WALKABLE WASHINGTON

Transformation towards walkability is taking place all over the state of Washington. From urban, suburban and small town initiatives, the program showcases the effects of a renewed focus on creating great places for people to walk. The case studies are exceptional projects and programs showcasing how cities, counties, school districts, and community organizations throughout the state are making it safer, easier, and more inviting for people to walk.

WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO

We promote walkable communities and empower people throughout Washington to connect to the world by foot.

CASE STUDY

LAKEVIEW TRAIL

MOUNTLAKE TERRACE, WA

PROJECT GOALS:

• Connecting the Interurban Trail and the Mountlake Terrace Transit Center to encourage safe, easy, and enjoyable travel options on foot, bike, or bus
• Improving a major segment of an east-west pedestrian/bicycle corridor across the city that is dissected by Interstate 5
• Extending walking and bicycle connections beyond the city’s borders to better link Snohomish and King Counties and communities on both sides of Lake Washington via the Burke-Gilman Trail
• Enhancing pedestrian safety while providing easier access to recreational opportunities along the shoreline, shopping in the downtown core, and employment hubs in Seattle and Everett.

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE: The Lakeview Trail is a one-mile, non-motorized paved trail connecting the Interurban Trail and the Mountlake Terrace Transit Center. The Project increases commuting options for residents of Mountlake Terrace and other nearby cities, provides safe and convenient connections for people to walk or bike from multiple neighborhoods to the town center and destinations throughout the region via bus.

Safety improvements were a key priority for the Lakeview Trail project. Improvements included the addition of Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons at two crosswalks, enhanced signage, new pavement markings, upgraded bus stops to meet ADA guidelines, and a new traffic signal where
the trail crosses from the south side of 236th to the north side at 65th Place W. The traffic signal phasing includes an all-pedestrian phase to eliminate conflicts between pedestrians and turning vehicles.

The Lakeview Trail improves non-motorized access to recreational opportunities and healthy activities including Ballinger Playfield, Ballinger Park, Lake Ballinger Boat and Fishing Access, Mountlake Terrace Senior Center, and the Nile Shrine Golf Course. From the Mountlake Terrace Transit Center, one can walk through Veterans Memorial Park to downtown Mountlake Terrace that includes the Library, Post Office, Recreation Pavilion and Pool, local businesses and schools.

REGIONAL CONNECTIONS: Geography limits the opportunities for east-west connections across southwest Snohomish County. With the City of Edmonds now constructing sidewalk, curb ramps, and bike lanes between Highway 99 and the Interurban Trail at 228th Street, Lakeview Trail completes the gap from Highway 99 to Interstate 5 and the Mountlake Terrace Transit Center. This transit center includes a freeway station with express bus service to Seattle and Everett and future LINK light rail now under design. Lakeview Trail links our community to transit and greatly improves access to major employment centers as well as the University of Washington and regional attractions.

Additionally, east of the Lakeview Trail along 236th Street, the City of Mountlake Terrace is now designing the Main Street Revitalization Project with wide sidewalks and a pedestrian activity area to connect the Transit Center and Town Center. The newly completed bike lanes on 236th Street SW and Cedar Way are expected to be connected to the Mountlake Terrace Transit Center by 2019. This will also offer bike connections through Lake Forest Park to Edmonds via Highway 99 and to Bothell, Kirkland, Redmond, and Seattle via the Burke-Gilman Trail.

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS: Right of Way: While many projects have a limited right-of-way, this project had the additional challenge that portions of existing roadway were not centered within the right-of-way. This offset within the right-of-way resulted in a significant landscape buffer between the existing sidewalk and the condominium buildings. This issue was resolved by extending fill slopes.

Safety Challenges: Curves along the roadway limited visibility for people crossing the road on foot. Planners anticipated the areas with the greatest safety risk by identifying locations with limited sight distance and high expected usage. The city installed mid-block crossings with pedestrian activated rapid flashing beacons in these areas to create safer and more convenient connections for people on foot.

Signals: In order to make the trail run along the park side and connect to the transit center, a safe roadway crossing was needed at the intersection of 236th St and 65th Place W. A full signal was installed with a separate pedestrian phase signal to eliminate conflicts between pedestrians and turning vehicles.
Terrain: A significant retaining wall was designed near one end of the project and survey data did not include a house near the top of the wall. Concerns about undermining the house’s stability were raised so the city and contractor adjusted the nearby landscape strip and re-designed the wall with different footings to resolve this issue.

Parking Mitigation: To accommodate the trail along the ballfield without impacting residents across the street, a parking study was conducted. The city found that adequate parking would remain if on-street parking adjacent to the ballfield were removed. This allowed the trail to be built by narrowing the roadway and utilizing the former on-street parking for the trail. Four single-family homes’ driveway access was affected by the planned trail. Each family had unique constraints and concerns requiring frequent communication from the city. One resident also came by City Hall several times to express his concerns and listen to possible solutions. A great deal of work was done to reach agreement with each property owner for appropriate mitigation.

Costs and Funding: More than $2 million in federal funding paid for the majority of the design and construction costs of the project. Additionally, city funding was provided by real estate excise taxes and the Stormwater Utility Fund. The total construction cost of the project was approximately $3.4 million.

Community Involvement: Community outreach was vital to achieving positive resolution to the design and construction challenges of this project. Communication efforts from start to finish included open houses, community meetings, postcards and letters to residents, city newsletter articles, social media posts, telephone calls, emails, in-person and on-site meetings with residents and other neighboring property owners, City Council meetings, and online City Manager weekly updates.

Citizen participation was critical to this project, resulting in a new design alternative that was not originally presented. Dozens of people attended a September 2012 open house to discuss facility type alternatives including bike lanes and sidewalks, shared use trail, or cycle track and sidewalk.

A major topic of concern was which side of the roadway should have the new facility as thousands of residents live in multi-family and condo housing across from the trail while other residents live adjacent to a section of the roadway not centered within the existing right-of-way. Additionally, safety concerns about the 236th Street SW and 65th Place W intersection were raised, as none of the alternatives presented for facility type and location met with general approval.

A second public meeting was held in November of 2012 to address ongoing public concerns. One week before this meeting, the Ballinger Lake Golf Course concessionaire terminated operations, opening up new possibilities to resolve concerns about right of way and landscaping. The City Council discussed future use of the golf course site and presented new design alternatives in December 2012, and ultimately voted in early 2013 to convert the golf course to a passive park and
open space facility. Residents attended each of these Council meetings to voice their concerns and preferences about use of the site.

In 2014, a final open house updated residents on the design and construction schedule and the public expressed appreciation for the city listening and responding to their concerns.

**BENEFITS AND RESULTS:** The new Lakeview Trail creates a more vibrant Mountlake Terrace by linking the west and east sides of our city that are separated by a freeway, connecting the community to a major transit center and the Town Center, and encouraging walkability and healthful activities!

**Connecting Communities:** The trail completes the missing link between the Interurban Trail to the west side of the Interstate 5 bridge that leads to the Mountlake Terrace Transit Center. The Interurban Trail includes miles of paved surface in Snohomish County connecting the cities of Mountlake Terrace, Edmonds, Lynnwood and Everett and extends into King County through the cities of Shoreline and north Seattle.

**Safe Crossings:** Flashing beacons provide for safer pedestrian crossings across 228th Street SW at the Interurban Trail and also across Lakeview Drive at the entrance to Ballinger Park Boat Launch parking lot. Lakeview Trail design included a trail crossing at 236th Street SW and 65th Place W, so a new traffic signal was installed at this intersection. This signal has a separate phase for pedestrians to reduce conflicts between pedestrians and turning vehicles resulting in improved safety. Access to transit stops adjacent to the trail is improved and now meets current ADA guidelines.

**Vibrant Communities:** Thousands of residents live in multifamily housing across from the playfield and park and a senior citizen center is located at Ballinger Park. The trail provides a safe route to the Transit Center for employment and leisure travel as well as a two-mile round trip loop for individuals and families to enjoy for exercise. Seniors are often seen utilizing the trail for walking and parents can fit in a workout while their children practice at Ballinger Playfield.

**Regional Connections:** Additionally, east of the Lakeview Trail along 236th Street, the City of Mountlake Terrace is now designing the Main Street Revitalization Project with wide sidewalks and a pedestrian activity area to connect the Transit Center and Town Center. The newly completed bike lanes on 236th Street SW and Cedar Way are expected to be connected to the Mountlake Terrace Transit Center by 2019. This will also offer bike connections through Lake Forest Park to Edmonds via Highway 99 and to Bothell, Kirkland, Redmond, and Seattle via the Burke-Gilman Trail.

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**RESOURCES:**
www.cityofmlt.com/1821/Lakeview-Trail
Before: People on foot and bikes faced safety risks from lack of visibility and right of way.

Mountlake Terrace celebrated the near completion of the Lakeview Trail with a ribbon cutting event in October 2015. Many neighbors and members of the community who participated throughout the design process were present.