

June 2006 – Open Houses Summary



The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) US 2 Route Development Plan project team held two open houses from 5 pm – 8 pm on June 13th and 14th, 2006 with the purpose of soliciting comments on US 2 operations and issues important to businesses, residents, and users along the US 2 corridor. Attendees were able to learn about the Route Development Plan (RDP) process, expectations, progress, final product, as well as ways they could be involved throughout the project. Display boards showed information about the corridor divided into 4 segments.



Additionally, WSDOT invited and provided tables for the following groups to maximize the experiences of the attendees:

- US 2 Safety Coalition
- Washington State Patrol
- The Stevens Pass Greenway
- City of Monroe
- SR 9 and SR 522 Project Office



Attendees were asked to share their feedback, both written and verbal, on the information presented to them as well as suggest potential improvements to address specific issues.

The US 2 Route Development Plan project team was available to answer questions and talk with open house attendees.

Seventy-two (72) people attended the Gold Bar open house, held at the Gold Bar Elementary School. Twenty-two (22) people filled out a comment form and twenty-six (26) comments were left on the flip charts.

Fifty (50) people came to the open house in Monroe, held at the Monroe High School. Twenty (20) people filled out a comment form and there were forty-two (42) comments made on flip charts.

The majority of people noted that the display boards portrayed the traffic data fairly and accurately. Only a few noted that the data counts were lower than they believed to be accurate. A number of attendees thanked the US 2 Route Development Plan Project Team for holding the open houses and for asking their opinion. Some expressed their desire for WSDOT to start constructing projects rather than continue in the planning phase.

Comments from the two open houses are transcribed below. They are organized by the segment that they refer to and by topic.

General Corridor Comments

There was an overall concern about traffic and safety along the entire length of the US 2 RDP study area.



Attendees were concerned about the safety of the corridor and suggested a number of ways to offer short-term safety improvements. Their suggestions included building jersey barriers, cable barriers, and rumble strips. Other people suggested adding more speed limit signs along the corridor. Some attendees suggested increasing the speed limit along the corridor to improve traffic flow, while others suggested lowering the speed limit in most areas to improve safety. A significant number of people suggested that US 2 be made into a 4-lane highway from Snohomish to Stevens Pass.

General comments applying to the entire study area are organized below into the following categories; the numbers of comments in that category are shown in parentheses:

- Emphasizing urgency (8)
- Collisions (3)
- Suggested improvements (44)
- Bypasses (10)
- Speed limit (8)
- Traffic/Congestion/Growth (7)
- Areas of concern (7)
- Enforcement/Safety (6)
- Other commuting options (9)
- Bicycle/Recreation (6)
- Wildlife (1)



Responding to "Have we captured the transportation issues along US 2 correctly?"

Yes (14)

No (4)

Thank you (4)

Emphasizing urgency

Reiterated need for funding (3)

- We need action, not more studies.
- Do it now, don't wait 20 years, it will be less expensive to do it now than 20 years from now.
- We who live in Snohomish County and use US 2 know the problems as you are hearing. WSDOT and the USDOT need to find the solutions. The federal and state legislators MUST find the funding for safety and growth concerns.
- A band-aid. Please no more band-aids lets get a real solution.
- This is important to those of us who live here and we see people injured and dying here every week. It is good to know someone has noticed and there is a plan to do something about it.

Collisions

- Data clarified the number of collisions that occur other than head-on collisions.
- I would say you have unfortunately the deaths of Hwy 2 attract attention – and that is what it takes.
- Put articles in the paper more often and show differences in improvements verses accidents and fatalities.



Suggested improvements

- Highway 2 should be 4-lanes. (16)
- More roundabouts (6)
 - Consider roundabouts before stoplights.
- If you make more roundabouts, make them big enough for large trucks and/or RV's.
- Put lots of rumble strips now. (4)
- Reflectors (4)
- Reflectors on white stripes and center graves in middle of road so people wake up if they cross over into others lane.
- Paint and reflectors in middle and sides, especially in the winter when you can't see what lane you are in because of the rain.
- More center dividers (3)
- The cable preventing head-on collisions is a good idea but not enough proof in effectiveness.
- More turn lanes (3)
- Left turn lanes (2)
- Fix curves. (2)
- Shorter solution...we suggest you put a median all the way from Snohomish to Gold Bar. Jersey barriers or cable and post or rumple zones with left turn pockets as needed.
- Ban motor vehicles.
- Create movement areas for trucks. Main and SR 203 and US 2 troubled.

Bypasses

- Need bypass from Snohomish through or to Index. (4)
- Major thoroughfare like I-90 past North Bend.
- Keep speed limit so that commuters can get to work.
- Build highway bypass from Monroe to Gold Bar. (3)
- The solution to the problem is limited. Hwy 2 needs to be made into a second interstate (i.e. I-90) and making Hwy 2 accessible through business loops to an Interstate Hwy.
- Need a freeway for truckers of all kind to get around our small towns.
- We need back roads to get from Gold Bar to at least Sultan – Basin Road.

Speed limit

- Lower speed limits (3)
 - Speed limits should be 50 (never 55 or 60).
 - Reduce speed limit through Skykomish to 40 or 45 mph.
- Increase speed limit.
- Change the speed limit from 60 mph to 55 mph where areas become more populated and back to 60 mph in wide-open areas.
- Need more speed limit signs (all over the WA highways).
- Have signs that say “turn your lights on” and lots of signs.
- More left turn lanes/signals.



Traffic/Congestion/Growth

- Stop letting Sultan and Monroe grow so explosively and then be the main ones to cry about Hwy 2!
- Hwy 2 needs to be a free flowing road from Snohomish to Index. Future growth and increased traffic volume necessitates long range planning and not a piecemeal approach.
- The cities of Sultan & Monroe are as much to blame for a lot of these problems as anything else. They have absolutely no right to cry about the accidents, etc. when they refuse to curb their own growth.
- Our commutes should not be taking this long. Snohomish County and WSDOT waited too long and did not anticipate these problems. Why are you asking me what the problems are – don't we have professionals getting paid to do this? Doesn't the data speak for itself?

- Frustrating! - Impossible on Sundays going west. 40 minutes to get through Monroe on Saturdays.
- Regarding property taxes: equal funding for growth areas example, is that Gold Bar should allocate more funds.
- Give equal funding or priority funding to growth areas including Gold Bar, Sultan, and Monroe.

Areas of concern

- All of Hwy 2 is of concern – would like to identify every location on the map.
- The areas I've marked on the map are of concern because of narrow, windy blind spot curves. Below Index and Hwy 2 bridge and between Money Creek and Skykomish, and anywhere along this 45 mile stretch of concern where people turn off Hwy 2 onto private driveways.
- I would like to see these spots have wider roads with a shoulder.
- Concentrate on Monroe to Sultan
- You have segmented the areas but a comprehensive long-term plan needs to be considered. Hwy 2 is not just a country highway but also a major route to recreation from Seattle and a commute to Seattle.
- The whole corridor is of major concern. We have had deaths from Snohomish to the pass.
- Put a road in east of Gold Bar to Hwy 203. This will help those who work in Redmond/Kirkland as they will by-pass Monroe, SR 522, and Duvall.

Enforcement/Safety

- More policing to catch people speeding will help.
- A lot of out-of-towners need to realize the impact that they have on our small towns speeding is a huge issue especially along "4 lanes" where they cut you off all the time.
- Clear weeds and grass and trees on these pull on/off ramps so we can see if a vehicle is coming.
- Most of the collisions were caused by being intoxicated or falling asleep at the wheel, so how do we stop that besides getting people off of the road.



- I figure “people” race once a patrol passes, where wrecks happen it’s usually of drunkenness, carelessness or drug usage. So it’s impossible for most can tell a wreck before it happens. We don’t have enough state patrols in general to cover all these mistakes; most of the alcoholics and drug addicts are in this area. There are too many for our state patrol.
- My husband fell asleep at the wheel commuting and thank god didn’t kill anyone. We as a family have made changes. He has to stay over in a motel or with friends and family on a long commute.

Other commuting options

- Commuter rail on BNSF track between Everett to Skykomish two times a day. (2)
- Add commuter rail on BNSF track between Everett to Skykomish two times a day. (2)
- From a family who has a driver constantly on Hwy 2 and 522 we are excited about the idea of rail commuting in our area to help alleviate traffic congestion. We also use community transit whenever possible.
- Need transit planning for commuter, residents.
- Rail commuting to prevent collisions in the winter months/to slow down rear-end collisions of people using Stevens pass.
- Burlington Northern, going from 32 to 50 plus daily trains (Tunnel at Summit may limit trains).
- Need transit planning for commuters and residents.

Bicycle/Recreation

- Need safe bike paths including bridges (3).
- In areas of high bicycle riding installation of rumble strips alongside of roadway should be postponed until the development of off road bicycle routes.
- When Hwy 2 is widened, ensure adequate shoulders for safe bicycling.
- How about “safe” bike paths? Why not work out something with the railroad?
- Pedestrians/Bicycles complete the street.
- Add bicycle lanes.
 - Bike Corridor by the railroad.

Wildlife

- Also somehow people need to realize that the farther up you go, the more wildlife you have crossing the highway, particularly at night.

Segment 1: Snohomish to Monroe

Segment 1 from Snohomish to Monroe is characterized by 2 lanes of traffic in each direction and connects two growing cities. SR 522 and SR 9 absorb some of the traffic that would otherwise be routed to US 2 between Snohomish and Monroe. A number of attendees commented on the traffic on SR 522 and SR 9, specifically that SR 522 should be completed as a bypass to US 2.



The majority of comments related to Segment 1 suggest that 4 lanes be built between Snohomish and Monroe. A number of people noted that there is often traffic through Snohomish, especially on the weekends. Most of the general comments that could be applied to the length of the study area began in Snohomish and would also apply to this segment.

Open House attendees provided comments related to Segment 1 under the following topics:

- Suggested improvements (4)
- Traffic congestion (2)
- Bypass (1)

Suggested improvements

- Build 4-lanes
- Need minimum 2 lanes each way with turn lane.
- Passing between Snohomish and Monroe.
- Eliminate local ingress/egress between Snohomish and Monroe.

Traffic congestion

- The 522/US 2 intersection and traffic through Monroe demands state attention NOW.
- Complete 522. This will take a load off of Segment 1.

Bypass

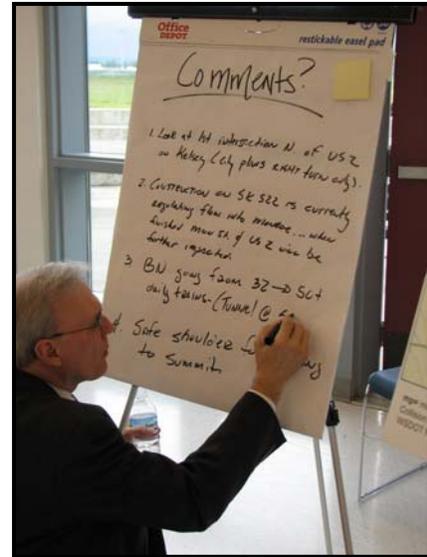
- Build SR 522 bypass or business frontage roads.

Segment 2: Monroe

The comments received for Segment 2 were focused predominantly on traffic and congestion. Nineteen (19) people commented that they would like to see a bypass built around Monroe. Maintaining business access and alleviating congestion were two of the most common issues presented by attendees who commented on this segment.

Comments relating to Segment 2 fell under the following topics:

- Suggested improvements (1)
- Congestion/Traffic (4)
- Bypass (19)
- Areas of concern (3)



Suggested improvements

- Need longer left turn green light through Monroe.

Congestion/Traffic

- Traffic really bottlenecks at Fred Meyer to the Fairgrounds/Fryelands.
- Don't like medians in Monroe because they increase congestion.
- In Monroe it is very discouraging to be going east and having to go to a business on the left hand side of the road. I tend to not go anymore. I take my business out of the area – which is bad for the community. Put in a road to the left of Hwy 2 (between Hwy 2 and the theater) or divert Hwy traffic away from Hwy 2 and use the Hwy for business traffic.
- It is now more difficult for Aid Units to drive through Monroe with a sick patient. Sometimes the driver needs to go against traffic to get through town – this is more dangerous than before.

Bypass

- Bypass Monroe (4)
 - Bypass north and south of Monroe.
- Bypass south side of Monroe (3)
- Bypass north of Monroe (2)
- Desperately needs a bypass.
- 203 to Hwy 2 bypass east side of Monroe – 2 bridges required.

- Construction on SR 522 is currently regulating flow into Monroe...where finished Main St. and US 2 will be further impacted.
- Implement Hwy 2 bypass around Monroe as shown on maps from many years ago from airport to woods creek.
- Why was land purchased for bypassing the City of Monroe and then sold???
- Maybe the money spend "studying" whether or not Monroe needs to be bypassed could have gone towards the bypass project.
- Get the by-pass of Monroe done!!!
- Monroe bypass is sorely needed! This is both for Hwy 2 travelers and Monroe residents.
- Bypass Monroe like you did to Snohomish, Sultan, Startup and Gold Bar. Start to plan ahead for growth.
- Houses were moved from the north side of US 2 segment 1 in the mid 70s to make room for the bypass. How come we are going to waste another \$750,000 for a "study" when we knew what to do 30 years ago? Spend the money on pavement! Segment 2 needs a bypass or Viaduct NOW, with segment 3 second in importance.

Areas of concern

- All of Segment 2!!!
- Look at intersection north of US 2 on Kelsey. (City plans right turn only).
- I have lived in Monroe for 18 years. When I moved here this issue was at the state it is now. Nothing has ever been done or accomplished since I moved here, yet the tax base (population) has tripled and my property taxes have tripled. When are we going to see something for our money?



Segment 3: East Monroe to West Gold Bar

A number of open house attendees highlighted Pickle Farm Road as an area of concern and suggested different improvements for that location. Other frequent comments include building a bypass around Sultan, building a 4-lane highway from Monroe to Gold Bar, and syncing traffic lights with Sultan. There were a number of concerns regarding the traffic through Sultan and the lack of available alternate routes. There were also a number of comments regarding the amount of growth in the area.



Comments were made for Segment 3 on the following topics; the number of comments made under each topic is noted in parentheses.

- Suggested improvements (16)
- Areas of concern (6)
- Congestion/Traffic (6)
- Growth (2)
- Wildlife (1)

Suggested improvements

- To prevent collisions, add stoplight at Pickle Farm Road or in Startup to slow cars to enter and leave Hwy 2.
- Need minimum 2 lanes each way with turn lane.
- 4-lanes from Monroe to Gold Bar.
- Make a 4-Lane Interstate with business loops to each town or city.
- Bypass Sultan (2)
 - Bypass north of Sultan.
- Sultan – Gold Bar bypass – add motorcycle lane.
- Bypass Sultan & Startup with exits if needed for the city.
- Install roundabouts at the 2 signal lights on Hwy 2 in Sultan.
- Eliminate local ingress/egress between Monroe and Sultan.
- Short-term improvements: median cement blocks, jersey barriers, rumble strips.
- Sync lights from Monroe to Sultan.
- Sync lights within Sultan.
- At Pickle Farm Road, create left turn pocket – make right turn (existing) into thru lane. (2)
 - Left turn pocket (eastbound) at Pickle Farm Road (east Gold Bar).

Areas of concern

- Fish hatchery
- Start-up
- From milepost 16 to 20 - there have been two major wrecks there recently. Since I know people live around that area, near the road, it is a danger to both the people in the car and near by the buses.
- Milepost 12 to 13 - most people street race or sprint on this part of Hwy 2 and it concerns me because 2 or more people race on both sides or 1 side and passes. I don't want anyone, even people I don't know, to get hurt. I would rather have someone in prison/ jail in safety than someone to get hurt or die.
- Sultan Basin Road to Old Owen Big Pass.
- Milepost 13 to 17 (Gold Bar) Westbound proposed foot bridge. Cut back the blackberries – the footpath is overgrown.

Congestion/Traffic

- The new Sultan lights slow down traffic too much. I am very disappointed to see that nothing will be done (as far as any sort of construction) till possibly Summer 2008 and summer is the busiest time of year as far as Friday-Sunday traffic plus it depends on money. I have anxiety over my commute because it is on the "death Hwy." It is very frustrating that it takes an hour or more to get home (Gold Bar) from Snohomish on a Friday.
- Two weeks ago a deadly accident happened just past Kellogg Road in Startup, we were put on Kellogg to reach Sultan and just after we got through there was another accident on Kellogg that had all the traffic up. We also get a lot of broken windshields from the big vehicles throwing them but some small cars do also from the gravel on the highway.





- Please provide westbound 2 through Sultan relief on Sunday afternoons! Backups are miles long and delays are up to 60 minutes! Maybe a bypass, maybe just adjust the stoplights pattern on that day or start limiting access to Hwy 2.
- The weekend traffic, especially Sunday afternoon and early evening is always very slow or stop and go year round, especially from Gold Bar to Sultan. It gets a little busier earlier Friday afternoon and climaxes Sunday when everyone is coming home to points west of Sultan.
- Save us from Sunday afternoon westbound delays at Sultan please.
- The traffic through Gold Bar and Snohomish is not good at rush hour. Locals need the local roads that are taken over by travelers and weekend recreation goes. A by-pass route is the only real solution. Local population increases also require more lanes on existing roads.



Growth

- There needs to be planning for the continuing development of Sultan and Gold Bar. These cities will get bigger and we need to plan and do for the future.
- Some of the growth of Sultan and Gold Bar are going to get worse; you need to plan ahead so they don't turn into Monroe style problems.

Wildlife

- Create animal over passes.

Segment 4: East Gold Bar to Skykomish

The most common feedback given for Segment 4 was to widen the highway, add shoulders or increase the number of lanes. A few people suggested lowering the speed limit in this area, while others noted that they would keep it the same.

The comments for this segment are organized into the following categories; the number of comments related to the category is shown in parentheses.

- Suggested improvements (11)
- Areas of concern (3)

Suggested improvements

- Need 2 lanes each way. (3)
- Widen the highway.
- Provide 3 lanes from Gold Bar to Startup
- Provide shoulders in Segment 4
- Bridges need to be wider to accommodate wider cars and trucks – need shoulders; the highway has cars boxed in.
- Milepost 23: the speed zone (45 mph) safety for school buses entering Hwy 2 roadway attention getters (textures off side of road to wake drowsy drivers). Hwy 2 between Gold Bar and Index is too dangerous to have a 60 mph speed limit.
- No roundabouts – they cause more problems than they solve!
- Spend more time on traffic enforcement – the Hwy's 2 and 522 are good roads with too many idiot drivers on them and make talking on cell phones while driving illegal.
- 60 mph to great in the Anderson Creek area

Areas of concern

- Not a fair traffic count for Skykomish!
- Segment 4 from milepost 22 to 23 needs widening, including bridges and shoulders.
- Milepost 20 to 21
- Lanes heading west need more converging room before Big Bend turn off, it is an easy place to have head on collisions.

