

## The Bike Buzz in West Richland

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August 17, 2017

Many thanks to West Richland Public Works Director Roscoe Slade and Community Development Director Aaron Lambert for making time in their busy schedules to talk with Dave Beach and Carl Berkowitz about the many bicycle/pedestrian related activities occurring in West Richland. It was hard to keep track of all the bike/pedestrian improvements they shared with us including details of their Complete Streets Policy, new bike lanes, improvements to the existing bike/pedestrian connectivity and the addition of a beautiful gateway entrance to West Richland. Highlights are given below.

### ***But First, a Path Forward...***

Cyclists and pedestrians should feel free to contact Roscoe ([roscoe@westrichland.org](mailto:roscoe@westrichland.org)) or Aaron ([alambert@Westrichland.org](mailto:alambert@Westrichland.org)) with concerns about bike/pedestrian issues or suggestions about future activities the City should consider.

We learned that in developing bike/pedestrian access in the City, West Richland uses a 'node' concept. This means before they start to design or implement any specific route they first identify key 'nodes', or destinations, for cyclists/pedestrians. Examples of nodes include schools, shopping centers, or parks. There can be multiple nodes along any proposed route.

"How we can get you there is not always as straightforward as it might seem" Roscoe noted. There can be many obstacles to what sounds like a simple addition or modification of a route, including constraints imposed by existing land use designations, zoning laws, joint-ownership with other jurisdictions and agencies and (of course) limited funding opportunities. All of these have to be taken into account when the City wants to develop or modify bike/pedestrian access. "But we still want to know where citizens want to go, what we can include along a possible pathway and how we can generally make the community a more bike/pedestrian friendly place to live" said Aaron. "Cyclists and walkers should contact us with their ideas"

### ***The Projects: two big ones...***

*Complete Streets Policy (CSP):* There was not much controversy among citizens of West Richland when it adopted a Complete Streets Policy. A CSP specifies (among other things) that street designs be able to safely accommodate pedestrians, bikes, cars and public transportation (including pull outs for buses). "We've been implementing the concepts of CSP for years so making it official wasn't a big deal for us" notes Roscoe. A beautiful example of a CSP roadway can be seen along Belmont Road just south of Paradise Way. There's a grassy strip separating sidewalks and a well-marked bike lane with ample room for traffic to safely pass cyclists. It's one of the best examples of a CSP design we know of in the Tri-Cities community

[Note: In the spirit of light hearted jurisdictional competition, there is some controversy about whether West Richland or the City of Pasco first adopted a Complete Streets Policy. Both councils met to

approve the CSP for their community's on the same night...no record has been found of what time each council actually voted.]

*The Gateway Project:* Besides being an aesthetic addition to the Van Giesen entrance of West Richland, this crossing along the Yakima River will give cyclists and pedestrians' safer access directly south to 38<sup>th</sup> Ave and north to a quiet section of Fallon Drive. No longer will they have to walk or ride along a busy part of Van Giesen. On a historical note, it will also allow citizens the ability to bike/walk along part of the 'Old Yellowstone Trail', one of the first automobile roads to go from the east coast, starting at Plymouth, Massachusetts, and ending in Seattle, Washington,



***Also in the Works...***

*Bike Counters:* Looking ahead to an increase in cyclists as development continues in West Richland, the City has installed two automated bike counters along the Keene Rd. pathway. Data from these counters will be used to plan for future bike/pedestrian lanes and to support future funding requests from various state and federal agencies.

These new devices count not only bicycles and their direction of travel but also record pedestrian traffic. The motivation for installing these counters is an expected increase in use of all the bike/pedestrian lanes as new schools and neighborhoods are added. Aaron stated "We've seen other cities try to add non-motorized infrastructure after the fact, and it's expensive and painful. We want to stay ahead of the game by planning for bike/pedestrian access now. The counters will help us do this".

Additional information to 'stay ahead of the game' is anticipated via West Richland's first ever participation in the annual Washington State Dept. of Transportation Bike/Pedestrian manual counts, scheduled for September 26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Volunteers helping with this state-wide survey will monitor bicycle and pedestrian use at yet-to-be determined sites in West Richland. If you can help, please contact volunteer coordinator Dave Beach ([davidbeach47@gmail.com](mailto:davidbeach47@gmail.com)). An overview of the survey can be found at <https://www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/Count.htm>, although information specific to West Richland is work in progress (contact Dave for the latest information).

*Filling the Gaps:* Much recent work in West Richland has involved simply filling gaps in the present bike/pedestrian system.

A prime example cyclists should soon see is along Belmont Blvd, near Paradise Way. Cyclists and walkers may have noticed a short stretch of asphalt along the northbound lane of Belmont that seems to stop in the middle of nowhere. As funds became available, this short stretch will continue north along Belmont Blvd to connect with Van Giesen. Eventually, the City would like to see this path continue even further north to connect with Ruppert Rd.

Another 'fill in' project is the addition of bike and walking access for students of the new Leona Libby Middle School, with a new trail located at the south end of Belmont Blvd. This route goes along a beautiful and biologically rich wetland behind West Richland's new Municipal Services Facility. If you haven't seen it yet, pedal or walk out there to check it out ... look for yellow-headed blackbirds (uncommon here) and blue herons as you ride past.

*Speed Limits:* Although not an engineering infrastructure change, the City has been working with the Washington State Department of Transportation to reduce the speed limit along Van Giesen. This is being done in part out of recognition that Van Giesen is used by many cyclists riding between Benton City and Richland. Another factor is the anticipation of added traffic with the completion of the I-82 interchange near Red Mtn.

The City hopes to reduce the speed limit along the entirety of Van Giesen within the City boundaries to make this road safer for both motorized and non-motorized users. While the State has tentatively agreed to this reduction in speed, formal approval is not expected until more development takes place west of town at which time this concern will become a more immediate issue.

*Keene Rd.:* Also in the works are plans to link the now unconnected bikeways along Keene Rd. Unfortunately funding are a limiting step in the process. Roscoe and Aaron note that cyclists may not see signs indicating bike lanes on these connections because marking them as formal lanes or paths would require additional funding for special maintenance, which the City doesn't have at present. But the bikeways will eventually be installed and receive the same basic TLC as other roadways in the City.

Offering safe connectivity between Flat Top Park and Belmont Blvd. is also in the planning stage. But this project will require lots of citizen input to the planning process. The City wants to find a route for a new bike trail to wind its way through the neighborhoods between these two nodes and will be working closely with the residents in the design, with public hearings and meeting with individuals. While this new access route is on the City's wish list, it is not expected to materialize for some time.

*Bombing Range Rd.:* New sidewalks are in store on Bombing Range Rd. going from the roundabout (at the south end of Bombing Range Rd) to Arena Rd.-Federal grant money has been found to widen this ¼ mile section of road, with the hope it will make for a safer route for both bike and pedestrian traffic.

*S. 38<sup>th</sup> Ave Paving:* While many cyclists use Bombing Range Rd. as an up-hill fitness training ride along with some enjoying the fast descent riding north on Bombing Range Rd., another option may soon be available. At the present time no continuous asphalt path exists between Keene Rd. to the south and Van Giesen to the north. Presently, S. 38<sup>th</sup> Ave. is unpaved and while suitable for mountain bikes, is a tough ride for road bikes.

The City now has plans and funding to pave S. 38<sup>th</sup> Ave north of Maple Lane (the eastward extension of Paradise Way) and south to Northlake Dr. (near the Bombing Range Sports Complex). This will be a big step forward in giving road cyclists a non-Bombing Range Rd option for traveling between Keene Rd and Van Giesen.

### **Stay tuned!**

Many other projects are expected as builders complete their work throughout the City. As part of approving many of the planned developments, cyclists and pedestrians will encounter more 'complete streets', assuring safe access for bikes, pedestrians, cars and buses.