

The Bike Buzz in Benton City

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Many thanks to Benton City Mayor Linda Lehman, City Clerk and Treasurer Stephanie Haug and Maintenance Foreman Kyle Kurth for meeting with Dave Beach and me to talk about bike activities in one of the most popular cycling destination places in Tri-Cities.



Cyclists who haven't yet been out to Benton City need to! It's one of the few remaining communities in our area to retain a small town, rural America flavor. The roads outside of town are quiet farmland. And one of the best long distance bike rides in the area starts from Benton City. This is the Old Inland Empire Highway, a state highway that opened in 1913, was built to link Yakima, Walla Walla, Spokane and other population centers in eastern Washington. Cyclists can ride on long, stretches of road overlooking the Yakima River, eventually coming into Prosser, with its many wineries, coffee shops and more 'small town flavor'. But Benton City itself has cycling opportunities for visitors and residents. And this community is also a popular rest stop for Tri-City cyclists coming in from Badger Canyon/Kiona, or Ruppert-DeMoss Rds. It's also the last (or first, depending on direction) stop for Richland's 'Tour du Hanford' loop that includes H'way 225 (Horn Rd.) along the Yakima River, past Horn Rapids County Park, along Route 10, past LIGO, turning at the Hanford Wye Barricade, riding along Glade North Road and Stevens Blvd, into (or out of) Richland.

But First, a Path Forward...

Cyclist and pedestrians can contact Stephanie (shaug@ci.benton-city.wa.us , 509-588-3322) for questions and suggestions about all things bicycle in Benton City.

One behind-the-scenes activity now in the works is the pursuit of funding to extend the existing Benton City bike trails and to add other cycling amenities. Linda noted that these activities are being done with the strong support of their city council.

Two years ago, during a council retreat, improved bike access through the city was determined to be a priority goal. This decision was based, in part, on a survey of residents that showed many wanted this for the community. Since then, a consultant has been working with the city to identify and apply for grants to fund the extension of the existing bike infrastructure into one that allows safe non-motorized access throughout Benton City. In addition, Stephanie shared that, through the Chamber of Commerce, they plan to encourage their local businesses to support the bike community.

Linda pointed out that all of these plans are consistent with guidance given in the Benton City Comprehensive Plan 2017 (<http://www.ci.benton-city.wa.us/docview.aspx?docid=27034>). The following is taken directly from Goal 3 of the Transportation section of this document:

Assure adequate accommodation for the needs of bicyclists, pedestrians, equestrians, and persons with physical disabilities in all transportation policies and facilities.

- *Policy 1. Strive to provide a system of bicycle routes and pedestrian walkways that link neighborhoods and public facilities and enhance the walking and bicycling experience.*
- *Policy 2. Take advantage of corridors such as power lines, surplus street rights-of-way, buffer zones, and public lands for multiple use trails and pathways.*
- *Policy 3. Require single- and multi-family residential development to provide pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly streets and sidewalks within the development.*
- *Policy 4. Develop and/or adopt design standards for bicycle friendly streets, sidewalks, crosswalks, bicycle racks, and multiple use trails and pathways.*
- *Policy 5. Require new and improved commercial centers to be located and designed to facilitate access and circulation by alternative transportation modes.*
- *Policy 6. Include stand-alone pedestrian and bicycle projects in the six-year Transportation Improvement Program, as appropriate*
- *Policy 7. Actively seek state and federal grants for non-motorized transportation improvement projects.*

The Projects: now

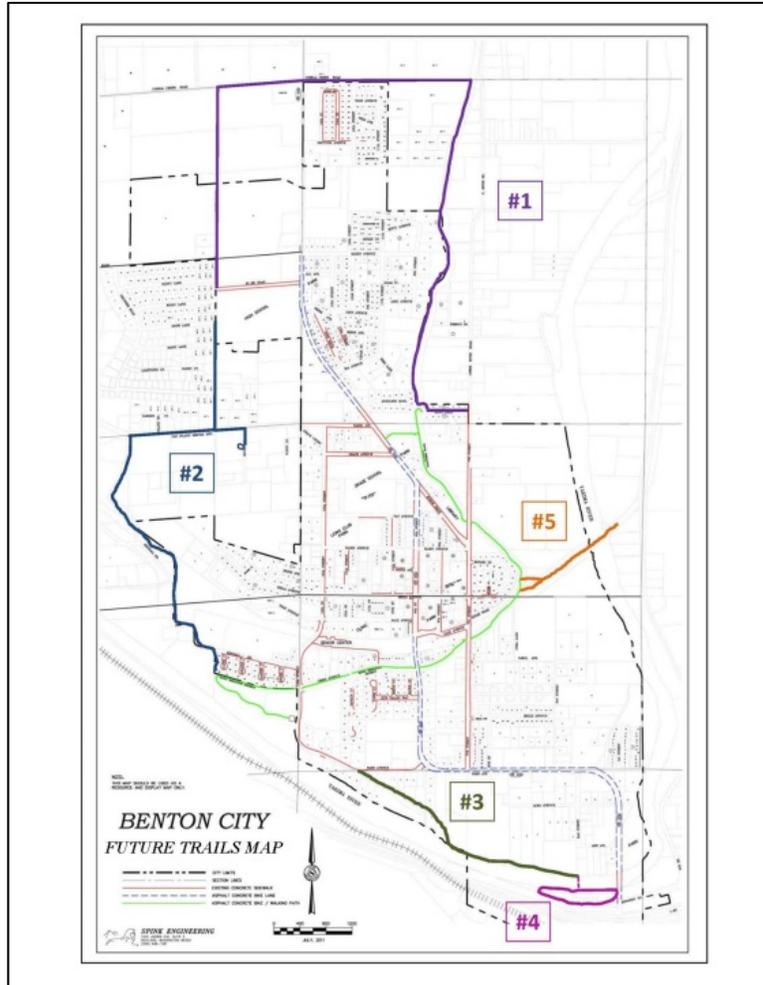
There are presently two 'official' bike trails in Benton City.

- SR 225 has a west side diamond lane for bicycles from the Yakima River Bridge to Dale Avenue. Sidewalks serve pedestrian movement through the commercial core from Dale Avenue to Ellen Avenue, while bicycles are routed around the commercial core from Dale Avenue to Ellen Avenue. On SR 225, beginning at Ellen Avenue, a west side parallel pathway extends northward to Grace Avenue, beyond which a diamond lane extends to the north city limits.
- A second multi-use path begins at a trailhead at 14th Street, south of Chris Avenue. It heads west approximately 0.25 miles, then curves back to the east, following the abandoned Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way, nearly to the Yakima River at Dinah Lane after crossing 7th Street. The path extends to the north approximately 0.6 miles, providing access to the schools, and terminates at Hope Lane for a total length of approximately 1.85 miles. This path will eventually connect with the future Tapteal Greenway path system along the Yakima River to Richland.

Also in the Works...

- Benton City is intent on increasing connectivity throughout their community and with other developments near them including our many wineries. The Benton City team shared plans to extend the city bike paths north to Coral Creek Rd (the northern boundary of the city) and west to the high school, then south on Highland along the backside of the high school. The start date for this project (and others) will depend on their success in obtaining funding, possibly through grants from the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office.

- These and other projects are shown on the map to the right, with the numbers indicating the present prioritization of activities (which could change, depending on availability of funding). One item they hope to pursue will be better bike/ped access from Benton City to Red Mountain. To this end, there are ongoing discussions with Union Pacific Railroad to gain access to the old railroad bridge crossing the Yakima River, just east of town and visible from the popular Ruppert-DeMoss Road connecting West Richland with Benton City. The city would like to turn both ends of the bridge into public parks with easy and safe access to the bridge and adjacent streets.



- The Benton City team also talked about bringing a bike/pedestrian path into town from south of the newly installed traffic circle area. This new route would cross the river on the remnants of an older bridge, using the four existing concrete piers located on the west side of the existing bridge. An entrance into town from that area would provide direct access to/from Badger Canyon, the Horse Heaven Hills and other points located south of the I-82 Freeway.
- Other plans? Riders on the annual Inland Empire Century Bike Ride (May 12th this year) who do the 50, 75 and 100-mile course may be coming through 9th St/Division St which is the main street of Benton City. In the past, riders on the IEC swung by the fire station off of 13th St and then bypassed the main part of town. If this change is made to the IEC route, participants should have additional hydration and food opportunities, courtesy of the Chamber of Commerce. This is work in progress; check with Linda for updates!