

## Washington SR 532 Route Development Plan

State Route (SR) 532 is located in rural, northeast Snohomish County approximately 45 miles north of Seattle. It is 10 miles long, connecting Interstate 5 with Camano Island, an exurban bedroom and vacation home community in Island County. The Island is also home to Camano State Park, one of the most popular parks in the state, drawing particularly heavy traffic volumes during the summer weekends. The small city of Stanwood is located approximately 6 miles west of I-5. In late 2000 the city of Stanwood applied to the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) for a break in access to the highway for the purpose of building a new intersection and installing a new signal system.

Traffic engineers at WSDOT did not feel that the break in access was good for the operations of the highway, nor was the location of the proposed signals ideal. It was decided that the decision should be cast in the perspective of what was best for the entire corridor. Thus the principle parties, the two counties, the city, and WSDOT contributed funds to update a six-year old route development plan, with an emphasis to be placed on corridor management principles. The existing plan identified the need to widen the two-lane highway to four lanes within the next twenty years. However, neither the metropolitan transportation plan, nor WSDOT's Highway Systems Plan identified the widening in their fiscally constrained list of projects. It was also well known that residents, especially on Camano Island, were generally against the widening of the highway.

Thus the update, while recognizing the capacity deficiency in the long-term, focused on short-term strategies to preserve the operational and safety characteristics of the highway, as well as options for the future. The recommendations for the highway included removing the signals immediately to the east of the proposed location for the new intersections and installation of the new signals, which resulted in consistent spacing of signals throughout town of 0.6 miles. Numerous intersections are recommended for channelization, roundabouts are to be studied for future consideration at difficult intersections, existing connections may be closed, sight distances improved, future development will be required to connect to existing county roads, and future development will be required to maintain enough setback to preserve right-of-way for future widening.

The most novel aspect of this project is that the steering committee, which included the two transit agencies, is meeting after the study has been completed to coordinate efforts, establish priorities, and seek funding for projects to incrementally implement the plan. They are also investigating legal mechanisms to pool resources such as developer mitigation funds.

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