



## City of Blaine

### 2020 Legislative Priorities

Updated July 2020

#### **Addressing Train/Vehicle Delays at Bell Road (SR 548)**

Bell Road (SR 548) connects the communities of Birch Bay and Semiahmoo to downtown Blaine and Interstate-5. There are serious local traffic delays on this roadway caused by the Vehicle and Cargo Inspection System (VACIS). The VACIS is operated by US Homeland Security to monitor goods leaving or coming into United States from Canada. Cargo trains going through the VACIS move very slowly, and block traffic across Bell Road (SR 548). This traffic backs up on to Interstate 5 at Exit 274. A grade separated crossing over the train tracks is the ideal solution to address this congestion, enhance public safety, connect Blaine with Birch Bay and Semiahmoo, promote economic development, and support the movement of goods into and out of the United States. However, evaluation of the project has uncovered significant engineering challenges, local access issues, and an unexpectedly high construction cost. Based on WSDOT evaluation of alternatives, the City supports construction of an at-grade, signalized intersection with channelization improvements (bypass lanes) to improve traffic flow and reduce delays.

The City of Blaine advocated for WSDOT to receive \$1.550 million in state transportation funds to engineer and design a grade separation project at Bell Road (SR 548). Of the \$550,000 that WSDOT planned to spend to achieve 30% design by mid-2020, approximately \$200,000 remains after the alternative analysis and signal analysis was completed. The \$1 million in state rail funding was planned for right-of-way acquisition. We support the use of the remaining allocated funds for design and construction of the at-grade alternative (approx. \$1.2 million).

#### **Marine Drive Reconstruction Project**

The City of Blaine and the Port of Bellingham request \$3.1 million in transportation funding to reconstruct Marine Drive. The easternmost section of Marine Drive has been closed to vehicle traffic since 2015. This segment of road serves as access to Jorgensen Public Pier and is a component of the breakwater for Blaine Harbor. Access to adjacent fish processing industries has been compromised due to the road closure. The City and the Port of Bellingham are coordinating on an effort to reconstruct the roadway to ensure access to the pier and protection of the harbor. Under the proposed project, a new truck-compatible roadway will serve the industrial shipyard. A single vehicle lane, a bike/ped lane, and a bulkhead will continue for the final 300 feet to provide access to the public pier.

### **Marine Park Shoreline Restoration and Naturalization Phase II**

The City of Blaine requests \$750,000 in capital funding for Phase II of the Marine Park Restoration and Naturalization project. The public beach at Marine Park has concrete rubble, broken asphalt and garbage at the water's edge, impeding public access to the water and polluting Semiahmoo Bay. With the help of a \$50,000 grant from the Washington State Department of Ecology's Coastal Protection Program, the City completed Phase I in 2015 that restored 400-feet of shoreline by installing sand, gravel cobbles, and shoreline plants. The result was a clean enhanced public shoreline. The City has been able to make the Phase II of the project shovel ready through grant assistance from the Rose Foundation. Phase II would allow the City to continue the removal of debris. As the only publicly accessible beach on the east side of Drayton Harbor Blaine residents rely heavily on the site for water access. Marine Park Playground and walking trails attract residents from the County and beyond – this project will enhance access to the water for many.

### **Local Transportation Revenue**

Cities throughout the state lack financial resources to adequately maintain and operate the city-owned transportation system. The City of Blaine asks that the state provide increased local funding tools to meet city transportation needs. As a border community, the City of Blaine is unique from other communities. Visitors from Canada frequently travel into the City of Blaine and utilize Blaine's infrastructure without contributing to the tax base. To address this, the state previously authorized border communities to impose a "border gas tax" with voter approval. The City of Blaine, Sumas and Nooksack have utilized this authority. One option to increase local funding tools to meet city transportation needs would be to authorize these communities to increase the border gas tax by another cent.

### **Fish Landing Shared Revenue**

The City of Blaine is home to marinas and harbors and recognizes that landed food fish are important to the City's local economy. Washington State currently imposes a small tax on enhanced food fish revenue in such communities, but does not share this local revenue with the impacted municipalities. The City of Blaine supports the City of Westport and the Association of Washington Cities' effort to change statute and require that 75% of the revenue from the state landing fee is shared with the municipalities that house such facilities. The City sees a need to develop infrastructure in and around its own port, and sees a viable use for these funds, should the Legislature choose to enact this proposal.

***The City of Blaine supports the legislative priorities of the Association of Washington Cities.***