

Lummi Nation

Haxton Way Pedestrian Pathway Project

Before the construction of an adjacent shared pedestrian-bicycle trail, Haxton Way, which traverses the Lummi Nation Reservation in Whatcom County, Washington, was a dangerous thoroughfare for walking and bicycling. With no sidewalks or bicycle lanes, pedestrians and bicyclists were forced to travel along ditches or in the driving lanes, creating unsafe conditions for both non-drivers and drivers. As Haxton Way provides access to the Reservation's general store, a major employment center, human service providers, and residential areas, the Lummi Nation sought to find a way to reduce vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle conflicts, and improve nonmotorized access and connectivity along this major corridor.

Recognizing the importance of having a safe facility for pedestrians and bicyclists, the Lummi Nation Planning and Public Works Department (PPWD) partnered with Whatcom County, the Washington State Department of Transportation, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to develop a two-mile, \$1.7 million pedestrian-bicycle trail



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along Haxton Way. Funding for the trail was made available through a combination of sources, including County and Lummi Nation funds and grants from the State's Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Program, the Federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and FHWA's Federal Lands Highway Coordinated Technology Implementation Program.

The Lummi Nation PPWD and its partners actively engaged local residents and Tribal Elders in the planning process to ensure that community input was integrated into the project. Through open houses,

public comment periods, one-on-one meetings, and briefings to the Lummi Nation Tribal Council, a vision for the trail emerged that offered enough space and lighting to encourage use, limited impacts to nearby wetlands, and provided safe access to employment centers and human service providers along and near Haxton Way. During these conversations, community members expressed a strong preference for a wide path to facilitate conversation among groups of walkers and for a path that is illuminated at night to promote safety and extend the time of day during which the path is usable.

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Based on this input, the Lummi Nation designed the facility to consist of a paved trail with a boardwalk, pedestrian bridges, safe road crossings, and solar-powered lighting. The trail is designed to accommodate multiple users side-by-side, and the solar-powered lighting automatically adjusts to the time of day and weather conditions to support use at all hours. The project has improved safety on the heavily traveled stretch of Haxton Way. "Our Council is unanimously in favor for creating a safer community," Lummi Chairman Cliff Cultee said in a news release. "We will always be in support of and find room for improvements and safety projects."

While the trail promotes safety and access to major destinations, it also provides many other benefits. The establishment of the trail has helped to increase physical activity in the Lummi Nation, as more people are using the trail for commuting and recreation rather than using the roadway.

The trail creates a more attractive space for walking and bicycling since it separates pedestrians and bicycles from vehicles, reducing possible conflicts. As the Lummi Nation is historically a walking community, the presence of the trail has fostered walking again as a viable alternative to other modes of transportation. The trail's width further encourages walking as a way to socialize, as users can walk next to each other and talk, and also stop to chat with others passing by.

Since its completion in 2010, the Haxton Way pedestrian-bicycle trail has helped to improve safety, encourage physical activity, and support Lummi Nation residents in leading active, healthy lives. Going forward, the Lummi Nation aims to prioritize safety and pedestrian improvements in its Transportation Improvement Program.

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