

## The Bike Buzz in Richland

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Richland has been growing by leaps and bounds with lots of new homes and roads throughout the community. Recognizing all the growth in the Queensgate area, Jeff Peters, Richland's Transportation and Development Manager, recently wrote that "we've got some changes coming very soon to the Queensgate area that should make things much more friendly to cyclists and pedestrians. We try to incorporate space and features in all of our street projects."

And kudos to the City for completing the improvements to the Riverfront Trail in Howard Amon Park this year. This project included shoreline enhancements and the widening of the multi-use path through the park.

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

The responsibility for incorporating bikes into Richland's transportation plans is split between Jeff, (jpeters@CI.RICHLAND.WA.US) who handles the 'transportation' side of cycling, and Joe Schiessl (JSchiessl@CI.RICHLAND.WA.US), Parks and Public Facilities Director, who handles recreational cycling in the parks. There's considerable overlap in their cycling responsibilities, but both are knowledgeable about all things cycling in the community, and are the key contacts for information on this subject.

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

At their October 2017 meeting, Richland City Council approved a Complete Streets Policy (CSP) that outlines the City's commitment to "...all road users and modes of transportation, consistent with the 2005 City-wide Transportation Plan and the City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan." In recommending the approval of a CSP, staff noted that Richland would be eligible for funding opportunities from sources to be made available only to communities with a CSP. The hope is that more bucks will be available for bikes in the not too distant future.

Bikes have been part of Richland's transportation plan for many years. Existing system and future improvements for automobiles, air travel, rail freight, barge traffic and public transit are discussed on pages 45-46 of the 'City of Richland Comprehensive Plan 2017 – 2037'. Included in this section is a summary of existing and future plans for non-motorized transportation, reproduced in full below:

*"Non-motorized facilities within the City of Richland are mainly composed of sidewalks constructed in association with streets and a separate bicycle and pedestrian trail system. There are currently about 30 miles of Class I trails that serve the City of Richland, with over six miles of secondary trails and 36 miles of soft trails that traverse natural areas such as Badger Mountain or Columbia Point South and the Amon Basin. There are also over 68 miles of on-street bike routes that facilitate bicycle travel throughout the City."*

The other big news from Richland that will affect cyclists (in addition to adopting a Complete Streets Policy) is construction of the Duportail Bridge. This, in turn, is driving many other projects in Richland, including the addition of bike paths along Duportail Street, and also the bridge connection itself, that will link Queensgate Drive to Cottonwood Drive. Preliminary plans for the bridge include a multi-use pathway with combined ped/bike access and new signaling at the intersection of Duportail St. and Tanglewood Drive. The SR-240/Duportail intersection is also scheduled to be modified with traffic signals to accommodate additional lanes and (presumably) allow safe crossing by cyclists.

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

In a communication with Miles Thomas, Richland's Redevelopment Project Manager (mthomas@CI.RICHLAND.WA.US), we learned that the City is continuing to make strides towards better connectivity and inclusion of multi-modal transportation in its core and peripheral business areas. This year the City took steps for cycling advocacy that included: partnering with Wheelhouse Community Bike Shop to host Richland's first family friendly Bike-In Movie Night; staff attendance at the Washington Bike Summit; and the installation of a new bicycle rack at the SW corner of the Uptown Shopping Center (mitigating bicycle parking need at a new business).

Miles also noted that the Business and Economic Development Division of the City is continuing to support public and private efforts at multi-modal transportation improvements, and encouraging small businesses to make their locations as appealing to the cycling community as their means allow. They are also working with an entrepreneur through their 'Ask Richland Business' series for assistance in identifying methods to implement their own public bike-share business model in the Tri-Cities.

Although their efforts (from a business perspective) are sometimes at odds with the existing infrastructure, Richland hopes that continuing to support alternative modes of transportation and recreation will encourage patronage to local businesses. Miles notes that the City sees demonstrating the economic benefit of multi-modal transportation as an enticement for other public/private initiatives.

### ***Richland's Transportation Improvement Program***

Richland uses a Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) as a planning tool to identify and prioritize the expenditure of funds to improve City transportation facilities (see Figure 1, at the end of this note). All of their projects are grant dependent; if grants for each project are not received, a given project would be delayed until funding becomes available. There are presently 21 prioritized projects in the City's 'Six Year Transportation Improvement Program From 2016 to 2021' (available for viewing at <https://www.ci.richland.wa.us/Home/ShowDocument?id=2686> ). There is a lot of additional information in this document. Here we note only on those activities that explicitly call out bike-related facilities.

- The top priority project is the Duportail Bridge, with the bike paths and road modifications described above.
- Improvements are planned for Center Parkway between Gage Blvd and Tapteal Dr. that will include a new 3-lane roadway with bike lanes on both sides.(Priority #2)

- The Duportail Street Extension (a spin-off of the Duportail Bridge) will have a new 3 lane street with sidewalks, curbs, gutters and bike lanes. (Priority #3 and Priority #4)
- Columbia Park Trail between the SR 240 westbound off-ramp east of the City Limits of Richland, will be expanded to include bike lanes. (Priority #10)
- Improvements to Gage Boulevard include the addition of bike lanes between Penny Royal Ave to Morency Dr. (Priority #15)

### **Suggested Areas for Future Attention:**

#### **(Or what might be done with funding from the Complete Street Program...)**

- An important issue for cyclists is the enhancement of connectivity between Richland and Kennewick. There are presently two safe access points to and from these communities via a) Leslie Road or b) the I-82 bike trail to Keene (this is the multi-use trail going between the Chamna Reserve north of the Yakima River, to the Tagaris Winery area/Windmill Rd. on the south). But there remain two challenges to assure good connectivity. Both require cooperation between the two cities and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT).

The first challenge is to modify the Steptoe Roundabout to assure safe passage in all directions by cyclists and pedestrians (see Figure 2, below). Cyclists riding north (downhill) on Steptoe to access the bike path on the north side of Columbia Park Trail now have to navigate multiple on- and off ramps for H'way 240. It's a dangerous ride dodging fast moving cars, and not for the faint of heart, especially during commute times when traffic is particularly heavy.

The second connectivity challenge is to find safe passage when cycling (or walking) to or from Columbia Park Trail via Columbia Center Blvd. This requires negotiating the Richland Junction/ H'way 240 clover leaf (see Figure 3, below). Cyclists going from Richland to Kennewick's Columbia Center have to navigate the multiple on- and off-ramps of H'way 240. A further complication is a traffic island that separates southbound riders from the adjoining sidewalks. This is another dangerous non-motorized connection between Richland and Kennewick, and is also not for the faint of heart!

Both of these challenges are complex not only because of engineering/design issues, but also because addressing these challenges will require cooperation between Richland, Kennewick and WSDOT. None the less, both the Steptoe Roundabout and the Richland Junction/H'way 240 cloverleaf need attention in order to have safe connectivity for cyclists of all skill levels who want to travel between these two major metropolitan areas.

Separate from challenges of intercity connectivity are a few issues unique to Richland:

- There has been an increase in traffic along Bradley Blvd as motorists look for alternatives to the growing congestion on George Washington Way. At one time Bradley Blvd. was a safe cycling/walking road to bypass the Hanford traffic on GW Way. It had little traffic and clear striping for bike lanes (see Figure 4, below). But the striping has been removed, and more motorists use Bradley Blvd. as a side street that parallels GW Way. It's also a route to the new restaurants and

hotels near Columbia Point. The net result is that this once popular bike route has become increasingly dangerous for cyclists coming to or from the I-182 bike path over the Columbia River. At a minimum, the City should re-paint the bike lanes. Better yet would be to add traffic-calming devices to slow the many fast driving cars now using this once quiet, once well-marked roadway.

- Non-motorized access to and from the Richland Airport/Columbia Basin Racquet Club area is another growing problem. Cyclists and pedestrians now have to cross at the intersection of Van Giessen and the H'way 240 where high speed vehicles often cut corners when turning at this intersection, endangering cyclists or walkers waiting to cross with the light.

A simple alternative to this crossing could be had by removing one element of the concrete sound barrier directly across from Airport Way to the north. Doing so would allow access from the Green Belt Trail behind the barrier to an already existing striped pedestrian walkway and crossing signal (Figure 5, see below). Doing so would allow cyclists and pedestrians to cross the highway by exiting from the Green Belt Trail to Airport Way, using the existing signal and crosswalk markings as an alternative to the H'way 240/Van Giesen, intersection. The challenge here does not appear to be an engineering issue but an administrative concern, involving as it would both the City (who 'own' the Green Belt Trail) and WSDOT (who 'own' H'way 240). We'd encourage the City to start this conversation with WSDOT.

**Summary:**

Richland (and the Tri-Cities in general) is a great place for cycle commuters. But there's always room for improvement, and perhaps Richland's new Complete Streets Policy will make commuting even better!

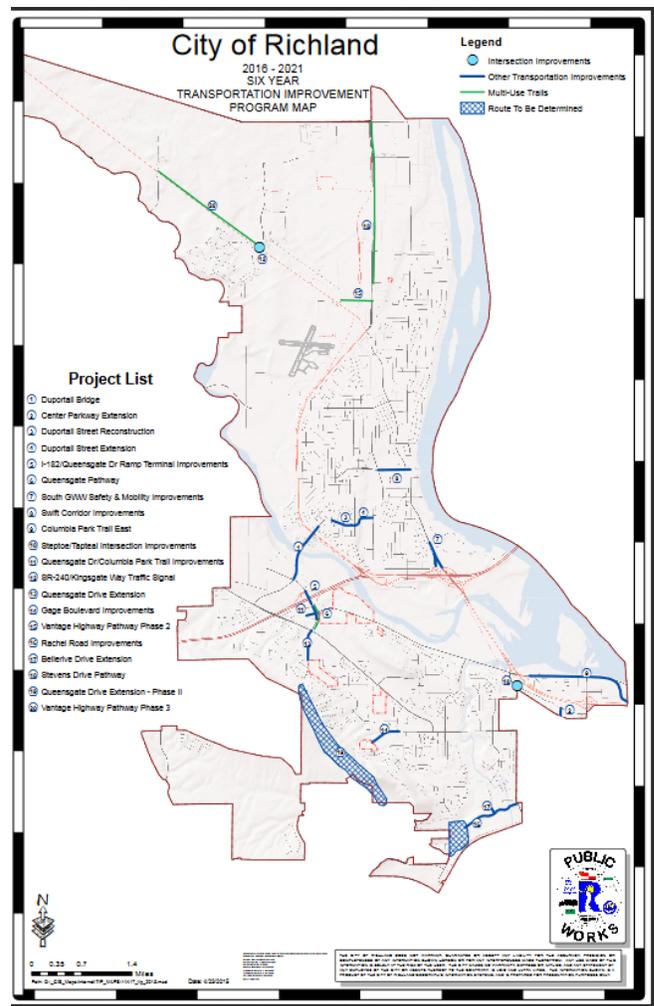


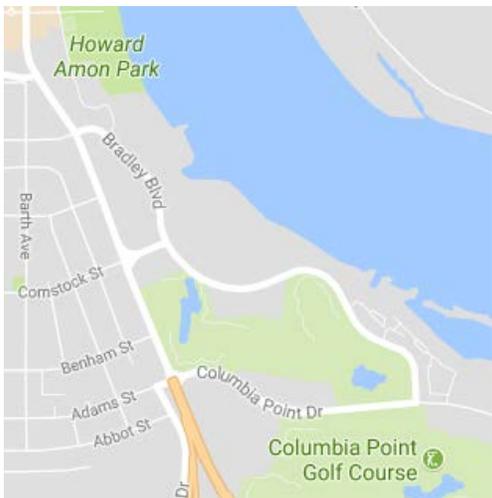
Figure 1: The 2016 Transportation Improvement Planning Map from [www.ci.richland.wa.us/Home/ShowDocument?id=268](http://www.ci.richland.wa.us/Home/ShowDocument?id=268)



**Figure 2: The Steptoe Roundabout**



**Figure 3: The Richland Junction Cloverleaf**



**Figure 4: Bradley Blvd.**



**Figure 5: The Green Belt Trail and Airport Way**