



The First FORUM ON WALKABILITY TO ADDRESS WALKABILITY IN ISLAND COUNTY

Sponsored by:

Island County Environmental Health Assessment Team (EHAT)

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Date: Friday, October 27, 2006

Time: 8:00-10:00 AM

Location: Coupeville Recreation Hall, Coupeville, WA

Attendees of the Forum (organized alphabetically by last name):

Terri Arnold	Island County Parks
Marian Bartleson	Oak Harbor Senior Center
Connie Bowers	Island County Public Works
Art Burke	South Whidbey Parks and Recreation
Bill Byrd	Island County Commissioner District 3
Roger Case, M.D.	ICHD Health Officer
CAPT Colin Chinn	Naval Hospital
Joyce Christiansen	Camano Island Walkers
Patty Cohen	Mayor of Oak Harbor
John Dean	Candidate, Island County Commissioner District 3
Sherry Erickson	Camano Island Walkers
Karen Grossman	ICHD
Heather Habeeb	Oak Harbor Senior Center
Katie Hicks	EHAT
Keith Higman	Environmental Health Director
Helen Johnson	South Whidbey Home Builders Association
Cac Kamak	City of Oak Harbor Planning Dept
Kevin Rio Kiper	EHAT
Sharon Knight	South Whidbey School Board
Carole Lievestro	Soroptimists of Oak Harbor
Adam Lorio	Deception Pass State Park
David Macys	EHAT
Valerie Matazzoni	EHAT Staff
Connie Mathison	Island County Public Works
Kerry McDonald	ICHD Director of Administrative Services
Tim McDonald	ICHD Health Services Director
Carrie McLachlan	ICHD Assessment/Comm. Dev. Supervisor
Mike Morton	Island County Public Works
Bill Myhr	Coupeville School District Superintendent
Cathy Niiro	United Way/CHAB
Hank Nydam	City of Oak Harbor Parks Manager
Marie Piper	EHAT
Linda Rhodes	EHAT
Mike Riley	Island County Trails Coalition

Barbara Saugen	Whidbey General Hospital Commissioner
Carol Sele	NAS Whidbey Island
Jane Selene	Oak Harbor Senior Center
Celine Servatius	EHAT
Mike Shelton	Island County Commissioner District 1
Carl Stephens	EHAT
Leslie Stevens	EHAT
Joyce Swanson	Broad View Elementary
Aaron Terada	Fort Ebey State Park
Dave Thomason	CHAB
Carol Triplett	Camano Island Walkers
Whitney Webber	EHAT Staff
Jill Wood	ICHHD
Elaine Woods	Whidbey Walks

Program Description:

Agenda

8:00-8:05

Opening Remarks

8:05-8:10

Purpose of Forum

- I. Chair of the forum, Commissioner Mike Shelton, explained that a forum on walkability was identified in the *Island County Plan for Healthy Living* as one of thirteen strategies for moving toward the vision for a healthy Island County.
- II. Commissioner Shelton noted that each person and organization attending the forum was invited to participate because they had been identified as an interested party for actively addressing the walkability issue.
- III. Commissioner Shelton noted that the Environmental Health Assessment Team (EHAT) sponsored the forum. In addition to illegal waste dumping and littering, EHAT volunteers identified walkability as an environmental health issue of concern for our community. Commissioner Shelton noted the success of EHAT's previous forums on illegal waste dumping and littering.
- IV. Commissioner Shelton defined walkability as a measure of the extent to which our community provides safe, convenient access to walking and other non-motorized forms of transportation.
- V. Commissioner Shelton described the purpose of the forum: 1) To discuss how environmental factors impact our need for safer and more accessible walking routes, 2) To facilitate communication and cooperation around the issue of walkability in our communities, 3) To review local data on the relationship between overweight/obesity and walking in Island County, 4) To work together with other agencies, organizations, and volunteers to identify the primary gaps in our understanding of walkability and the barriers to addressing problem areas, and 5) to build consensus on the gaps and barriers.
- VI. Whitney Webber, EHAT staff, reviewed contents of the folders provided.

8:10-8:15

Introductions

- I. Attendees introduced themselves by stating their name and organization they represented or interest in walkability.

8:15-8:50

Presentation by Carrie McLachlan, Supervisor of Assessment and Community Development, Island County Public Health

- I. Commissioner Shelton discussed EHAT’s partnerships with schools, NAS, local government, and service clubs to encourage walking in the community. He mentioned that as part of EHAT’s next steps, they would like to identify what policy and environmental changes can be made to make walking safer, more pleasant, and easier to do.
- II. Commissioner Shelton provided a quick overview on the relationship between overweight/obesity and walkability in Island County.
- III. Commissioner Shelton introduced Carrie McLachlan to give a detailed presentation on this topic. (Copies of the slides are available upon request.)

8:50-9:35 Identify gaps and barriers in addressing the issue of walkability in small groups

- I. Commissioner Shelton asked attendees to break out into groups to identify the primary gaps in their understanding of walkability and the barriers to addressing problem areas. The three groups were: 1) Safe Routes to School, 2) Convenience & Connectivity, and 3) Recreation.
- II. Commissioner Shelton asked the attendees to concentrate on 3 major topics in their chosen group: 1) Safety, 2) Availability, and 3) Public awareness.

Small-group Brainstorming Exercise

1. Ten minutes to address accomplishments.
2. Twenty minutes to discuss gaps and barriers.
3. Ten to fifteen minutes to prioritize top 3 issues out of all topics discussed.

Accomplishments		
Safe Routes to School	Convenience & Connectivity	Recreation
1) Maxwellton Trail connects schools	1) Bayview Rd project accommodates pedestrians with right-of-way and paved shoulders	1) Guided trail walks; naturalists educating public about benefits of walking
2) Coupeville recreational complex	2) Camano Island Walkers – 4 years of walking, building personal relationships	2) Newspaper publicity
3) Coupeville HS project to provide trail access	3) New developments building trails into new housing areas	3) Dedicated volunteers (e.g. Friends of Camano Island Parks (FOCIP))
4) OH sidewalks on Regatta; other sidewalk projects planned	4) Freeland Trails Committee – working on connecting trails	4) Efforts to increase signage
5) “Walk to School Day” in OH; Frequent Walker Challenge	5) Kettles Trail connects Coupeville to Kettles	5) Plenty of choices (easy-extreme, short-long)
6) Coupeville “Poker Walk” – multi-generational	6) Oak Harbor connects housing areas behind Walmart to Windjammer Park and beyond (Skagit Valley College)	6) City of Oak Harbor – Disc golf coming!
7) Coupeville 4 th of July Walk/Run	7) Oak Harbor pocket communities have walking	7) New South Whidbey property coming with

	areas	improved access/more trails
8) Camano – Arrowhead Road Expansion	8) Close proximity of services/destinations for errands to living/working areas	8) Island County Trails Plan – lots of research, maps
	9) Multitudes of county right-of-ways to work with	9) Winter walking with lights at schools on South Whidbey
		10) \$5 parking fee gone at state parks

Gaps and Barriers from Safe Routes to School Group:

Safety:

- Stranger danger
- Lighting
- Unsafe access points
- Lack of safe crossing (i.e. sidewalks may end at county/city boundary)

Availability:

- No hubs for buses or parents to drop kids off to walk together (Walking school bus concept; using hubs gets kids walking together from a designated location with a responsible adult and keeps vehicles out of school parking lots.)
- Distance between home and school precludes walking as an option

Public Awareness:

- Missed grant opportunities (i.e. application process too complex and not well advertised, schools lack resources to apply, requires time and staffing to apply and an agency willing to lead the application process)
- Healthy choice is not always easiest choice
- Lack of parental motivation
- Transient population may be unaware of opportunities/safety/programs
- Skewed priorities of parents to encourage walking

Gaps and Barriers from Convenience & Connectivity Group:

Safety:

- Lighting
- Dark clothing and no reflective gear
- Speed limits
- No car path separation (i.e. perception that shoulders are not safe for pedestrians)
- Signage (i.e. fog lines/walking symbol)

Availability:

- Cul de sacs do not connect
- Signage (i.e. historical, biological, mileage markers)
- Trails to and from public transportation
- Increase transit runs
- Adopt-A-Park to maintain trails
- Volunteerism
- Lack of private property easements
- Lack of time
- Community trails open to public
- Parking at trailheads
- Lack of restrooms, seating/waiting areas
- Driving to walk (i.e. linking trails)

Trails not mapped/not known

Not maintained

Public Awareness:

Lack of understanding of tidelands

Neighborhood awareness of trails

Signage

Maps

Easy to find an excuse (i.e. blame the weather, not enough time)

Children will follow adult example

Handicapped accessible

Lower income groups not well represented

Growth Management Plan

Gaps and Barriers from Recreation Group:

Safety:

Lack of separation from busy/loud/unsafe roads (requires creative design for safety)

Trails too narrow to accommodate strollers

Availability:

Fun with kids and parents – more choices!

Improve/offer more at parks

Advocate for increased funding for safe trails (better trails = better property)

Volunteers are drained; cannot do as much without political will, dollars, and more support

Island County does not have a “walkability factor” from which to set clear goals

Lack protected/covered areas for walking in bad weather

Not enough places to encourage kids to have fun outside (i.e. skate park)

Few paved trails near common areas

Not enough resources devoted to volunteerism (i.e. employee time, stewardship groups, Adopt-A-Park programs)

Trails do not encourage multiple activities

No one on Camano devoted to the walkability issue (requires one person on each island)

Few schools have walking paths

Public Awareness:

Projects in Island County Non-motorized Trails Plan not completed, specifically pocketbook of maps (lack funding and leadership)

No easily identifiable “inter-island logo” (may be supported through 2% hotel tax fund)

Lack of interagency communication – who knew we all cared?

Not enough social opportunities for community member interaction

Recreational opportunities are poorly marketed/advertised (begin with “Walkability Week”)

No routine stewardship schedule or consistency in project activities

No one to encourage applications for conservation easements near neighborhoods/schools

Classrooms are booked – hard to get message across re: walking

9:35-9:55

Build consensus on gaps and barriers

Top 3 Priorities: Within the small groups, each participant was given three red dots to vote for their priorities. The most red dots won!

Safe Routes to School:

Missed grant opportunities

Lack of safe crossings (e.g. Whidbey Avenue)

Healthy choice not always the easiest choice

Convenience & Connectivity:

- ❑ Policy shift from top down (e.g. developing walkable communities)
- ❑ No separation from vehicular traffic
- ❑ Signage (e.g. reminders that people are walking, “naturalist” type information, identifying trails and trailheads, etc.)

Recreation:

- ❑ Political will (i.e. publicity, funding, priority-setting, and goal-setting)
- ❑ Advertise, market, and improve recreation options throughout Whidbey and Camano (e.g. pocketbook of user-friendly maps)
- ❑ Interagency cooperation and communication

9:55-10:00

Closing & Adjourn

- I. Commissioner Shelton summarized the key points from the forum.
- II. Commissioner Shelton asked for a show of hands to see if there was an interest in a second forum. EHAT is sponsoring a second forum to work on solutions. Most meeting participants said they would be interested in attending.
- III. Commissioner Shelton invited attendees to stay for more refreshments and to network and meet with staff and EHAT to develop ways to engage the community around the issue of walkability.
- IV. Commissioner Shelton thanked the attendees for their time and energy in meeting to work on this issue and acknowledge their hard work and dedication to making a difference in the county.
- V. Commissioner Shelton reminded participants to complete an evaluation form and stated that minutes from the meeting would be distributed to all participants.

Evaluation:

Following is the form that was used for the event. We received 34 evaluation forms. Some forms did not contain a response for certain questions.

Walkability Forum Evaluation Form

The Environmental Health Assessment Team (EHAT) would like to know your opinions on today’s forum. We appreciate your response to the following questions.

Please return this form to the organizer at the end of the forum. Also, if you have not done so already, please sign the sign-in sheet and update the participant list with your contact information. Thank you for your time and participation!

		Strongly agree				Strongly disagree
1.	The forum was applicable to my job/interests.	1 (25)	2 (8)	3 (1)	4	5
2.	The program was well paced within the allotted time.	1 (22)	2 (10)	3 (2)	4	5
3.	The material was presented in an organized manner.	1 (28)	2 (6)	3	4	5

4. The presentation provided adequate background on the topic. 1 (23) 2 (8) 3 (2) 4 5
5. I would be interested in attending a follow-up forum to brainstorm solutions. 1 (25) 2 (6) 3 (2) 4 5
6. The forum did a good job of bringing together people in the community working to address this issue. 1 (26) 2 (7) 3 4 (1) 5
7. The objectives of the forum were met. 1 (22) 2 (9) 3 (2) 4 5
8. Given the topic, was this forum: a. Too short (12) b. Just right (21) c. Too long
9. Please rate the following:
- | | Excellent | Very Good | Good | Fair | Poor |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| a. Visuals | <input type="checkbox"/> (18) | <input type="checkbox"/> (13) | <input type="checkbox"/> (2) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Acoustics | <input type="checkbox"/> (8) | <input type="checkbox"/> (11) | <input type="checkbox"/> (11) | <input type="checkbox"/> (2) | <input type="checkbox"/> (1) |
| c. Meeting space | <input type="checkbox"/> (7) | <input type="checkbox"/> (14) | <input type="checkbox"/> (11) | <input type="checkbox"/> (1) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Handouts | <input type="checkbox"/> (12) | <input type="checkbox"/> (14) | <input type="checkbox"/> (7) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. The program overall | <input type="checkbox"/> (16) | <input type="checkbox"/> (14) | <input type="checkbox"/> (3) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
10. Please list organizations missing from the forum that could contribute to a follow-up forum:
 Mayors of Coupeville and Langley, more Camano representation (e.g. state parks, senior center, road maintenance, schools, transportation), community trail stakeholders (e.g. Saratoga Woods, Goss Lake, Goose Rock), non-walking population (e.g. teens, students), local newspaper representative, WSU Beach Watchers, school PTA, service groups (e.g. Lions, Elks, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts), vendors (e.g. bicycle stores), churches, youth groups
11. How could this forum be improved?
 Allow more time (e.g. 3-4 hours), schedule the forum from 9-11 or 11-1, better define the three "topic" areas as groups got off track often, 9 AM start for people traveling from Camano, better organized group areas to meet, need microphones

Lessons Learned:

We considered this workshop a success. However, we feel that there are ways to improve reaching out to the community. Please note the lessons learned and feel free to contribute your thoughts to this list.

Lesson #1: Expand the list of invitees and spend more time on making sure that those on the list can attend.

Lesson #2: Schedule meetings at a later time (~ 9 AM) and for a slightly longer period (3 hrs) since some participants will be traveling from greater distances.

Lesson #3: Devote more time to providing the background and rationale for the forum and to defining the topic areas so that the comments from each group reflect the forum objectives.

Lesson #4: Improve ways (i.e. microphones) for the small groups to share their thoughts and findings with the larger group.

Lesson #5: Organize better meeting spaces for small group discussion.

Lesson #6: Include handouts that participants can use during the meeting to record their thoughts and ideas.