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WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL  
**Public Works and Capital Projects Committee**

February 25, 2003

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. by Committee Chair Barbara Brenner in the Council Chambers, 311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham, Washington.

Present:

L. Ward Nelson

Absent:

Sam Crawford

Also Present:

Dan McShane

**COMMITTEE DISCUSSION**

**1. DISCUSSION REGARDING A REQUEST BY CITIZENS IN THE GENEVA NEIGHBORHOOD TO HAVE A STOP SIGN INSTALLED ON LAKEWAY DRIVE (AB2003-097)**

Brenner stated the Council received this request last year. Mr. Citron knows that the Public Works Department doesn't feel that a stop sign is warranted, however he still feels it is necessary.

Joe Rutan, Assistant Director of Public Works, stated he has the original petition and a series of letters. He distributed a letter from former County Engineer Bruce Mills to the County Council on May 6, 2002. It is a summary of the Public Works recommendation on this issue.

Nelson stated the community is concerned about the traffic flow. They can't get on and off of Lakeway. People get backed up on the side streets.

Brenner stated she is sympathetic to the citizen's concern. The letter says that the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) is clear that stop signs should not be used for speed control. However, they use stop signs for speed control a lot. A driver has to stop when he or she comes to a stop sign. That controls speed.

Rutan stated that it would be in error to say that there are not stop signs in the county that were not installed to control speed. The question would be whether or not they were installed with the Public Works Department recommendation. The department follows the MUTCD for recommendation on installing stop signs, which is a guideline. The staff uses its professional judgment. This is a serious thing. They don't want to train people to disregard signs. If they are putting signs up in places where there is no reason, people will start ignoring them. That is his recommendation.

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2 Nelson asked if there are mechanisms to change streets from two-way to  
3 one-way. Rutan stated the question for him is Geneva Elementary School's  
4 approved safe walk route. He is interested in finding that out to determine if the  
5 safe walk route is appropriately chosen and signed. They could do some widening  
6 of the shoulder areas.  
7

8 Brenner asked Mr. Rutan to look into this and report back with any ideas.  
9 Rutan stated he would. He never wants to take a dangerous situation and make it  
10 look safe when it is not safe. He has some ideas for how to create signage for the  
11 pedestrian and bikes.  
12

13 Brenner stated she is sympathetic to the issue, but would like to wait until  
14 she hears Mr. Rutan's suggestions on the issue. There are ways to change people's  
15 habits, including having a patrol car at the location.  
16

17 Todd Citron, citizen, stated he knew that this does not meet the Engineering  
18 Division's rules, which is why he is bringing it to the Council. It is an issue for  
19 everyone in his neighborhood. There is a place for the people who live in a  
20 neighborhood to maintain the character of a neighborhood and incorporate safety  
21 for the families. It is a 25 miles per hour street that is not an arterial. The  
22 population has increased in that area. The County repaved Lakeway Drive a year  
23 and a half ago. Now it is an invitation to speed. Kids may or may not follow the  
24 appropriate safe route. The school's park-like grounds attract families during all  
25 hours. He asked the committee to step outside the Public Works Department  
26 analysis and consider the reasons for installing a stop sign. Installing berms in the  
27 middle of the road is another option that's being done in the City of Bellingham.  
28

29 Rutan stated berms are traffic calming designs. That is what they are trying  
30 to achieve here. The use of stop signs to calm traffic has been an issue in the  
31 realm of public works. There are other options for traffic calming, such as speed  
32 bumps and road surfaces. They can't do speed bumps because they are dangerous  
33 for bikes and motorcycles. Another option is called a roundabout. The most  
34 effective way to slow people down is to narrow the road at the intersection by  
35 bumping out the sidewalks. Those are the types of things they should look at for  
36 traffic calming, not the use of stop signs, although there are places where that has  
37 been done.  
38

39 Brenner asked Mr. Rutan to come up with other options.  
40

41 **2. DISCUSSION REGARDING THE AUSTIN CREEK BRIDGE ON LAKE**  
42 **WHATCOM BOULEVARD IN SUDDEN VALLEY (AB2003-098)**  
43

44 Brenner asked if the letter from Pete Kremen satisfies the concerns.  
45

46 Steve Greiser, Sudden Valley Community Association General Manager,  
47 stated they received a copy of Executive Kremen's response. He is encouraged by

1 it. There are not a lot of details other than to encourage moving it up the list. He's  
2 followed that project on the transportation list for years, and it is slowly creeping  
3 up. The population in Sudden Valley keeps growing. It will still be four or five  
4 years before anything is done to the bridge, and by that time it will be a real  
5 problem. He would like it moved up on the list.

6  
7 Brenner asked if they would have to move it up on the six-year road  
8 program.

9  
10 Joe Rutan, Assistant Director of Public Works, stated that is correct. He and  
11 his staff developed a lot of questions that they need to ask the community  
12 association to get a better handle of the problem. That bridge is a difficult bridge to  
13 widen. After this meeting, he will get his traffic people involved with the Sudden  
14 Valley board and put together options for the committee to review. If he proposes  
15 a new bridge, for example, he will look at whether they want to do just the bridge  
16 or a larger project. In talking with Executive Kremen, it is a high priority for staff  
17 to work on.

18  
19 Nelson asked how soon they could bring this information back to the  
20 committee. Rutan stated he would like to bring it back this spring.

21  
22 Nelson asked how long it would take for permitting if it were approved this  
23 spring. Rutan stated that if they do a full rebuild of the bridge and he has the  
24 plans, it could take two years to get permitting. A number of agencies are going to  
25 want to review this. Right-of-way may also need to be purchased.

26  
27 Nelson asked for an update periodically on this issue before spring.

28  
29 Brenner suggested an update for the committee in four weeks.

30  
31 McShane stated the Lake Louise Road improvements were highly ranked on  
32 the list. Those improvements are to encourage traffic to follow that road. They  
33 could close the Lakeway-Austin Creek Bridge permanently. Rutan stated that if  
34 they do close that bridge to work on it, Lake Louise would become an important  
35 alternative route.

36  
37 Nelson stated he'd like to look at the whole construction plan. The reason  
38 this has taken so long may be because financially it makes sense not to redo a  
39 bridge, and then come back and redo the road. Rutan stated he will look at the  
40 whole package and see what they recommend as an appropriate package and  
41 sequence. If there is another portion of the project that will delay permitting, they  
42 may proceed with fixing just the bridge. They are going to take a dangerous  
43 situation and make it safe, but they still have an interim time when there is a  
44 dangerous situation out there. There have been suggestions in the past. There are  
45 differing opinions on what signage should be installed. One of the signs he's seen  
46 that may fit this situation is at Deception Pass Bridge. It warns pedestrians and

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1 bikers that it is an unsafe bridge to cross. He'd like to focus on warning the  
2 pedestrians and the bikes.

3  
4 Brenner agreed with doing that and also doing something that would allow  
5 people to walk across the bridge. Rutan stated they could do some interim signing  
6 to make people using the bridge be aware of the situation.

7  
8 Brenner asked if they could make the bridge one way, with a stop sign at  
9 each end. Rutan stated it is an option. He doesn't know the ramifications of that  
10 option yet.

11  
12 Greiser stated the planning process was scheduled to begin this year, so they  
13 haven't pushed it forward at all. The thing now is about pushing up the planning.

14  
15 Rutan stated that is about the entire project. He is talking about focusing  
16 just on the bridge, which may push the project forward.

17  
18 Brenner stated an interim solution could be the one-way bridge.

19  
20 Greiser stated he liked the idea of the sign similar to the one on Deception  
21 Pass Bridge. It warns both pedestrians and drivers. It catches people's attention  
22 because it is different.

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24  
25 **OTHER BUSINESS**

26  
27 There was no other business.

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30 **ADJOURN**

31  
32 The meeting adjourned at 2:18 p.m.

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36 Jill Nixon, Minutes Transcription

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39 ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL  
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

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45 Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

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Barbara Brenner, Committee Chair