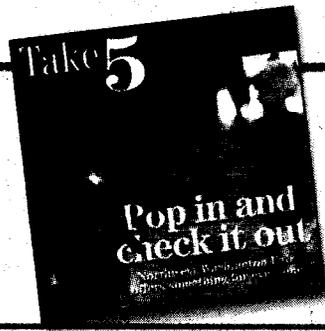


THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

BellinghamHerald.com

Thursday, August 7, 2014

75 cents



LYNDEN FAIR TIME

Farm celebration starts Monday.
Week's entertainment: **TAKE FIVE**

LUKE RIDNOUR RETURNS TO BLAINE

NBA point guard leads youth basketball camp **B1**

PRIMARY ELECTION UPDATES

Top two candidates in political races emerge **A2**

Mini-roundabouts coming near Slater, I-5

Projects a fast, inexpensive fix for traffic congestion

RALPH SCHWARTZ

THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

FERDALE — Whatcom County is fast-tracking construction of three mini-roundabouts near the Slater Road and Interstate 5 interchange to relieve rush-hour congestion.

County Public Works and the state Department of Transportation came up with a way to solve the Slater traffic problem at the on- and off-ramps

and at Pacific Highway that will only take a couple of weeks and \$280,000 to build, said county officials.

County engineer Joe Rutan said the work will be so simple, it will amount to a maintenance job more than a construction project. The work involves placing a three-inch-high island in the center of each of the three intersections, painting new stripes and

placing roundabout signs.

Transportation officials considered stop signs for the ramps, but the signs wouldn't improve the congestion problem, Rutan said. Full-size roundabouts or traffic signals would be more expensive, he said.

"These things cost \$100,000 each, as opposed to a couple million," Rutan said.

Large trucks won't follow the roundabout but will drive over the low island to turn, he said.

Construction of what officials call the "compact roundabouts" — 62 to 67 feet in

diameter, instead of up to 120 feet — should begin in mid-September, said DOT spokesman Tom Pearce.

Traffic at the interchange gets an "F," the lowest possible grade, during the evening rush hour. With a steady stream of traffic on Slater, the line of cars waiting to turn left onto Slater can extend back to the right lane of I-5, both northbound and southbound, Rutan said.

Drivers waiting to turn onto Slater become frustrated, he said.

"People who have been waiting for so long, they'll pull

into traffic and just hope someone stops," Rutan said.

County officials have asked Lummi Nation, Ferndale and Bellingham to contribute to the construction cost. The interchange is on the southeast corner of the Ferndale city limits. Retail development, including a new Costco at the Bakerview Road interchange in Bellingham, is expected to increase traffic at Slater and I-5, officials said.

Lummi Nation has verbally committed to paying \$70,000 for the work, said county Executive Jack Louws. Ferndale is considering a \$10,000

contribution, said city spokesman Sam Taylor.

Bellingham's City Council is likely to consider paying for a share of the work at a meeting in September. City staff and Mayor Kelli Linville will meet to decide how much they should recommend the council spend on the project, said Public Works Director Ted Carlson.

Reach Ralph Schwartz at ralph.schwartz@bellinghamherald.com or 360-715-2289. Read his Politics blog at bellinghamherald.com/politics-blog or get updates on Twitter at @bhampolitics.

Woman
killed in

BELLINGHAM RESCUE

Truck hits Euclid Avenue carport; driver removed, taken to hospital

Two more
Whatcom