



## *City of Blaine*

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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#### **Blaine residents identify priorities for services**

*Council considers Transportation Benefit District to aid in economic development*

Blaine, Wash. – Residents and businesses in Blaine, Wash. have weighed in on priorities for services and projects as part of a Strategic Economic Initiative completed this year. The report, which included 933 responses, says that economic development, parks, trails and streets are a top priority for the community. Public Works Director Ravyn Whitewolf says the four are interconnected.

“Good transportation links are critical to economic development, which attracts and keeps businesses in Blaine,” she said. “It also welcomes people for shopping and tourism, which generates revenue for other city services.”

The question is how to fund transportation projects and programs that will bring economic development to the City. Like most cities, the demand for services in Blaine is higher than the revenue available to provide them. The City is limited by law to a one percent revenue increase per year on its property tax levy. It also retains less than one percent of the 8.5% sales tax remitted to the state. This is causing the City to look at different ways to fund what local residents want.

With street and trail connections being central to economic development, the Blaine City Council is considering asking voters to approve a Transportation Benefit District (TBD). The TBD would last for 10 years and be funded through two-tenths of one percent (0.2%) sales tax.

This would make Blaine’s total sales tax rate 8.7%, which is the same as the neighboring communities of Bellingham, Lynden and Ferndale. It would generate approximately \$200,000 a year for transportation projects and programs, and help the City provide matching funds for grant requests to make local tax dollars go further.

The Blaine community has approved special funding for city services before. Voters approved a 10-year property tax levy for streets in 1996. When the levy expired, the City Council issued bonds for street maintenance and improvements, but bonds costs more due to interest payments.

Whitewolf says that a sales tax increase also means that visitors from Canada and neighboring communities will pay their fair share for the city services they use.

“We want to hear from the community,” she said. “This seems like a fair way to fund transportation projects and programs which, in turn, will help revitalize our downtown.”

The City of Blaine wants to hear from local residents and businesses about this proposal. Interested parties are encouraged to email their thoughts to [TBD@cityofblaine.com](mailto:TBD@cityofblaine.com), or send a letter to Ravyn Whitewolf, Public Works Director, 1200 Yew Avenue, Blaine, WA 98230. All communication is encouraged and becomes a matter of public record.

The Strategic Economic Initiative involved focus groups, library users, open houses, and community surveys. More about the initiative can be viewed at [www.cityofblaine.com](http://www.cityofblaine.com).

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*The City of Blaine (pop. 4,900) is 110 miles north of Seattle and 35 miles south of Vancouver, British Columbia. The City is located between the beautiful Cascade Range and Puget Sound, and steeped in the rich history of a logging and fishing town. The natural beauty of Blaine attracts visitors from Canada and neighboring communities for shopping, professional services, and recreational opportunities. Visitors are central to a thriving economy in Blaine, which helps fund city services for local residents.*

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