

## **OPEN LETTER TO THE BELFAIR COMMUNITY AND CITIZENS OF MASON COUNTY**

The purpose of this letter is to articulate the position of the Board of County Commissioners regarding the proposed Belfair SR3 project and associated costs.

### **Scope of Project**

To begin, the proposed SR3 project contains several components. A sewer system would be constructed in phases with the first phase designed to serve properties in proximity to SR3 and within the Belfair downtown core. Wastewater would be transmitted via a force main to the existing treatment facility in Allyn. Secondly, given that a large section of SR3 will be impacted by construction of the sewer main within the right of way, it is proposed to reconstruct SR3 to three lanes the entire length of Belfair. Thirdly, to address storm water, a new system will be designed to improve water quality. Fourthly, to improve the appearance of Belfair and provide for pedestrian connections, the project will include extensive landscaping, as well as bike and walking trails, and sidewalks. Lastly, if funding can be obtained, the sewer will be extended to the Belfair State Park area to address current and on-going health risks.

### **The Proposed SR3 Project has Six Goals:**

1. To promote economic development within Belfair by installing a sewer system thereby creating new jobs, attracting private investment and making possible new housing construction and industrial building.
2. To enable the downtown core area of Belfair to redevelop and expand thereby ensuring its future market viability, as well as providing opportunity for new commercial growth on SR3 north of downtown.
3. To improve transportation through Belfair to serve residents and commuters, and improve highway safety.
4. To improve water quality thereby lessening the impact of storm water on Hood Canal and improving fish habitat and the environment.
5. To enable Belfair to transform its appearance and develop an identity making it an attractive center of growth and development for decades to come.
6. To create an attractive opportunity for future residential growth within a designated urban growth area (UGA), consistent with the Growth Management Act requirements.

The Commissioners strongly believe this project is in the best interest of Belfair and all citizens of Mason County.

### **Public Involvement**

This project emerged from a group of local citizens who served as the Belfair Sub-Area Planning Committee over a 2 ½ year period. Their task was to formulate a plan for the future of Belfair. The committee was assisted by a consultant, MAKERS Architecture, funded by a state grant (\$60,000), the county (\$21,375) and local contributions of businesses and citizens (\$40,000). Three public workshops conducted in 2003 drew broad citizen participation and comment regarding the plan. On April 19, 2004 the Planning Advisory Commission held a public meeting in Belfair and has scheduled a public hearing on May 17, 2004. Subsequently, the Board of County Commissioners will

hold a public hearing after it receives the recommendations of the Planning Advisory Commission to consider adoption of this plan. The plan is available for review at [www.makersarch.com](http://www.makersarch.com) (select "ftp" on the home page), at the Mason County Planning Department and at the Timberland Regional Library in Belfair.

### **Project Costs**

To ascertain the cost of this project the county is presently finalizing a contract with a consultant, Perteet Engineering, Inc. The scope of the contract can be found on Mason County's Website, [www.co.mason.wa.us](http://www.co.mason.wa.us). The cost is \$275,579 and is to be completed by December 31, 2004. To continue citizen participation in the process, soon a committee will be appointed to work with the consultant as they complete their assigned tasks. In addition, public meetings will be held to inform citizens on the consultant's progress.

No estimate for this project has been made by the Public Works Department. The county has received an estimate prepared by ESA, Inc. (Engineering Services Assoc., Inc) under the auspices of the Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group which totals \$18,148,914, comprised of SR3 widening \$3,266,819; sanitary sewer \$12,018,161; storm water/sewer \$1,981,934; trail system \$382,000; and Belfair Creek restoration \$500,000. The cost details can be found on Mason County's Website, [www.co.mason.wa.us](http://www.co.mason.wa.us). The county recognizes the possibility that the consultant's cost projection may exceed the above estimate, however, that is by no means certain.

With respect to sanitary sewer, in December 2003 Gray & Osborne, Inc. prepared an estimate for the Utilities & Waste Management Department which projected the initial phase cost of \$12,915,637 and the extension cost to Belfair State Park area at \$4,169,953.

To put these estimates in perspective note that it is expected WSDOT will contribute at least half of the cost of highway reconstruction. Thus, the county cost share of \$1,633,409 is 20% of the total cost for roadway projects budgeted in the county in 2004 by Public Works and less than the recently awarded contract to reconstruct a 2.02 mile portion of Crestview Drive in the amount of \$2,019,446. Furthermore, the estimated amount for the first phase of the sewer project is approximately 58% of the final cost to construct the Allyn Sewer System, approximately \$22,450,000.

### **Project Funding**

One of the consultant's tasks is to develop project funding options which will include grants, loans, county funding and participation of benefiting property owners. The Commissioners believe the benefits of the project, similar to the Allyn project, will significantly out weigh the costs. It should be noted residential growth in Allyn is proceeding at a rate more than three times the county average, primarily due to the construction of sewer facilities.

### **Project Schedule**

Although construction of the project is not yet scheduled and is contingent on funding, the goal is to have the project completed, if at all possible, prior to the 2007 scheduled closing of the Hood Canal bridge, which may well be delayed to 2008.

**Belfair Bypass**

With respect to the bypass, it is the Board of Mason County Commissioners' position that construction of a bypass is necessary for the long-term development of Belfair and to address regional transportation issues. The SR3 project is not a substitute for the bypass, but rather an immediate short-term answer to address the current situation. Presently, it is envisioned in the Belfair Plan that planning and funding acquisition on the bypass will be done in the next 3 to 7 years. Construction would be initiated during the next 7 to 15 years. The Commissioners believe the bypass should be substantially funded by the state, augmented by federal funds and benefiting property owners, and not funded principally by the citizens of Mason County.

In conclusion, the Commissioners believe major capital projects, like the SR3 project, deserve and require full public disclosure and discussion. This project will create a new future for Belfair, jobs for citizens, new housing, improved water quality and is good for Mason County.

BOARD OF MASON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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