



Board of County Commissioners  
1820 Jefferson Street  
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Port Townsend, WA 98368

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Kate Dean, District 1   Heidi Eisenhour, District 2   Greg Brotherton, District 3

April 5, 2023

Governor Jay Inslee  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Governor Inslee,

As you know, in Jefferson County and the entire North Olympic Peninsula, we are nearly singularly dependent on the Hood Canal Bridge for the daily flow of commerce and emergency services. We appreciate the need for the Center Lock Rehabilitation, and the need to do the work in the summer. We also appreciate the complex nature of this project and appreciate WSDOT's willingness to engage with the impacted local communities.

However, the variables to communities like ours are unknowable until we have some certainty of which dates will be impacted, what the plan is for allowing traffic across the bridge periodically, and the specific impacts of potential time overruns. WSDOT's data shows that the weekends from late July through August are the most traveled of any time of the year. Ideally this work could have been done in June but we've been told this is not possible with the lead time needed to secure supplies and crew to do this work. We get it and still recommend distributing the impact with longer closures impacting the weekday and weekend trips more equitably.

For example, the last weekend of July and first three weekends of August are the dates that have been talked about so far. However, in anticipation of time overruns, in Port Townsend alone, the Thing NW festival, August 25-27, and the Wooden Boat Festival, September 8-10, could be devastated. Hundreds of thousands of dollars have already been spent to secure these events. Our most acute need is clarity about the impacts of the Center Lock Rehabilitation project as soon as possible so we can prepare. The level of uncertainty around time and mitigation plans is unsettling as we move into our first busy tourism season since 2019. Further, our emergency responders are scrambling to mitigate these impacts and develop a safety net of response to get our residents off the peninsula when needed. This can be a life or death issue as East Jefferson Fire and Rescue completes 60-70 medical transfers on summer weekends.

In collaboration with WSDOT and Washington State Ferries, you have the ability to direct mitigation to our area with existing resources.

For example, two possible options for WSF mitigation, each of which uses an existing boat and existing crew, have been brought to WSF's attention:

- Divert the last sailing of the day from Edmonds-Kingston; pick up a load of commercial freight from Edmonds, sail one round trip to/from Port Townsend.
- Instead of restoring Vashon from 2-boat to 3-boat service in April, use that 3<sup>rd</sup> boat for Edmonds-Port Townsend service for the duration of the major highway detours. Port Townsend has been limping along

on < 50% service; Vashon already has 66%, and has an additional way off the island via Pt. Defiance. There's a matter of fairness here.

There is a lot in the mix and all of these things take planning and resources. These are big projects that need to start now to get a proviso in the budget from the legislature at the end of the session; to plan for staffing and logistics such as getting the dolphins at the Port Townsend Ferry Dock moved. We know it can be done because this is the mitigation offered during the bridge closure in 2009. About 600 trailers destined for Sequim will be detoured due to fish passage barrier removal projects on Hwy 1010 that will close the highway for two separate 25 day stretches. The detour route has a load limited bridge that may prevent some of the detoured truck traffic from safely completing the detour. We need to help the commercial carriers through this closure to keep our peninsula functioning. And most critically, we need a plan and resources for our emergency responders to ensure the safety of residents of and visitors to the Peninsula.

Thank you for your attention. We appreciate the attention to the great Hood Canal Bridge, and to our concerns about impact to the communities of the North Olympic Peninsula.

Sincerely,

Greg Brotherton

Kate Dean

Heidi Eisenhour

C: Secretary Millar