
From: Bonnie Onyon
Sent: Wednesday, January 2, 2019 8:12 PM
To: City Council
Cc: Michael Jones; Briahna Murray; Hanna Jones
Subject: FW: WCOG Regional Unfunded Transportation Needs 2019
Attachments: 2019 WCOG Regional Transportation Funding Priorities.pdf

Importance: High

Please see email below to our State reps and other influential parties. Also see attachment.

Blaine is fortunate to be first on WCOG's list of priorities. We will visit our reps and others in Olympia later in January, and hopefully see the fruits of our labors in the new State budget. Our lobbyists are working hard on our behalf.

Bonnie

From: Bob Wilson <Bob@wcog.org>
Date: Wednesday, Jan 02, 2019, 4:42 PM
To: Doug Ericksen <doug.ericksen@leg.wa.gov>, Kevin Ranker <kevin.ranker@leg.wa.gov>, Jeff Morris <jeff.morris@leg.wa.gov>, Luanne Van Werven <luanne.vanwerven@leg.wa.gov>, Sharon Shewmake <shewmake@gmail.com>, Debra Lekanoff <debra.lekanoff@leg.wa.gov>
Cc: Tom Parker <tparker011@comcast.net>, Bobby Briscoe <bobbyb@portofbellingham.com>, Bonnie Onyon <BOnyon@cityofblaine.com>, Jack Louws <jlouws@co.whatcom.wa.us>, Jeremiah J. Julius <JeremiahJ@lummi-nsn.gov>, John Carter <john.carter@lwvsd.org>, John Perry <jperry@ci.everson.wa.us>, Jon Mutchler <JonMutchler@cityofferndale.org>, Kelli Linville <klinville@cob.org>, Kyle Christensen <kchristensen@cityofsumas.com>, Michael Lilliquist <mlilliquist@cob.org>, Satpal Sidhu <ssidhu@co.whatcom.wa.us>, Scott Korthuis <korthuiss@lyndenwa.org>, Terry Bornemann <terryb903@comcast.net>, Tom Jones <mltjones@comcast.net>, WCOG Staff <Staff@wcog.org>
Subject: WCOG Regional Unfunded Transportation Needs 2019

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Happy New Year! Attached please find a PDF document containing WCOG's recently-adopted *Unfunded Transportation Needs of Whatcom County 2019*. Your support for the listed projects in the upcoming State Legislative Session would be greatly appreciated by the member jurisdictions of WCOG. As always, please don't hesitate to call or e-mail me if I can answer any questions for you.

On behalf of WCOG's Council Board, I wish you success in the 2019 Session!

Bob

Robert H. Wilson, AICP Executive Director
Whatcom Council of Governments
314 East Champion Street
Bellingham, WA 98225
(360) 685-8389

My incoming and outgoing e-mail is subject to public disclosure requirements per RCW 42.56.



Unfunded Transportation Needs of Whatcom County 2019

Adopted by the Board of the Whatcom Council of Governments
December 12, 2018



MEMORANDUM

January 2, 2019

TO: Whatcom County's State Legislative Delegation

FROM: Bob Wilson, Executive Director

RE: **Unfunded Regional Transportation Funding Priorities for 2019**

At its meeting last month, the Board of the Whatcom Council of Governments unanimously approved the following six transportation funding requests, and it requests your support for them in the 2019 State Legislative Session:

REGIONAL ROAD PRIORITIES

Grade Separation Rail-Traffic Solution at State Route 548 (Blaine) – The U.S Department of Homeland Security's "VACIS" rail freight-car inspection array is located alongside BNSF Railway's tracks immediately south of the City of Blaine's southern limit. While the VACIS is in operation, freight trains must slow down to a virtual crawl, which has the unintended effect of blocking the busy intersection of Peace Portal Drive and Blaine Road (both of

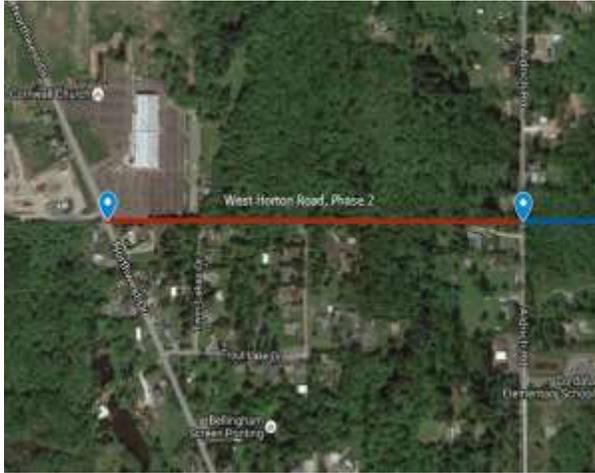


Traffic backed up on State Route 548 due to VACIS inspection.

which are links of State Route 548). Back-ups typically last 30 minutes or longer, severely affecting school bus schedules and, more importantly, potentially cutting off the neighborhoods to the west of the intersection from first responders. These back-ups also impede through-traffic to and from the City's commercial and industrial districts and disrupt flow on and off Interstate 5 at Exit 274.

A grade separation at this intersection would enhance public safety, promote economic development and support the efficient movement of goods between the U.S. and Canada along Whatcom County's northern border, which amounted to approximately \$16.6-billion (USD) in 2017. Request: **\$24-million**

West Horton Road Multi-modal Corridor Extension, Phase 2 (Whatcom County) – This project – located in Bellingham’s Urban Growth Area – would be carried out as a partnership



between the City of Bellingham and Whatcom County. It would extend West Horton Road a half-mile west – from Aldrich Road to Northwest Avenue – as an arterial street with sidewalks and bicycle lanes, and a roundabout at the intersection of Horton and Northwest. Land acquisition, off-site mitigation and minimizing the road footprint will be necessary to address anticipated environmental impacts. Request: **\$16-million.**

REGIONAL TRANSIT PRIORITIES (listed in order of priority)

1. Operating Support for Regional Transit Service (Whatcom Transportation Authority) –

Based on a model developed by the North Sound Transportation Alliance (also known as “The Farmhouse Gang”), the three northwest Washington transit systems – the Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA), Skagit Transit and Island Transit – operate a coordinated set of services linking the five northwestern counties of Whatcom, Skagit, Island, San Juan and Snohomish. This includes express service provided by WTA, linking Bellingham Station to Skagit Station in Mt. Vernon with continuing service provided by Skagit Transit to Everett Station. Similarly, service operated by Island Transit and Skagit Transit allow residents of Island, Skagit and San Juan counties to access services in Bellingham through the connection at Skagit Station.

All three systems operate outside the boundaries of their individual service areas to provide these linkages. The current funding source is a mix of local funds and competitive grants. This funding model is unreliable and unsustainable, and it threatens the viability of these critical regional transportation services, which advance the State’s interests by relieving congestion, supporting economic development and improving mobility, especially for Washington’s transportation-disadvantaged population. A dedicated and reliable source of operating funding to sustain and enhance extra-regional services like the WTA/Skagit/Island County Connector service is requested. Request: **Ongoing operating support in an amount to be determined by the Legislature**

2. Lincoln Creek Transportation Center Improvements (Western Washington University, Bellingham and WTA) – This facility – owned and operated by WWU – serves as both a park-and-ride lot and a regional transit center, providing parking for about 500 cars along with regular WTA bus service to Western and employment centers in Whatcom, Skagit and Snohomish counties. This project involves grading and paving the site to create 566 marked parking stalls, the construction of a transit concourse, new traffic signalization for bus

priority on Lincoln Street, and badly-needed drainage and storm-water treatment improvements. Benefits include improved access and safety for pedestrians, bicyclists and people with disabilities, as well as reduced delay on local roads and nearby I-5 interchanges. WTA will apply for a SFY 2019-21 Regional Mobility Grant through WSDOT in the amount of \$9,867,971, with the land serving as the required local match. It is requested of the State Legislature that it authorize this request.

Request: \$9.87-million



The uneven grade of the site's unpaved surface causes storm water to pool in the numerous gullies in the parking area.

3. Bellingham Station Expansion (WTA) – WTA has developed design concepts to expand its station in downtown Bellingham, which was built in 1980 with ten bus gates. Bellingham Station is at capacity and must be expanded to build out the High-Frequency Transit Network (WTA's GO Line services) and to support transit service to the rapidly-developing Waterfront District.

The station would be expanded by adding a passenger concourse and four bus gates in the Railroad Avenue right-of-way to the southwest of the existing station. The new gates would accommodate articulated coaches and provide charging for electric buses.

Request: \$4-million



4. Support for Transit Electrification (WTA) – The cost of an electric bus and charger is double that of a standard diesel coach. With a fleet of 61 coaches – at up to \$550,000 per coach – the unfunded marginal cost to WTA of electrification would be up to \$35-million over 10 years. There is significant pressure on Washington's transit systems from the State to move to an electric bus fleet. This should be accompanied by a commitment from the Legislature to assume the costs associated with this important environmental initiative.

Request: Capital support in an amount to be determined by the Legislature

Please call Tom Parker of Parker Northwest at (206) 200-7898, or me at (360) 685-8389, if you have questions about any of these requests. Thank you for your help in addressing these critical regional needs.