



BAINBRIDGE ISLAND SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION PROJECT

OUTREACH PHASE 1

January 2020 – September 2020

Summary

Overview and Key Findings

In 2019, the City Council expressed support in providing a transportation system (streets, transit, trails, etc.) that improves mobility and safety for all users while respecting the character of neighborhoods and maintaining a climate-resilient environment. The initiative, which became known as the Sustainable Transportation Plan, will establish the long-range vision for how we travel on the island. In addition, the Council determined that the Sustainable Transportation project should result in a transportation system that supports the overriding goal of the City's upcoming Climate Action Plan: to reduce carbon emissions on Bainbridge Island by 90% by 2045.

In summer 2020, we (the project team, comprised of City of Bainbridge Island staff and consultant staff) engaged island residents through an online open house, island-wide mailer, and live virtual event webinar. This engagement phase focused on identifying residents' mobility values, their current travel experiences, what's changed since COVID, and soliciting "Big Ideas for Sustainable Transportation." The second major public input point in winter 2021 will highlight packages of priority projects, programs, and policies to achieve our mobility vision and goals.

The prompting questions we put to residents in this phase of engagement were:

- What's most important to you when it comes to mobility on Bainbridge Island?
- Traveling on Bainbridge Island is great when...?
- What are the factors that encourage you to walk, bike, take the bus, and share rides most often?
- What's your big idea for sustainable transportation on Bainbridge Island?
- What has changed about how you move?
- What destinations do you visit often, both before COVID-19 and today? And what barriers to your travels do you encounter along your route?

We offered three different mediums for residents to provide feedback:

- Online open house (646 people visited the site July 31 – September 7)
- A livestream virtual event on August 20 (approx. 40 participants)
- An island-wide mailer (10,847 items mailed, 360 responses collected)

The top themes that emerged in the feedback we gathered are:

- **Safety** is residents' highest priority. We heard this both as a mobility value, and in the many "Big Ideas for Sustainable Transportation" where islanders cited specific types of improvements to increase the safety of sustainable transportation modes.



- **Sustainability** and having a **well-maintained transportation system** were, along with safety, the island's top mobility values
- **People enjoy walking and bicycling** on the island when they have **dedicated space separate** from traffic and when there is slow or no traffic. The connectivity of paths, trails, and bikeways to popular island destinations would support more active travel on the island.
- **COVID-19 has changed the way people travel.** Participants are taking the ferry, bus, and carpooling less. Over half of respondents reported walking, rolling, and biking more since COVID-19. When they do travel, islanders are mostly making trips to essential services or for exercise and recreation.
- Many of the island's "Big Ideas" focused on suggestions and requests for **more comfortable, connected places to walk and bike**, safety for **seniors and students**, **regional connections** by water or bus, and **maintaining** the island's current transportation system.
- When mapping opportunities and barriers to sustainable transportation, respondents cited the island's **scenic roads, parks, and shoreline street ends as great places to walk.** Grocery stores, schools, and downtown Winslow generate many trips. Common barriers include narrow roads with limited visibility, missing connections that require out-of-direction travel, and high-speed traffic makes walking and bicycling uncomfortable.
- Residents **support the plan's goals** but have concerns about **financial cost and political will** for implementation.

Key Audiences

- STTF Members (21)
- People who live on Bainbridge Island
- People who work on Bainbridge Island
- People who visit Bainbridge Island
- Technical Advisory Team (Bainbridge Island Metro Park & Recreation District, Bainbridge Island School District, Puget Sound Energy, Washington State Ferries, Kitsap Transit, WSDOT)

Phase I Outreach Activities

The COVID-19 pandemic prevented us from gathering in-person feedback. We promoted the project and our feedback opportunities through digital and socially distanced communication channels:

- **Island-wide Mailer**

During the week of August 10, we mailed a trifold postcard to all Bainbridge Island residents and businesses (10,847 addresses). The mailer introduced the Sustainable Transportation Plan with information on what will be included in the plan, project timeline, and ways to stay involved. The mailer invited people to attend the virtual livestream event on August 20 and participate in the online open house. The return survey component of the mailer invited people to share their "Big Idea for Sustainable Transportation" by writing their response in the blank space provided, and indicate their top three mobility values. We received 360 responses, delivered by mail and dropped off at City Hall.

- **Yard Signs and Posters**

During the week of August 3, we posted 20 yard signs on approved Metro Park District property where people walking and biking might see them. The yard signs were also placed outside City Hall, the Police station, and Municipal Court. STTF members also received yard signs and posted them on their property.

We hung 10 posters throughout downtown Winslow to advertise the online open house and virtual event. City Hall created a display with an informational poster and provided additional copies of the mailer that people could pick up, fill out, and submit.

Figure 1: Yard sign posted at Rotary Park



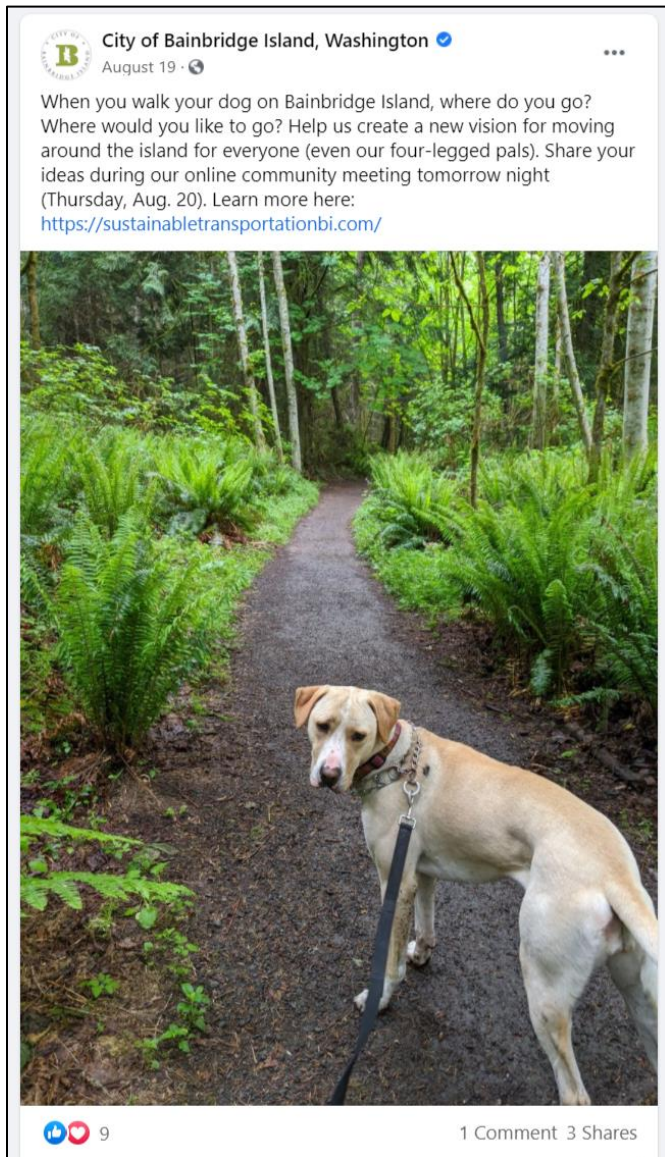
- **City of Bainbridge Island – Web and Digital Communications**

- Weekly updates to City of Bainbridge Island website and project page
- Two City Manager’s Report e-newsletter updates
- Three Notify Me email updates
- 1 News Flash (press release)
- A graphic was added on the homepage of the City website to promote the August 20 virtual event and online open house.
- The School District added information about the online open house and webinar to their event page.
- Mark Epstein, Sustainable Transportation Plan project manager, joined the August 17 Bainbridge Island Senior Community Center weekly webinar.
- Email to stakeholders from Project Manager Mark Epstein

- **City of Bainbridge Island Social Media**

We publicized the online open house and virtual events with posts to the City of Bainbridge Island Facebook (12 posts), Twitter (5 posts) and Nextdoor (2 posts) accounts.

Figure 2: Example social media post on City of Bainbridge Island's Facebook page



- **Virtual Livestream Event (August 20, 2020)**

On Thursday, August 20, 2020 we held a virtual live event via Zoom to introduce the project to the Bainbridge Island community, gather feedback, and answer questions from attendees in real time. Approximately 40 people attended the meeting held via Zoom.

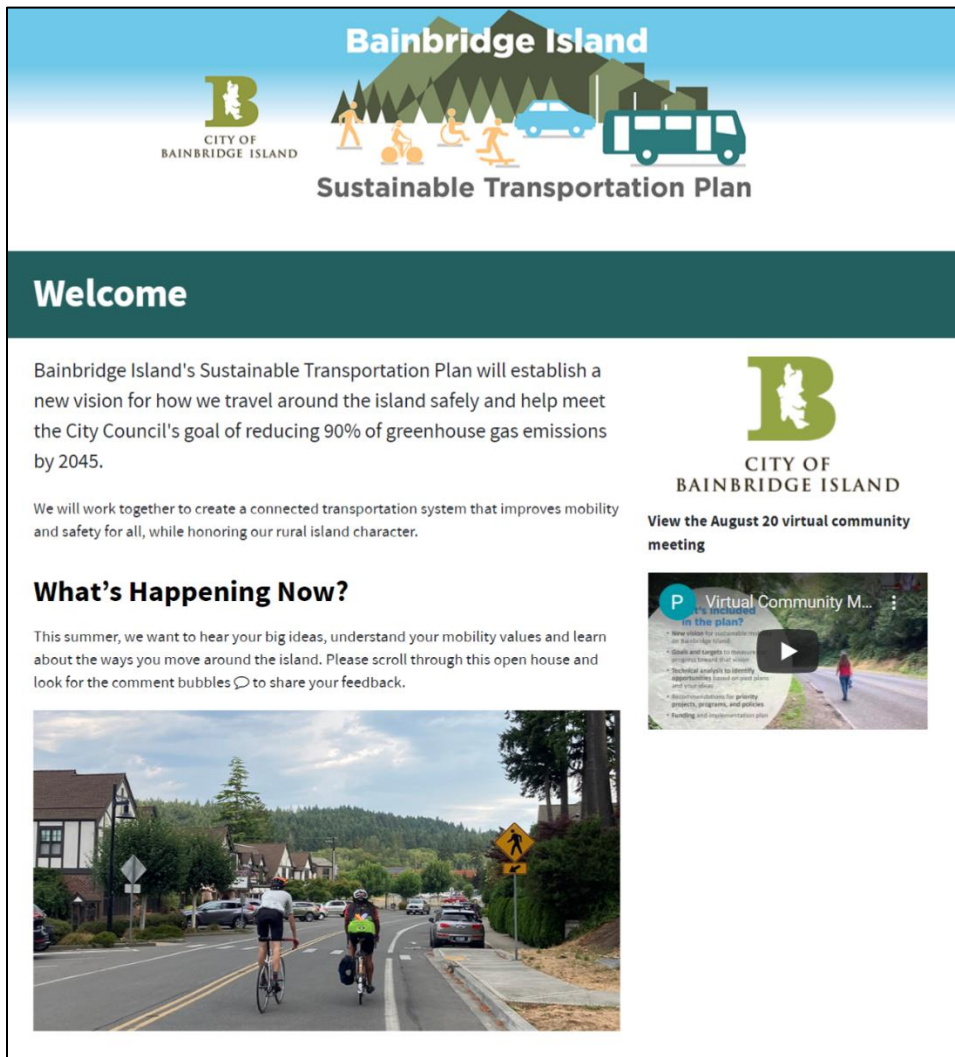
- **Project Website and Online Open House:** SustainableTransportationBI.com

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and recommended social distancing guidelines, we were unable to host an in-person open house as originally planned. Our team adjusted and launched an online open house on July 31 that provided project information and interactive opportunities to provide feedback, much like at an in-person event. Opportunities for feedback were integrated throughout the site to collect input on mobility values, travel preferences, and mobility barriers and opportunities. The online open house included a way for participants to share their “Big Ideas for Sustainable Transportation.”

Between July 31 – September 7, 2020, the online open house resulted in:

- 646 people visited the site a total of 989 times
- Visitors spent an average of 4:08 minutes on the site
- Most visitors were from Bainbridge Island, Seattle and Bremerton, and they found the site most commonly by directly typing in the site’s URL, or via Bainbridgewa.gov

Figure 3: Screen grab of the top of the online open house site. See appendix for full site.

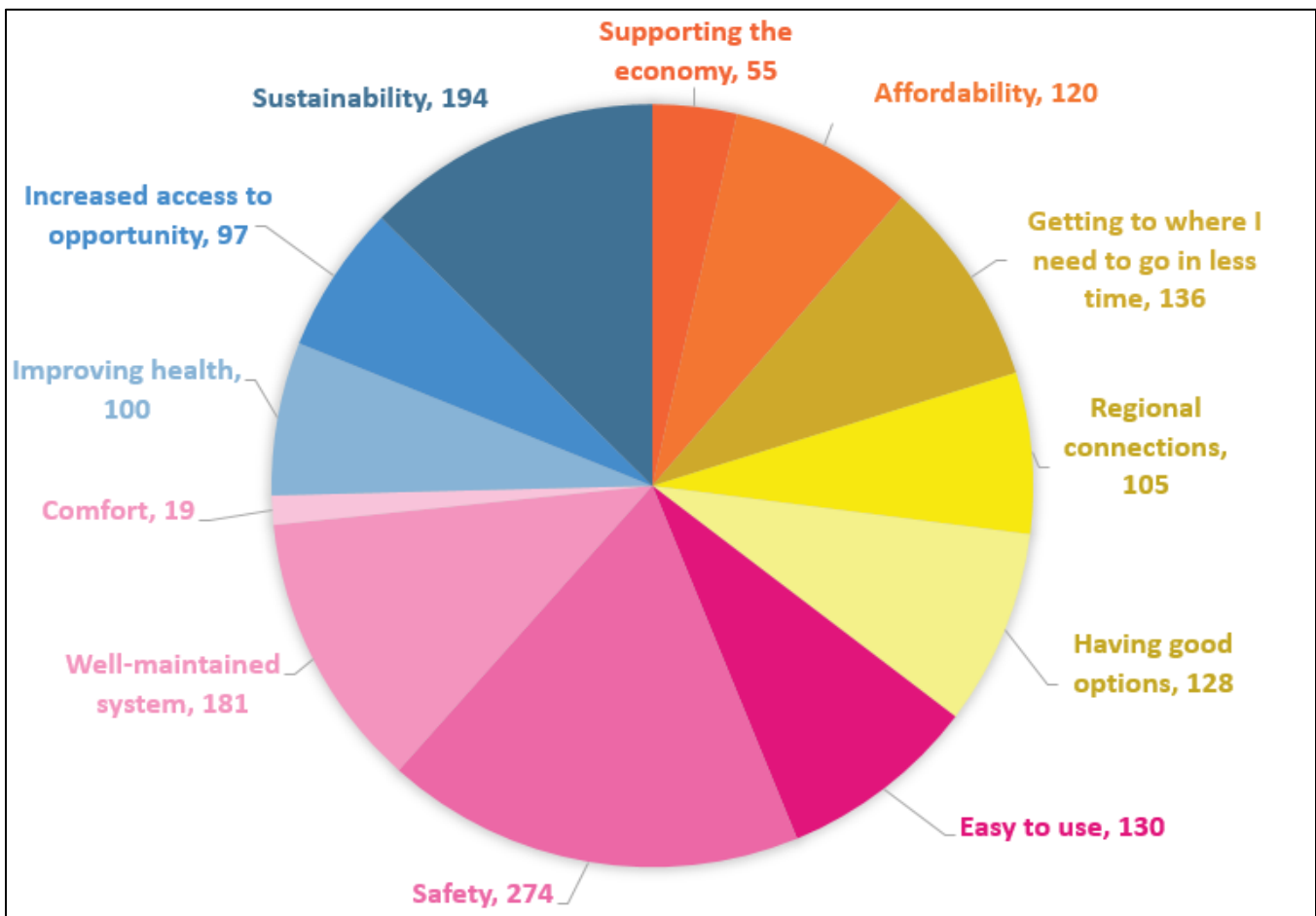


Mobility Values: What's most important to you when it comes to mobility on Bainbridge Island?

Bainbridge Island's shared values will be the foundation of the Sustainable Transportation Plan. We will use them to guide decisions and make investments that support our vision. We asked participants what's most important when it comes to mobility on Bainbridge Island by selecting their top three mobility values from 12 mobility value options. Mobility values include economic, social, quality, and performance values. We learned about the community's mobility values through three methods:

- Island-wide mailer (360 responses)
- Online open house survey (211 visitors answered this question)
- During the August 20 virtual live event (40 participants)

Figure 4: Aggregated responses to the Mobility Values question



Big Ideas for Sustainable Transportation

We invited residents and business owners to share their big ideas for the future of mobility on the island. The island-wide mailer encouraged recipients to write their “Big Idea” on a detachable portion of the mailer and return it to City Hall. Some respondents emailed ideas into Mark Epstein, COBI project manager and the project team. We received 233 “Big Idea” submissions from participants who returned their mailers.

Figure 5: Islanders submitted 233 “Big Ideas for Sustainable Transportation”



Big ideas ranged from policy recommendations to project and infrastructure improvements to programs that make it easier to travel sustainably. Many of the big ideas aligned with mobility values expressed through the mailer and online open house, adding more specific ideas and suggestions to each value. Big ideas emphasized the values of safety, well-maintained system, and connectivity. Themes from nearly 250 big ideas received are detailed below.

Safety is a consistent theme across the big idea submissions, along with a demand for mobility improvements to prioritize the safety of people both locally across the island and regionally.

- Bainbridge Island residents want to make it safer for their children to get to and from school, and for seniors to get to and from shopping centers.
- The safety of people walking, biking, and rolling was a top callout of the big ideas, including ideas for walking, biking, and roll infrastructure along major corridors, scenic routes and tourist destinations, and connecting to town centers. Residents specifically called out the need to improve the safety along busy roadways and roadways with narrow or no shoulders. A lack of safe places to walk, bike and roll is a main reason many residents don't choose these modes.
- Installing separated paths was a consistent theme for making safe connections. Although some residents suggested increasing the road shoulder width, many more wanted dedicated paths for walking, biking, and rolling.

- The Agate Pass Bridge is noted frequently as unsafe for people walking and biking. Many islanders call for the bridge to be improved to allow for better regional access.
- Other safety considerations include lighting along corridors, consistent maintenance of roads and trails, improvements to intersections along SR 305, and interactions between freight trucks and people walking, biking, and rolling.

Several big idea submissions focused on **better maintenance and management of the island’s existing mobility networks and infrastructure**. Some respondents noted that existing road conditions feel dangerous for drivers as well as people walking, biking, and rolling. One bike rider wrote “The [bike lanes] are littered with blackberry vines, gravel, branches, trash cans, etc.”

A common theme in the big ideas submissions is **connectivity**. Islanders prioritize improved access services on Bainbridge Island, as well as connectivity to the region. Big ideas related to connectivity include:

- Build a comprehensive network of separated walking and bicycling paths along major corridors to facilitate access across Bainbridge Island, including connections to retail centers, schools, housing developments, and the ferry terminal.
- Big ideas cited the lack of access to safe and comfortable facilities as the limiting factor for not biking more frequently, including one big idea response: “More people would bicycle if they weren't a few inches away from cars.”
- Transit service on Bainbridge Island that emphasizes connection from the major residential areas to schools and retail nodes, as well as off the island to other regional services such as medical services in Seattle and Port Orchard.
- The BI Ride program is well regarded, and many submissions include requests for increased service. Suggestions for shared ride programs or a new small-capacity transit fleet to transport residents from key island points, and to improve tourist accessibility of the island without the need for cars.
- The Agate Pass Bridge is noted as a bottleneck for regional connectivity. A park and ride at the Suquamish Clearwater Casino Resort with timed transit service to and from the ferry terminal is a big idea to reduce vehicle miles traveled and congestion.
- Increased transit and multi-use path connections to Bainbridge Island schools could allow students to travel without the need of a car. One resident wrote, “I would love to see public transportation correspond/work with public schools to help get kids to afterschool activities and sports.”

The most commonly referenced big idea was for an **all ages and abilities network of bike facilities and paths**. Multiple residents emphasized that these facilities should respect the island’s natural and rural character.

- Big ideas emphasized bike lanes and paths to increase accessibility to services on the island, as well as better connections to the Kitsap and Puget Sound region. Specific locations cited for improved bike connections include Winslow, Lynwood Center, Rolling Bay, as well as SR 305, Eagle Harbor Drive, Country Club, Koura, and Miller Roads.
- In addition to walking paths, sidewalks are key for residents to access more of the island. One submission said, “Areas around schools and neighborhood service centers need to be walkable. Sidewalks are critical in the neighborhoods surrounding schools (like Blakely Elementary) so families can safely walk to school.” Specific areas were Grow Ave, Koura Road, and throughout Winslow.

Traveling on Bainbridge Island is great when...

The online open house survey requested feedback for when traveling on Bainbridge Island is great by focusing on the elements that support an enjoyable walk, bike ride, bus trip, or rideshare/carpool.

- Nearly half of respondents cited that biking on the island is great when there is a **dedicated space separated from traffic**. A third of respondents selected **paths and trails along streets with less traffic and lower speeds** as the top element making for a great bike ride.
- Most respondents cited that **sidewalks connecting them to the places they want to go** as the most important element for a great walk. Walking routes with **slow-moving or little car traffic** also ranked high.
- Taking the bus on the island is great when the bus comes frequently and on time, and runs during hours one needs to travel. Bus stops located within a short walk or bike ride of home is another element that makes for a great experience taking the bus.
- Most respondents cited the ability to **easily coordinate with others traveling to the same destination** as the key element that makes carpooling or ridesharing great.

COVID-19 Travel Changes

The online open house asked visitors how their travel patterns have changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. From the 138 respondents to this question, we found:

- **Walking, rolling and bicycling are up**, with 56% reporting increasing the amount they walk or roll
- **35% of respondents are bicycling more**, and 22% are bicycling about the same amount
- **Motorized or group modes of travel are down significantly**, with 84% reporting using the ferry less, 81% of reported bus riders using the bus less, 82% of reported carpoolers riding in carpools less, and 40% of respondents driving alone less.

When asked about the types of trips participants make, the majority reported they travel for essential trips (e.g., doctor, grocery store, shopping) followed by for exercise or recreation. Figure 77 depicts the types of places virtual event attendees travel most often.

Destinations and Barriers on Bainbridge Island

The online open house asked visitors to populate an interactive map of Bainbridge Island with common trip destinations, and barriers they encounter on those trips.

Themes that emerged from the destinations (50 total destinations marked on map):

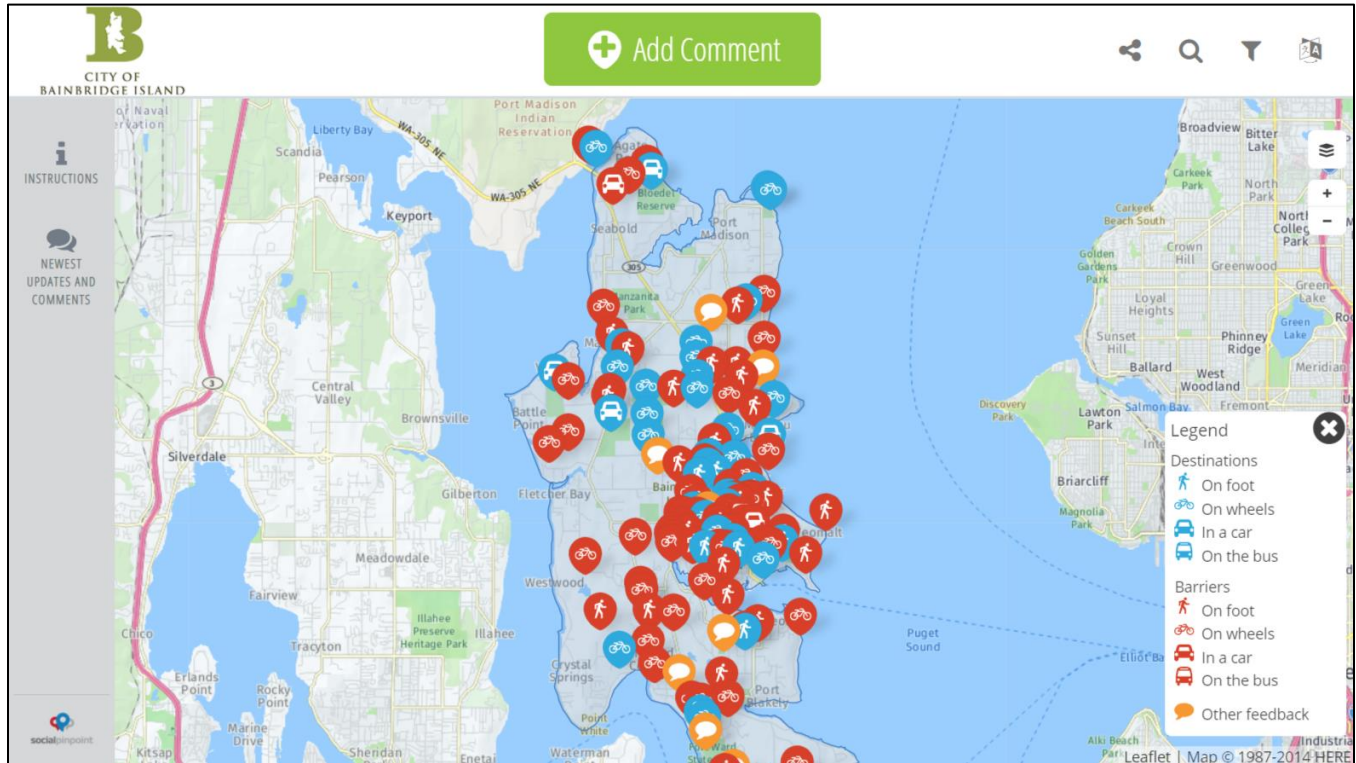
- Beautiful and scenic island roads encourage walking and biking
- Parks and shoreline street ends are great places to walk
- Side paths and trails draw many people and feel safe and comfortable
- Grocery store, schools, and Downtown Winslow generate many trips
- High-volume destinations (e.g., ferry terminal) are potential mobility hub locations

Themes that emerged from the barriers (98 total barriers marked on map):

- Narrow roads have limited visibility
- Street ends and missing connections force out-of-direction travel

- Bike parking is limited at trail and shoreline entrances
- High-speed traffic makes walking/biking uncomfortable
- Agate Pass Bridge lacks safe walking/biking facilities

Figure 6: Destination and barrier map from the online open house



August 20 Virtual Livestream Event

On Thursday, August 20, 2020 we held a virtual live event in lieu of an in-person open house to introduce the project to the Bainbridge Island community, gather feedback, and answer questions from attendees in real time. Approximately 40 people attended the meeting held via Zoom. We recorded the virtual event and posted it to the project website for those unable to join live. During the hour presentation, we used a web-based polling to engage participants as well as live Q&A to interact with attendees. Key findings from feedback received through polling includes:

- Nearly half of attendees would like to travel around the island by bike in the future.
- Virtual event attendees cited safety and sustainability as top two mobility values.
- “Big Ideas for Sustainable Transportation” shared by attendees included safer bikeways, passenger-only ferry service, and programs to make e-bike more affordable and accessible among other ideas.
- Most of the people attending the live event live on the island and were over the age of 40.

Next Steps

Phase 1 engagement concluded in early September. The project team will compile feedback to share with the Sustainable Transportation Task Force and Technical Advisory Team at their joint meeting on September 25, 2020. We will integrate the island’s top mobility values along with themes from the “Big Ideas for Sustainable Transportation” in the Sustainable Transportation Plan goals and desired outcomes that will be approved by Council in October 2020. Feedback on opportunities and barriers for sustainable transportation, the elements that make walking, biking, taking the bus, and carpooling/ridesharing great, and big ideas will inform both the gap analysis and project identification. During fall 2020, the project team will utilize phase 1 engagement findings and community feedback to inform technical analysis, including the gap analysis to highlight where there are unmet needs and opportunities for improvement on Bainbridge Island’s transportation system. Feedback on what’s most important to Bainbridge Island when it comes to mobility will inform the development of the evaluation framework to screen and score potential projects. The next phase of engagement in early 2021 will share packages of priority projects, programs, and policies to achieve our mobility vision and goals.

Figure 9: Sustainable Transportation Plan Timeline

