SNOQUALMIE TOWN CENTER INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS PHASE 2A
SNOQUALMIE, WA

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE: This project made improvements to State Route 202 (SR 202/Railroad Ave SE) from SE Northern St to SE River St. Improvements included roadway repaving, new street illumination, significant tree preservation, new and undergrounded utilities, and significant pedestrian improvements along with curb bulb-outs, street furniture and gateway treatments.

Specific project bike and pedestrian amenities added that were previously absent include:

- Pedestrian paths replacing either grass or a gravel shoulder along SR 202, including: a 500 foot wood-composite boardwalk in central downtown; a 600 shared-path extension of the Snoqualmie Centennial Trail; and 1,300 feet of added sidewalk, including access to 7 houses sited directly on SR 202.
- 3 new crosswalks, including one mid-block crossing in a long commercial stretch, and further improved 4-way crosswalks at 2 other intersections.
- Half a mile (2,700 feet) of sharrows and signage to guide bicyclists on a safer, alternative, parallel downtown route using a lower-traffic street (Maple Ave SE).
PROGRAM TIME-FRAME: Phase 2a of the Infrastructure Improvements is on-going and is expected to be completed in the near future. Phase One was completed in October 2010, and Phases Three and Four are expected to begin at a later date.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: The Downtown Phase II Improvements (2011-2014), and its origin 2010 Downtown Master Plan, incorporated feedback from numerous stakeholder interviews; regular Economic Development and Planning Commission meetings; plus two charrettes, a public hearing, and seven open houses overall.

Although the City had numerous stakeholder meetings with WSDOT and downtown merchants, two community involvement components stand out:

1. The City worked extensively with a local 501. nonprofit, the Northwest Railway Museum, on design feedback. These conversations saw the addition of a historically reflective wood-composite boardwalk alongside the railroad museum, boardwalk-stamped concrete, bulb-outs to slow traffic speeds, and even railroad wheel designs in crosswalks. These features make the space inviting, interesting, and safer for pedestrians.

2. Amid planning efforts, the City participated in the Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) grant program, resulting in walking tours and staff involvement in regional city planning meetings on walkability. The project culminated in the 2012 adoption of a Complete Streets Ordinance, and generation of Pedestrian and Bicycle Network Recommendations Report. These both impacted final designs, helping determine the bicycle sharrow route, and the width and prominence of sidewalk features.

COST AND FUNDING: Funding for the project is provided by the US Dept of Housing and Urban Development, the Washington State Transportation Improvement Board, the 2013 Washington State Pedestrian & Bicycle Safety Program, the Washington State Department of Transportation, the City of Snoqualmie, and the Federal Highway Administration/Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) through the 2013 Rural Town Centers & Corridors Program.

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS: Behind every street improvement, there is a larger story of sweat and effort sidewalks rarely reflect. The project overall experienced delays and budget strains, a good portion due to issues in original design specs, and then construction contractor issues. City staff weathered these as a general course, though some problems were more closely linked with walkability improvements, including conversations with Northwest Railway Museum (NRM), sidewalk extensions, and bike facilities.

City conversations with the local nonprofit, the Northwest Railway Museum (NRM) were not always easy, as NRM had desires for project features that were hard to budget, and also requested compensation for the Right of
Way (ROW) section necessary for boardwalk construction. In addition, some project features were not initially budgeted, including 800 feet of sidewalk to residential homes off of State Route 202 (SR 202), which were also ultimately grant-required to meet ADA requirements. Lastly, there were some initial thoughts to provide bike lanes on SR 202 met with too many conflict points for parking along a major arterial. This last issue was solved through the addition of sharrows on an alternative route (see project description). The sidewalks were funded out of a standing annual street fund of about $200k, and their link to a grant requirement was useful in securing Council approval. Negotiations with NRM ultimately required a $280,000 ROW purchase, funded out of a combination of REET revenues and General Funds, along with a solid store of good, old-fashioned patience.

**BENEFITS AND RESULTS:** The project “exceeded expectation.” Several of the project areas have not seen public improvements in decades, and many never had amenities for those travelling by foot and by bicycle.

Although the project concluded toward the fall/winter of 2015, when inclement weather was building, City staff and downtown merchants have noticed increased foot and bicycle traffic downtown despite standard winter rainstorms. The new bulb-outs have slowed traffic, and the new crosswalks of imprinted concrete will not require as much maintenance, better providing driver signals of pedestrian activity. The wood-composite boardwalk is an attractive and interesting feature alongside the Railroad museum, with a historic aesthetic, built-in informational kiosks, and a design built around large, significant trees that increases the friendliness of the design.

Some public projects add pedestrian amenities as an afterthought, but the Downtown Phase II project was centered around adding pedestrian amenities. The downtown boardwalk was always a compelling feature, and the idea of slowing traffic and encouraging people to walk to stores was a driving feature of the project, and all evidence points to it being a strong success.

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**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**
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