

# SR 3 Belfair Bypass - Questions and Answers

## Is there funding to construct the Bypass?

No. Current funding is designated solely for completion of the environmental review phase of the project.

## Will the Belfair Bypass project relieve congestion in downtown Belfair?

Although the Bypass would improve traffic conditions in Belfair, it would not solve them. As a stand-alone project, the Bypass is not expected to draw enough travelers from the Belfair retail/commercial core to provide complete congestion relief to downtown Belfair. Traffic analysis shows that a high level of trips passing through Belfair originate from or are destined to the North Shore/Tahuya area, SR 106, or the Belfair retail/commercial area itself. Additional improvements to SR 3 will be necessary to maintain satisfactory traffic conditions through downtown Belfair.

## Why is the preferred alternative two lanes instead of four lanes?

Traffic studies have demonstrated that a two lane facility sufficiently supports the traffic demand through design year 2035.

## What access connections to the Bypass will be provided between the north and south connections?

The Bypass is proposed as a Limited Access facility between SR 302 and Lake Flora road, with a single proposed intersection in the vicinity of Alta Road. Limited Access control would allow possible future connections to the planned county road system in the vicinity of Romance Hill Road and the Mason/Kitsap County line. Connections to local roads at these locations are not included in the proposed project.

## What does “Limited Access” mean?

This means that access from properties next to the Bypass will be selectively limited. WSDOT will acquire access rights from abutting property owners as required by RCW 47.52. Typically, only county road intersections will be allowed to connect to the Bypass. This will preserve the safety and efficiency of the new highway. Development accessing the new highway corridor like existing SR 3 through the Belfair retail/commercial core will not be allowed.

## What are the benefits of this project?

The proposed project would provide a solution to immediate regional mobility and safety needs for this part of the SR 3 corridor. It would improve safety on SR 3 through Belfair by providing through traffic a route around the downtown business core. With through traffic able to bypass downtown Belfair, congestion will be improved but not eliminated. The completed project would ensure efficient movement of freight, commute trips, tourist influxes and serve general traffic needs through the design year 2035. It would also serve as an alternate route during recurring highway closures from accidents on existing SR 3 in Belfair.

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### **Will WSDOT need to buy property to complete construction of this project?**

Yes. Approximately 92 parcels would be directly impacted by the Build Alternative depending on the project's final design. The Build Alternative would relocate four residential units (three single-family residences and one single-wide mobile home).

### **Why didn't WSDOT put forward a preferred alternative that is smaller in scope and less expensive?**

In 2009 the Legislature directed WSDOT to evaluate if the Bypass could be scaled back and completed less expensively. WSDOT conducted public outreach and engaged an expert review panel representing Belfair business interests, local citizens, local engineering expertise, Federal Highway Administration and WSDOT traffic and design expertise to reconsider the scope and budget of the Bypass. The result was a list of several alternatives which require additional engineering design and environmental analysis to determine if they will result in a higher benefit and lower cost. The 2009 legislature provided no funding to conduct further design analysis for these alternatives. These alternative approaches will be evaluated once funding is allocated by the legislature.

This Environmental Assessment evaluates the original Bypass alignment inherited from Mason County that was further developed by WSDOT in preliminary design. The core segment of this alignment remains the same with any of the expert panel recommendations.

### **Why is it taking so long to build this project?**

While preliminary design and environmental analysis for the Bypass has been active on and off since 1997, final design, right of way and construction funding has never been fully funded to move the project forward.

### **Doesn't the North Mason School District have plans that conflict with the Belfair Bypass?**

WSDOT has been working closely with the North Mason County School District throughout the preliminary design phase of the project. Until April of 2013, the southern end connection alternative presented in the SR 3 Belfair Bypass Environmental Assessment (2013) was considered the most prudent and reasonable alternative among several options evaluated. In April 2013, the School District passed a facilities bond with a linked land use proposal that is not compatible with WSDOT's current Build Alternative. This proposed land use change for new public school facilities will require further evaluation for the proposed new highway alignment. Once funding is allocated for final highway design, highway conflicts with school facilities will be reevaluated for avoidance and minimization accordingly.