



City of Spokane

January 14, 2008

Mr. Steve Davenport
Senior Planner
1026 W Broadway Ave
Spokane, WA 99260-0220

Subject: Spokane County Regional Trails Plan

Dear Mr. Davenport:

In September of 2007, the City of Spokane wrote a letter of support for the Spokane County Regional Trails Plan. I reinforce that support on behalf of the City of Spokane and its citizens. I am also requesting that the improvement of the Iron Bridge and connection between the Centennial Trail and the Ben Burr Trail be identified as a planned facility in the Spokane County Regional Trails Plan.

I am very enthusiastic about the benefits of non-motorized transportation planning. I encourage the approach to transportation planning being used by Spokane County because, as you know, many of the trails discussed in the regional plan traverse through the City of Spokane. My staff and I will work to implement this plan along with our own plan, and strive to complete projects that will improve the health of our citizens by providing greater outdoor recreation opportunities for biking and walking.

In the past year, there has been a great deal of energy around improving opportunities for bicyclists and pedestrians. One example is the city's work program to develop a Bicycle Master Plan. Our Planning Services Department is working directly with the City Council appointed Bicycle Advisory Board, neighborhood interests and other stakeholders to develop this plan by the end of this summer.

In addition, the Spokane Regional Health District and City of Spokane have been energetic participants in the Active Community Environments Program. As part of the ACES program, an Active Living Task Force has been established to engage numerous individuals and organizations interested in promoting active living and good community design. The Task Force has worked with the local chapter of the American Planning Association to organize a conference on public health and planning, and has influenced policy and actions within the County and City of Spokane.

"Spokane – Near Nature, Near Perfect"

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On June 14, 2007, the Active Living Task Force conducted a workshop, in partnership with the Washington State Department of Health, Spokane Regional Health District, and the City of Spokane, to bring together citizens and groups interested in pedestrian and bicycle mobility, and identify existing facilities and priorities for improving the non-motorized network. Approximately 80 participants learned about efforts to improve pedestrian and bicycle mobility in other cities and helped craft ideas for addressing gaps in the City of Spokane's non-motorized network.

One of the outcomes of this June 2007 workshop is a list of priorities based upon the commonalities that emerged among the groups in their responses to questions and a mapping exercise. Crossing the Spokane River and linking the Ben Burr Trail to the Centennial Trail were identified as two priorities.

The improvement of the Iron Bridge and linking the Centennial Trail to the Ben Burr Trail are also identified as projects that should be included in the Bicycle Master Plan. At this time the plan is in the development stage involving preparation of maps for public review and input.

Attached to this letter is additional background regarding the Active Living Task Force, Active Community Environments and support for the improvement of the Iron Bridge.

I look forward to completion of the City of Spokane Bicycle Master Plan and the Spokane County Regional Trails Plan. As a tool to support grant funding applications for improvements for projects such as the Iron Bridge, I will support the adoption of this plan by resolution of the Spokane City Council.

Sincerely,



Mary B. Verner
Mayor

Attachment

CC: Doug Chase, Director, Spokane County Parks Department
John Botelli, Planner, Spokane County
Ted Danek, City Administrator
Roger Crum, Acting Parks Director
Dave Mandyke, Director, Public Works and Utilities
Leroy Eadie, Planning Director
Ken Pelton, City Planner

June 2007 Active Living Task Force Workshop

Goals for the workshop included:

- Identify and prioritize projects for improving the City of Spokane's non-motorized network
- Bring together different groups with a common interest in having a safer, better connected, and more extensive non-motorized network
- Give direction to the City of Spokane's and WSDOT's policies and implementation actions related to non-motorized transportation facilities.

Active Community Environments (ACEs) are places where people of all ages and abilities can easily enjoy walking and bicycling, both as a mode of transportation and form of recreation. These areas support and promote physical activity, have sidewalks, bike lanes, multi-use paths and trails, parks, and recreational facilities. An active community environment is further promoted through mixed-use development, a connected street grid, and integration of open spaces.

I would like to draw your attention to the following information from the Rails to Trails Conservancy website:

http://www.railtrails.org/wherewework/western/news/wereg_news_0710spokanebridge.html

Bridge Mending in Spokane:

On the eastern side of Spokane, Wash., a gated iron railroad bridge hunches over the Spokane River. Built in 1911 by the Oregon & Washington Railroad and Navigation Company, the bridge serviced mining areas in the Coeur d'Alene district of Idaho and the northern Bitterroot Mountains of Montana. The line closed in 1973 to make way for the 1974 Spokane World's Fair. Today, a growing collection of local community members, business owners and advocates are working with Rails-to-Trails Conservancy to re-open this historical railroading relic—except this time for pedestrians and bicyclists instead of trains.

While renovating the bridge alone represents a unique opportunity to re-use and re-invent a piece of Spokane's past, the bridge would also link directly with the popular Spokane River Centennial Trail, a 37-mile rail-trail with more than 1.5 million users a year. Residents on both sides of the river would then have direct, non-motorized access to the Centennial Trail, whose eastern trailhead begins all the way at the Idaho border. The bridge would likewise be a key connector in Spokane's regional trails system, providing a link to the Ben Burr rail-trail and a number of other proposed pathways.

Bridge supporters also promote the project as a potential economic catalyst in nearby

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communities. "Opening the bridge would provide economic benefits to the surrounding area that is being re-developed, potentially encouraging businesses, employees and residents to move to the city," says Karen Byrd, chair of the Logan Neighborhood Council, one of the communities that the bridge would connect. "This is an example of a great opportunity to improve the pedestrian and bicycle mobility in Spokane, and the Logan Neighborhood has supported this project since 1995."

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy will be working with the City of Spokane, neighborhood groups and local businesses to implement a renovation strategy for the iron bridge. This plan will include identifying potential funding sources to renovate the bridge, ensuring that the bridge's structural soundness is adequately assessed, and developing a long-term maintenance strategy.