

City of Bellevue
Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan
Summary Report
Focus Groups
May 2007

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Background and Objectives

The City of Bellevue contracted with Northwest Research Group, Inc. to conduct a study that will assist the City and its stakeholders in understanding current and potential usage of alternate modes of transportation, in particular walking and biking, by residents. Their behavior and attitudes towards Bellevue's overall transportation network will also be discussed and reported.

The study consisted of two phases:

1. The 2007 Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan online survey which was conducted in May 2007, by the City of Bellevue with 919 bicyclists and 405 pedestrians.
2. Six follow-up focus groups further exploring citizen perceptions of "getting around" downtown Bellevue using various modes of transportation.

The quantitative online survey was independently conducted by the City of Bellevue, but the results were analyzed by Northwest Research Group, Inc.

Six focus groups were held, two each on May 17th, May 22nd, and May 23rd, 2007. A range of 8 to 14 participants were recruited depending on the group composition to ensure 8 to 12 participants attended and participated. Group participants were recruited from a base of 399 online bicycle participants and 117 online pedestrian participants who expressed interest in receiving information from the City.

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Methodology

Due to the complex nature of the objectives under investigation in this second phase, exploratory qualitative research was used. This qualitative methodology provides richer information to meet the research objectives. Due to the complex nature of the objectives under investigation in this second phase, exploratory qualitative research was used. This qualitative methodology provides richer information to meet the research objectives.

Qualitative Research Methodology

Qualitative research is generally defined as research that utilizes open-ended interviewing to explore and understand the attitudes, opinions, feelings, and behaviors of individuals or a group of individuals. It uses relatively small sample sizes and can take many forms, including focus groups, in-depth interviews, mini-groups, dyads, and triads.

Qualitative research can:

- Lead to deeper understanding of the consumer mindset;
- Develop hypotheses about a product or service; and
- Provide flexibility, allowing for changing areas of exploration as the study progresses.

Qualitative research cannot:

- Quantify insights or statistically project findings to the population under study for the following reasons:
 - Recruiting is rarely completely representative;
 - The nature of qualitative research necessitates small samples; and
 - The line of questioning is not necessarily consistent across interviews.

Qualitative research is best used for breadth of information. While quantitative surveys are appropriate for learning “how many?” or “how much,” qualitative research helps you discover and understand motivations, feelings, values, attitudes, and perceptions.

The exploratory research phase of this work is intended to be qualitative in nature. As such, the findings apply only to the participants studied and can not be projected to the entire population or to other populations outside the scope of this study.

Focus Group Methodology

To achieve the study objectives, six (6) focus groups were conducted in downtown Bellevue, two each on May 17th, May 22nd, and May 23rd, 2007.

Eight bike survey participants per group were recruited for 6 to 8 to show and 14 pedestrian survey participants were recruited per group, for 8 to 12 to show. Groups lasted approximately 120 minutes. Focus group participants were provided a monetary incentive of \$35 to participate.

Group Composition

Six groups were created, each with 6 to 11 participants. The six groups, which are described in more detail below, were split up based on their gender and whether they were pedestrians or bicyclists. Those participants that indicated they were bicyclists were then further divided based on their riding frequency and ability level.

Pedestrian Groups:

This group was split by gender, one group of females and one group of males, who were identified as pedestrian respondents from the online quantitative survey. Each group included people of many ages, with differing frequencies of pedestrian activities and places of residence/employment, as well as varying household sizes. Their sources of information about the survey (e.g. It's Your City, friend/co-worker), were also diverse.

Less frequent bicyclists:

This group was split by gender, one group of females and one group of males, who indicated in the online bicyclist's survey they last rode their bike more than one week ago. Each group included people of many ages, with differing frequencies of pedestrian activities and places of residence/employment, as well as varying household sizes. Their sources of information about the survey (e.g. It's Your City, friend/co-worker, email from a bike group), were also diverse.

Frequent bicyclists:

This group was split by gender, one group of females and one group of males, who indicated in the online bicyclist's survey they last rode their bike within the last week. Each group included people of many ages, with differing frequencies of pedestrian activities and places of residence/employment, as well as varying household sizes. Their sources of information about the survey (e.g. It's Your City, friend/co-worker, email from bike group), were also diverse.

Recruiting

Those who indicated in the pedestrian or the bike survey online that they would like to receive more information and provided an e-mail address were randomly invited to participate in the focus groups via e-mail by the City. Final participants were selected and participation was confirmed to ensure a mix of age, place of residence/employment, household size, and source of information about the survey.

Kris Lau and Tomomi Watanabe, who co-moderated the focus groups, developed the moderator's guide in conjunction with the City of Bellevue. *(A copy of the final screening instrument and Moderator's Guide are included in the Appendix of this report.)*

Key Findings

Ideal Place

As a “warm-up,” participants were first asked to discuss what they felt to be the ideal place for pedestrians and/or bicyclists, drawing from past experiences. Places they have been, read, or heard about being particularly pedestrian and/or bicycle friendly (depending on the respective focus group) and what specifically made these places so great. This topic also led to what their perceptions of an “ideal city” looked like in terms of their respective activity.

In general, pedestrian participants:

- Indicated that the culture of transportation is different in Europe, more people tend to travel via foot and therefore there are a lot of “great cities for walking”.
- Said that high gas prices in Europe make owning a car expensive, which in turn, encourages citizens to find cheaper alternatives such as walking, biking, or mass transit.
- Felt that locally, Portland, Oregon, is a great place to walk, and attributed this to the “narrow streets”, which cause cars to drive much slower. Some participants also mentioned that the streets in Portland have fewer lanes in comparison to Seattle, also slowing down the flow of traffic.
- Mentioned the Netherlands as a great place to walk because the bike paths are separated from the walking paths which are both separated from the traffic lanes.
- Felt that smaller cities were sometimes more pedestrian friendly, in comparison to larger urban areas because pedestrians don’t have as much interaction with traffic and busy intersections.
- Stated that crosswalks, like those at Pike Place Market in downtown Seattle, are pedestrian friendly and well designed, because they quickly and effectively alert cars of any pedestrian traffic.

In general, bicycle participants:

- Identified numerous countries throughout Europe such as France, Italy, Belgium, and Holland, and specific cities such as Berlin, Munich, and Amsterdam, as places that are bicycle friendly, and have many more dedicated bike lanes than the US.
- Felt that locally, Redmond was a very bicycle friendly town that has focused a lot of energy on making it a place where people want to bike for both recreational and commuting purposes. Eastlake was also identified as having the same characteristics.
- Reported that areas in Southern California, such as San Diego and La Jolla, are great areas to ride bikes. Some participants indicated that the high ridership along the paths and areas surrounding the water created a safe environment to ride in the streets as well.

- Thought Portland, Oregon, where there is a large presence of bicyclists, is a good place to ride. One participant also mentioned that Portland has a “good layout” with segregation between cars and bikes. Several participants indicated that Portland “geographically works as a bike commuting area” (i.e. it’s flatter than Bellevue).
- Cited Mercer Island as a good place to ride because of the “high tolerance level for bicyclists”.

Attributes of an Ideal Place

After participants discussed places they felt were ideal cities or areas to walk or bike, they were asked more specifically to define the attributes that make their ideal city great. This topic ended up generating conversations about the problematic areas in Bellevue in relation to their “ideal city”.

Pedestrian participants mentioned the following as attributes they saw in their ideal city:

- Sidewalks allowing pedestrians to get around easily.
- Vegetation buffers on busy streets creating protection for pedestrians.
- Narrower streets and travel lanes for cars, therefore reducing their speed.
- Well lit areas encouraging pedestrians to walk whenever they want and feel safe.
- Responsive lights that aren’t “designed around cars, but around pedestrians”.
- No “right on red” by cars. Participants reported that automobiles tend to ignore pedestrian crossings if allowed a right on red and focus their attention more to oncoming traffic. It was suggested that more driver awareness on these types of intersections and lights would help. Even perhaps banning them all together, would be beneficial and much safer to pedestrians.
- Working drinking fountains throughout the City.
- Countdowns at crosswalks.
- Softer surfaces to walk on.

Bicycle participants mentioned the following as attributes they saw in their ideal city:

- Streets that are flat and geographically easy to maneuver.
- Connectivity between routes.
- Suitable and safe parking for bikes in well lit, centralized areas between commonly used locations.
- Well kept bike paths, which include: good pavement quality, no debris or drains along paths, and wide bike lanes that allow for space between traveling parties.
- Public education and awareness for drivers and bicyclists, so both groups can co-exist and abide by the rules.

- Participants also mentioned that in Europe there is “more respect” for bicyclists and in many cities bikes outnumber cars. This ratio forces drivers to be more aware of bicyclists due to the sheer number of riders.
- Lower speed limits and better law enforcement.
- Designated and segregated bike routes.
 - Participants generally agreed that designated bike lanes are a good idea, especially in high volume areas for both commuter riding and recreational riding. Participants mentioned safety by separation as a huge benefit to implementing designated bike lanes as it allows both cars and bicycles distance between each other.
- Good lighting at intersections to allow cars to see all parties more clearly. This attribute also promotes a “safer environment”, especially at night, and during the winter months when it’s darker for longer periods of time.
- No illegal parking in existing bike lanes.
- No “right on red”.
- Better visibility around corners.
- Signals that are easily triggered and work efficiently and fast.

Issues Walking and Biking in Bellevue

Pedestrian participants noted some issues walking or running in Bellevue:

- The amount of car traffic and congestion was frustrating for some when walking around Bellevue’s “downtown core”.
 - Long lights in downtown Bellevue make it difficult to walk because of the extended waits at intersections.
 - Although traffic is frustrating, there are many places and paths to walk on in Bellevue.
- Proper education for drivers would help Bellevue become more pedestrian friendly.
 - Better signage and clearly marked crosswalks were ways participants thought the City could educate people. Countdowns on the light crossings was mentioned as a way to help both pedestrians and drivers gauge the amount of time remaining for both foot and car traffic.

Bicycle participants noted some issues biking in Bellevue:

- They felt considerably safer riding in the street than on sidewalks because cars don’t often pay attention when they are pulling out of driveways. Many participants indicated that cars don’t even slow down until they reach the street where the “traffic” starts.
- Connectivity between bike lanes is extremely important, and Bellevue lacks this. All cycling groups mentioned on multiple occasions that in Bellevue, bike paths

often “stop” and feed onto dangerous main arterial roads before meeting back up with another path further down the way.

- Connectivity between bike routes that go to other cities would also encourage riders, especially if there were a wider variety of destinations and safe routes with designated lanes to get there.
- Were aggravated with the condition of some bike lanes and often referred to the “debris from the street” being pushed onto the paths. Many felt that although the roads and streets are being well-maintained the same couldn’t be said of the bike lanes.
 - Participants stated street sweepers are notorious for pushing “glass” as well as branches, leaves, and other debris commonly found on roads directly into the shoulder of the street or bike lane. This makes it difficult to ride and forces bicyclists to ride in the street – aggravating both parties.

Bellevue in Comparison to Other Cities

Participants were asked to talk about how other cities compare to Bellevue for biking or walking/running.

- Most felt getting across or through Bellevue is difficult – due to growth in the City and the resulting immense amount of construction.
 - Cyclists specifically mentioned the flow of traffic to and from Microsoft causing difficulties.
- Participants indicated that Seattle drivers seem much more bicycle savvy than drivers in Bellevue.
 - It was also noted that there are more things to look at while driving around downtown Seattle and this causes traffic to move along much slower.
- Downtown Bellevue was considered difficult to maneuver.
 - Participants cited that Bellevue is one “huge mall”, specifically mentioning that downtown Bellevue has a plethora of stores and shopping outlets, increasing the amount of traffic and activity.
 - Riding bicycles in downtown Bellevue was considered difficult due to the “legacy of the super block”.
 - The streets in downtown Bellevue are very high volume streets lacking bike lanes, therefore bicyclists are forced to enter into the traffic with cars.
 - The poor signage in downtown Bellevue makes it difficult to navigate, especially for those unfamiliar with the area.
- Both Kirkland and Redmond are areas mentioned by cyclist group participants as great examples of efficient bike systems. The beautiful scenery coupled with well thought out and connected bike paths make these cities enjoyable places to ride.

- Redmond, having a smaller population than Bellevue, is considered by participants to exude a more “community or neighborhood feel” than Bellevue. This difference is reflected in the paths throughout the city.
- Redmond was also dubbed the “bicycle capitol” by the participants. Bicyclists felt it was very welcoming and friendly city to ride in.
- Although Bellevue does have greenbelts to different locations, participants stated that these routes weren’t direct.
- A continual theme throughout the groups, mentioned more specifically by participants who commute to work via bicycle, was the extreme lack of bike routes from East/West. The North/South direction was thought to be lacking sufficient bike lanes as well, but not to the extent of the East/West direction.
 - Although participants said it is not impossible to get through Bellevue from East to West and vice versa, it requires the use of multiple routes due to the lack of connectivity. Especially for the purpose of commuting to and from work.
- One participant commended the City of Bellevue for being “responsive to issues” such as debris, pot holes, and protruding vegetation on bike paths. Once the City is notified of these problems, they said, they quickly responded
- Non-specific to Bellevue, but more in regards to the United States in direct comparison with European countries, was the culture surrounding automobiles and the need to own a car. Participants felt it was time to start changing our culture and begin utilizing the other available modes of transportation that are more environmentally friendly.

Improvements in Bellevue Over the Past 5 Years

Participants were asked if they had noticed any improvements for pedestrians/bikers in the past 5 years.

- The signals at stoplights have increased their time allowing pedestrians more time to cross the street.
- The lights are more responsive and activated quicker than in the past so pedestrians and bicyclists don’t have to wait as long at intersections.
- More landscaped sidewalks have been created.
 - Participants said the landscaping adds to the look of the sidewalk while also creating a barrier between the various modes of transportation, a dual benefit.
- The new transit center is centrally located making it much easier for residents, specifically downtown residents, to use alternate modes of transportation aside from cars.
- Some residential neighborhoods now have more bike lanes and sidewalks.

- More greenbelts have been created throughout the city, although participants said it would be more beneficial if there was more connectivity between main bike paths and the greenbelts.
- With open communication such as focus groups and online surveys the City has encouraged and facilitated discussion between citizens trying to indicate problem areas within Bellevue. By taking resident opinions into account and highlighting areas citizens like, the City has been successful.
 - Although the City is currently gathering residents opinions, there was some frustration over the City having meetings with committees regarding the same issues being commented on by the residents. It seemed nothing was ever resolved.

Areas Residents go to Walk and/or Bike in Bellevue

Participants were asked to indicate where they go to ride or walk in Bellevue. Bicyclist group participants indicated the reason for riding, either commuting to or from work or riding recreationally, which made a major difference where they rode.

The following places were cited by pedestrian participants as good places to walk in Bellevue:

- The Lake Hills greenbelt
- Mercer Slough
- The point to point trail system in Medina
- The downtown Bellevue park
- The library
- Areas surrounding the lake
- Crossroads park
- Downtown Bellevue during lunch
- The trail in Factoria can be loud but is a nice place to walk

The following places were cited by bicycling participants as good places to bike around Bellevue:

- Somerset was mentioned as a nice place to ride after work.
- When looking to find hills to bike, Issaquah is a good destination.
- The areas surrounding residential neighborhoods are good for bikers because the flow of traffic is much slower than that of main arterial routes and downtown Bellevue.
- Beginner/less frequent bike riders enjoy the trails around I-90 and 520.

- Residents of Mercer Island seem to have more respect for bicyclists and it feels like a safer place to ride in comparison to Bellevue.
- Redmond, considered a biking city, is mentioned as a great place to ride.
- The paths surrounding the lake in Kirkland are scenic.
- Lake Washington Boulevard is good for commuting purposes.
- West Lake Sammamish Parkway is a beautiful and popular place to ride but is continually cited as a problem area.

Areas Residents do not go to Walk and/or Bike in Bellevue

Participants were also asked to indicate places that they deemed “not so good” to ride or walk.

Pedestrian participants mentioned:

- Lake Sammamish. There is no public access to the lake or beach, and there are no trails along the lake only private homes.
- Mercer Slough is bad anytime after daylight because it’s very dark and unsafe for pedestrians.
- The areas around schools lack lighting which is a major issue for the dark mornings in the Northwest.
- NE 8th St, when trying to get across I-405, it’s “a nightmare for pedestrians”.
- Although the Crossroads Park is mentioned as being nice, the other areas aside from the park in Crossroads are not good for pedestrians.
- Bel-Red Road is dangerous because of the “haphazard sidewalks” and cars driving to fast.
- The 550 Sound Transit bus down Bellevue Way drives extremely fast in addition to the already excessive traffic.
 - Because the bus makes stops on Bellevue Way, it stays in the lane closest to the curb and due to its size, pedestrians and bicyclists feel very unsafe.

Bicyclists participants mentioned:

- The Overlake area from 520 to Bel-Red Road
- Trying to get across I-405
- NE 8th St and NE 4th St
- The downtown Bellevue area in general
- West Lake Sammamish Parkway
- Eastgate

- The Coal Creek interchange
- Lake Hills connector
- Bellevue Way

Once participants had indicated both good and bad places to bike and walk, they were asked how they discovered this information:

- Online, the City has maps for routes.
- Experimenting and linking routes together. One participant said “if they’re there, we’ll find them”.
- Noticing areas while traveling around via car.
- Existing knowledge and experience.
- Word of mouth.

Concerns with Getting around Bellevue

When asked what their main concerns were relating to getting around Bellevue, the following were consistently mentioned by participants

- Safety is consistently cited as a big concern for both pedestrians and bicyclists, especially when dealing with cars.
- Cars turning right on red – participants say drivers often are only paying attention to the oncoming traffic on the left side and neglect to notice the right side, in particular pedestrians and bikes, while turning.
- Both pedestrians and drivers talking on cell phones are a major safety hazard because they aren’t as attentive to their surroundings.
- Speeding traffic.
- Lack of law enforcement regarding speed limits and other laws being disregarded.
- Participants also mentioned driveways as a concern because of the limited visibility. Others noted that drivers who are coming out of the driveway do not look for bicyclists or pedestrians and block the sidewalk forcing them to move into the main road and traffic lanes.

Areas of Concern

Mapping Exercise and Approach

A map exercise was used to determine the major areas of concern among focus group participants. They were asked to pinpoint places considered a high priority for pedestrian and bicycle improvements.

Group 1 and Group 2: Pedestrian Participants Groups

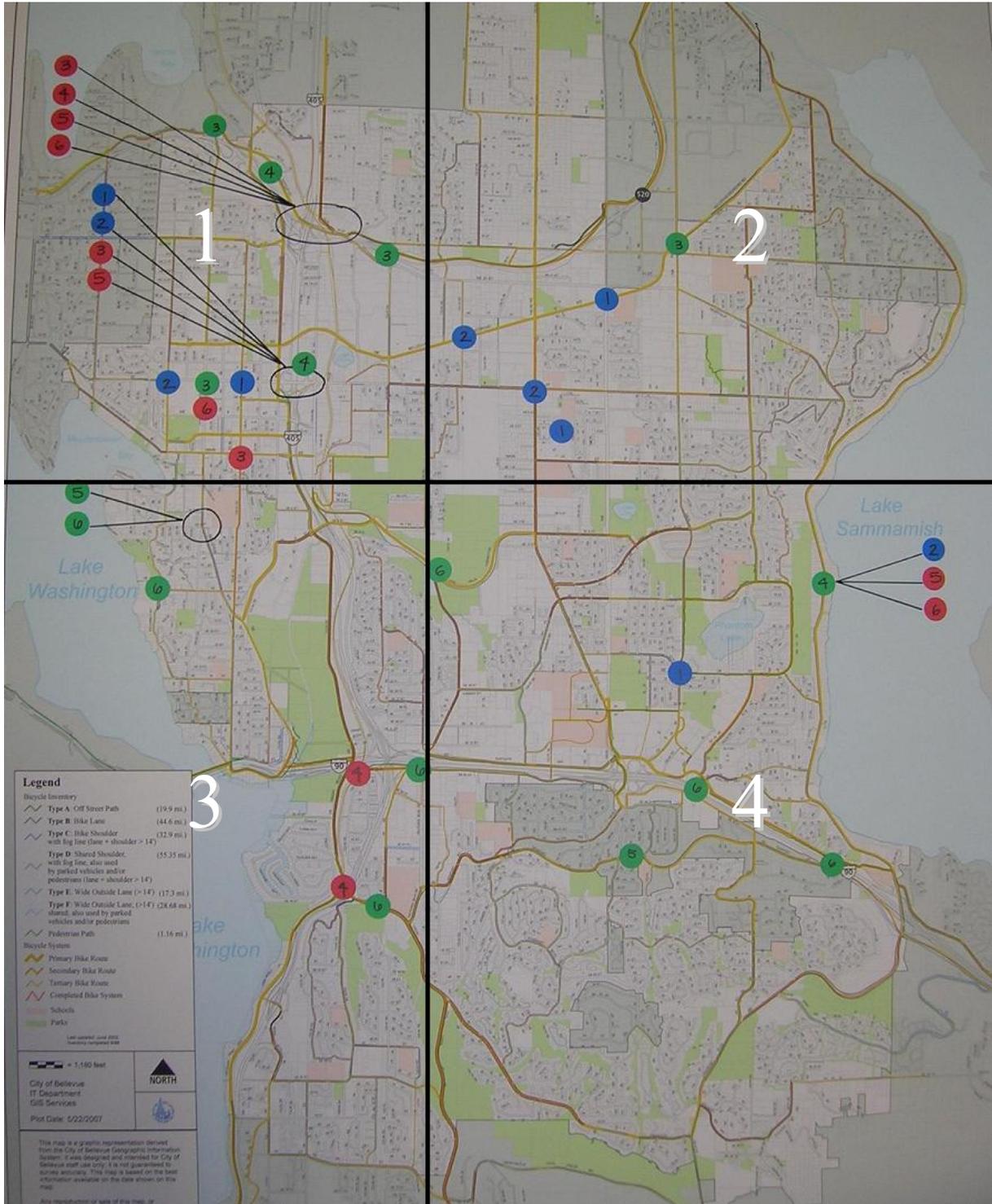
Northwest Research Group, Inc. presented the City's Sidewalk and Trail Inventory Map to groups 1 and 2, the pedestrian participant groups. They were asked to review the map and think of areas to recommend to the City as priority areas. The group was then given five blue "priority dots" and had to reach a consensus and pick areas they felt needed immediate attention from the City. (These areas are noted on the NWRG master map by blue dots – see page 18. The number on each dot corresponds to the focus group that suggested that specific area.)

Group 3–Group 6: Bicycle Participants Groups

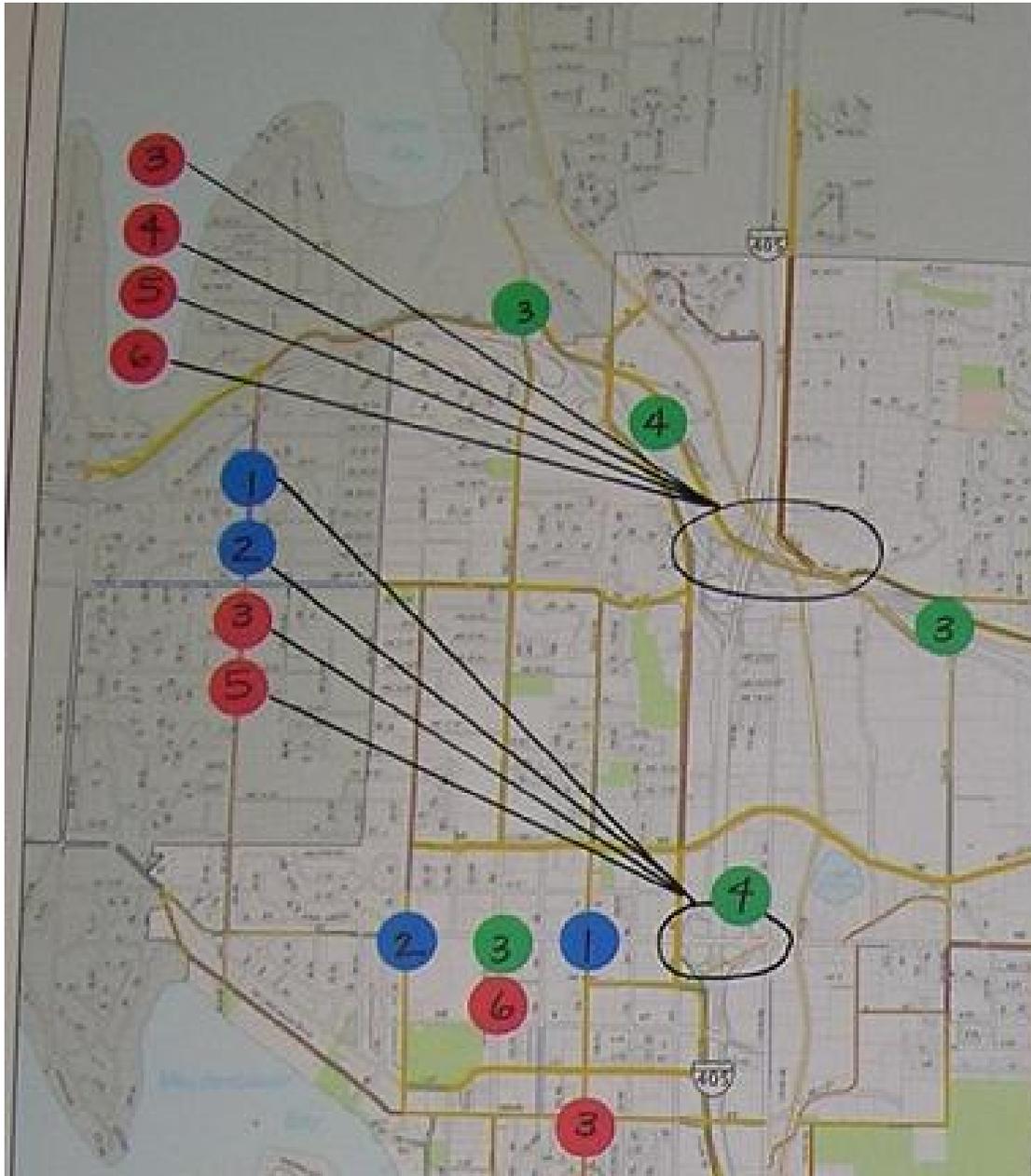
Northwest Research Group, Inc. presented the City's Bicycle Inventory Map to the bicycle participant groups (groups 3 thru 6). They were asked to review the map and think of areas to recommend to the City as priority areas. The group was then divided into 2 to 3 separate subgroups, depending on the size and composition of the overall group. Each subgroup was given three green "priority dots" for their respective map and had to come to a consensus and pick areas they felt needed attention from the City. (These areas are noted on the NWRG master map by green dots – see page 18. The number on each dot corresponds to the focus group that suggested that specific area. As part of this exercise participants reviewed the City's Bicycle Typology and made a recommendation as to the preferred facility type in the problem "green dot" areas.)

Northwest Research Group, Inc. then combined the subgroups back together, and the overall group was given three red "top priority" dots. (These areas are noted in the NWRG master map by red dots – see page 18.) The participants had to reach a consensus and pick 3 areas they deemed important and required immediate attention from the City. (It should be noted that group participants came to a consensus when evaluating all green dot "priority areas", therefore any areas with a red dot "top priority" were considered green dot "priority areas" at one time as well. The number on each dot corresponds to the focus group that suggested that specific area.)

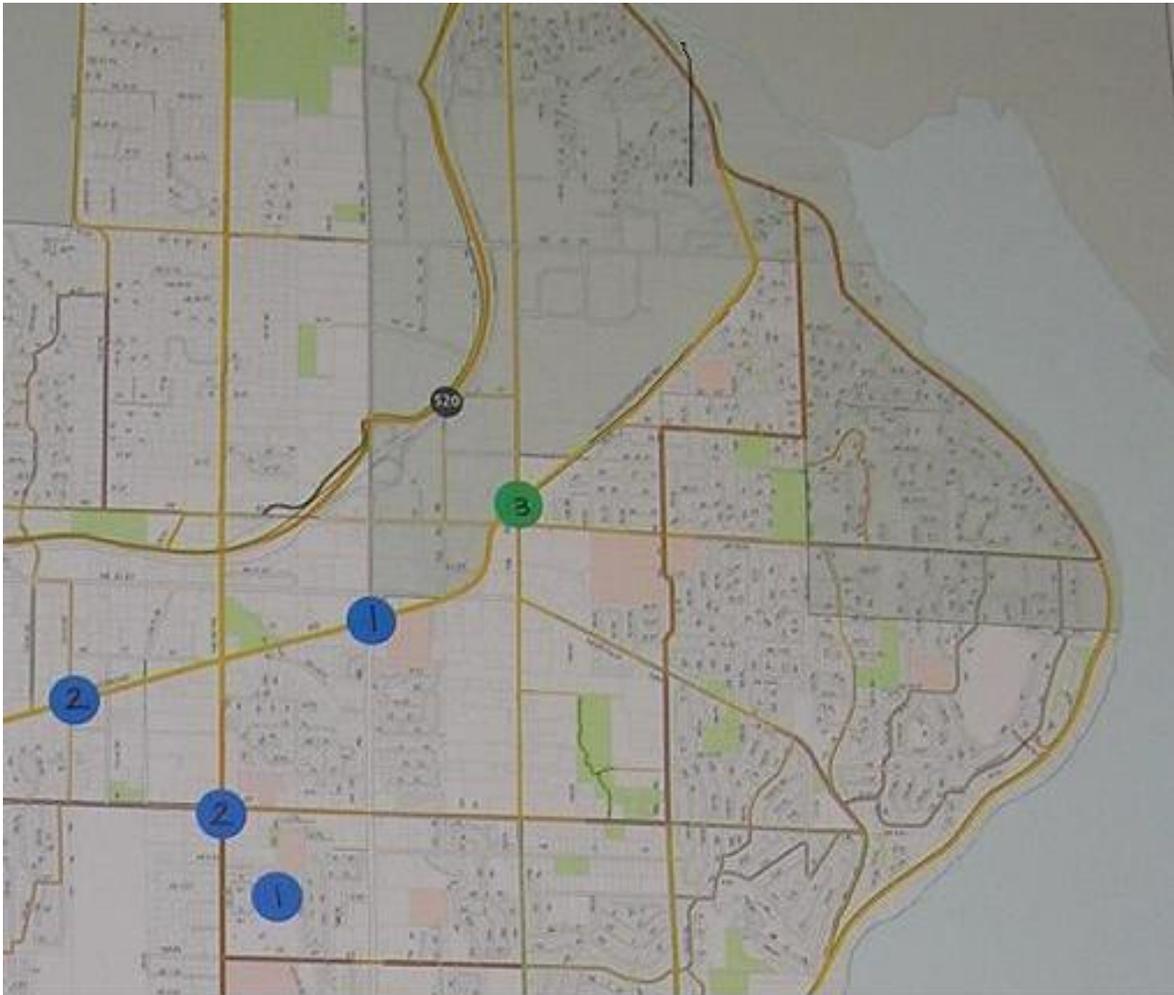
Maps and Quadrants



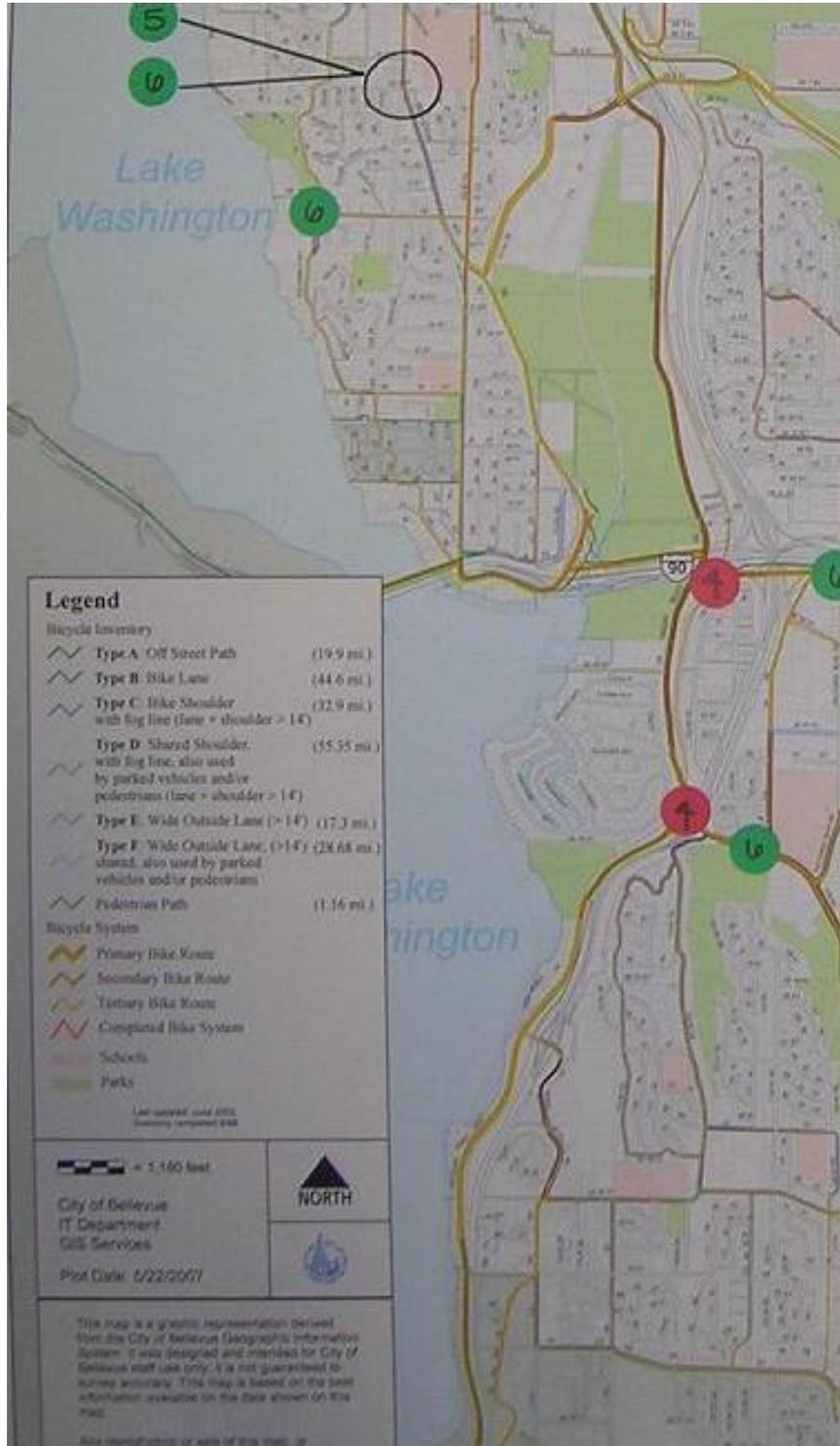
Quadrant 1



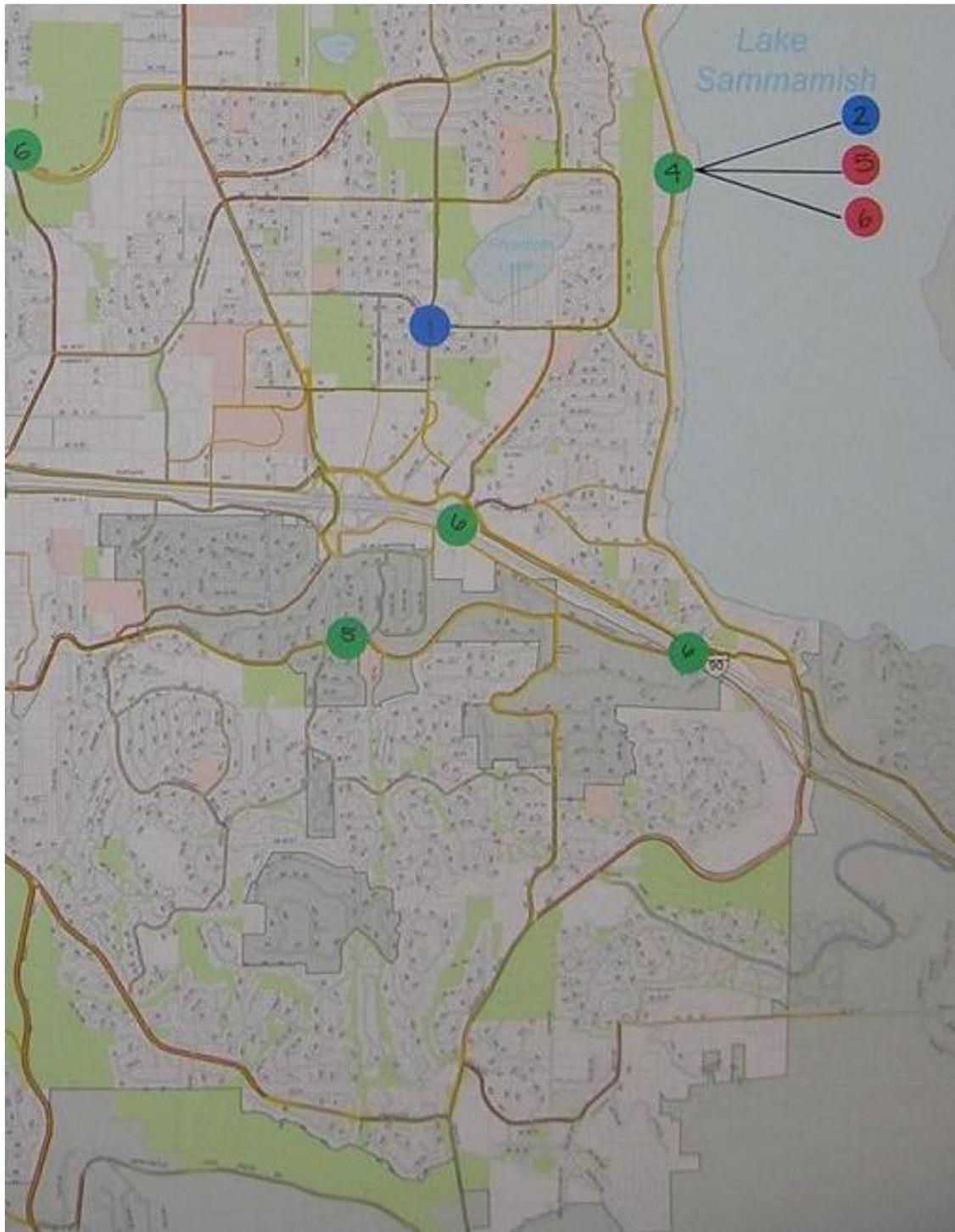
Quadrant 2



Quadrant 3



Quadrant 4



Conclusions

The following are *all* the problems and suggestions mentioned by each of the six groups, represented by the colored dots. These responses were noted on the map (page 18) of Bellevue which has been broken down into four quadrants (pages 19-22).

Problem Areas Mentioned by Participants by Group

Group #1 (Female pedestrians*)

1. *Problem Area:* 5-way stop at SE 24th Street and 156th Avenue SE (Quadrant 4)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* Build a signal/light at this intersection
2. *Problem Area:* NE 8th Street (Quadrants 1 and 2)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* Find a way to get pedestrians across the I-405 freeway. Pedestrians and bike paths should be separated, and pedestrian activated lights implemented
3. *Problem Area:* Downtown Bellevue (Quadrants 1 and 3)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* Flashing crosswalks to notify cars of pedestrians, and make it easier to cross streets.
4. *Problem Area:* 148th Avenue SE and NE (Quadrants 2 and 4)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* Bike paths (facility type B) and a buffer between pedestrians and traffic would be helpful. Also a better awareness of pedestrian's right-of-way, more complete driver's education, and crosswalks with lights.
5. *Problem Area:* Library (Quadrant 1)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* Crosswalk needs flashing lights, especially because of the high numbers of elderly residents in this area

* Note that many priority areas suggested by this group correspond to areas near schools. This group strongly voiced the need for improvements in areas frequented by children, specifically mentioning improvements such as crosswalks and lighting.

Group #2 (Male pedestrians)

1. *Problem Area:* Bel-Red Road (Quadrant 2)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* More lighting, bike lanes separated from traffic, consistent sidewalks, and more retail would make this major corridor much more pedestrian and bike friendly.
2. *Problem Area:* NE 8th Street and around Hilltop Road (Quadrants 1)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* Enforce areas for pedestrians to cross and widen sidewalks.
3. *Problem Area:* Getting across I-405 (Quadrants 1 and 3)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* The various modes of transportation should be separated for safety reasons, and a safe walkway across should be created.
4. *Problem Area:* West Lake Sammamish Parkway (Quadrants 2 and 4)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* Needs an East/West connection.
5. *Problem Area:* the section of 140th Avenue NE from Main Street to I-520 (Quadrant 2)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* Sidewalks and bike lanes separated from traffic lanes.
6. *Problem Area:* The section of NE 8th Street from 140th Avenue NE to 156th Avenue NE (Quadrant 1)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* Sidewalks and bike lanes separated from traffic lanes.

Group #3 (Female bike riders who last rode more than one week ago)

Top priority areas that chosen by consensus of all group participants:

1. *Problem Area:* Main Street and Bellevue Way (Quadrant 1)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* Both need bike lanes.
 - *Facility type:* B
2. *Problem Area:* Intersection of NE 8th and 112th adjacent to the I-405 (Quadrant 1)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* Need a bike lane and a way to get across or through the intersection safely.
 - *Facility type:* B
3. *Problem Area:* the I-520 trail (Quadrant 1)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* Northup Way has some room on the shoulder, but most of it doesn't. Adding some room there would really help bicyclists.
 - *Facility type:* C

Areas that were not chosen as a "priority" but were still deemed important by this group:

4. *Problem Area:* NE 8th Street and Bellevue Way (Quadrant 1)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* Past Main Street there is not a primary bike route, designated bike lanes need to be created on 8th Street, especially between 104th Avenue NE and 124th Avenue NE. Also, bike lanes end on the way back up to Bellevue Way.
 - *Facility type:* B or C
5. *Problem Area:* 124th Avenue NE (Quadrant 1)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* Connect to I-520
 - *Facility type:* C
6. *Problem Area:* Bel-Red Road (Quadrant 2)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* Need a designated route from Northup Way to connect to Bel-Red Road.
 - *Facility type:* C
7. *Problem Area:* Lake Washington Boulevard (Quadrant 1)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* Needs a bike lane along the Northern portion.
 - *Facility Type:* B

Group #4 (Male bike riders who last rode more than one week ago)

Top priority areas that chosen by consensus of all group participants:

1. *Problem Area:* Coal Creek Parkway at 119th Avenue SE – near I-405 (Quadrant 3)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* The bike lane in this area is in very poor condition, mainly due to tree roots, and traffic forces bicyclist to use the lane.
 - *Facility type:* G
2. *Problem Area:* I-520 trail (Quadrant 1)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* The bike trail ends at 120th and doesn't connect to South or Central Bellevue. Also, up to 124th, the City needs to either develop a new shoulder or fix the existing one.
 - *Facility type:* D
3. *Problem Area:* Bike trail connections at the I-90 (Quadrants 3 and 4)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* These trails need more light, signage, and connectivity/linkage to other trails and destinations.
 - *Facility type:* A

Areas that were not chosen as a “priority” but were still deemed important by this group:

4. *Problem Area:* Near 520 bike trails – along Northup (Quadrant 1)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* There are no connections at the end of the I-520 trail, there needs to be more connectivity here.
 - *Facility type:* A or B
5. *Problem Area:* Bel-Red Road (Quadrant 2)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* No bike lanes can be found on this street and the curb is very high forcing bicyclists to ride in traffic lanes.
 - *Facility type:* B
6. *Problem Area:* West Lake Sammamish Parkway (Quadrants 2 and 4)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* Cars are constantly running red lights along this corridor, especially Southbound on Northup at West Lake Sammamish Parkway. Better driver education and signage would help alleviate some of these problems.
 - *Facility type:* B or F

Group #5 (Female bike riders who rode within the last week)

Top priority areas that chosen by consensus of all group participants:

1. *Problem Area:* West Lake Sammamish Parkway (Quadrants 2 and 4)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* The pavement needs to be improved, as well as a decent Northbound lane from North Bellevue border to I-90. The quality of the existing paths is also very poor.
 - *Facility type:* B or C
2. *Problem Area:* I-520 trails (Quadrant 1)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* There is a lack of continuity throughout the trail. For example a connection between the end of the 520 trail and Lake Washington Boulevard, as well as from 24th to Bellevue Way and Northup would create such a better trail network for bicyclists.
 - *Facility type:* B,C or G
3. *Problem Area:* I-405 (Quadrant 1)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* There isn't a safe place to cross the 405 from Downtown Bellevue. NE 10th Street would be a great option not only to cross the freeway, but also to create a much needed East/West route.
 - *Facility type:* B

Areas that were not chosen as a "priority" but were still deemed important by this group:

4. *Problem Area:* Newport Way (Quadrant 4)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* This street needs shoulders on either side, more street lights, and a direct route to Issaquah. Speeding cars pose a major problem along this route as well.
 - *Facility type:* G
5. *Problem Area:* Bellevue Way (Quadrants 1 and 3)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* Bike lanes are needed along Bellevue Way from 108th Avenue NE to Main Street as well as connectivity to the I-90 trail
 - *Facility type:* B

Group #6 (Male bike riders who rode within the last week)

Top priority areas that chosen by consensus of all group participants:

1. *Problem Area:* I-520 transition from NE 24th Street to 116th Avenue NE (Quadrant 1)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* Extend I-520 trail West of I-405, or even to the Evergreen Bridge.
 - *Facility type:* A
2. *Problem Area:* West Lake Sammamish Parkway (Quadrants 2 and 4)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* Near Northup Way, drivers are not aware of and are not prepared for bicyclists riding in the shoulder against traffic. Better signage to help warn those driving of this situation would help. Also, bi-directional lanes and better pavement would create a much safer riding atmosphere for those biking.
 - *Facility type:* B or C
3. *Problem Area:* Central locations between route destinations (Quadrants 1,2,3 and 4)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* Bikers should be able to leave their bikes at centralized areas, such as the downtown Bellevue transit center.
 - *Facility type:* none

Areas that were not chosen as a “priority” but were still deemed important by this group:

4. *Problem Area:* I-90
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* The trail transition on the West side, from the Lake Trail to and from the North side of I-90 (especially across Eastgate Way at Factoria Boulevard) is considered a “chokehold”. It is hard to avoid riding in traffic unless bicyclists get off their bikes and walk, which can be equally dangerous. Another suggestion that would make this area more bicycle friendly would be less-severe switchbacks.
 - *Facility type:* A
5. *Problem Area:* Lake Hills – where Richards Road turns off (Quadrants 3,4)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* Cars go too fast around that turn.
 - *Facility type:* J
6. *Problem Area:* Newport Way to Lake Washington Trail (Quadrant 3)
 - *Suggestions and Improvements:* In order to make this transition, bicyclists have to merge with traffic and use the middle lane, and needs to made less complicated.
 - *Facility type:* J
7. *Problem Area:* Downtown Bellevue – Bellevue Way (Quadrant 1)

- *Suggestions and Improvements:* This route needs more lanes so bicyclists can better avoid the traffic.
- *Facility type:* C

8. *Problem Area:* Enatai Loop (Quadrant 3)

- *Suggestions and Improvements:* The pavement needs to be improved, and a more prominent shoulder should be incorporated within that same project.
- *Facility type:* E or F

Summary of All Group Comments

An “x” in the cell denotes areas in which group participants felt it was an area of concern. The list below are commonalities between all the groups:

	NE 8th Street	Downtown Bellevue	Bel-Red Road	I-405	West Lake Sammamish Parkway	520 Trail	I-90	Main Street and Bellevue Way
Group #1	X	X						
Group #2	X		X	X	X			
Group #3	X		X	X		X		X
Group #4			X	X	X	X	X	
Group #5				X	X	X		X
Group #6		X			X	X	X	X

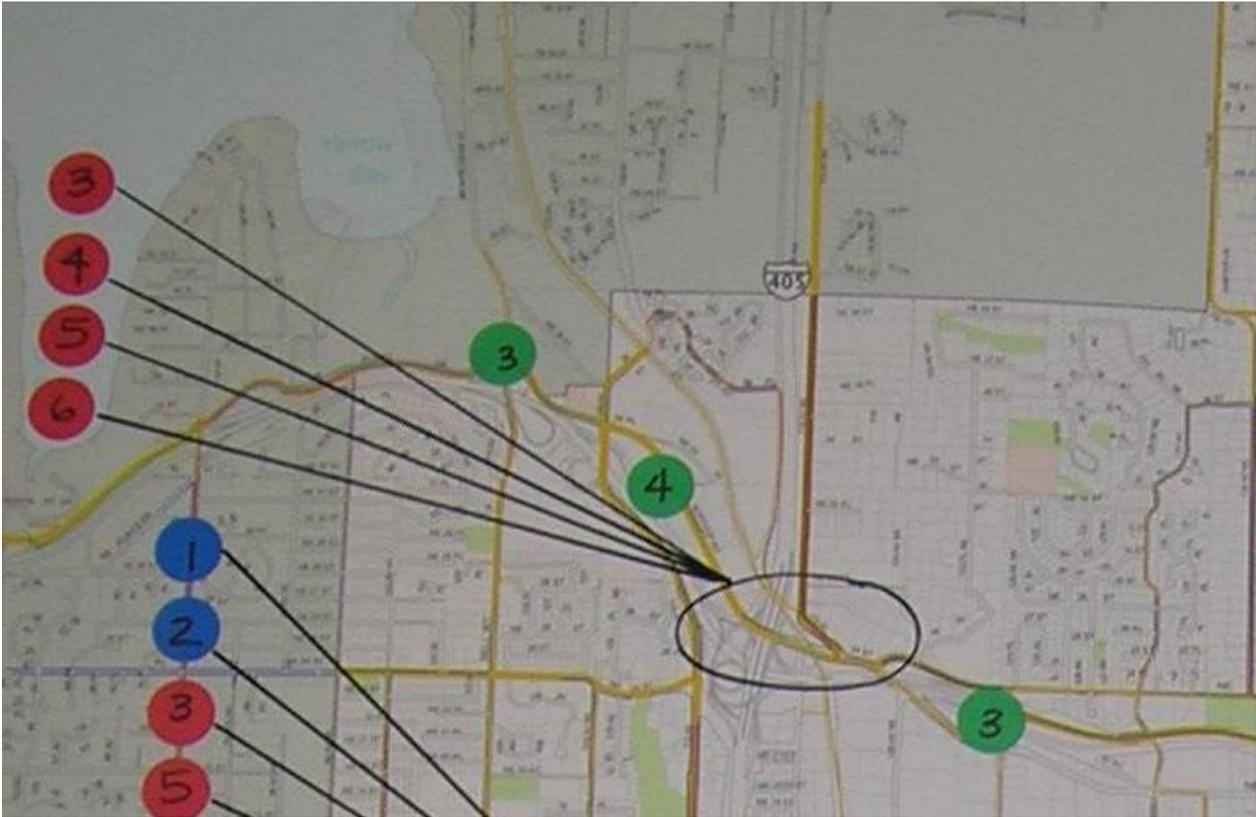
The participants from 4 groups mentioned at least one thing they were concerned with in the following problem areas around: Interstate 405, West Lake Sammamish Parkway and the 520 Trail.

Top Priority Problem Areas (based on number of dots/comments)

Due to the varying classifications of group participants, such as frequency, ability, preferred areas in Bellevue for activities, and type of activity (recreational or commuting), participants had a wide variety of responses. Although there were three places consistently brought up amongst participants as important “areas of concern”. Below is a summary of these specific areas.

Problem Area #1: The 520 Trail - This was mentioned by *all* bicycle participants groups

- *Type of Problem:* Lack of shoulder space and trail connectivity
- *Suggestions and Improvements:* Putting more shoulders in around Northrup Way, having the trail connect South or Central Bellevue starting at around 120th, fixing shoulders in existing specific areas, and continuing trail on to other routes and areas within Bellevue.
- *Facility Type:* A, C or D



- This area of the 520-Trail was noted as a high priority area by all bicycle participant groups - note the 4 red dots pertaining to this area.

Problem Area #2: West Lake Sammamish Parkway – This was mentioned by both pedestrian and bicycle group participants.

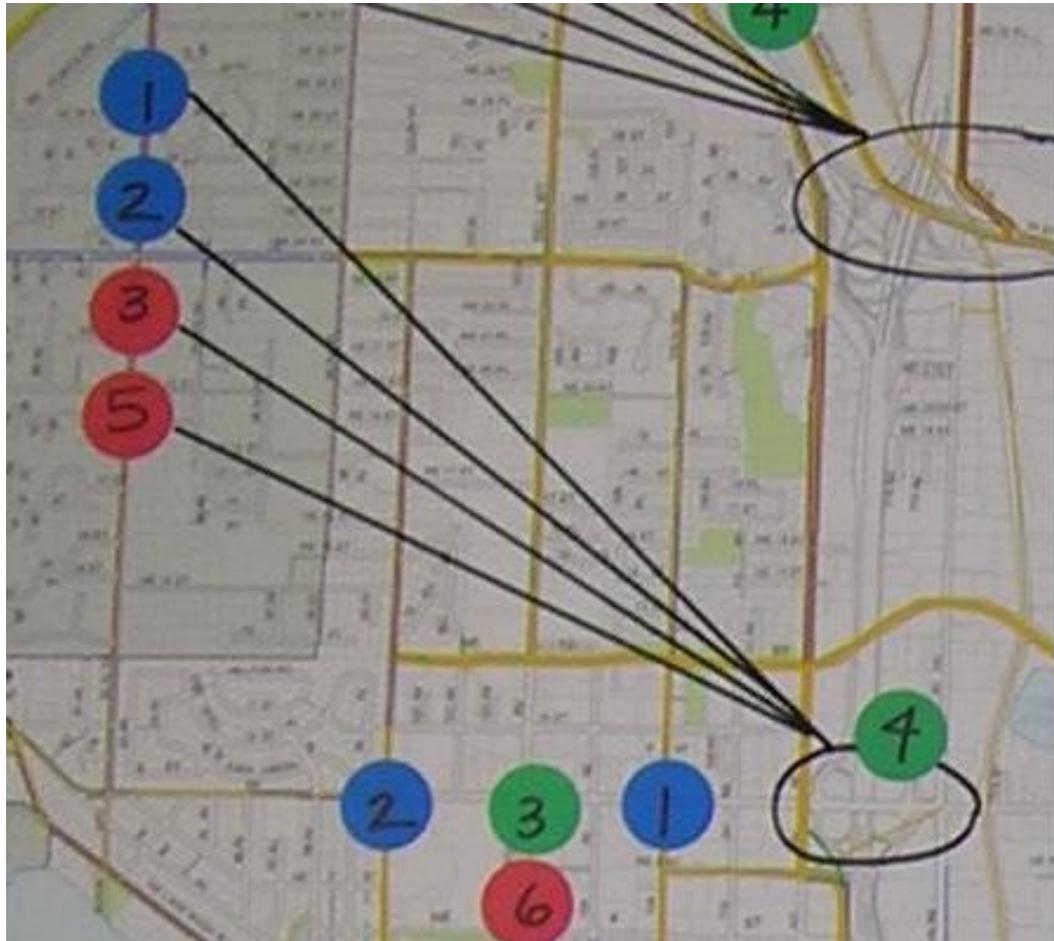
- *Type of Problem*: Lack of East/West directional paths, cars running red lights and neglecting to pay attention to foot/bike traffic, and poor pavement quality.
- *Suggestions and Improvements*: Bi-directional lanes on West Lake Sammamish Parkway allowing pedestrians/bicyclists to avoid oncoming traffic, fixing and maintaining paths, driver education about the rules and regulations in the area, and new paths starting from West Lake Sammamish Parkway and head West, creating an East/West route.
- *Facility Type*: B or C



- The problems mentioned about West Lake Sammamish Parkway regarded the street as a whole, not just one specific area - the red dots indicate that two participant groups labeled it as a high priority area.

Problem Area #3: I-405 near NE 8th St and 112th – This was mentioned by both pedestrian and bicycle group participants.

- *Type of Problem*: Difficulty getting across I-405
- *Suggestions and Improvements*: Encourage the City to find an alternative way for both pedestrians and bicyclists to get across the I-405, separating pedestrian lanes from bicycle lanes, lowering existing curb levels, and placing more signage around this area.
- *Facility Type*: B



- The circle near the green dot labeled '4' shows the section of I-405 where this problem is occurring, note that two participant groups indicated this was a high priority area (marked by the red priority dots).

Criteria Used to Determine Priority Areas

Participants were asked what criteria they personally used to choose these priority problem areas.

Participants:

- Disregarded projects the City would most likely say “no” to, and found alternate solutions.
 - If one bicycle or pedestrian route is unsatisfactory, maybe a different path within close proximity would also work. Similarly, participants mentioned they ruled out certain options because there was an alternative.
- Looked at maintenance rather than complete redevelopment.
 - So much construction is already taking place in downtown Bellevue, there is no need to create more. Leading to the question of, “what can be done without tearing down existing structures, streets etc.?”
- Considered the question, “What factors create the best experience for the user?”
- Worked towards providing “concrete and specific” ideas.
- Tried to find a commonality between everyone’s ideas and opinions and stayed focused on the main priorities.
 - Connectivity was one of these main priorities. Participants determined where route connectivity was needed, in both the East to West directions as well as North to South.
 - Intersection hazards were also brought up by participants multiple times.
- Focused on locations they frequented often and in turn had the most knowledge on.
 - Particularly areas with insufficient bicycle and/or pedestrian facilities.

Follow-up discussion included what criteria group participants recommended the City use when looking at, and assessing problematic areas.

The City should:

- Focus their energies on improving safety.
 - Safety was the most important criterion participants felt the City should use when assessing problematic areas. Safety was deemed even more important than connectivity, when it pertained to facilities or areas geared to less experienced, recreational riders such as children and families. These problem areas included schools, primarily anywhere children needed to cross a road.
 - Although a sensitive topic, some participants suggested the City look at key areas where the most fatalities have occurred, using those statistics to determine the priority of projects.

- Many participants wanted residents to get out of their cars and pursue alternative forms of transportation; safety for bicyclists and pedestrians was a main concern.
- Improve the overall connectivity of bike routes in Bellevue, especially ones advanced riders frequent. Participants said that the existing paths are good, but they don't connect, forcing pedestrians and bicyclists directly onto the street in search of a safer continuous route.
- Participants also suggested that the City take into account the potential number of people that would use the path. Given limited resources such as time and money, paths with higher volumes of bikers and walkers should be addressed before those with lower incidence of use.
- Take into account population density and geography as guidelines for improvements as well. If the City wants to promote alternate modes of transportation and see results, they must target all age groups and neighborhoods, "not just energetic 19-year-olds".
- Continue to work on getting residents out of their cars.
 - This would be good for the environment by reducing gas and oil use, in turn reducing emissions produced by such products.
 - This would also benefit residents economically by reducing gas consumption, as well as maintaining Bellevue's expensive infrastructure for longer amounts of time. The majority of wear and tear on the roads is caused by cars, whereas alternative modes of transportation, such as biking and walking, have less effect over time.
- Participants mentioned that problematic areas need appropriate signage; this could help reduce potential problems.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Focus Group Findings

The focus group findings suggest that:

- The City should work on the connectivity between existing bike lanes and sidewalks. Participants in the bike groups indicated Bellevue paths often “stop” and feed onto dangerous main arterial roads, eventually linking back up with a path. Participants in pedestrian groups also mentioned that sidewalks are not consistent throughout the City.
 - Connectivity between bike routes that go to other cities would encourage riders, especially if there was a wider variety of destinations and safe routes with designated lanes to get there.
- Group participants voiced concern regarding the lack of East/West bike routes and vice versa. Although all groups expressed strong feelings on this issue, it was particularly apparent among participants who commute to work via bicycle. The North/South routes were also mentioned as having very few bike lanes, but not to the extent of the East/West directions.
 - Participants mentioned they are able to travel through Bellevue in the East/West directions and vice versa, but this requires using multiple paths due to the lack of connectivity between bikes paths, especially for the purpose of commuting to and from work.
- A major safety concern voiced among bike participants regarding downtown Bellevue is cars turning right on red. Often drivers are only paying attention to the oncoming traffic on the left and neglect to notice the right side, and bike lane, while turning.
 - Driver education and limiting the amount of “right on red(s)” especially in high volume pedestrian and biking areas is seen as an important step to creating and maintaining safe roadways.
- Participants felt that driver education would help minimize traffic accidents involving pedestrians and bicyclists by informing all road users about proper etiquette, traffic laws, and rules of the road.
- In a map exercise, participants noted key areas in Bellevue that need improvements. Although there are a variety of areas, three in particular were indicated as having issues that need to be addressed and merit a particularly close look by the City:
 - West Lake Sammamish Parkway – mentioned by a mix of pedestrian and bicycle group participants;
 - The 520 Trail – mentioned by all bicycle group participants; and
 - I-405 near NE 8th Street and 112th – mentioned by a mix of pedestrian and bicycle group participants.

Direct Participant Recommendations for the City

Participants were asked to make one key recommendation to the City. The following section includes actual comments by participants.

- Participants recommended that the City work on implementing East to West routes as well as North to South routes:

Designate bike favored East/West and North/South routes with signage to sensitize motorists and to inform cyclists of the routes (e.g. directions and route maps “you are here”).

Focus on complete solutions for East/West and North/South across the city. Complete means reasonably direct, [a] consistently marked route where cyclists feel safe and drivers expect the cyclists.

Provide a bike lane (type B) running the full distance of Bellevue North/South and East/West – this will benefit the environment and promote health.

Pick two or three North/South routes and make them safe and two or three East/West routes. Have safe and easy connections between these routes. Keep pedestrians, bike and cars in separate lanes on these routes and keep them well maintained.

- Although participants said they are happy with the current trails there was continual discussion about the lack of connectivity to and from other trails in the surrounding area:

Provide consistent access thru downtown Bellevue, across main streets and intersections.

Look at major destination areas (dense housing, employment and other services) and create connections between them. [Meaning] safe efficient routes for bicycles [in areas such as the] I-90 trail, 520 trail, downtown Bellevue and Crossroads.

Focus on finishing connections to allow longer distance connection. [At places between] Enatai and I-90 and the 520 trail ideally providing access to downtown on the way. Choose lower cost options that cover more distance, not expensive point-to-point solutions.

Connect existing North/South bike lanes and routes (for example, bike lanes end then connect on the other side of the road – 118th lane ends and drops you into a 4 lane busy road).

- Education was mentioned as an extremely important measure going forward:

Bike awareness and advocacy [such as] signage and bus advertising to keep drivers aware and respectful of cyclists. [The City] should support and subsidize community efforts, such as the Cascade Bicycle Organization in this effort.

Increase awareness of pedestrian rights to drivers with signage, education and public service announcements.

Awareness by making it a goal and providing statistics on pedestrian auto accidents. [Such as] it has been [insert amount] of days since the last accident.

Bellevue needs to educate drivers to notice pedestrians so anything, lighted crosswalks, signage, flashing lights – would be great. [In the] downtown [area] no free right turns [right on red].

[Create] a public relations and advertising campaign for driver education regarding pedestrian safety. Use a clever slogan that's easily remembered.

Marketing of bike awareness education.

Put up signs [e.g.] bikes in roadway, share the road with bicyclist, bicycles may use full lane.

- Safety continues to be a main tenet mentioned by participants:

Re-evaluate placement of traffic calming and obstacles that obstruct cyclists.

Increase fines for crosswalk violations, people change and take notice when [violations] are given.

Enforce the right on red law. Ticket people who don't stop for pedestrians.

Enforce car and speed limits. Lower speed limits to 25 MPH [in areas such as] Lakemont and Richards Road.

- The following are additional comments about specific intersections within Bellevue where participants would like to see improvements:

Make NE 8th St one way from I-405 to Bellevue Way and NE 4th one way eastbound. [Also] retiming the signals [would be beneficial].

Install pedestrian activated flashing lights embedded in the pavement at crosswalks at on and off ramps of I-405 and NE 8th St.

At 112th and 8th, provide a bike path from there North to get across Bellevue.

Bike lane for West Lake Sammamish on both sides of the street.

[There should be] a way to get into downtown Bellevue across I-405.

Appendix

Invitation to Participate

An email was sent out to respondents who indicated they would like to participate in further research. Respondents then contacted Northwest Research Group, Inc. to confirm scheduling where upon Northwest Research Group, Inc. selected participants.

Dear On-Line (Pedestrian/Bicyclists) Survey Participant:

As you recall, you recently completed an online survey conducted by the City of Bellevue to inform the City's 2007 Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan. As part of that survey you indicated that you would be interested in receiving additional information about this effort. The second phase of the City's outreach effort pertaining to the plan update includes focus groups among interested citizens to further refine the recommendations to be included in the Plan and we would very much like to include your opinions in these groups. The City has retained an independent research firm, Northwest Research Group, Inc., to facilitate and moderate the groups The City would like to invite you to participate on [date].

As a small token of our appreciation of your time and honest input, the City will provide each participant \$35 at the conclusion of the group. I would like to encourage your open and honest feedback in this forum.

Please rest assured that your answers will not be shared with the broader public - your feedback in the group will be combined with others in this group and the other groups we are holding. NWRG will not link your feedback to your personal information in any way.

The group should last about two hours, and will be facilitated by an independent moderator from NWRG. Light refreshments will be served. If you require reading glasses, please be sure to bring them with you. Your name and contact information is one in a small number of a randomly selected group of online survey participants we are asking to participate in focus group sessions.

The group will be held at:
[Specified date]

If you are able to participate, and I hope you are, please e-mail your interest to Kris Lau from Northwest Research Group at krislau@nwrp.com or call her at 800-545-5909 during regular business hours to confirm. Please call to confirm by Monday May 7th. We have asked NWRG to follow-up with those who have not responded by that time to determine interest in participating. Someone from NWRG will also be in contact with you to confirm your participation with a day or two of your scheduled group. It is important that we are able to count on your participation.

Please do not forward this invitation to others, if you feel there is someone else who might be interested in attending, please forward that information to Kris and we will evaluate the representativeness of the group and number of participants who have already confirmed. If you find that you will be unable to attend this discussion for any reason, please contact Kris as soon as possible, in order to ensure a representative group, please do not send someone else in your place. Should you have any questions about the purpose or intent of the focus groups, please do not hesitate to contact Kris Lau or Tomomi Watanabe from NWRG, during regular business hours at 800-545-5909 or krislau@nwrp.com or tomomi@nwrp.com. Again, your opinions are very important to the City, I personally encourage you to participate and thank you in advance for your time and valuable input.

Sincerely,
Franz Loewenherz
Senior Transportation Planner
City of Bellevue
425-452-4077
floewenherz@bellevuewa.gov

Moderator's Guide

City Of Bellevue Pedestrian and Bicycle Focus Groups Moderator's Outline May, 2007

Introduction

5 min.

- Purpose of focus groups.
- Opinions / how you feel and why.
- No right or wrong answers.
- Expect agreement / disagreement.
- Encourage synergism / talk one at a time.
- Recruiting process / source of list / you represent audience.
- All your comments remain confidential and will not be tied to your name in any way.
- How results will be used.
- Impartial third party
- Video & audio tape / (ignore note-taker!)

Personal Introductions

10 min.

- Name, tell me what you do, where you live and work, how often you bike // walk, jog, or run for what / when / where.

Best Place for Pedestrian, Joggers, or Runners / Bike Riders

20 min.

- Of all the places you have been, read, or heard about, name the place that you think is the most pedestrian / bicycle friendly city or town. – local, national, worldwide?
 - Why? What makes the place pedestrian / bike friendly? – list attributes on easel
 - Why are these attributes important?
 - What does the ideal city look like for pedestrians / bike riders?

About Bellevue for Pedestrians, Joggers, or Runners // Bike Riders

30 min.

- WRITTEN EXERCISE – Fill in the blank
 - Bellevue is _____ for pedestrians, joggers, runners / bike riders. Give me a descriptor, adjective, to fill in the blank.
 - Discuss – why did you say that?
- What do you think about Bellevue in terms of walking, jogging, running / biking? Excellent, good, average, fair, poor?
 - Why? What makes Bellevue?
 - In the survey, people indicated that there is no room for people to walk, jog, or run / bike. Would more people start to walk, jog, or run / bike in Bellevue, if there was more room? Would you?
 - Why / why not.
 - In the survey, people mentioned that Bellevue is built for cars / Bellevue is not pedestrian or bike friendly. What do you think about that?
- How does Bellevue compare to other neighboring cities?
 - Better, the same, worse? How?
 - Have you noticed any improvements / changes in the pedestrian / bicycle facilities in Bellevue in the last 5 years? What have you noticed?

- What role, if any, do pedestrian and bicycle facilities play in the character of the neighborhoods in Bellevue?
- Where do you go for a walk, jogging, or running / biking in Bellevue?
 - What / where is a good place for these activities?
 - Why? What makes this place a good place?
 - What / where is not a good place for these activities?
 - Why? What makes this place not a good place?
- How do you find out about good / bad locations? How would you like to?

Barriers & Locations with Safety Concerns

30 min.

What are your concerns when thinking about walking, jogging, or running / biking in Bellevue?

Survey participants indicated a lack of room (sidewalks, bike lanes, or enough shoulder) as one of the reasons that people don't engage in that activity. If there is more room, do you think more people will engage in these activities?

What criteria should the city use to decide where to put more room?

Are there different criteria for different activities (commute, recreation, errands, exercise, etc.) / for different groups (experienced, non-experienced/recreational, or family)?

Some indicated there should be separate space for pedestrians and bike riders. What do you think about that? Why / why not.

Other people also indicated drivers and traffic as barriers, what are your thoughts on that?

What can the City do about this?

SHOW THE POSTERS, READ THE NARRATIVES/DISCRPTIONS AND DISCUSS EACH [BIKE GROUPS ONLY].

What do you like / dislike?

Which one works for what activities? Groups of users? Ex. commute, recreation, errands, exercise, etc.) / for different groups (experienced, non-experienced/recreational, or family)?

Which one should be on what type of roads?

SHOW THE MAP AND DISCUSS: List / Mark with an X on your map, the two places in Bellevue which need the most attention from the City to make it safer for pedestrians, joggers, and runners / bike riders.

Why? What needs to be done?

What criteria should the City use to prioritize improvements to these locations?

If not brought up unaided – probe the following locations specifically

Pedestrians – NE 8th St., Bellevue Way, Main St., Downtown in general

Bike Riders – Bellevue Way, West Lake Sammamish, Along 520, Bel-Red Road, Northup Way

Back to posters: Which design should be on which roads or what part of the roads?

Wrap Up

5 min.

If you can make one recommendation to the City to make Bellevue more pedestrian // bike friendly, what would you recommend? Please write it down on the pad.