

General tips for writing a letter to your elected official

- Tell your story. As you explain your comment or question, make it personal and describe how the situation affects you;
- You do not have to be an expert on a topic to comment on it; especially if the topic is affecting you personally. That is the perspective to share;
- Elected officials at every level - - local, state, and federal - - pay attention to letters from their constituents. They realize the value of listening to the general public. Encourage others to write about the same topic. The more letters on a topic the better.
- Most elected officials receive letters through their official website or the official website of the elected body on which they serve. An example is to send a letter to a City of Vancouver City Council member, go to <http://www.cityofvancouver.us/government.asp?menuid=10462&submenuid=10474> for council members' email addresses and the City Hall mailing address;

Here are examples of what you may write about in your letter –

- A compliment for a pedestrian-friendly feature such as a new crosswalk or sidewalk;
- Describe a problem you observe and ask for community leaders support in a solution;
- Offer educational information, especially resources where they can learn more about a particular issue;
- Encourage them to dedicate resources to address a long range solution. For example, ask them to speak up for walkable communities within the community's strategic plan.

Say what you think –

In addition to letters and emails you may also contact your elected officials by telephone, by an in-person appointment, or by commenting at a public meeting. Citizens of all walks of life are encouraged to attend public meetings and share their comments. It is not as hard as it might seem! You are welcome to write out and read your comments, as well as give each councilmember a copy of your written comments. There is usually a time limit. At Vancouver City Council meetings the limit is three minutes per citizen. Individual city websites and local newspapers provide information on opportunities for citizens to comment at regularly scheduled meetings.

Sample letter to an elected official –

Dear Councilmember,
Thank you for your recent support of painting a marked crosswalk at the intersection of Anywhere Street and Everywhere Avenue. Children from our

neighborhood, including my own, regularly cross at that intersection when they walk to the park and library. As a parent and voting citizen who values safe and walkable communities, I sincerely appreciate your support.

Sincerely,
John Q. Public
1234 Anystreet
Vancouver WA 98123

