



# City of Bothell™

**City Council  
Agenda Bill**  
AB # 21-135

**TO:** Mayor Olsen and Members of the Bothell City Council

**FROM:** Becky Range, Interim Assistant City Manager (Presenter)  
Jaclynn Brandenburg, Interim Public Works Director

**DATE:** September 14, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Consideration of Extending the Temporary Main Street Closure until January 1, 2021

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<b>POLICY CONSIDERATION:</b>	<p>This item asks City Council to extend the temporary closure of Main Street between 101st and 102nd Avenues NE until January 1, 2021. This includes continuing to suspend fees for all downtown public area use permits.</p> <p>Any decisions made will impact community members, businesses, visitors, students, and transit. Our staff recommendations on this topic will always be based on the following guiding principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintaining public safety routes, emergency response times, and access to all areas of Bothell</li><li>• Maintaining safe and adequate traffic circulation throughout our city</li><li>• Supporting businesses and recognizing the financial hardship of COVID to many of our businesses</li><li>• Connecting more of our public spaces and safely expanding pedestrian areas where community members can gather, socialize and engage with each other</li><li>• Providing a more broad and flexible mix of placemaking for community events, pedestrian areas, and public rights of way that do not adversely impact or benefit one particular area over another</li></ul>
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<b>HISTORY:</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
	<b>JUNE 2, 2020</b>	City Council provided direction to close Main Street between 101st Ave NE and 102nd Ave NE and allow use of the right of way at no cost to support downtown businesses
	<b>OCTOBER 6, 2020</b>	City Council provided direction to extend the Main Street closure and fee waivers until restaurants are able to resume full service
	<b>APRIL 20, 2021</b>	City Council extended temporary closure of Main Street through the summer until October 3, 2021 and requested staff return with more information on Town Square and Festival Street Improvements

In response to capacity limits and increased safety requirements due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Bothell temporarily closed Main Street between 101st Ave NE and 102nd Ave NE and allowed use of the right of way at no cost to support downtown businesses. Staff recommended to City Council in April 2021 that the closure of Main Street extend through the summer months and remained closed only through October 3, 2021, as we expected full reopenings and traffic levels to resume.

**DISCUSSION:** In response to the surge in Delta cases, many cities and workplaces have delayed full reopenings and traffic will not likely resume to normal levels this Fall. As such, we recommend the temporary closure be extended, yet we will continue to monitor traffic circulation.

Full transit has not yet been restored. Cascadia College advises that less than half of their Fall classes will resume in person. The University of Washington Bothell expects most classes to be held in person and on campus. Northshore School District has resumed in-person classes.

Staff believes it will be necessary to reopen this area of Main Street in January 2022 due to other area closures for construction projects. We have significant road work on Main Street scheduled for February that will result in a 30+ day closure between 102<sup>nd</sup> and 103<sup>rd</sup>. The New Fire Station 42 construction will likely result in lane closures or delays at the intersection of NE 185<sup>th</sup> Street and Beardslee Blvd.

Some Councilmembers expressed their desire to permanently close Main Street, as it offers a pedestrian refuge space where community members can gather, socialize and engage with each other during events or community programming. After hearing recommendations from staff that perhaps this placemaking could be attained with other options, Council directed staff to bring back more information on how our Town Square and Festival Street could be improved to deliver this same amenity, but without disrupting traffic circulation and restricting emergency routes. We plan to provide more information on this in an upcoming City Council meeting.

In previous discussions, staff and all departments have strongly advised against permanently closing Main Street without further study or necessary costly adjustments to traffic infrastructure, for the following main reasons:

**1. Emergency Access:**

- Fire/EMS: Fire Department access to an entire side of the buildings along Main Street is limited when Main Street is closed. There is no natural fire break or access between each business in that area, so firefighters have only two sides to access these businesses (the Main Street side and the rear of the buildings). The closure of Main Street further limits access to one side. The closure has a somewhat limited impact on effective delivery of EMS services to some of the businesses as well. The Fire Department has to stage apparatus on either the back side of the business or park on either end of the closure and walk personnel and equipment to patients. Additionally, the conversion of the alley between Main and 183<sup>rd</sup> to a pedestrian “Main Lane” makes emergency access even more limited.
- Police: Congestion on 185<sup>th</sup> Street impacts Police Department emergency access routes as they exit their building, resulting in slower response times. In addition, permanently closing Main Street will eventually create a congestion issue along NE 185<sup>th</sup> St that may affect emergency response time for both Police and Fire, especially during rush hours.

**2. Traffic Circulation and Impacts to Transit:**

- Main Street and 185<sup>th</sup> are the only two east-west corridors in Downtown, other than SR 522. For over a decade, the City worked

with Sound Transit, Community Transit and King County Metro to establish 185<sup>th</sup> as the long-term transit corridor as envisioned in the Downtown Plan. The combined service on this corridor is anticipated to be 23 buses in each direction per peak hour in 2026 – the estimated year of opening for the Sound Transit SR 522 bus rapid transit service. Closing Main Street will impact long-term traffic congestion Downtown, degrade transit, and interrupt the integration and connectivity that was heavily funded, planned and designed for our future Downtown. See Attachment 1 for more details.

**3. Impact to All Stakeholders:**

- Not all businesses along Main Street support a full closure. We have not engaged with community stakeholders, such as UW Bothell and Cascadia, to understand how they would be impacted by such important decisions, nor have we engaged with other area businesses, adjacent property owners along 101<sup>st</sup>, 102<sup>nd</sup>, 183<sup>rd</sup> and 185<sup>th</sup>, or transit users and providers.
- City Council has received hundreds of emails of support to permanently close Main Street. We appreciate this input and it should inform decision-making. However, we understand many of these emails were submitted by customers on Main Street when prompted by a business who directly benefits from using this public right of way.
- We believe the input of other residents and businesses should be considered and there should be more comprehensive community engagement or study done.

**4. Determining Value of Public Rights of Way (ROW):**

- Staff has serious concerns about the appropriateness of using a significant portion of public ROW to expand the property footprint of only a few private property owners.
- As stewards of city funds and assets, we aren't even sure how to determine the value of this critical traffic thoroughfare. Additionally, we are concerned that future requests for ROW use from private entities could be expected.
- Any loss of public property should be more carefully considered and studied.

**FISCAL IMPACTS:** Revenue loss for the recommended extension of the temporary closure and suspension of fees is minimal.

**ATTACHMENTS:** Att-1. Background Paper on Main Street Traffic Circulation

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:** Extend the temporary closure of Main Street and suspension of fees until January 1, 2022.