



Snohomish County
Office of the Executive
Aaron Reardon
County Executive

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Contact: Christopher Schwarzen

Office: 425-388-3883

Email: Christopher.Schwarzen@snoco.org

Granite Falls bypass lands \$10 million from state *Alternate-route project will start earlier than anticipated*

A newly approved list of state Public Works Trust Fund loans will provide more than \$10 million to Snohomish County in the form of a very low interest loan, allowing construction of the new Granite Falls Alternate Route to begin in early 2009.

Governor Chris Gregoire signed a bill Friday containing the project loan request.

The Granite Falls Alternate Route – a 2-lane, 2.1-mile newly constructed road – will stretch between S.R. 92, west of Jordan Road, and reconnect with Mountain Loop Highway north of Gun Club Road. Most importantly, it will divert heavy truck traffic out of downtown Granite Falls.

The result will be less congestion, better safety and increased economic development for the city of Granite Falls, a partner on the project.

“What this means is better quality of life for the residents of Granite Falls and the surrounding areas,” said Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon. “We recognize the importance of this project and now have the opportunity to move it forward.”

In 2005, more than 6 million tons of gravel passed through Granite Falls, translating into one truck and trailer every 30 seconds or 2,000 daily truck trips. Truck movement through downtown has significantly impacted residents, businesses and schools by compromising pedestrian and motorist safety as well as creating noise and air pollution.

By diverting the traffic away from Granite Falls’ downtown core, the city will be able to redevelop its main street to increase tourism through better access to the Cascade Mountains, National Forest lands, trailheads and nearby scenic rivers.

Road construction will begin in early 2009 and should be completed by the fall of 2010.

The project is expected to cost nearly \$32.6 million. The county has secured more than \$19 million – a mix of federal, state and local funding. The \$10 million loan, at a 0.5 percent interest rate and payable during a 20-year period, leaves only the need to secure an additional \$3.5 million.

The \$10 million state loan will allow the project to be completed in one phase instead of two, meaning the project will be finished earlier than initially expected.

“Completion of the project as early as possible is a must. Not only will it allow the trucking industry better service, but it means the city can move forward with its economic improvements sooner,” Reardon said. “None of this could have been done without federal and state support.”

Federal funding worth more than \$4.4 million was acquired with the help of the Washington Congressional delegation including Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell as well as Rep. Rick Larsen. Snohomish County has petitioned federal legislators for the additional \$3.5 million, but based on difficult federal budget conditions, county officials say they recognize local funding may be needed to finish the project.

This is the first time the county has qualified for a loan under this state program for a road project since 1998. State officials said safety needs helped support approval of the project.

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