CHAPTER 2:
DESCRIPTION OF THE ALTERNATIVES

2.1 Introduction

FHWA, WSDOT, and the local community have long recognized the need for an SR 3 bypass around Belfair in the project area. The alignment and scope of work presented as the Build Alternative in this Environmental Assessment best meets the *purpose and need* for the project while avoiding, minimizing, and/or mitigating for created effects on the environment.

2.2 What alternatives are under consideration in this environmental assessment?

Two alternatives are presented in this EA:

- The Build Alternative: construct the Belfair Bypass, described in detail below.
- The No Build Alternative: do not construct a Belfair Bypass.

With either alternative, the existing SR 3 would receive on-going maintenance and safety improvements as projects are funded.

2.2.1 What is the Build Alternative?

FHWA and the WSDOT propose to construct the Bypass on a new alignment to the east of existing SR 3, as shown in Exhibit 2.1 and 2.2. The new road would become the mainline SR 3 and the existing segment of SR 3 through Belfair will become a *business loop*.

The Bypass would be 6.68 miles long and consist of two 12-foot lanes with eight-foot shoulders. Right of way to be purchased would be 120 feet wide. The Bypass will be a Managed Access facility from the beginning of the alignment (MP 22.81) to the intersection with SR 302. Then, the facility will switch to Limited Access from the intersection with SR 302 to the intersection with Lake Flora Road.

2.2.2 Description from south to north:

At the southern end, the new Bypass would connect with the existing SR 3 at MP 22.81, just south of the SR 3/SR 302 at the Victor Cutoff Road intersection. This intersection would be realigned, and controlled with a new traffic signal as shown in Exhibit 2.1.

Near the SR/3 SR 302 intersection, the main entrance to Belwood Estates and a church in this vicinity would need to be converted to a right-in/right-out entrance. A new entrance would be constructed approximately 800 feet to the east.

The alignment would cross the recreation fields of North Mason High School. A grade-separated crossing is proposed here at MP 23.43 to maintain access between the currently developed school property and undeveloped school property to the east.

The alignment would pass through the eastern portion of the Alta Neighborhood, severing the access to several properties. A frontage road would be constructed on either side of the Bypass, to provide access for these properties. The two frontage roads and the Bypass would meet at a four-way unsignalized intersection at about MP 23.79.

North of the Alta Neighborhood, the Bypass would cross a ravine at MP 24.37 with a 300-foot long bridge, and then pass below the high voltage power lines at MP 24.95.

The next four miles of the alignment are largely undeveloped forested land, and some large wooded residential parcels, with the exception of the Belfair Wastewater and Water Reclamation Facilities complex at MP 26.03. The Bypass would pass through the northwest corner of this property and over a sewer main in this area. The Bypass would cross the Mason and Kitsap County line at about MP 27.

At the northern end, the Bypass would connect with existing SR 3 at MP 29.49, after intersecting with SW Lake Flora Road. This intersection would also be realigned and controlled with a traffic signal shown in Exhibit 2.2. Additional features to be constructed along with the Bypass include stormwater treatment facilities, a compensatory wetland mitigation site, and culvert extensions as needed.

2.3 How was the proposed alternative selected? What alternatives were considered but dismissed from further consideration?

Processes that have evaluated the location of a bypass span over 40 years, and include:

- *1996 WSDOT SR 3 Reconnaissance Study*
- *1997 WSDOT Belfair Bypass Analysis SR 3 Vicinity*
- *2001 Mason County Belfair Bypass Environmental Assessment*
- *2006 WSDOT SR 3 Belfair Bypass New Alignment Project*
- *2007 WSDOT Preferred Connection Alternative Selection, SR 3 Belfair Bypass*

WSDOT worked on preliminary design and environmental analysis for the current alignment June 2006 through June 2009. The traffic and transportation analysis done by WSDOT during this time period included the development of eight alternative improvement concepts. These consisted of various new local connector roads, the two-lane bypass on the currently proposed alignment, and several combinations of these components. These were compared in terms of meeting the goal of achieving an acceptable transportation level of service through the project area, through the year 2035.

The conclusions were:

- Roadway widening and intersection improvements on existing SR 3 through Belfair would be necessary with or without any additional roads, and

- Construction of a bypass and connector roads (between the bypass and existing SR 3) would reduce the extent of the improvements needed on existing SR 3, and
- Construction of a Newkirk Connector road would provide optimal results, and further minimize improvements needed on existing SR 3.

The traffic and transportation analysis done by WSDOT in August 2011 included the No Build and the currently proposed Belfair Bypass Build Alternatives as described in this chapter, Section 2.2.2. It also presumed that the SR 3 Belfair Area Widening and Safety Improvements project would be constructed prior to the construction of the Bypass. The SR 3 improvement project extends a center two-way left-turn lane, paved shoulder and sidewalk on both sides of SR 3 through Belfair, in two stages. Stage one is between MP 25.36, just south of Belfair Elementary School, to MP 27.08 at Ridge Point Blvd This project is funded and scheduled for construction to begin in summer 2013. Stage two is from MP 25.36 south to MP 24.91 at the SR 3/SR 106 intersection and is currently not funded.

This analysis concluded that a bypass, with Limited Access between the southern and northern connections to SR 3, would offer the best prospects for improving travel times through the corridor for pass-through traffic. An intersection is proposed as part of the Build Alternative at the vicinity of Alta Road. Limited Access would not preclude future access in the vicinity of Romance Hill Road and the vicinity of the Kitsap County line. After the Lake Flora Road intersection, the Bypass would switch back to Managed Access.

2.3.1 Selection of the alignment

Studies done by various agencies have proposed or referred to a Belfair Bypass for many years. Although the location of the alignment and connection points to SR 3 have varied, a bypass was always proposed to lie east of SR 3, on the inside of the curve of the highway, connecting points to the north and south of the Belfair commercial area. This level of screening of the potential alternative locations for a bypass that would provide a reliable high-speed regional route is supported by basic feasibility and reasoning, and does not require further analysis:

- A bypass on the west side of SR 3 would lengthen, rather than shorten the driving distance between Shelton and Bremerton.

- The southern connection would be shifted north to avoid the Hood Canal and the complex tidal mud flats and wetlands at its northern tip. Therefore, the southern connection point would be within the congested segment of SR 3, which would negate the purpose of a bypass.

This basic alignment of a bypass to the east side of Belfair, on the inside curve of SR 3, is now an integral part of the local land use and transportation plans that have been updated over the years.

Within the general east side bypass corridor, the topography, U.S. Government railroad, and the electrical transmission line constrain the corridor that is feasible for roadway construction. Within that corridor, the primary factors defining the alignment for the Bypass are avoiding impacts to residences and to wetlands.

2.3.2 Selection of the connection designs

An analysis focused on the northern and southern connection points, where the Bypass would connect to the existing SR 3, was performed. Alternative designs were screened and scored by a selection team, on the following criteria:

- Operational functionality and safety
- Cost
- Public approval
- Impact to property
- Environmental issues

The selected connection designs are shown in Exhibits 2.1 and 2.2. The north and south connections are also shown in Exhibits 3-2 and 3-3 (Transportation Direct Effects and Mitigation). The selected south end alternative does not preclude a potential future Mason County project which would extend Rasor Road over existing SR 3 to meet the Bypass in the vicinity of Alta Road. For more detail on connection analysis and design, see *Preferred Connection Alternative Selections, SR Belfair Bypass, WSDOT, September 17, 2007.* (Figs are in the Transportation DR, Aug 2011 Figs 3 & 4)

2.3.3 Transportation Demand Management

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) are measures used to help the existing transportation system operate more efficiently.

The widened shoulders and new sidewalks included in the BAWSI project will make walking and bicycle riding through the Belfair area safer and more attractive. Therefore, more people may choose these alternatives for travel, which would result in removing some short trips by car from SR 3 within the project area.

Mason County has proposed the following TDM strategies to reduce demand for new roads (Mason County Comprehensive Plan, Transportation Chapter VIII-3.10, Mason County, 2005 as updated):

- **Park-and-Ride Service:** Remote parking lots should be located at transit stops to allow those users beyond the normal quarter mile walking distance to a transit stop.
- **Shuttle Systems:** Short-distance transit services should provide reduced auto dependence (i.e., shuttle service from places of employment to restaurants and shopping areas).
- **Employment Transit Subsidies:** Employers should subsidize their employees' use of transit by giving cash subsidies for purchase of transit passes.
- **Ridesharing:** Carpooling and vanpooling offer tremendous potential for improving utilization of existing transportation facilities. Modest increases in ridesharing should produce measurable improvements.
- **Alternative Work Hours:** Promotion of staggered work hours should spread peak period demand. An example of this concept should include flex-time, which gives employees personal choice to determine their work hours.
- **Parking Management:** This strategy includes limiting the supply and availability of parking, preferential parking for carpools and vanpools, or reducing the amount of free parking provided to employees.

2.4 What environmental consequences may be expected from the proposed Build Alternative and the No Build Alternative?

The environmental consequences of construction and operation of the proposed Build Alternative and the No Build Alternative are discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

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