c. Use freed land from former student commuter spaces to facilitate campus expansion in a sustainable, accessible, pedestrian and transit-oriented manner.
 - d. Improve the safety, efficiency, sustainability, accessibility, and aesthetic value of all remaining parking spaces on-campus.
5. Highland and High Street: Improve the safety and efficiency of the highly used intersection of Highland and High Street.
 6. Carshare Parking: Reserve several spots in highly visible and easily accessible lots around campus for the exclusive use of carshare vehicles, as dictated by student demand. These spots should be in desirable locations to help promote the use of a carshare program and discourage private vehicle ownership.
 7. Electric Vehicle Parking: Reserve several spots in each campus lot for electric vehicles and provide charging infrastructure for these cars. These spots could be in the most desirable locations to encourage the use of more alternatively fueled vehicles, but permits for these spaces should be sold at regular prices.
 8. Significantly increase the number of handicap parking spaces on campus to ensure that all persons who require accessible parking have access to it.
 9. Increase education about alternative transportation options and the availability of Lincoln Creek Park and Ride for commuters seeking parking permits
 10. Improve the parking surface at Lincoln Creek Park and Ride, so as to encourage commuters to use this facility, instead of campus parking lots
 11. In order to ensure the safety of pedestrians, the timing of traffic lights at the intersection of Bill McDonald Parkway and West College Way should be modified to have all traffic stop and a walk signal at all pedestrian crossings to allow all pedestrians to cross the intersection at once. Currently, left and right hand turns on red by vehicles reduce the safety of both drivers and pedestrians or cyclists.
 12. East College Way: Convert the entirety of East College Way to a restricted access road.
 - a. Bicycles should be emphasized in a shared two-lane setting from the intersection of East College Way and South College Way until the road ends near Old Main.
 - b. Consolidate excess driveways in parking lots along the entirety of East College Way into several well-marked and safe intersections.
 - c.
 13. High Street: Continue to restrict vehicular traffic to authorized vehicles on High Street from Highland Drive to Oak Street during peak hours.

Section 5: Campus Development

The way that a university campus grows and develops can have a dramatic impact on the movement of students. Campuses that are spread over a wide area, or that are located in multiple locations, can encourage the use of vehicles and discourage the use of alternative transportation options. In contrast, a compact campus that is designed to be both pedestrian and transit oriented provides greater incentive for students to use non-vehicle modes of transportation by being easily accessible for all students using alternative modes of transportation. In light of this, the ASTAC recommends the following:

1. Campus Infill: Build as many new buildings as possible on campus to consolidate locations and create a pedestrian, bicycle, and transit-oriented campus.

- a. Relocate administrative offices currently located at Bill McDonald Parkway and 32nd Street to locations on South Campus now occupied by student commuter parking spaces.
2. Waterfront Development: Base all new off-campus development on sustainable transportation principles.
 - a. Build appropriate infrastructure for easy pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access.
 - b. Stagger class times to allow for transit-use between campus locations and major transit transfer centers.
 - c. Avoid creating a campus only shuttle to connect both campus locations. Such a system drains campus resources, creates a new and confusing transit service that overlaps an existing system, and does not benefit the broader community.
 - d. Seriously consider investing in permanent transit infrastructure that connects the new Waterfront Campus to the downtown Bellingham core and Main Campus. Options for this connection include streetcars, pedestrian bridges over major roads, other pedestrian-only corridors such as Pine or Oak Streets, and modern gondolas.

Section 6: Greater Campus Infrastructure Improvements

Just as the way that a campus is developed can impact the transportation habits of students, the infrastructure in areas surrounding campus can greatly influence the mode of transportation that students choose to get around. In light of this, the ASTAC recommends the following improvements to further encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation:

1. Pedestrian Improvements: Work with and encourage the City of Bellingham to improve pedestrian facilities, infrastructure, and accessibility within the city. Specific projects are outlined below.
 - a. Create sidewalks, with appropriate curb cuts, on both sides of Bill McDonald Parkway from Sehome Village to Campus and build more lighted, flashing crosswalks at strategic points along the corridor.
 - b. Build appropriate pedestrian infrastructure in and around the heavily-student populated Happy Valley neighborhood. Areas for focus include 25th Street from Bill McDonald Parkway to Douglas Avenue and 21st Street from Bill McDonald Parkway to Harris Avenue.
 - c. Add lighting to the pedestrian trail connecting Buchanan Towers to 23rd Street and Douglas Avenue.
 - d. Two particular areas include the installation of a traffic light at the intersection of Bill McDonald Parkway & 25th St and the installation of a lighted, flashing crosswalk at the intersection of Bill McDonald Parkway and South College Drive.
2. Bicycle Improvements: Work with and encourage the City of Bellingham to improve bicycle facilities, infrastructure, and accessibility within the city. Specific projects are outlined below.
 - a. Create bike lanes on both sides of Indian Street from the campus entrance on High Street to Magnolia Street.
 - b. Repave Indian Street for a more comfortable biking experience.
 - c. Create bike lanes on Holly and Chestnut streets from downtown to Indian Street by removing one of the three travel lanes and realigning the remaining lanes.

- d. Create a connected network of marked bike routes in the Happy Valley neighborhood. Areas for focus include 25th Street from Bill McDonald Parkway to Douglas Avenue and 21st Street from Bill McDonald Parkway to Donovan Avenue.

Section 7: Greater Campus Transit Improvements

An excellent public transit system not only gets students to and from campus, but also allows students to travel quickly and conveniently to other destinations in the greater community. Continuing to improve and expand public transit in Whatcom County is key to creating a transit system that realizes this goal and provides a truly viable alternative to driving not only for Western students, but for the community as a whole. In order to continue on the progress that has been made, the ASTAC recommends the following improvements:

1. Infrastructure Improvements: Work with and encourage Whatcom Transportation Authority to collaborate with the City of Bellingham to install lighted, flashing crosswalks at all heavily used GO-Line stops that are far removed from signalized crossings.
2. Service Improvements: Work with and encourage Whatcom Transportation Authority to improve service to and from campus, student neighborhoods, and popular student destinations in a manner that simultaneously improves transit service for the community at large. Specific projects are outlined below.
 - a. Increase frequency of evening and weekend services on all routes within the City of Bellingham, and especially those that serve campus, student neighborhoods, and popular student destinations.
 - b. Create a new Happy Valley GO-Line to service the heavily student populated Happy Valley neighborhood.
 - c. Improve regional transportation connectivity by better linking to Amtrak and Greyhound services, Bellingham International Airport, and by improving County Connector services.
 - d. Continue to build a network of high-frequency GO-Lines throughout the City of Bellingham that provide service every 15-minutes on weekdays and service at least every 30-minutes on evenings and weekends.
 - e. Create more county express routes that have their terminus on Western's campus. These routes provide excellent service for student commuters and eliminate the need for a transfer, thereby encouraging long-distance transit use.
 - f. Work with WTA, Skagit Transit, and Sound Transit to expand bus options to the Central Puget Sound region. Investigate the feasibility of adding weekend service to the Skagit Transit 90X route.
 - g. Work with WTA to advocate for community and legal changes to make transit more accessible to students.
3. Western Student Shuttle: Continue to provide a late night shuttle service to students, connecting downtown, the Sehome neighborhood, the Happy Valley neighborhood, the York district, and the Lincoln Creek Park and Ride, as ATF allows.

Section 8: On and Off-Campus Accessibility

Every student at WWU should be able to move to, from, and around campus quickly, safely, and conveniently. Therefore, campus and the surrounding areas should be completely accessible to

everyone, regardless of disability. An accessible campus not only enhances the freedom and quality of life of disabled students, but also improves the quality of life for all Western students. In light of this, the following improvements are suggested:

1. Campus Accessibility Improvements
 - a. All on-campus pathways, sidewalks, and buildings should be paved and wheelchair accessible with wheelchair ramps and curb cuts built where they are needed.
 - b. New campus buildings and infrastructure should take into account the transportation needs of Western students, especially those who are disabled, and should be planned to accommodate those needs both now and in the future.
2. Greater Campus Accessibility Improvements
 - a. All WTA fixed route buses should be accessible for persons with disabilities and all operators should be properly trained in how to work with persons with disabilities
 - b. WTA Specialized Transportation should be planned to create convenient and speedy travel times for riders.
 - c. Sidewalks going to and from campus and in the areas surrounding campus should be made wheelchair accessible, be kept in good condition, and should have curb cuts where appropriate. Bill McDonald Parkway is of particular concern because:
 - i. It is a heavily-traveled path for all students, connecting students to housing and important retail establishments (Sehome Village, etc.) and
 - ii. Significant portions of the Parkway are currently inaccessible to individuals with disabilities due to a lack of sidewalks and curb cuts.