
***Socioeconomic and
Environmental Justice
Discipline Report***

SR 3 Freight Corridor – New Alignment

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**Washington State
Department of Transportation**

Executive Summary

What improvements and changes are planned for the SR 3 New Freight Corridor?

The State Route (SR) 3 Freight Corridor – New Alignment project would construct a two-lane, 6.5 mile limited access highway with a design and posted speed of 50 miles per hour (mph) on a new alignment approximately 3,000 feet to the east of existing SR 3. The major portion of the highway would run through Mason County while the northern end would be located in Kitsap County. The proposed alignment would begin at MP 22.81 on SR 3 and connect back to the existing SR 3 alignment at MP 29.49. The south end connection to existing SR 3 is proposed just south of the intersection with SR 302, and the north connection is just north of SW Lake Flora Road. The proposed Freight Corridor would carry regional traffic from Shelton to Bremerton and would be the mainline for SR 3. The existing SR 3 would become a “Business Loop” serving downtown Belfair with connections to SR 106, SR 300 and Old Belfair Highway.

What is the purpose of this report?

This discipline report covers the interrelated social, economic, and environmental justice topics. This report discusses these topics in terms of existing conditions, and potential benefits and effects of the project as completed.

What social and economic features and resources are found in the project area?

The project area includes the Belfair commercial district, with retail, general and professional services located along existing SR 3. Belfair Elementary School, North Mason Senior High, and Theler Wetlands and Community Center also front on SR 3 in Belfair. The proposed Freight Corridor passes through mostly undeveloped, forested land east of Belfair, along with an area of suburban and rural residential to the south.

What temporary benefits and effects would occur?

There are likely to be short-term economic benefits realized in local employment of the contractor’s crew during construction. The local suppliers of fill, gravel, aggregate, asphalt and other construction materials and services also would see some benefit from the construction of the new road. Localized and temporary negative effects include traffic delays, noise, dust, and fumes typical to road construction. SR 3 is the major route between Shelton and Bremerton used by fire, police, and emergency medical providers. Construction of the Freight Corridor would temporarily increase congestion on SR 3, north and south of Harrison Medical Center’s Belfair Clinic. This would affect patients traveling to the clinic from north or south of the study area. Patients who live within Belfair would not be affected by the construction. The construction period is expected to be approximately two years.

What long-term benefits and effects would occur?

The project would result in reduced traffic congestion and increased safety through Belfair, and increased transportation efficiency and capacity on SR 3. Long-term effects of the project are permanent changes such as property acquisition, residential and business displacements for the required right-of-way, noise, access, and visual impacts to those properties adjacent to the new alignment, changes to traffic patterns, and land use changes.

What would be the effects to social and economic resources if the project is not built?

Without the proposed Freight Corridor, the traveling public would experience continued traffic congestion and high collision rates in this segment of SR 3. As traffic volume continues to increase, safety problems through the Belfair area would be exacerbated.

What measures are proposed to minimize or avoid effects to social and economic resources?

Approximately 72 parcels will be directly affected by construction of the Freight Corridor. The majority of the land directly affected and adjacent to the Freight Corridor is currently undeveloped, forested land. Displacements would be limited to two single family homes and one mobile home. One of the single-family homes has already been purchased by WSDOT at the request of the homeowner. That homeowner was not an Environmental Justice population. The landowners of property purchased or adjacent to new right-of-way will have various perspectives and may experience it as a positive or a negative effect. All owners of property to be purchased will be treated equally under the provisions of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended. At the community level, negative effects are outweighed by the social and economic benefits of increased safety and decreased congestion.

Are there unavoidable impacts?

The purchase of property for right-of-way is unavoidable in order to construct the new Freight Corridor. The change in visual character of this land, and noise from traffic through the previously undeveloped area, is unavoidable with the construction of a new segment of highway.

What was the Environmental Justice determination for this project?

As the project effects are minor and there is no controversy, this evaluation concludes that no Environmental Justice populations that would be disproportionately adversely affected by this project; therefore, this project has met the provisions of Executive Order 12898, as it is supported by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 What is the Purpose of this Project?

The purpose of constructing a Freight Corridor around the Belfair urban area is to provide a reliable high speed regional route between Kitsap and Mason Counties. The Freight Corridor project ensures the efficient movement of freight, commuter trips and other regional traffic between Shelton and Bremerton in a manner that bypasses the urban center of Belfair. The project would provide a solution to the immediate and long-range regional transportation mobility needs of the SR 3 corridor through the design year of 2050 by reducing congestion and lowering the existing crash rate on SR 3 through Belfair. It would provide an alternate route during recurring highway closures resulting from vehicular crashes and other incidents. Implementation of the project would provide safe and reliable regional access to jobs, goods, and services; accommodate seasonal influxes of tourist traffic; and improve efficiencies for all public services.

1.2 Why is the SR 3 Freight Corridor – New Alignment Project Needed?

A new Freight Corridor around Belfair is needed to improve regional mobility for freight, passenger vehicles and transit. The improvements would increase mobility, reduce congestion through Belfair, and improve safety.

1.2.1 Increase Mobility

SR 3 in the Belfair urban area experiences chronic traffic congestion and declining operational Levels of Service (LOS) for traffic. Because SR 3 is the major north- south link between Mason and Kitsap counties, Belfair is a choke point on this regional highway and serves as the only freight route through southwest Kitsap and northeast Mason Counties. SR 3 is designated as a critical rural freight corridor and is part of the National Highway Freight Network (NHFN). SR 3 is also identified as a National Highway System (NHS) route and as a Highway of Statewide Significance (HSS). The National Highway System route designation extends from the Hood Canal Bridge in the north to Shelton in the south, passing through the Belfair urban area, the City of Bremerton, the Puget Sound Industrial Center - Bremerton (PSIC - B), and connecting with SR 16.

SR 3 carries most of the daily commute trips from SR 106, SR 300 and populated coastal areas in Mason County north to Bremerton and via SR 16 to points in Pierce and King Counties. Regional traffic using SR 3 must pass through the commercial area of Belfair having numerous access points with high turning volumes. Southbound traffic destined for Shelton, Grays Harbor, and Olympia also must pass through Belfair.

1.2.2 Reduce Congestion

A combination of freight, commute, and recreational traffic volumes cause severe congestion through the Belfair urban area. Congestion is occurring during peak commute hours (7:00-9:00 AM and 4:00-6:00 PM), weekends, holidays, and during the tourist season (May-September).

SR 3 had an average of 19,000 vehicles per day in 2018 south of Lake Flora Road. Highway LOS analysis shows the one-mile segment of SR 3 north of Lake Flora Road, the signalized intersection at NE Clifton Lane, and the unsignalized intersection at Old Belfair Highway, are all failing LOS standards (see also the SR 3 Freight Corridor Transportation Discipline Report).

Several studies conducted over the last decade have shown that traffic congestion and safety concerns will overwhelm SR 3 in the near future. The operational analysis of the project area indicates that the roadway currently operates below minimum acceptable service standards on this portion of the highway. Without the Freight Corridor, operational performance for freight and regional through traffic on the portion of existing SR 3 through Belfair will continue to decline to the point of chronic failure by 2045. If no action is taken, travel times in the project area are expected to get worse as future traffic volumes increase.

The current highway does not support regional transportation needs. This route experiences seasonal fluctuations from tourist traffic and recreational users and is the most direct and expedient alternate land route for traffic from Bremerton to Interstate 5 if SR 16 or the Tacoma Narrows Bridge becomes blocked. Southbound traffic destined for Shelton, Grays Harbor, and Olympia must pass through Belfair. As land located in the corridor continues to be developed, and regional trips continue to increase, traffic congestion through Belfair will be exacerbated. The Bremerton Economic Development (BED) Study for US 101, SR 3 and SR 16 in Mason and Kitsap Counties (WSDOT 2012a) showed the Freight Corridor project was the top priority project for the local communities and stake holders.

If the Freight Corridor project is not built, SR 3 would be an important regional facility that will fail to provide efficient regional and local traffic mobility. A bypass would improve the roadway system around Belfair and would reduce travel time.

1.2.3 Improve Safety

Crash records in the study area indicate that the type and severity of crashes appears to be consistent with congested urban conditions. Rear-end and property damage only (PDO) or non-injury crashes account for the greatest number of crashes. The number of crashes tends to increase under congested conditions, but the severity of those crashes is generally lower, due to lower speeds. In the study area, between January 2018 and December 2022, 402 crashes were reported. Two were fatal crashes and eight were serious injury crashes. One serious injury crash was at the Lake Flora Rd intersection (MP 28.78). The remaining two fatal crashes and seven serious injury crashes were non-intersection crashes. During this time, 330 crashes occurred between the study

intersections with the majority occurring between Lake Flora Road to NE Clifton Lane (42%) and between NE Clifton Lane to SR 106 (40%).

1.2.4 Support of Local Plans

The area is developing based on local agency comprehensive plans and zoning. However, the area lacks a completed transportation network appropriate for the community. The Bremerton Economic Development (BED) Study showed the SR 3 Freight Corridor is the top priority project for the local communities and stakeholders. The Freight Corridor has been included in the transportation elements of the Mason County and the City of Bremerton comprehensive plans.

1.3 Description of Project Alternatives

1.3.1 Alternative 1: No Build (No Action) Alternative

Under the No Build Alternative, the SR 3 Freight Corridor project will not be constructed. Only routine maintenance, repair, and minor safety improvements would take place on SR 3 in the study area over the next 20 years. WSDOT is evaluating the No Build Alternative to provide a reference point for comparing the effects, both positive and negative, associated with the proposed build alternative.

1.3.2 Alternative 2: Build Alternative (Project Action)

The proposed SR 3 Freight Corridor – New Alignment project would construct a two-lane 6.5 mile limited access highway with a design and posted speed of 50 miles per hour (mph) on a new alignment approximately 3,000 feet to the east of existing State Route (SR) 3. The major portion of the highway would run through Mason County while the northern end would be located in Kitsap County. The proposed alignment would begin at MP 22.81 on SR 3 and connect back to the existing SR 3 alignment at MP 29.49 (see Figure 1). The south end connection to existing SR 3 is proposed just south of the intersection with SR 302, and the north connection is just north of SW Lake Flora Road. The proposed bypass highway would carry regional through traffic from Shelton to Bremerton and would be the mainline for SR 3. The existing SR 3 would become a “Business Loop” serving downtown Belfair with connections to SR 106, SR 300, and the Old Belfair Highway.

The typical cross-section of the proposed improvement is shown in Figure 2 and its construction elements would include the following:

- Two 12-foot travel lanes with 8-foot shoulders.
- Stormwater treatment facilities – natural dispersion and infiltration, compost-amended vegetated filter strips, and treatment wetlands.



Figure 1: SR 3 Freight Corridor Project Vicinity

- Two roundabouts to connect the south end of the new corridor to the existing SR 3 corridor at SR 302
 - The western roundabout would provide access to the existing SR 3 corridor
 - The eastern roundabout would provide access to SR 302 and the proposed SR 3 Freight Corridor
- A roundabout at the north end of the alignment to connect the existing SR 3 corridor to the new corridor at Lake Flora Road
- Right-in-right-out access to provide access to North Mason High School and Belwood Lane

1.4 Project Benefits

The proposed SR 3 Freight Corridor Project would contribute to solving the immediate and long-range regional transportation mobility and safety needs of the SR 3 corridor in northeast Mason and southwest Kitsap counties. The Freight Corridor will improve safety and efficiency in the movement of freight and commute trips between Kitsap and Mason counties, accommodate seasonal influxes of tourist traffic, and serve general traffic needs through to the design year 2050. It will also serve as an alternate route during recurring highway closures from accidents on existing SR 3 in Belfair.

2.0 Studies and Coordination

This chapter describes the legal foundation for the preparation of this discipline report and key information used in the analysis. The boundaries of the area studied and the demographics for the analysis of potential effects on social, economic, and environmental justice aspects are defined. The definition of key terms and the sources of information used in the analysis are provided. Coordination and outreach to the public, and methods used in the evaluation, are outlined.

2.1 Purpose of this Report

This is a combination discipline report, including the interrelated social, economic and environmental justice topics in one document. These topics cover the community and the people who live there, including *general economic climate and resources, housing, demographic characteristics* (economic, racial, language, age), *community resources (services, recreation, transportation), businesses and employment*. This report discusses these topics in terms of existing conditions, the potential benefits and effects of the project as completed, as well as the temporary construction period, and the proposed mitigation of effects. This report explains how WSDOT is complying with all applicable regulations, orders, and guidance of the proposed SR 3 Freight Corridor project.

To complete the environmental justice determination, this analysis of the proposed WSDOT project identified:

- Locations of minority populations, low-income populations, elderly populations, disabled populations, and populations with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), in the study area of the proposed project.
- Factors that could interfere with full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process, such as access and language, and then recommend measures to remedy those barriers.
- The benefits of the proposed project and evaluate the distribution of those benefits to all affected populations, and recommend measures to prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority populations and low-income populations.
- Adverse effects of the proposed project and evaluate whether minority populations and low-income populations would bear disproportionately high and adverse effects, and then recommend measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate those effects.

2.2 Regulatory Context

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires the analysis of environmental effects of federal actions and plans, including human health, economic and social effects. Impacts are to be discussed in proportion to their significance. NEPA also requires efforts be made to notify and involve the public during the decision-making process. Guidance for the discussion of the social and economic impacts of the project in environmental

documents is found in Federal Highway Administration’s Technical Advisory, T6640.8A.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 prohibit discrimination on the grounds of race, color, national origin, age, or disability.

In addition to these federal laws, the following statutes, regulations, and guidance relate to environmental justice:

- Presidential Executive Order (EO) 12898 on Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-income Populations – recognized that minority and low-income populations have historically been unequally burdened with the negative impacts of public works projects, such as pollution, noise, and community disruption, and also have not been proportionately represented in public involvement and decision-making. This order requires WSDOT to:
 - Avoid, minimize or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.
 - Ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.
 - Prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and/or low-income populations.
- Presidential EO 13166 on Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) – requires federal agencies to identify and respond to needs for language translation to assist people who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, write, speak or understand English.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and The Age Discrimination Act of 1975 -- direct WSDOT to ensure that people with disabilities and people 65 years of age or older have fair and equal access to decision-making processes and to the benefits of publicly-funded projects.
- The Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as Amended – ensures that owners of property acquired and other people displaced by federally funded projects are treated fairly.
- Presidential EO 14008, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad – requires agencies to build resilience against the impacts of climate change.
- Presidential EO 14096, Revitalizing Our Nation’s Commitment to Environmental Justice for All – expanded the scope of EO 12898 to provide guidance to agencies on how to consider Environmental Justice while satisfying their directives. The new guidance includes the requirement to look at effects related to climate change.

Minority: A minority person is an individual who identifies his- or herself as Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, or American Indian/Alaska Native.

Low-income: a low-income person is an individual whose household income falls below the federal poverty guidelines as defined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

2.3 Study Methods

2.3.1 Study Area

For social, economic, and environmental justice issues, an area extending ½ mile in all directions from the project limits was set as the study area. The ½ mile distance is typical for these discipline studies, to capture the potential impacts that extend beyond the physical limits of the project. **Figure 3** is a map of the study area.

2.3.2 Data Collection

Information about the study area and the people who live there was gathered by:

- Visiting the project area
- Reviewing aerial photographs
- Researching U.S. Census Bureau data and School District data from the Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)
- Evaluating Geographic Information System (GIS) data
- Searching on Google Maps for businesses and services
- Searching County Assessor Maps for parcel data
- Reviewing local planning documents
- Researching data from Washington State Departments of Revenue and Employment Security
- Searching Washington State Office of Minority and Women’s Business Enterprises for listed businesses

Two main sources were used for demographic data: U.S. Census Bureau and Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). There are two Census Tracts that overlap the study area. Census data was collected for race, poverty status, language spoken, and household language by ability to speak English, disability, age, and households without a vehicle available. The most recent U.S. Census Bureau estimates and projections were collected for Mason County and Kitsap County and Washington State to provide context for the study area.

Census Tract: Census Tracts are geographic units used for data collection by the U.S. Census Bureau. A Census Tract generally has a population of 1,200 to 8,000 people, with an optimum size of 4,000 people. The primary purpose of Census Tracts is to provide a stable set of geographic units for the presentation of statistical data.

The OSPI data is collected and reported annually by elementary school district, which is a smaller geographical area than the Census Tract. The 2020-2021 school year data is the most recent available at this time. It provides information about student enrollment, including ethnicity of students and numbers of students enrolled in special programs. The Transitional Bilingual program offers English as a Second Language instruction, and the Emergency Immigrant Education program offers additional language assistance in school districts that have experienced a significant increase in the number of immigrant youth. These statistics reflect the general population in terms of Limited English Proficiency. Low-Income program benefits are available to students from households with income levels below certain thresholds. The student enrollment in these programs is helpful in determining the amount of low-income population in the district.

The Mason County portion of the project study area lies within the North Mason School District, and the closest elementary school is Belfair Elementary. The Kitsap County portion lies within the South Kitsap School District, and the closest elementary school is Sunnyslope Elementary. Other public schools located within the study area are North Mason High School, Pace Academy, Homelink (a hybrid school that combines homeschool with support of the school district), and Hawkins Middle School. A private school, Belfair Christian, is also located within the study area. Sand Hill Elementary School is outside the study area, but students who attend the school may live within the study area.

The boundary line between the two Census Tracts and between the two school districts is the Mason County/Kitsap County boundary line.

2.3.3 Data Evaluation

Demographic data was evaluated in terms of:

- Locations of minority populations, low-income populations, elderly populations, disabled populations, and populations with Limited English Proficiency, in the study area of the proposed project.
- Factors that could interfere with full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process, such as access and language, and then recommend measures to remedy those barriers.
- Benefits of the proposed project and evaluation of the distribution of those benefits to all affected populations, and recommend measures to prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority populations and low-income populations.
- Adverse effects of the proposed project and evaluate whether minority populations and low-income populations would bear disproportionately high and adverse effects, and then recommend measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate those effects.

Social and economic information was evaluated to determine:

- Changes in community cohesion.

- Impacts to school districts, recreation areas, churches, businesses, police and fire protection.
- Changes in travel patterns and accessibility.
- Transportation safety and overall public safety.
- Estimated number and characteristics of households to be displaced.
- Estimated number of businesses to be displaced or otherwise directly affected.
- Effect on remaining businesses and implications for future development.
- Impacts on the economic vitality of the overall local economy.

Discipline reports on transportation, land use, noise, visual quality, air quality, hazardous materials, and cultural resources were reviewed, and relevant findings on effects and benefits to the community are considered in this report.

The intended and expected benefits and the known and potential adverse effects of the proposed project were identified. Benefits and effects were then evaluated in terms of demographic, social and economic aspects of the study area, and if they applied differently to particular locations within the study area.

The environmental justice evaluation determines whether low-income populations or minority populations would suffer *disproportionately high and adverse effects* of an action, as defined by EO 12898 and EO 14096. This means that:

1. Low-income populations or minority populations would predominately bear the adverse effects; or
2. Low-income populations or minority populations would suffer the effects and the effects would be considerably more severe or greater in magnitude than the adverse effects suffered by the general population.

2.3.4 Analysis of Alternatives

The Environmental Assessment for the Freight Corridor is considering the proposed alignment, with the only alternative being not building the Freight Corridor. With the proposed corridor alignment which passes through undeveloped land for the most part, only the areas where the Freight Corridor would connect to SR 3 are locations where residences or businesses would be directly impacted by acquisition of private land, or where nearby residences would be impacted by noise and visual effects. These proposed connection locations and designs, the North Connection at Lake Flora Road, and the South Connection at SR 302, were selected through a process detailed in the report *Preferred Connection Alternative Selections, SR 3 Belfair Bypass* (WSDOT Tumwater Design Office, 2007).

The evaluation process considered the following factors:

- Public Approval: how well the alternative matched the public preferences according to surveys taken in 2007, as well as concerns raised by local civic groups and neighborhood associations.

- **Property Impacts:** how well the alternative avoids direct impact to homes and businesses within or directly adjacent to the footprint; and avoids impacts to utilities, privately owned organizational use property, schools and recreation areas, and proposed large-scale development.
- **Environmental Justice:** how well the alternative avoids disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental impacts to minority and low-income populations.
- **Direct Connection Northbound and Southbound, and Improved Capacity:** how well traffic is directing away from the existing SR 3 through Belfair and onto the Freight Corridor.
- **Future Build-out:** how well the location allows for future construction considering impacts to property, residences, low income and minority populations, noise receptors, schools, privately owned organizational use property, local roads, utilities, and wetlands.
- **Route Connectivity:** how well the alternative matches and connects to the existing roadway.
- **Highway Runoff Treatment:** how well the location allows for the construction of ditches, ponds and swales for storm water management.
- **Local Street Requirements:** how local streets would be impacted and require the construction of frontage roads.
- **Safety:** how well the alternative meets standard designs, meets driver expectations, and provides safe flow of traffic volumes, and whether it would improve the existing high-crash intersections of SR/3Lake Flora Road or SR 3/SR 302.
- **Project Costs:** consideration of project costs both current and for future stages, including estimates for engineering, right-of-way purchases and construction.
- **Environmental Concerns:** how well the alternative avoids noise impacts to residential and other sensitive areas, avoids involvement of potential hazardous materials, avoids impacts to areas of high potential for cultural resources, avoids geologically unstable areas and avoids impacts to wetlands.

There are three residences within the footprint of the south connection. This prior analysis of the alternatives for the two connections establishes the non-prejudicial basis for the locations and the unavoidable impacts to specific residences and businesses. The demographics of the overall project area are reported in this Discipline Report as part of informing the public outreach, and the consideration of existing conditions and potential impacts on the community.

2.4 Public Involvement

The community's input is invaluable in helping WSDOT identify project effects early in the process so that avoidance or mitigation can be planned. According to the Federal

Highway Administration, a primary goal of Environmental Justice is to engage those groups who have traditionally been underrepresented in the project development process. Therefore, WSDOT must provide meaningful opportunities for involvement in the decision-making process, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income. All potentially affected communities should have opportunities to participate, and their contributions and concerns should be considered fairly.

The project has a long history of public involvement and has been before the public for many years as part of the 2001 environmental assessment (prepared for Mason County when the project was known as the Belfair Bypass). It generated a great deal of public involvement efforts, including open houses, newsletters, public presentations, media information and public displays. In 2006, a new proposal for further study produced additional public outreach.

The public involvement activities since that proposal are as follows:

- October to December 2006: Meetings were organized with individuals and groups.
- January 2007: An Open House was held at the Theler Center in downtown Belfair. The community was well represented at this event which focused on the history of the project and showed design alternatives on north and south ends of the project.
- April 2007: Another open house was held at the North Mason High School Gym which had a large area to accommodate more persons. The main topics for the open house were to revisit alternatives discussed in the previous open house and to inform the public about progress.
- October 2007: The third open house was also held at the North Mason High School Gym. This open house discussed the alternative chosen for the end connections.
- 2007: WSDOT organized several meetings with individuals and groups to explain the project. Some of the meetings were with The Kiwanis, the Belwood Community, the Alta Vista Community, The North Mason Chamber of Commerce, and the Kitsap County Chamber of Commerce.
- In 2008, WSDOT began informing property owners along the Freight Corridor alignment of upcoming activities such as surveying.
- In 2010, WSDOT staff conducted a public outreach process in order to identify design alternatives that would have the potential to reduce the cost of the project and still meet the community's needs. A town hall meeting was held March 17, 2010 at the North Mason High School gymnasium to provide an open forum for community members. A survey was available at this meeting, as well as on the project website. The *Belfair Bypass 2010 Proviso Report* (WSDOT, June 23, 2010) to the Washington state legislature states in the conclusion: "The majority

opinion expressed by the community was they want a bypass and they want it soon.”

- August 2011: WSDOT sent notices to selected property owners and informed them about the survey activities needed for environmental studies.
- December 2012: An Open House and Environmental Hearing was held to provide information on the project design and for the public to provide comments on the NEPA Environmental Assessment.
- October 2019: After a hiatus in project development while awaiting funding, an Open House was held to present information about the modified Freight Corridor project.
- October 2020: A public meeting was held in the Alta-Brook Neighborhood for comment on the Value Engineering report.
- November 2020: A briefing was held with Mason County Commissioners which was placed on YouTube for public viewing. Public comments were solicited.

Additional community outreach is planned as part of the NEPA process, including a public open house to be held concurrent with the release of the Supplemental Environmental Assessment.

2.4.1 Coordination with Tribes

Native Americans are a minority population, as well as being members of tribes. WSDOT consults with tribes, in recognition of their sovereignty and as part of efforts to protect cultural and historic resources. WSDOT is engaged in current and ongoing consultation with the Jamestown S’Klallam, Lower Elwha Klallam, Port Gamble S’Klallam, Suquamish, Skokomish, Squaxin Island, and Puyallup Indian Tribes. Potential Traditional Cultural Properties in the general vicinity are a concern, and efforts are being made to assure avoidance of impacts with a cultural resource survey. No other concerns about tribal interests or resources within the study area have been communicated.

A Cultural Resource Survey was performed and provided to all consulted tribes for review and comment on November 3, 2023 as part of the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 process. No comments were received from any of the Tribes. As part of the NEPA process, WSDOT is also initiating Government-to-Government consultation with the Tribes listed above.

2.5 Coordination with Agencies and Services

There has been extensive coordination between Mason County, WSDOT and the Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPO) regarding the plans and studies for the proposed Freight Corridor. Agency coordination was the major component of the 2001 environmental assessment. The project was again resumed in 2006 and numerous meetings with the agencies were organized.

At that time, comments were solicited through meetings with the following local community services:

- Coordination meeting with Mason County in November 2006
- Coordination meeting with Mason School District in December 2006
- Coordination meeting with the Regional Transportation Planning Organization in February 2007
- Coordination meeting with The Port of Bremerton in February 2007
- Status meeting with Mason County in March 2007
- Coordination meeting with The North Mason School District in March 2007
- Coordination meeting with The Mason County Citizen Advisory Panel in September 2007
- Coordination meeting with The North Mason School District in August 2020

After a multi-year pause while awaiting funding, the project was most recently resumed in 2019. Stakeholder involvement began in the Spring of 2019 and has been ongoing during project development. The following meetings have been held to gauge response and determine if there were any critical design issues that would lead to delays through either the environmental or real estate processes for the project:

- Stakeholders/Affected Agencies:
 - Bonneville Power Administration
 - City of Bremerton
 - Federal Highway Administration
 - Mason County PUD #3
 - North Mason School District
 - Peninsula Regional Transportation Planning Organization
- Agencies/Project Partners
 - City of Bremerton
 - Mason County Public Works
 - Port of Bremerton
- Developers/Property Owners
 - LDS Church
 - E.E. Overton
 - Rainier Concepts
 - Skokomish Tribe

In addition to these meetings there is a Stakeholder Advisory Group comprising a large group of agencies which held several meetings between the summer of 2019 and the spring of 2020. Most agencies only asked to be informed of ongoing status as the project moved through design. The comments topics discussed during the meetings included the following:

- Connection points to the existing SR 3

- Effects on traffic circulation in the immediate vicinity and in the region
- Potential relocations of residents due to property acquisition
- Road capacity and future population growth
- Future road connections
- Traffic safety and emergency response
- Effects on North Mason High School
- Other design considerations

3.0 Existing Conditions

This section describes the existing conditions, or the current demographic, social and economic environment within the study area, as well as the larger vicinity.

3.1 Demographic and Economic Context

Context for the study area is provided primarily with information from Mason and Kitsap Counties. The proposed Freight Corridor alignment is approximately 80% in Mason County, and 20% in Kitsap County. SR 3 generally extends south to north, from Shelton in Mason County to the east end of the Hood Canal Bridge in Kitsap County. Mason County is 961 square miles, with the county seat in Shelton. Kitsap County is 396 square miles, with its county seat in Port Orchard.

The most recent demographic and economic information is available from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) Estimates¹ and from the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM)².

3.1.1 Population

According to U.S. Census Bureau ACS 2021 1-Year population estimates, Mason County's population grew in the past decade (2010-2019) at a rate of 10.0%, lower than the state growth rate (13.2%). Kitsap County's population grew at a slower rate during this time period, at 8.1%. The following tables (Table 1 and Table 2) display U.S. Census estimates that show how the counties compare to the state in terms of population characteristics. Both counties have a lower percentage of Asian and of Hispanic/Latino-origin population than does the state overall. Mason County has a notably higher percentage population than the state in persons 65 years old and older, American Indian/Alaska Native persons, and in persons living below the 2021 poverty level. Kitsap County, in comparison to Mason County, has a higher percentage of Black persons, Asian persons, and persons who are foreign born.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Estimates, <https://data.census.gov/>

² Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) County and City Data, <https://ofm.wa.gov/washington-data-research/county-and-city-data>

Table 1: Mason County Demographic Data

2021 Estimates	Percent of Population	
	Mason County	Washington
Population	64,964	7,617,364
Persons 65 years old and over	22.7%	16.2%
White persons	81.0%	71.7%
Black persons	0.7%	3.9%
American Indian and Alaska Native persons	1.8%	1.2%
Asian persons	0.9%	9.0%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	0.4%	0.7%
Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin	10.7%	13.2%
Persons below poverty level	12.8%	10.0%
Foreign born persons	7.1%	15.3%
Language other than English spoken at home, age 5+	8.1%	20.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, <https://www.data.census.gov>

Table 2: Kitsap County Demographic Data

2021 Estimates	Percent of Population	
	Kitsap County	Washington
Population	273,072	7,617,364
Persons 65 years old and over	18.0%	16.2%
White persons	78.7%	71.2%
Black persons	2.8%	3.9%
American Indian and Alaska Native persons	1.1%	1.2%
Asian persons	5.0%	9.0%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	1.0%	0.7%
Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin	8.3%	13.2%
Persons below poverty level	8.0%	10.0%
Foreign born persons	7.5%	15.3%
Language other than English spoken at home, age 5+	8.0%	20.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, <https://data.census.gov>

3.1.2 Economic Conditions

Counties in Washington rely on property taxes for about one third of their revenues. The next largest county revenue source is retail sales tax, collected by the state and distributed back to the local jurisdictions. According to the Washington State Auditor’s website, total revenues collected for Mason and Kitsap Counties for 2022 were \$100,575,248 and \$369,856,560, respectively. The prior three years (2019–2021) show a gradual increase in both sales tax and property tax revenues over time for Mason County. During that same

period, Kitsap saw a reduction in revenues between 2019 and 2020, presumably due to the pandemic. Since 2020, Kitsap’s revenues have been steadily increasing.

Table 3: Summary of Resources and Uses Report

	Mason County	Kitsap County
Property Tax Levy Rates (2020) per \$1,000 of assessed value	10.54	10.10
State & Local Combined Retail Sales Tax (Oct.–Dec. 2020)	8.5%	9.0%
Sales Tax Collection (2019)	\$11,540,117	\$52,742,078
Unemployment rate (Nov 2020)	10.0%	7.7%
Civilian labor force (Nov 2020)	25,854	133,120
Median household income (2019)	\$57,634	\$76,945
Total population	64,964	273,072

Source: Washington State Auditor, Financial Intelligence Tool (<https://portal.sao.wa.gov/FIT/>); Washington State Employment Security Department, Labor Market and Economic Analysis (<https://esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo>)

*MASON COUNTY*³

Mason County’s 2017 Comprehensive Plan states that natural resource industries support the county’s economy, including both raw materials and value-added specialized forestry and aquaculture commodities. Other major sectors are heavy construction and government services. Government is in fact the largest employer in the county, followed by the service industry and retail industry. The Squaxin Island and Skokomish Tribes reside in Mason County and are also within the top 20 employers. The Comprehensive Plan, Economic Development Element states that small, rural businesses account for roughly 40% of the county private payroll, and 49% of all businesses are located in the county’s rural areas. On average, income per capita in Mason County is lower than state and federal per capita incomes.

*KITSAP COUNTY*⁴

The Kitsap County Comprehensive Plan, Economic Development Element reports that the county’s economy is mainly supported by the Naval base and shipyard, which helps to keep the economy healthy and stable. The county median household income is slightly higher than that of the state. The portion of the Freight Corridor project in Kitsap County lies fully within the Puget Sound Industrial Center (PSIC, formerly known as the South Kitsap Industrial Area), an Urban Growth Area established for airport, industrial, and business growth and development. The unemployment rate in Kitsap County consistently runs below state average.

³ Source: Washington State Employment Security Department Mason County profile, esd.wa.gov

⁴ Source: Washington State Employment Security Department Kitsap County profile, esd.wa.gov

- Employment services are expected to grow, as is accommodation and food service in the leisure and hospitality sector.
- Utilities are expected to continue to shed jobs in the coming year, as are wholesale trade and publishing.
- Construction will likely lose more positions after being decimated during the recession.
- Defense plays the major role in the Kitsap economy, dominated by the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard.
 - Lockheed Martin Space Systems is one of the private contractors working in partnership with the U.S. government.
 - Others include Applied Technology Systems and Pacific Ship Repair and Fabrication.
 - Many smaller military contractors and service providers also provide jobs in the community.
- Health care thrives in the area, led by:
 - Harrison Medical Center
 - Doctors Clinic
 - Martha and Mary Health and Rehabilitation
- The Port of Bremerton has been working to attract new business to the PSIC area and has also focused on promoting the Bremerton Marina.
- The leisure and hospitality sector employs thousands in the county including the Clearwater Casino, operated by Port Madison Enterprises in Suquamish.
- Technology continues to expand in the county.

3.2 Demographic Characteristics of the Project Study Area

The following map and sections provide a view of the population within the study area, based on Census Tract-level (Figure 3) and school district-level statistics.

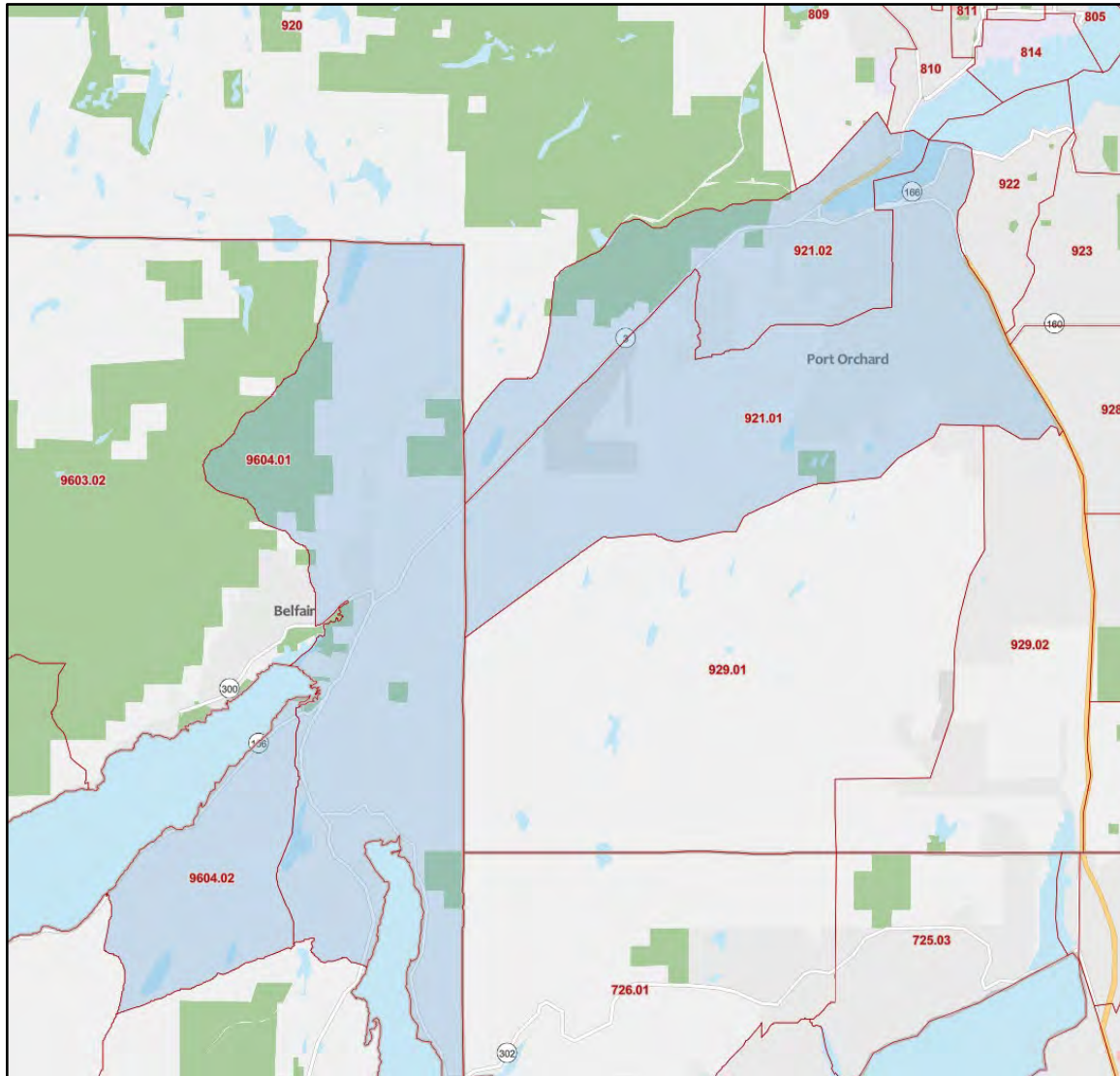


Figure 3: Study Area and Census Tracts

3.2.1 Elderly Populations, Disabled Populations, Populations with No Vehicle Available

Data on the segments of the population that are elderly (65 years old and older), disabled, or who do not have access to a vehicle is important in planning for public involvement and outreach, as reliance on transit or other forms of transportation and access to facilities should be considered. The Census Tract in the Mason County portion of the project contains the higher percentage of elderly population. The Kitsap County Census Tract has a larger overall rate of disabled citizens, and households with no vehicle available. The table below (Table 4) provides a breakdown of these characteristics per Census Tract. The Census Tracts are shown in Figure 4, above.

Disability: The American Disabilities Act defines a person with a disability as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or

more major life activities. This term, as used here, refers to the self-reported Census data. EO 14096 expanded the definition of Environmental Justice to include persons with disabilities.

Table 4: Population Characteristics, 2021

	Mason County Census Tract 9604.01	Mason County Census Tract 9604.02	Kitsap County Census Tract 921.01	Kitsap County Census Tract 921.02
Age 65+	20.4%	16.2%	18.8%	8.6%
No Vehicle Available	6.6%	5.4%	2.0%	0.0%
Disabled (by Age Group)				
Under 5 Years	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
5 to 17 Years	12.9%	9.0%	2.4%	5.0%
18 to 34 Years	7.3%	0.0%	14.0%	7.0%
35 to 64 Years	15.5%	15.9%	30.5%	19.3%
65 to 74 Years	31.7%	40.7%	18.6%	13.5%
75 Years and Up	64.2%	48.7%	56.7%	100.0%
Below Poverty Level	6.9%	2.0%	5.4%	10.7%

Source: S1701, DP04, S1810, U.S. Census Bureau, <https://data.census.gov>, 2021 ACS 5-year Estimates

3.2.2 Limited English Proficiency

There was no evidence in the community of a recent immigrant population increase or of a language commonly in use other than English. No business signs, advertisements, or establishment observed in a windshield survey through the study area indicated the use of another language. The U.S. Census Bureau ACS 2021 5-Year Estimates indicate zero percent of the population in the Kitsap County Census Tract, and 0.5% of the population in the Mason County Census Tract, have Limited English Proficiency (LEP). The OSPI data displayed below (Table 5) correlates with Census data, with less than 2% of elementary school student population that could be counted as LEP.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP): LEP populations include all persons over the age of five self-reporting on the Census that they speak a language other than English *and* speak English less than well.

Table 5: Student Enrollment in Language Programs 2020-2021 School Year

Program	Percent of Total Enrollment		
	Belfair Elementary, Mason County	Sunnyslope Elementary, Kitsap County	All Washington State School Districts
English Language Learners	20.8	5.5	11.9

Source: OSPI, <https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/>

For project communication purposes, the office coordinators for Belfair Elementary and Sunnyslope Elementary were contacted to confirm no languages exceed 5% among the English Language Learners population. It is WSDOT's policy to accommodate LEP populations by providing translated materials if the LEP population is 5% or more of any particular non-English language. This data does not indicate a need for translation of brochures, meeting invitations and newsletters into another language; however, due to the expanded outreach for community engagement, WSDOT will provide Spanish translation services for the public open house to be held during the NEPA process. All notices for the project state that other translation services are available upon request.

3.2.3 Minority Populations

As defined by Executive Order 12898, a minority person is a person who is Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, or American Indian/Alaska Native.

Table 6: Ethnicity by Census Tract, 2021

	Mason County Census Tract 9604.01	Mason County Census Tract 9604.02	Kitsap County Census Tract 921.01	Kitsap County Census Tract 921.02
White alone	76.3%	75.8%	81.8%	77.4%
Black or African American	2.1%	0.7%	1.6%	0.6%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.5%	0.1%	0.0%	0.4%
Asian	1.5%	4.0%	5.6%	6.5%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	3.1%	0.9%	2.8%
Some other race	10.8%	6.4%	1.8%	2.0%
Two or more races	8.8%	9.9%	8.2%	10.2%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	11.6%	17.1%	7.9%	7.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2021 5-Year Estimates, File 1, Tables P5, P8, PCT4, PCT5, PCT8, PCT11

Ethnicity data for the elementary schools is displayed below (Table 7) alongside the total for all school districts in the state. The statistics correlate roughly, except for the White and Hispanic population percentages. The elementary school enrollment shows lower percentages of White population and higher percentages of Hispanic population within the study area than is indicated in the Census data.

Table 7: Student Ethnicity 2020-2021 School Year

Ethnicity	% of Total Enrollment		
	Belfair Elementary, Mason County	Sunnyslope Elementary, Kitsap County	All Washington State School Districts
White	57.5	60.5	51.1
Black/African American	0.0	0.7	4.6
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.3	0.2	1.3
Asian	1.3	3.5	8.3
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0	0.9	1.2
Two or More Races	10.6	14.0	8.8
Hispanic/Latino	30.3	20.2	24.7

Source: OSPI, <https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/>

3.2.4 Low-income Populations

Census data on low-income households in the study area was retrieved from EJScreen and is displayed below (Table 8).

Table 8: Low-Income Households in the Study Area

	Households in study area	% of Population
Total number of households	293	--
Low-income households	59	20.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Data on students identifying as “Low-Income” at any point in the current school year is shown below (Table 9) as an indication of poverty within the study area. Information about the elementary schools is displayed alongside the total for all school districts in the state as a reference. In correlating the school data with the Census data, a higher percentage of students in both school districts identify as low-income as compared to the study area. This is most likely due to the fact that the school districts cover a much larger geographical area than the study area. Additionally, students are included in the low-

income category if they were ever, at any point during the school year, enrolled in the low-income program, whereas the census data represents a single point in time.

Table 9: Student Identification as Low-Income, 2020-2021 School Year

Program	% of Total Enrollment		
	Belfair Elementary, Mason County	Sunnyslope Elementary, Kitsap County	All Washington State School Districts
Low-Income Students	55.1	27.7	44.5

Source: OSPI, <https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/>

3.3 Social and Economic Characteristics of the Project Study Area

The following sections provide information about the community resources, and the existing conditions within which the local population lives and works.

3.3.1 Transportation Infrastructure and Services

Within the study area, SR 3 connects with SR 106, SR 302, and with SR 300 in Belfair—all are non-HSS facilities. SR 3 is currently signalized at intersections with SR 106, at Belfair Elementary School (MP 25.4), and at NE Clifton Lane.

The SR 3, Belfair Area Widening and Safety Improvements Project, between SR 106 and Ridge Point Blvd (MP 27.08), was completed in November 2017. The project included an improved, full-length center left turn lane, and reduced and defined access points through the downtown area, to relieve congestion and increase traffic mobility. It also provided wider paved shoulders and new sidewalks on both sides of SR 3 along with improved lighting. This project was implemented to improve safety for both motorized and non-motorized travel.

Facilities for pedestrians and bicycles are otherwise fairly limited in the study area. The shoulder on SR 3 is usable for bicycle and pedestrian travel.

Mason Transportation Authority (MTA) provides scheduled transit service Monday through Saturday between Belfair, Bremerton and Shelton. Local service is provided in Belfair, between downtown Belfair to North Mason High School on SR 3, and Belfair State Park on SR 300. Transit travel within Mason County is free. When traveling outside Mason County to Bremerton there is a \$1.50 one-way charge for youths and adults and a \$0.50 charge for seniors and persons with disabilities. An interesting aspect of the Bremerton route and the Belfair local service is that customers can flag the bus anywhere along the route provided they pick a safe location where the bus can pull completely off the road. In addition to providing fixed route transit service, complementary paratransit service, and commuter programs, MTA maintains a number of park-and-ride facilities throughout Mason County, three of which are located in Belfair. Two are on SR 3 with a capacity of approximately 20 parking stalls each. A third park-and-ride lot is located on SR 300/NE Clifton Lane at Old Belfair Highway with an approximately 25 stall capacity.

The Puget Sound and Pacific Railroad (PSAP) operates a freight rail line that runs through the study area. The rail line is grade separated from SR 3 where it crosses the highway on the north and south sides of Belfair.

3.3.2 Traffic Safety

WSDOT crash data indicates that several locations on SR 3 in Belfair experience crash rates higher than the statewide average for this type of facility. The overall crash rate on SR 3 between MP 22.81 and MP 29.49 is 2.67 crashes per million vehicle miles. This is higher than the statewide average crash rate of 0.95 for rural principal arterials. Crash records indicate that the type and severity of crashes appear to be consistent with urban congested traffic. The Build Alternative will divert over 20% of the total trips from SR3 to the Freight Corridor. With reduced traffic volume through existing SR 3, congestion-related crashes are likely to be reduced (see Transportation Discipline Report for more information).

3.3.3 Housing

There is a range of housing types in the study area. The new alignment would pass through largely undeveloped rural, forested and semi-forested land, with the south connection to SR 3 in a suburban area and the north connection in a rural setting. Census data indicate the percentage of the population within the two study census tracts that rents their home ranges from 22.4% to 24.2%.

3.3.4 Community Services and Resources

Fire protection in the immediate area of the project is provided by the Belfair Fire District. The main station for the fire district is within Belfair, just west of SR 3 on Old Belfair Highway. Public health facilities and medical services are located in Belfair and Bremerton. The closest hospital, Harrison Medical Center, is in Belfair. Mason and Kitsap County Sheriff's Departments and the Washington State Patrol provide law enforcement as well as several community protection programs.

The study area is located within the North Mason and South Kitsap School Districts. There are several public schools within the study area. The closest public school is North Mason Senior High School.

Within the study area, there are various churches, a library, post office, other government service offices, food banks, and a community center.

3.3.5 Recreation

The entirety of SR 3 through Mason County and the Kitsap Peninsula provides unique views and traveling experience. It provides connections to Seattle via the State Ferry system, or to the many opportunities for outdoor recreation activities on the Olympic Peninsula. The area is located on Hood Canal, which affords ample watersport choices such as shell fishing, fishing, boating, SCUBA diving, etc. Several local parks can also be accessed. The internationally renowned Theler Wetlands are located in Belfair.

3.3.6 Community Cohesion

Community Cohesion is a term referring to the interaction of people in the community that leads to a sense of connection. This is indicated by such features as: pedestrian facilities, low turnover in home ownership and rentals, identifiable neighborhoods, regular community events, and gathering places. Typical gathering places include schools, parks, libraries, community centers, churches, markets or coffee shops. Belfair has many assets that support a sense of identity and community cohesion.

The library, post office, several churches, and markets are located on SR 3 in Belfair. The Theler Wetlands is a community focus in Belfair and is a regional center for environmental education including the Theler Community Center, where many events are held. A farmer's market, held here May through September, is a draw for local residents as well as visitors. A number of major annual festivals are held in the area, including The Hood Canal Summerfest and car shows.

Interaction within the community can also be gauged by its civic groups and organizations. The Belfair community supports local chapters of the Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts, Boys and Girls Club, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Fraternal Order of Eagles, Freemasons, and the Lions Club, among others.

3.3.7 Growth and Development Patterns

The period of highest rate of population growth in Mason County was the 1970s, with a 49% increase for the decade. The past decade (2010–2019) saw an increase of 10%. The Mason County Comprehensive Plan (p. 5) states the county is planning for a population increase of 34% over the next 20 years. The plan explains that county growth reflects regional trends of population migrating toward rural areas. Mason County projects the continuing trends of retirees being attracted to the area and especially the rural land, and seasonal residences being converted to year-round occupancy. Development that occurred in rural areas before the adoption of UGAs and comprehensive plans include low density and medium-density subdivisions. Within the project study area, this pattern is found in Belwood Estates near the southern SR 3 Freight Corridor connection (outside the UGA, zoned R-10 AC). The great majority of new housing over the last ten years has been in the rural area outside the UGA.

3.3.8 Businesses

Businesses on SR 3 in the study area are concentrated about mid-way between the two SR3/Freight Corridor connections, from the intersection with NE Old Clifton Road south for about 1.5 mile. The largest shopping center and commercial area is in a triangle sided by SR 3, SR 300, and NE Old Clifton Road. Businesses in the study area include grocery and drug stores, gas stations, financial services, health care and other professional offices, automobile sales and services, wholesale boat supplies, day care and preschool, pet care, auction center, lumber, landscaping and nursery, and wholesale floral suppliers, in addition to a motel, several restaurants, bars, and fast-food establishments. Overall, the business district is geared more toward local and regional residents than toward tourist

traffic. However, customer volume at the motel, restaurants, gas stations, and grocery stores can be expected to increase notably during the summer due to tourism.

3.4 Elements of particular importance to low-income, minority, elderly, or disabled populations

3.4.1 Public Transportation

Access to the Mason Transportation Authority (MTA) bus system is vital for people who do not have a vehicle or a driver's license or who are disabled. These factors often coincide with low-income or elderly populations.

3.4.2 Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Facilitation of travel by foot or bicycle is important to community health, but also to those people who do not have access to a vehicle. Most transit users are also pedestrians, accessing the bus stops at each end of the trip by foot. Until very recently, the pedestrian network in Belfair has been fairly limited. The SR 3 Belfair Area Widening and Safety Improvements project, completed in 2017, added sidewalks and consistent road shoulders that accommodate bicycles along both sides of SR 3 in the study area, helping to support a more walkable environment in Belfair's core. According to the Belfair Mobility Plan (a 2018 update to the Belfair UGA Plan's Transportation Element), few pedestrian walkways exist outside of this core area; those that do are generally not full standard sidewalks.

In recent years, the public has encouraged the consideration of trails and pathways as a means of increasing walkability in Belfair. As stated in the Belfair UGA Plan, "There is a strong support from community members to expand the trail system throughout the community in different loops that connect different land uses together. This trail system can be used as another alternative route for pedestrians and bikers to get around in town." This sentiment is echoed in the Belfair Mobility Plan, which states, "The community places a high priority on these opportunities and several strategies are in place to build more pathways connecting residential neighborhoods with existing retail, services, and recreational opportunities. Most of these will occur with development of these areas though some, like the Lower Hood Canal Discovery Trail, will likely require grant funding to be completed."

3.4.3 Housing Affordability

Affordable housing includes mobile home parks, developments with manufactured housing, and housing developments with small lot sizes. These types of housing are present in the study area.

The Washington Center for Real Estate Research / Washington State University reports Housing Affordability for the state. The affordability is calculated and expressed by an index that measures the ability of a middle income family to carry the mortgage payments on a median priced home. This is reported for the second quarter of 2023. When the index is 100, there is a balance between the family's ability to pay and the cost. Higher

indexes indicate housing is more affordable, lower indexes mean less affordable. In the second quarter of 2023, Mason County’s Housing Affordability Index score was 84.0. This was calculated based on a median home price of \$400,000. Washington State’s overall index score was 57.2, with a median home price of \$601,600. This indicates that housing in the area is more affordable than in many other parts of the state.

3.4.4 Minority-Owned Businesses

A search of the Washington State Office of Minority and Women’s Business Enterprises in November 2023 showed no minority-owned businesses located within the study area.

4.0 Project Benefits and Potential Effects

4.1 Socio-Economic Benefits

4.1.1 Long-Term Benefits

The project is intended to provide long-term benefits in and beyond the study area.

The Freight Corridor will result in reduced traffic congestion, increased efficiency and increased capacity on SR 3, the main road through the study area. The local population, residents and businesses, service-deliverers and recipients, as well as tourists, freight, and other through traffic will all benefit from the improved safety. There would be no lack of these benefits to any location or population.

The Freight Corridor will improve safety through the Belfair area. With reduced traffic volume through existing SR 3 as a result of diversion of regional through traffic to the Freight Corridor, existing SR 3 mainline will experience less congestion, less delay and better travel times. Lower volume will lessen exposure and is likely to ease congestion-related rear-end crashes. With lower volume, vehicles making left turning movements will find more gaps to turn safely.

4.1.1.1 Belfair Commercial District

A bypass of a commercial area can be viewed as diverting customers, and therefore having a potentially negative impact on the economic condition of that particular area. However, this has not been the general opinion regarding the Freight Corridor. Public comment regarding this aspect of the Freight Corridor has included the expectation of improvements to the existing commercial area due to improved traffic flow, and of the potential for a competing commercial area to develop along the Freight Corridor. In 2005, Mason County Commissioners were presented with a petition signed by 74 people associated with the Belfair area businesses, in support of the Freight Corridor (known at that time as the Belfair Bypass; March 2005 Minutes, Mason County Commissioners). Given that the Belfair commercial area businesses are overwhelmingly types that serve general local resident needs or regional business needs rather than types that serve mainly spontaneous or pass-through customers, the diversion of traffic with the Freight Corridor is not expected to have a negative impact on the commercial area. Rather, the reduced congestion through the commercial area is expected to be a benefit to local business traffic. It would also facilitate the County's vision for the Belfair UGA to serve as an economic and social center with a compact core area (Mason County Comprehensive Plan, 2017, p. 9), further supporting development of the commercial area and helping to establish it as a destination.

4.1.2 Short-Term Benefits

There are likely to be short-term, construction-related benefits realized by the local suppliers of fill, gravel, aggregate and asphalt needed to build the new roadway. Funds spent on the project locally would also have a multiplier effect, such as suppliers buying

goods and services from other local businesses. This could also result in a short-term increase in local employment through the hiring of construction workers during the 2-year construction period.

4.2 Socio-Economic Effects

4.2.1 Long-Term Effects

The long-term effects of the project are permanent changes such as property acquisition, residential and business displacements for the required right-of-way, noise and visual impacts to those properties adjacent to the new alignment, traffic patterns, and access and land use changes.

4.2.1.1 Property Acquisition and Displacement

Acquisition for the Freight Corridor right-of-way necessitates direct purchase of privately-owned property. In some cases, this will also result in displacement of residents or business. In other cases, a minor part of a parcel is involved, allowing the use to continue. Private property acquisition affects undeveloped property as well as residential and business owners and tenants. Property acquisition impacts on individuals therefore vary widely.

A total of approximately 72 parcels will be directly impacted by the Proposed Action alternative (this number could change depending upon the project's final design).

Parcel acquisition will result in the displacement of two single-family homes, and one mobile home. One of the single-family homes has already been purchased by WSDOT at the request of the homeowner. That homeowner was not an Environmental Justice population. All three of those are in the vicinity of the southern end of the alignment, near SR 302. The remaining acquisition for right-of-way will mostly be of undeveloped or forested land.

The purchase of these properties by WSDOT removes them from the county tax rolls and therefore results in the redistribution of property taxes across the county. Of the 115 acres impacted by the proposed alternative, approximately 72 acres are in Mason County (63%) evenly distributed between the unincorporated county and the Belfair UGA. Approximately 43 acres would be converted in Kitsap County with the bulk of the affected land (88%) located in the City of Bremerton's Puget Sound Industrial Center (PSIC). The value of the aggregate property tax loss for approximately 111 acres split between two counties would be a very small percentage for either Mason or Kitsap County to bear, and only one of many factors involved in property tax distribution.

More detail on this aspect of the project is provided in the Land Use and Relocation Discipline Report.

4.2.1.2 Access

The majority of the Freight Corridor will be a limited access facility, with managed access near the north connection and south connection. The Freight Corridor would be a

new roadway in a large area of undeveloped land particularly in Mason County, which currently lacks public roads. About half of this land area is within the Belfair Urban Growth Area (UGA) and has been zoned for medium to high density residential use and includes a block of mixed use (commercial/residential) zoning which would be directly adjacent to the Freight Corridor. There is the potential for the project to accelerate planned development along the proposed corridor, especially in the vicinity of new corridor access points.

4.2.1.3 Noise

A traffic noise impact analysis has been performed for the proposed Freight Corridor. The finding was although there would be substantial increases noise levels in the Alta Neighborhood residential area near the south end of the Freight Corridor (up to 24 dBA higher than existing) and the high school outdoor recreation areas (20 dBA higher than existing), no noise walls are proposed. The noise abatement walls modeled did not meet the required feasibility or reasonableness criteria (see further detail in the Noise Discipline Report).

4.2.1.4 Visual Quality

A Visual Impact Assessment for the proposed Freight Corridor determined the project would result in permanent changes to the visual environment for SR 3 users and neighbors in the project area. The project would produce changes to the footprint of SR 3 that could be seen by adjacent viewers and travelers in the vicinity of the Freight Corridor's connections into the existing highway. Changes would also occur due to vegetation removal along the proposed Freight Corridor alignment, which is currently largely forested.

The project would be developed with community input to ensure that community concerns relating to visual impacts will be met early in the project. Mitigation measures would be implemented as part of the project and in accordance with WSDOT's *Roadside Policy Manual* in order to reduce or eliminate adverse visual impacts that may result from development of the project; the project would not have any effects that could not be mitigated (see further detail in the Visual Impact Assessment and Discipline Report).

4.2.2 Short-Term Effects

Short-term or temporary effects are those that occur during the construction of the project. This project is expected to be under construction for approximately two years. During that time period, it is expected that there will be traffic delays, noise, dust, and fumes from active construction equipment. These effects will be localized and temporary.

At this time, there are no detours planned for traffic during the construction period. However, it could be expected that some percentage of local traffic will choose to take alternate routes using local roads to the north or south of SR 3. Therefore, there could be temporarily increased traffic along county roads within the study area.

SR 3 is the major route between Shelton and Bremerton used by fire, police, and emergency medical providers. Construction of the Freight Corridor would temporarily increase congestion on SR 3, north and south of Harrison Medical Center’s Belfair Clinic. This would affect patients traveling to the clinic from north or south of the study area. Patients who live within Belfair would not be affected by the construction.

Construction noise will temporarily affect residences and businesses. Given the existing types of land uses, this noise will not affect the social interactions of residents within the study area. Access to homes and businesses will be maintained during construction.

Disruption of traffic or creation of noise can cause people to avoid driving in or stopping at businesses in the construction zone. Those businesses that depend on drive-by traffic would be most negatively affected during construction. Since there are very few such businesses in the study area, this will not be a significant impact on the community.

From coordination to date with the North Mason School District transportation services, school bus routes would not be affected by the project. Currently, students are not permitted to cross the highway for pick-up or drop-off. Particular stops may need to be coordinated through the construction period.

Construction activities may cause temporary increases in air pollution emissions. Construction contractors would be required to comply with all regulations for the minimization of dust and emissions (see Air Quality Discipline Report for further information).

There would also be substantial but temporary visual impacts during project construction, including visual impacts resulting from additional signage, landscape roadway fill, lighting during nighttime demolition, and the presence of construction materials and equipment onsite. These activities would be contained within the staging and construction limits, and their visual impacts would be temporary (see Visual Impact Assessment and Discipline Report for further information).

4.3 Indirect Effects

Indirect effects are those that are reasonably foreseeable as a result of the proposed project but occurring later in time or farther away from the project site. The extent into the future for this assessment is the design year, 2050. The distance extent is the County boundaries of Mason and Kitsap Counties. Socioeconomic indirect effects include changes in land use, population, business and employment.

The project residential displacements would not affect the customer base of businesses, or employment, in or beyond the study area, nor does it displace any businesses.

The potential for new access into undeveloped land could facilitate growth and development in those areas. According to the Land Use and Relocation Discipline Report for the project, the proposed Freight Corridor would accommodate growth anticipated from new development.

The improved mobility within the Belfair commercial area on SR 3 resulting from the diversion of regional through-traffic is expected to contribute to improving the

experience of doing business there. It could spur additional growth and development, facilitate the County’s vision for the Belfair UGA to serve as an economic and social center, and attract more tourism. The improved travel time and operating speeds for through-traffic on the Freight Corridor is also expected to benefit the economic growth in the region.

4.4 Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects are the effects within the study area of the project in combination with other current, past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions.

There are currently very few local roads on the east side of SR 3 extending into the undeveloped areas, which is a significant limitation to development. Once the proposed Freight Corridor is available, there could be a rapid increase in subdivision, building permit applications, and conversion of forest land to residential, given the right economic conditions.

A small number of projects, including transportation and utilities improvements and residential development, are currently planned for construction in the reasonably foreseeable future in the study area. The Build Alternative along with other planned improvements is consistent with established local plans and policies. Overall, it is anticipated that the Build Alternative would support economic development in the area. The Build Alternative’s contributions to the cumulative effects on populations in the study area would not be adverse or substantial in combination with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions.

4.5 Effects of No-Build Alternative

Without the proposed project, the study area and regional users of SR 3 would experience continued congestion and high crash rates in this segment of the highway. As traffic volume continues to increase, safety problems within this segment of SR 3 would be exacerbated. Heavier traffic would make left turns and crossing the highway even more difficult and hazardous for drivers as well as pedestrians.

If the proposed project were not constructed, no property would be purchased for right-of-way. There would also be no foreseeable access changes.

4.6 Findings

Because the project’s effects are minor and will affect both Environmental Justice and non-Environmental Justice populations, and because the project will provide improvements that benefit Environmental Justice and non-Environmental Justice populations alike, no disparate impact was identified. The project effects are minor and there is no controversy. The proposed action will not disproportionately adversely affect identified minority or low income populations; therefore, this proposed project has met the provisions of Executive Order 12898, as it is supported by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

5.0 Efforts to Avoid, Minimize, or Mitigate Potential Effects

5.1 Long-Term Effects

Throughout the design phase, efforts have been made to avoid or minimize permanent impacts to private property, residences, businesses and employment as well as other aspects of the environment such as wetlands. WSDOT will work with individual residents and businesses regarding driveway configurations and other specific property concerns. The project will also provide improvements that benefit Environmental Justice and non-Environmental Justice populations alike, as described in Section 4.1.

Parcel acquisition will result in the displacement of two single-family homes, and one mobile home. One of the single-family homes has already been purchased by WSDOT at the request of the homeowner. That homeowner was not an Environmental Justice population. Where impacts are unavoidable, right-of-way will be purchased from landowners in compliance with Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies. This assures fair treatment and compensation of those unavoidably affected. Disruption will be minimized to the extent possible. If it is determined that there is a potential for disproportionately high and adverse impacts to Environmental Justice populations during final design, additional mitigation will be developed and considered.

5.2 Short-Term Effects

Construction noise, some amount of dust, and traffic delays will be unavoidable during the one year to 18-month long construction period. These minor temporary impacts will affect both Environmental Justice and non-Environmental Justice populations and will not be disproportionately borne by Environmental Justice populations.

Construction effects will be minimized for the general public by using the following methods:

- Current information on construction and travel delays will be posted on the project website.
- Variable message signs will be stationed in advance of the construction activity area, which will provide information about delays, if necessary.
- The Olympic Region Clean Air Agency regulations require dust control during construction and measures to prevent the tracking of mud onto paved streets.

See Discipline Reports for Land Use and Relocation, Public Services, Utilities, Recreation, Noise, Visual Quality, Air Quality, and Transportation for related mitigation measures.

5.3 No-Build Alternative

Continued congestion and high crash rates and their related social and economic cost are unavoidable if the safety improvements are not built.

6.0 Determinations

6.1 Disparate Impact

This evaluation examines project impacts on minority⁵ populations within the study area. Table 10 summarizes current census data⁶ for minority populations in the SR 3 Freight Corridor study area, and whether there is a disparate impact on those populations. Because the project's effects are minor and will affect both Environmental Justice and non-Environmental Justice populations, and because the project will provide improvements that benefit Environmental Justice and non-Environmental Justice populations alike, no disparate impact was identified for minority or low-income populations.

Table 10: Minority and Low Income Populations, SR 3 Freight Corridor Study Area

	# of Adversely Affected	Total # in Study Area	Percentage Adversely Affected
Total Population		863	
Race/Ethnicity			
White alone	0	742	0%
Black or African American alone	0	5	0%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0	7	0%
Asian alone	0	6	0%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander alone	0	0	0%
Some other race alone	0	2	0%
Two or more races	0	101	0%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	0	145	0%
Total Households		293	
Poverty Households	0	59	20.1%

⁵ Individuals who identify themselves as Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, or American Indian/Alaska Native.

⁶ Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, as reported on EJScreen (<https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper>)

6.2 Environmental Justice

The project will not have negative impacts on community resources or services of particular importance to low-income populations or minority populations. Those who depend on transit and on bicycle and pedestrian travel will not be disproportionately affected. The only disruptions anticipated are minor traffic delays while end connections are constructed. The project would result in three residential displacements, one of which has already relocated voluntarily (see further detail in Land Use and Relocation Discipline Report). Where displacements are unavoidable, right-of-way will be purchased from landowners in compliance with Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies. This assures fair treatment and compensation of those unavoidably affected.

There will be minor temporary impacts related to the project, which will affect both Environmental Justice and non-Environmental Justice populations and will not be disproportionately borne by Environmental Justice populations. There are no adverse effects that will be predominantly borne by a minority or low-income population or be suffered by the minority or low-income population and be more severe or greater in magnitude than effects on non-minority or non-low-income populations. The project will also provide improvements that benefit Environmental Justice and non-Environmental Justice populations alike, as described in Section 4.1.

As the project effects are minor, this evaluation concludes that no Environmental Justice populations have been identified that would be disproportionately adversely affected by this project as determined above.

7.0 References

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