

The Bike Buzz in Kennewick

Carl Berkowitz
July 27, 2017

Many thanks to Kennewick Traffic Engineers John Deskins, Joe Seet and Alisha Piper for meeting with Dave Beach and me last April (4/24/2017) to share information on the many bicycle/pedestrian projects underway in Kennewick. Details are given below.

But First, A Path Forward...

A key point to come out of this meeting was how citizens can help the City improve bicycle and pedestrian mobility. Joe suggested the Tri-Cities cycling community develop a list of specific cycling/pedestrian related issues. As Joe noted, "We can't fix problems we don't know about." The Alliance for a Livable and Sustainable Community (ALSC) and Bike Tri-Cities (BTC) will try to coordinate this effort in the near future, and work with John, Joe and Alisha to schedule a round-table discussion with cyclists and city staff on the resulting topics. Contact Carl Berkowitz (CDBerkowitz@charter.net) or Dave Beach (davidbeach47@gmail.com) if you'd like to be part of this discussion.

The Projects: two big ones...

Kennewick has two big cycling related engineering projects coming up and a multitude of smaller ones.

The first of the two 'big ones' is at the east end of Columbia Park at the underpass on the Kennewick side of the Blue Bridge. It's on a curvy part of the road and narrow, so it's a bit of an adventure to ride through on a bike, especially if there's significant traffic from either direction. Kennewick hopes to reduce the excitement factor by widening this section of the road and adding a wall on the south side to increase the width of the bike and pedestrian lanes. And to make things even 'more boring', a Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacon (RRFB) is planned for just east of the underpass to alert motorists that pedestrians or two-wheeled travelers are crossing that part of the road that connects to the bike/ped lane on the Blue bridge, just east of the underpass.

A second 'big one' will be bike lanes, paving and sidewalks along the 'Bob Olson Parkway'. The parkway is in the Southridge area, just south of Thompson Hill. It's a westward extension of Hildebrand Blvd. along a road that is presently (as of spring 2017) unpaved. This road will continue northwest to Steptoe and 10th, resulting in a new and safe route for cyclists traveling between Hildebrand and Steptoe. On a historical note, Mr. Olson was a Kennewick councilmember for many years with a strong interest in city transportation issues.

Also in the Works...

Kennewick cyclists and walkers will also see a number of smaller, more local improvements made to the transportation infrastructure including the completion of many sidewalks and the addition of more RRFBs. John provided us with a list of the projects underway or planned. Note that this list includes the two 'big ones' described above:

1. The Columbia Park bike project is in Yakima for WSDOT review. Pending final review, the City plans to bid and construct this summer. This project improves the on-street bike lane segments between the skate park and Blue Bridge including Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) crossing just east of bridge.
2. The City did not receive funding for the bike path completion behind Duffy's pond. It is also working to resolve access issues with completion of this path.
3. There is a small sidewalk infill project that will soon be put out for bid to fill in short segments in miscellaneous locations, including a connection at the island by Columbia & SR 397
4. Bike lanes and sidewalks on Bob Olson Parkway (also one of the two 'big ones' described above). Plans are to complete this project later in 2017.
5. Kennewick received a new grant to add bike lanes and sidewalks to Metaline between Kellogg & Edison. Timeline is 2017 or 2018 construction.
6. Grant dollars have also been received to add bike lanes and sidewalk on 10th Avenue between Steptoe and Columbia Center Boulevard. Project anticipated in 2018 or 2019
7. CDBG grant projects in design are new Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon crossings on Kellogg at Metaline, on Volland by WinCo, and on Washington at Kennewick Avenue.
8. The city is also pursuing a grant for an RRFB at Washington and 6th Avenue where a lot of high school kids cross.
9. The SR 397 Overlay project that just started includes bike lanes from 1st Avenue north over the Cable Bridge.