



May 11, 2020

Mayor Olsen and Members of the Council,

We are a group from across the City of Bothell who seek to effect positive change in our community through education and advocacy for safer streets, flexible and equitable land use, and by critically evaluating the economic impact of sprawl on our growing city.

COVID-19 has affected us all; we've been documenting challenges and evolving mobility and land use inequalities throughout the pandemic. Many jurisdictions have experimented with transportation projects to care for their citizens and, in some cases, encourage public health and climate resiliency by allowing space and providing options for people to recreate close to home.

Bothell has grown quickly—there are some serious gaps in sidewalks and infrastructure that allow for essential distancing. However, we're rich in right-of-way space, and have historically used pilot programs to evaluate substantive changes in transportation code. From traffic calming to scooter-shares, pilot programs have successfully implemented new processes and made sure adverse impacts are well understood before full implementation.

**We support Councilmember Duerr's proposal to temporarily open a portion of Main Street to businesses and residents—facilitating public safety by enabling social distancing, while also providing measures for economic recovery to local retail businesses impacted by the pandemic response.** Preliminary studies suggest transmission of infection most frequently occurs inside. More exterior space for retail will allow for safe distancing, as well as increased seating and retail capacity, increasing tax revenue for the city to mitigate our expected deficit. ***If this is expected to be too popular, it should be piloted in other portions of the city to meet demand. Business deliveries and transit routes have previously functioned during temporary street closures and lane reductions. Studies show active transportation infrastructure makes local businesses more resilient and community-oriented.***

We encourage Council to take immediate action on this unfolding crisis by meeting the needs of their constituents: adopt a healthy/open street pilot program modeled after the Cities of Edmonds, Bellevue, Seattle, Bend, Portland, Oakland, Denver, Minneapolis, or many others who have paved the way:

- Immediately expand temporary spaces for people biking and walking--buffer shoulders and sidewalks with cones or signs in frequently-trafficked areas to allow distancing measures. ***In other jurisdictions, essential vehicle access for residents and businesses is still allowed on 'open' streets, which typically only restrict dangerous through-traffic in neighborhoods.***
- Prioritize work on the City's Bike Master Plan as people begin moving around our community and need a safe, functioning network for essential travel. ***Meeting Council's climate goals is dependent on moving people, not vehicles.***
- Research ways in which COVID-19 stimulus could be directed toward equitable, emergency transportation infrastructure in underserved areas of our community by implementing fast, temporary, cheap, multimodal networks where currently limited. ***While politically expedient to implement in high-traffic areas, parts of our city are only accessible by car. Piloting buffered spaces for people throughout Bothell will allow essential distancing measures without overcrowding, and a trial period for long-term transportation policy.***

We encourage an open dialogue on healthy/open streets in the City of Bothell, and look to municipal leadership to use this time as an opportunity to make progress on council goals and meet the practical needs of all members of our community. We are able to provide feedback on the aforementioned points as options are explored, and look forward to your thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,

**Bo-POP – Bothellites for People-Oriented Places**