

November 27, 2006

Spokane City Council  
City of Spokane  
808 W. Spokane Falls Blvd.  
Spokane, WA 99201

President Shogan and City Council Members,

Over the last couple months, the Spokane Bicycle Advisory Board has provided input into the Comprehensive Plan review process. Many of our suggestions have been adopted for recommendation by the City Planning Department for the 2007 Comp Plan Update. Many other suggestions have been added to the Official Docket.

We are writing this letter to formalize two important and related requests:

1. To add a provision to the 2007 Comp Plan Update that states:  
"The Comprehensive Plan must include an integrated Master Bike Plan that defines the goals and design elements for bicycling facilities in the city."
2. To request a 20% headcount, shared between city planning and engineering, to help drive and develop a Master Bike Plan in the near future.

As an advisory board, our job is to advise the City on how to become a more bicycle-friendly city. In general, cities that are more favorable to cycling have healthier citizens, offer a better quality of life, and offer a richer economic foundation for businesses that locate within the "bikeable" areas of urban boundaries. In the future, we hope to offer more formalized research and data to back up these claims, but the point is: a city that embraces, supports, and promotes cycling is a more desirable city in every way, for all citizens.

To this end, we believe that developing bicycle facilities (trails, roadway signs and lines, racks, "smart" traffic lights, and other amenities) in tandem with the design and engineering departments and within the context of our existing Comprehensive Plan is a critical element to smart growth in the city of Spokane.

Obviously, to implement these changes requires capital. In order to secure federal and state grants to fund future bicycle-related projects and integrate bicycle infrastructure with planned public works projects, the City must adopt a complete Master Bike Plan as part of the Comp Plan. With an initial modest investment of political will as well as staff time and resources from the City, the returns for the community would include new grant opportunities and enhanced amenities to keep pace with the tremendous growth in the region.

Last week, Mr. Steve Franks, Director of the Planning Department, stated that the City already had a bike plan from SRTC. To be clear: what we have from the SRTC is a bike map. A bike plan specifies goals and design elements required for building and growing a bicycle infrastructure. A bike map should be integrated with a Master Bike Plan, since a map alone is not a bike plan. SRTC has not submitted a bike plan, integrated with the overall city comp plan to the city.

In addition, Mr. Franks commented at the public hearing last week that instead of adding yet another requirement to the Comp Plan, he would prefer "action." Specifically, his comments support the request to commit planning and engineering resources to help drive and develop a Master Bike Plan in the near future.

We agree with Mr. Franks on the need for action. That is why we are asking the Planning Department to include a Master Bike Plan as part of the Comp Plan (Request #1). This formal support from the City, in turn, will enable the departments to work towards common goals as well as provide a foundation for efforts to secure additional funds for future planning and implementation.

After seeking out external funding for many of the Bicycle Advisory Board goals, we found that official support from the City in the form of an integrated bicycle plan with in the Comp Plan is critical in order to qualify for grant opportunities. There is no easier way to begin to achieve this than simply adding a statement to the Comp Plan.

Furthermore, in order to adopt a Master Bike Plan as part of the Comp Plan, we must have the support of the city planning and engineering departments. A twenty-percent head count would translate into one person day per week shared between the planning and engineering departments. With the City's support, we hope to have a Master Bike Plan drafted within 12 to 18 months and funding proposals out the door to launch some initial projects. Again, getting significant external funding for Spokane bike projects will ultimately rely on adopting an integrated Master Bike Plan as part of the City's Comp Plan.

Thank you,

Kimberly Burkland, Bob Lutz, and John Speare  
Spokane Bicycle Advisory Board