

# WSDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project: Project Overview

Prepared for:  
Participating agencies

Prepared by:



# WSDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project Overview

2016

## Cascade Bicycle Club

*The Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project is a statewide effort sponsored by WSDOT, conducted in conjunction with the National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project. The work element is the development of a statewide bicyclist and pedestrian count database to establish benchmarks and track changes consistent with objectives identified in WSDOT's 2009-15 Strategic Plan and the State Bicycle Facilities and Pedestrian Walkways Plan.*

*The study will rely primarily on volunteers to count pedestrians and cyclists traveling in bicycle lanes, on streets, on trails and paths, and on sidewalks across the state. An outreach effort, conducted by Cascade Bicycle Club is an important part of this project and will ensure that volunteers have all the necessary information to collect a consistent set of statewide bicycle and pedestrian counts.*

This document was produced by **Cascade Bicycle Club**. Any questions can be directed to [jeff.aken@cascadebicycleclub.org](mailto:jeff.aken@cascadebicycleclub.org)

## Introduction

This document provides background information regarding the Washington State Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project.

## 1. Count Dates and Times

### Dates

Late September to early October is the accepted annual national bicycle and pedestrian count period. This year, the 2016 Washington State Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project dates will be in late September (September 27- 29) to coincide with universities being back in session. To reduce the chance that data is skewed by weather, sports events, or other outside factors, local participants may select a **single date** from the three days provided: **September 27, 28 or 29.**

### Rationale for Dates

The WSDOT Count Period in early fall was selected because it represents a peak period for walking and bicycling, both work and school-related. Weather conditions are generally conducive, schools are back in session, and people have returned from vacations and are back at work.

### Times

Designated time periods are identified below. The designated time periods represent the busiest periods for bicycling.

#### **DESIGNATED TIMES:**

- Weekday, 7-9 AM
- Weekday, 4-6 PM

### Rationale for Time Periods

Weekday PM peak periods were chosen since the afternoon peak typically has the largest volume of travelers, with commuters, school children and people running errands. Weekday AM peak periods were chosen since the work commute period coincides with the school commute period. Counts conducted during these periods will provide an excellent snapshot of bicycling and walking during the peak periods of the year. Actual local peak periods may vary considerably.

### **Weather**

Weather may be a determinant in selecting one of the three proposed dates to conduct counts, but a participant should not be worried if the weather is poor or unusual during the count period. Weather conditions will be recorded for each count on the Count Form and be considered as a factor in future analysis. Over time, future counts, permanent counters and surveys will average out and overall trends in activity will become apparent.

## 2. Counts

### Count Variables

The proposed counts are intended to identify the numbers of bicyclists and pedestrians passing a specific point:

- on a sidewalk (both sides of street)
- path (both directions of travel)
- on-street bikeway (both directions of travel).

A person who passes by a point more than once is counted ***each time*** they pass by the point.

### Count Method

The Washington Count Period will be conducted manually, by volunteer counters.

To ensure that data received from different participants is comparable and consistent; participants should agree to follow the instructions and guidelines identified below.

#### **STEP 1: OBTAIN MATERIALS**

Count forms and the Background Data Sheet are available from Cascade Bicycle Club, [jeff.aken@cascadebicycleclub.org](mailto:jeff.aken@cascadebicycleclub.org) or from WSDOT's website: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/Count.htm>

Materials can be reproduced freely. The documents provided are:

- Documentation Project Instructions (This document)
- Volunteer Instructions and Count Form
- Background Data Sheet and Instructions

#### **STEP 2: SELECT GENERAL COUNT LOCATIONS**

To identify count locations in each participating jurisdictions, WSDOT and Cascade Bicycle Club work with local representatives from each jurisdiction to identify meaningful locations. The following considerations and suggested criteria are provided to local jurisdictions to help in the selection of general count locations:

- bicycle and pedestrian activity areas or corridors (downtown, near school campuses, parks, large workplaces, etc.)
- representative locations in urban, suburban, and rural locations
- key corridors that can be used to gauge the impacts of future improvements
- locations where counts have been conducted historically
- locations where bicycle and pedestrian collision numbers are high
- locations where there are on-going counts being conducted by other agencies through a variety of means, including video taping
- gaps and pinch points for bicyclists and pedestrians (potential improvement areas)

### **STEP 3: SELECT SPECIFIC COUNT LOCATIONS**

Once general locations have been selected, the Local Count Coordinator should inspect the sites to determine exactly where counters can be positioned.

#### **Guidelines for this inspection trip include:**

- For multi-use paths and parks, locations near the major access points are best.
- For on-street bikeways, count both sides of the street. Locations where there are few if any alternative parallel routes are best.
- For traditional downtown areas, a mid-block location near the center of the downtown is best. Count bicycles and pedestrians in one direction of travel only.
- For large-scale employee campuses, either on the main access roadway or near off-street multi-use paths is best. Count everyone in both directions at one access point.
- For residential areas, locations near higher density developments or near parks and schools are the best. Count everyone in both directions at one access point, typically a sidewalk and street.

#### **For all locations:**

- Counters will need to be in a safe, visible location and should be on public property in a location that does not block pedestrians or bicyclists.
- You must receive written permission from property owners if you will be on private property.
- If at all possible locate the counters in an area that will be comfortable for them (shade on hot days, shelter from wind/rain/etc during inclement weather)

### **Rationale for Locations**

The recommended locations are based on where many bicyclists and pedestrians travel, either now or after infrastructure improvements have been made. The purpose of the counts is to understand peak bicycle and pedestrian activity on a typical day; while it may be useful to conduct a few counts where bicyclists and pedestrians are not expected, it is preferable to understand existing use. We do not recommend counting bicycle movements through intersections because (a) it can become extremely complicated for one counter and (2) turning movement data is of little value for this database.

### **STEP 4: COMPLETE THE BACKGROUND SHEET**

This sheet will provide valuable information on the setting and conditions in which the counts take place. Researchers will be able to cross-tabulate things such as usage with land use, density, weather, income, and facility type.

Use the 'Background Data Sheet', available from Cascade Bicycle Club ([jeff.aken@cascadebicycleclub.org](mailto:jeff.aken@cascadebicycleclub.org)) to record characteristics of the count locations.

### **STEP 5: OBTAIN COUNTERS**

Each location should require one counter. Ideally, two counters will be provided per location, especially at busy intersections. You will want to identify and secure a counter for each location

plus one backup counter for every 5 locations. Counters for this study will be comprised of a body of volunteers.

### **STEP 6: TRAIN COUNTERS**

Counters will need to be familiar with how to complete forms and interpret field conditions.

## **The Day of the Count**

### **STEP 7: COUNTER EQUIPMENT**

Counters should be provided with data sheet(s) and written instructions. Volunteers will be instructed to provide their own water, writing utensils, writing surface, and to dress appropriately for weather.

### **STEP 8: COUNT FORMS**

Distribute count forms to counters. Count forms can be reproduced from the documents provided to you by Cascade Bicycle Club ([jeff.aken@cascadebicycleclub.org](mailto:jeff.aken@cascadebicycleclub.org)).

### **STEP 9: TRANSPORTING AND MANAGING COUNTERS**

Counters will need to arrive at the count locations at least 15 minutes ahead of schedule. The Local Count Coordinator should visit each count location to ensure that counters are on schedule. If the count locations are numerous or dispersed, designated supervisors may be needed to visit locations.

### **STEP 10: QUALITY CONTROL**

The Count Coordinator and any location supervisors should conduct a random review of counters during the count period to ensure they are on-duty and tabulating information correctly. Count results that vary significantly from one time period to the next or that are unusually consistent may need to be explained sufficiently to the Count Coordinator's satisfaction, or discarded.

### **STEP 11: COLLECTING FORMS**

All forms should be collected by the Count Coordinator at the conclusion of the count period. The Count Coordinator should double-check to ensure that the count forms have been completed accurately.

### **STEP 12: SUBMITTING DATA**

**All volunteers must enter their data online at**

<https://bikepedvolunteermanager.azurewebsites.net>

Completed count forms should be returned by volunteers within 10 days of the counts by mail, email or fax.

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