

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

# US 2 WESTBOUND TRESTLE

## DRAFT SUMMARY OF PROJECT

### ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE AND PEL STUDY

### PLAN







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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF  
TRANSPORTATION

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

The United States Highway Route 2 (US 2) Westbound Trestle Project is to develop a long-term solution that improves travel reliability, safety, and system linkages to correct roadways and support planned growth. Currently, 93% of the passenger vehicles that use the westbound trestle during the AM peak hour are single-occupant vehicles. The origins of the westbound traffic demand on the trestle in the AM peak period are split between SR 204 and 20th St SE, while US 2 carries almost 40% of the traffic demand. Traffic delays for westbound trips across the US 2 trestle are expected to substantially worsen by 2040. US 2 provides a critical east-west linkage between Everett, the state's sixth most populated city and a major employment center, and "bedroom" communities where many employees of Everett-based businesses reside, such as Lake Stevens and Marysville. The Puget Sound region is expected to grow to 5.8 million people, with 3.4 million jobs by 2050; as this growth occurs, the US 2 connection between Everett and communities to the east will become increasingly critical. These documents plan for population and employment growth in the communities that depend on US 2 as a critical transportation connection. Improvements to the US 2 Westbound Trestle are critical to implementing the population and employment growth planned under the Growth Management Act, Vision 2040, and county and city comprehensive plans.

This report summarizes the attached memoranda related to Environmental Justice, Native American Tribe Outreach, Natural Resources, and Cultural Resources. It also includes approach steps for the PEL Study



## 2 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE BASELINE DATA SUMMARY

The “US 2 Westbound Trestle: Environmental Justice Baseline Data Summary” memorandum (Attachment A) identifies the project’s Environmental Justice Study Area and summarizes the baseline demographic profile for the EJ study area compiled from the most recently released American Community Survey 2013-2017 5-year estimates (ACS). The ACS data illustrates that there are areas with higher concentrations of minority, Hispanic/Latino, low-income and limited English proficient persons and households with no vehicle than the corresponding Snohomish County average.

The southwest quadrant of the EJ study area near Lake Stickney, Paine Field and Mill Creek, as well as on the Tulalip Reservation, contains census block groups with substantially higher concentrations of minorities (43% or more) than the county average (23%).

The southwest quadrant of the EJ study area near Lake Stickney, Paine Field and Mill Creek, as well as in Marysville and Lake Stevens, contains census block groups with substantially higher concentrations of Hispanic/Latino persons (30% or more) than the county average (10%).

There are census block groups near Lake Stickney, Evergreen, Everett, and Marysville that contain substantially higher concentrations of low-income households (28% or more) than the county average (8%).

Elementary schools with more than 50 percent of students qualifying for free lunch, based on household income under the National School Lunch Program, are near Marysville, Everett, Evergreen, and Paine Field.

There are census block groups near Evergreen, Everett and North Marysville with substantially higher concentrations of households with no vehicle available (25% or more) than the county average (5%).

WSDOT policy about translation services is contained in the agency’s Limited English Proficiency Plan (LEP). WSDOT is committed to providing equal access to project information in their language for LEP persons and this memorandum outlines census block groups where 5% or more of the population in that census block has limited English proficiency (LEP).

Additionally, a list of community based organizations and social service providers that may be able to further inform the community engagement efforts is included.



### 3 NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBE OUTREACH AND COORDINATION FRAMEWORK

The draft “Tribal Work Plan” (Attachment B) outlines an approach for WSDOT to help identify key tribal issues as it prepares cost and feasibility studies for the project. There are five identified tribes with an interest in the Project: the Tulalip Tribes (Tulalip), Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (Yakama), Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians (Stillaguamish), Snoqualmie Tribe (Snoqualmie), and the Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe (Sauk-Suiattle). These tribes have varying interests in the project. For example, the project lies immediately south of the Tulalip reservation and the Tulalip has treaty fishing rights in this area. Other tribes may have an interest in cultural or natural resource impacts from the project. The key objective is to gather information and create trust and transparency with interested tribes as WSDOT develops planning-level options that if funded will eventually be carried to a full environmental review. Key tribal issues will likely be economic, transportation, and treaty fishing topics expressed by the Tulalip, and any significant cultural or natural resource concerns raised by all interested tribes. At this stage in project development, WSDOT should factor these issues and considerations into cost, feasibility, and schedule plans. The WSDOT project team has been working to meet individually on cultural resources and other issues. These meetings focus on presenting project briefings to the tribes, soliciting their feedback, and identifying any significant issues that would affect project development.





## 4 NATURAL RESOURCES APPROACH PLAN

Project discipline leads reviewed existing natural environment data for surface water, wetlands, fish, wildlife, and vegetation within a larger geographic area and within 500 feet of the existing trestle (the “study area”). The “Draft Environmental Constraints” memorandum (Attachment C) provides a summary of the natural environment data reviewed, an overall characterization of existing conditions, and emphasizes issues that could influence the design or constructability of a project alternative; for both the broader area and within 500-feet of the study area.

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### 4.1 SURFACE WATER

Potential issues related to surface water could influence the design or constructability of a project alternative. Most of the study area is in the Snohomish River Watershed, which receives drainage from the Snoqualmie and Skykomish Rivers. The western extent of the study area in the Puget Sound Watershed and drains directly to Possession Sound. A small portion of the study area to the northeast is in the Stillaguamish Watershed. Throughout the study area, there are networks of dozens of tributary streams that convey runoff to the larger watercourses in each watershed. Issues related to stormwater management are likely to shape the design of an alternative. Within the project area, roadway improvements would be required to meet the WSDOT NPDES Municipal Stormwater Permit requirements for operation and construction. Alternatives that remove existing vegetation and/or add impervious surfaces may result in impacts to water resources. In many areas, the existing transportation infrastructure system does not include any stormwater management facilities or has facilities that do not meet current detention and water quality treatment standards. Most of the project area is located on Ebey Island, and crosses the Snohomish River, Deadwater Slough, and Ebey Slough, just upstream of the Snohomish River Estuary. Almost the entire project area is zoned for agricultural use, except for urban/residential uses on the west end in Everett the east end in Lake Stevens.

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### 4.2 WETLANDS

This section outlines potential issues related to wetlands, emphasizing issues that could influence the design or constructability of a project alternative. Wetlands and hydric soils are present throughout the study area, particularly in association with stream networks. Information about the locations of wetland mitigation sites in the study area is limited.

Issues related to wetlands are unlikely to substantially differentiate between project alternatives, given the widespread distribution of wetlands in the study area. Actions that may adversely affect wetlands are not strictly prohibited; rather, if an alternative is likely to result in unavoidable adverse effects on wetlands or their regulatory buffers, requirements to mitigate for those effects would be triggered. Compliance with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations could shape the design of an alternative.

Compliance with these mitigation sequencing requirements may necessitate adjustments to an alternative alignment (to avoid or minimize impacts to wetlands or wetland buffers), unless it can be demonstrated that such adjustments would be impracticable. The distribution of wetlands is especially dense in the Snohomish River valley bottom, where the US 2 trestle is. Mapped or modeled wetlands cover almost the entire area within 500 feet of the existing trestle. Several wetland types, including freshwater emergent, riverine, and freshwater forested/shrub wetlands, are present.

As in the broader study area, issues related to wetlands are unlikely to substantially differentiate between of a design alternative in the project area. As discussed above, impacts to wetlands and wetland buffers would need to be mitigated in accordance with federal, state, and local regulations. Compliance with mitigation sequencing requirements could influence the design or alignment of an alternative.



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## 4.3 FISH, WILDLIFE, AND VEGETATION

This section outlines potential issues related to fish, wildlife, and vegetation, emphasizing issues that could influence the design or constructability of a project alternative. The issue most likely to rise to this level would be associated with adverse effects on species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) or designated critical habitat for such species. Streams throughout the study area support a wide variety of fish and aquatic fauna. Marine, estuarine, and intertidal habitats in the western portion of the study area also support numerous species and habitats that receive regulatory protection.

As with wetlands, issues related to fish, wildlife, or vegetation are unlikely to substantially differentiate between project alternatives. Actions that may adversely affect these resources are not strictly prohibited; rather, if an alternative is likely to result in unavoidable adverse effects on a sensitive species or habitat area, requirements to mitigate for those effects would be triggered. Compliance with mitigation sequencing requirements of local critical areas ordinances could influence the design or alignment of an alternative.

The presence of areas that provide habitat for ESA-listed species will necessitate additional consideration during the processes of project design and environmental review. The goal of these efforts will be to ensure that appropriate measures are implemented to avoid or minimize adverse effects on these species and, if necessary, to mitigate unavoidable impacts. ESA-listed Puget Sound Chinook salmon and Puget Sound steelhead have been documented in the segments of the Snohomish River and Ebey Slough in the project area. Bull trout use the Snohomish River in the project area as rearing habitat, and they are presumed to be present in Ebey Slough. The Ebey Island floodplain includes a network of ditches that are accessible to fish. All three of these species are presumed to be present in those ditches.

Based on the lack of state-owned fish passage barriers in the project area, culvert replacements are not expected to be a major consideration in the design of any alternatives.

The presence of a bald eagle nest was noted approximately 0.5 mile from the project area. If project construction entails any activities that generate extremely loud noises (e.g., impact pile driving) within 0.5 mile of an active bald eagle nest, it may be necessary to obtain an incidental take permit from USFWS, to ensure compliance with the Bald and Golden Eagle Management Act. Additional restrictions and permitting requirements apply to general construction activities within 660 feet of active bald eagle nests.

A field review of the area within 0.5 mile of the project alignment should be conducted before construction begins, to establish the location and status of any bald eagle nests. Some species of birds (e.g., peregrine falcon, cliff swallow, barn swallow) may build nests on structures such as the US 2 trestle. A field review should be conducted before construction begins, and any nests should be removed during the non-breeding season, to avoid violation of the take prohibitions in the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.



## 5 CULTURAL RESOURCES APPROACH PLAN

The “Cultural Resources Approach Plan” (Attachment D) identifies prior cultural resources studies and known cultural resources near the project. Portions of I-5 and US 2 have been included in prior studies, but most the project corridors have not been surveyed for cultural resources. When project alternatives are identified, it will be possible to assess more specifically which of the known cultural resources could potentially be affected and which areas need cultural resources survey. Discussion of the project with cultural resources staff of affected Tribes may also identify specific areas of concern.

Review of geological and soils surveys, ethnographic reports, historical maps, and other sources will provide more detailed information to refine low and high probability environments of the project. WSDOT cultural resources staff should be consulted to confirm which bridges involved in the project are subject to the Program Comment and identify any that may not meet the applicable criteria and would require historic review under Section 106.

Additionally, the 2005 Section 106 Exemption Regarding Effects to the Interstate Highway System by the ACHP excludes most Interstate Highway Features from consideration as a historic property under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). FHWA maintains a list of Nationally and Exceptionally Significant Features of the Federal Interstate Highway System not subject to the ACHP’s Exemption (FHWA 2018b). No such significant features are in the project corridors. Attachment D includes the following tables:

Table 1: Prior cultural resources studies in the involved corridors and a ~800-foot buffer.

Table 2: Very few archaeological sites have been recorded in proximity to the project corridors.

Table 3: Historic cemeteries identified near the project corridors.

Table 4: 36 historic inventory properties located on the north side of the existing US 2 Westbound Trestle and east of I-5, as a sample of the types of historic resources that have been recorded in proximity to the project.

Table 5: Properties listed on the Washington Heritage Register (WHR) and National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) within approximately one block from the project corridors.

Table 6: Five bridges near the project identified by WSDOT as historically significant (these are all on SR529 in northern Everett).

Table 7: National Bridge Inventory data, the US2 Westbound Trestle and several other bridges in the project vicinity appear to meet the criteria and it is expected that the Program Comment would apply.

Table 8: One bridge near the project has been identified as an exception to the Program Comment.



## 6 APPROACH STEPS FOR THE PEL STUDY

Consistent with WSDOT's draft Environmental Planning and PEL Handbook, the US 2 Westbound Trestle Pre-NEPA Documentation is anticipated to benefit the eventual delivery of the Project by incorporating environmental and community values into Project decisions and allow these decisions to be carried through project development. The study approach is intended to include the first steps towards:

- Identifying agency environmental priorities and project constraints
- Understanding and documenting community needs
- Identifying and addressing controversy
- Making informed decisions about the likely scope and budget for the future Project, and
- Consider NEPA concepts during planning to speed up delivery of the future Project when funded.

The approach for the US 2 Westbound Trestle Pre-NEPA Documentation is to identify a preliminary Purpose and Need considering the priorities, needs, and constraints identified by WSDOT, local and permitting agencies, and the public. Then to identify and review a range of alternatives to meet the Purpose and Need. Finally, the analysis results will be used to recommend one or more alternatives to be advanced for further consideration in the NEPA process. The attached Communications Plan (Attachment E) summarizes the involvement of a technical working group, resource advisory committee, and elected advisory group; interviews with community groups; coordination with Native American Tribes; and public information and input.

The PEL Study is being completed consistent with the considerations in 23 USC 168(d) as paraphrased below:

1. The study was conducted in accordance with federal law.
2. The study was developed in consultation with federal and state resource agencies and Native American tribes.
3. The study involved multidisciplinary consideration, including systems-level or corridor wide needs and effects.
4. During the planning process, notice was provided and public participation took place. After initiation of the environmental review process but prior to determining whether to use planning products, the WSDOT will make documentation available to stakeholders and consider any comments.
6. WSDOT does not anticipate significant new information or circumstance that has reasonable likelihood of affecting the continued validity of the planning product.
7. The study has a rational basis centered on reliable and reasonably current data and scientific methodologies.
8. The study will be documented in sufficient detail to support the decision or results of the analysis and to meet requirements for use in the environmental process.
9. The study is appropriate for adoption and use in the environmental review process.
10. The study is anticipated to be approved not later than 5 years prior to date on which information is adopted in the NEPA review.



The following is a high-level outline proposed for the PEL study:

- I. Introduction**
  - A. Purpose of this Planning and Environmental Linkages Study
  - B. Background
- II. Draft Purpose and Need**
  - A. Introduction
  - B. Draft Purpose
  - C. Draft Need
- III. Affected Environment, Constraints and Considerations**
- IV. Criteria for Evaluation**
  - A. Alternative Evaluation Criteria based on the Purpose and Need
  - B. Additional Evaluation Criteria based on WSDOT Mobility Performance Framework
- V. Identified Range of Alternatives**
  - A. Process of Alternative Identification
  - B. System Alternatives
  - C. West End Alternatives
  - D. Trestle
  - E. East End Alternatives
- VI. Initial Review of Alternatives**
  - A. Process of Alternative Review
  - B. System Alternatives
  - C. West End Alternatives
  - D. Trestle
  - E. East End Alternatives
- VII. Alternatives Identified for Detailed Analysis**
  - A. Development of end-to-end Alternatives
  - B. Identified Representative Alternatives
  - C. Evaluation of Representative Alternatives to Evaluation Criteria
- VIII. Alternatives Recommended for Further Consideration**
- IX. Consultation and Coordination**