



**Snohomish County**  
**Office of the Executive**  
**Aaron Reardon**  
*County Executive*

## **Media Advisory – Dec. 20, 2007**

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### **Federal bill spurs county improvements**

More than \$2 million in critical federal funding for transportation improvements and a biodiesel initiative has been secured by Snohomish County, in large part from the support of Sens. Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, as well as Reps. Rick Larsen and Jay Inslee.

On Wednesday, a federal “Omnibus spending bill” was passed by Congress, providing funding to Snohomish County beginning in 2008. The bill is expected to be signed by the President.

Included in the package is money for Snohomish County’s top federal legislative agenda items: the Granite Falls alternative route project, Highway 2 safety improvements and a biodiesel initiative geared toward reducing Snohomish County’s carbon footprint.

“In a highly scrutinized appropriations process, Snohomish County comes out a big winner,” said Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon. “I thank our Washington State delegation, particularly Sen. Murray’s leadership on transportation, for the fact that our roads will be safer and our air will be cleaner.”

A total of \$1.029 million will be available to help construct a two-lane, two-mile alternate freight route for gravel and logging trucks now driving through Granite Falls. The bypass will improve freight mobility, reduce congestion and improve public safety.

Last year, more than 4.5 million tons of aggregate was trucked through downtown Granite Falls to points throughout northwest Washington, causing major congestion, safety and pollution problems.

Funding totaling \$344,365 will be available for a biodiesel initiative, helping Snohomish County reduce its impacts on climate change. Since 2006, the county has worked with local farmers and researchers to plant seed crops that can be converted to biodiesel. Such biodiesel would allow the county to increase the number of vehicles in its fleet using the alternative fuel.

The federal appropriation will allow Snohomish County to generate demand for the production of more than 1,000 acres of canola, become an active partner in biofuel business development and invest in the necessary infrastructure to make biodiesel a sustainable agricultural industry in the county.

“By stimulating our local fuel infrastructure, Snohomish County can promote living-wage jobs throughout our agricultural community,” Reardon said. “Furthermore, the

biodiesel initiative will contribute to the county's efforts to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, while limiting our dependence on foreign oil."

Additionally, \$637,000 will allow the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), in partnership with Snohomish County, to fund U.S. 2 safety improvements between Snohomish and Skykomish. Since 1999, more than 40 deaths have occurred on U.S. 2 between this section of the highway.

A U.S. 2 development plan created by the WSDOT includes nearly 60 projects designed to improve safety and capacity along the 50-mile stretch, and this funding will allow those projects to begin.

The U.S. 2 money is necessary, Reardon said, as this busy highway has not benefited from either the Washington State nickel or the 9.5 cents gas-tax packages.

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