

Clark County Transportation Alliance

2016 Policy Statement

THANKS AND A CALL TO FURTHER ACTION

We are grateful for action by the Washington State Legislature in 2015 on a comprehensive transportation package that included funding for six regionally critical projects; funding for important grant programs; enhanced local funding options; direct distribution to cities and counties, and important reforms. We strongly applaud those who voted for this critically multi-modal needed infrastructure investment package. However, there is more work to be done. Clark County continues to face significant transportation related challenges including how to address the deficiencies in the I-5/Columbia River corridor. In the months and years ahead we need for our local state legislators to be our champions in addressing these needs and in supporting the specific needs listed below.

I-5/Columbia River Corridor

This primary freight, commerce and commute corridor through Clark County is an internationally recognized choke point. Congestion condition reporting from the SW-WA Regional Transportation Council (RTC) found a greater than 50% year-over-year increase in peak-hour vehicle and truck delay on stretches of I-5 from YR 2013 to YR 2014. RTC and WDOT reports that freight trucks accounted for over 8% of the average daily traffic volume on this corridor. Steady growth of the Vancouver/Portland region will likely continue to worsen those conditions into the future. The functionally obsolete bridges over the Columbia River constrict commerce flow and related corridor highway deficiencies compromise safety, freight mobility and economic development. Progress is needed towards addressing these known deficiencies.

Regionally Critical Projects Remain Unfunded

We ask our local legislators to work with local transportation leaders to help find funding for a number of transportation projects that have been identified as “regionally critical” by the SW Washington Regional Transportation Council, and which were not funded in the 2015 package, including:

- SR 14/I-205 to 164th Avenue Widening (*add auxiliary lanes*)(*\$38M*)
- I-205: SR-500 to Padden Expressway (*add auxiliary lanes*)(*\$30M*)
- SR 500 Intersections at 42nd Avenue and 54th Avenue (*capacity and safety improvements*)(*\$80M*)
- NE 10th Avenue from 149th to 164th St./Whipple Creek project (*new bridge and capacity improvements*)(*\$15M*)
- 27th Street/Stiles Rd/34th St:32nd St to SE Lehr (*\$37M*)
- SR 14/ Phase 2 widening – 6th-23rd St./split interchange (*\$80M*)
- Washougal 27th St. overpass – *additional funding TBD*

Move project funding forward

While greatly appreciative of the funding included in the 2015 transportation package we request that funding and project start dates for both the Mill Plain/I-5 Interchange project and the I-5/179th Street interchange be provided sooner.

Public Transit

Public Transit is a vital component of our region’s transportation network, providing people with safe, reliable and affordable transportation to get to work, school shopping and other important places. In addition public transit also provides “special needs” transportation (Para-transit service) for our most vulnerable citizens who need it most. It is important for the State to increase funding levels for special needs transportation in order to better meet the transportation needs for these citizens.

Ports and Freight

Our ports and rail system play a vital role in the region’s economy. Infrastructure investment in our freight system brings jobs and direct economic benefit to our region. We request additional state funding to help with upgrades to the Clark County Chelatchie Prairie Railroad; and the SR 14 improvements near the Port of Camas-Washougal (and as noted above).

Infrastructure and Economic Development – Local legislators should champion enhanced infrastructure and economic development partnerships between the State and local governments and help reverse recent actions that led to de-funding of virtually all related state programs including the Public Works Trust Fund. There is a need to redefine this relationship which should include full and unfettered tax increment financing and more robust State support for infrastructure and economic development. In addition, the state needs more tools including authorization for design-build, P3 and unsolicited proposals.

