



Board of County Commissioners
1820 Jefferson Street
PO Box 1220
Port Townsend, WA 98368

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

February 28, 2023

To: Steve Roark, WSDOT Olympic Region
From: Jefferson County Board of Commissioners

RE: Hood Canal Bridge Closures 2023

Mr. Roark,

Thank you for meeting with us last week and for your helpful description of the important work that WSDOT is doing on the Olympic Peninsula this year. We hope to be good partners in planning and implementing ongoing transportation needs now and in the future.

You will not be surprised to hear that we still have grave concerns about the July and August closure dates for the Hood Canal Bridge. As you heard from many of our public and private sector partners, these dates are potentially catastrophic for many of our local businesses. As your data reflected, bridge traffic is at its highest on weekends in July and August. As such, we would like to propose some alternatives and considerations:

1. Move Construction to June: There are very few events in June and less traffic and travel to/ from the Peninsula. We recognize that any dates will affect residents, business, events and tourists but our partners agree that June dates have significantly less impact.

2. Avoid conflicting closures with Highway 101 projects: The fish barrier removal projects on 101 will require closures (and detours) that directly conflict with the July/ August dates currently in play. Having our two highways off the Peninsula inaccessible at the same time seems dangerous, at best. Additionally, the detour to Center Road would put trucks on the bridge crossing the Little Quilcene bridge, which is closed to heavy loads due to structural issues. Trucks will either be stuck on one side of the Quilcene, or take dangerous risks in crossing.

3. Have fewer, longer openings: While we heard your concerns about weekday commuters, we wish to point out that our workforce is increasingly service- and tourist-based, meaning that many of our workers are traveling on the weekends. These workers are less likely to be able to work from home than 9-5 workers. Spreading the impacts of closures among sectors is much more equitable.

4. Provide additional ferry service: Regardless of dates, we ask that WSDOT work to provide an additional boat on the PT-Keystone service during peak hours, and/or consider assigning a Kingston/ Edmonds boat to serve Port Townsend (destination on the other side of the Hood Canal). Given the high volume of ridership on Kingston/ Edmonds that is specifically headed to the Olympic Peninsula, there will be less demand for that route. Port Townsend service could be very limited, but would alleviate pressure here, as was the case when this mitigation was put in place during previous transportation disruptions.

5. Participate in the Incident Management Team (IMT): As Chief Black from East Jefferson Fire and Rescue mentioned, local first responders and emergency management personnel will be standing up an IMT for this planned event. Having WSDOT at the table early and often will be essential for careful planning, mitigation and reduction of risk to human life and safety.

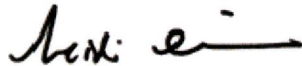
We welcome further engagement as WSDOT finalizes important dates and details. Please don't hesitate to reach out to the Commissioners and/or our trusted Public Works Department for additional conversation.
Thanks again for your partnership,

Sincerely,

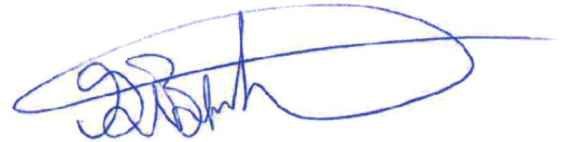
Jefferson County Commissioners

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Kate Dean
District 1

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Heidi Eisenhour'.

Heidi Eisenhour
District 2

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Greg Brotherton'.

Greg Brotherton, Chair
District 3

Cc: Steve Tharinger, Mike Chapman, Kevin VanDeWege, John Mauro, David Faber, Monte Reinders, John Vezina, Patty Rubstello