

The Farmhouse Gang

North Sound Connecting Communities

What is the Farmhouse Gang?

The “Farmhouse Gang” is the working name for the North Sound Connecting Communities Program, a coalition of citizens, elected officials and transportation agency staff from Washington’s five northwestern-most counties: Whatcom, Skagit, Island, San Juan and Snohomish. The Farmhouse Gang strives to improve ways for people to travel in the region by using all available modes.

The Farmhouse Gang is committed to identifying solutions to regional transportation challenges and – with regional partnerships – implementing those solutions.

The Farmhouse Gang is managed by the Whatcom Council of Governments under a grant administered by the Skagit Council of Governments.

What are the Farmhouse Gang objectives?

The following objectives provide direction for all Farmhouse Gang initiatives:

- Improve connections and sustain and expand services
- Provide public information about transportation services in the region to enhance awareness of the regional transportation network
- Be innovative in the pursuit of funding from a variety of sources
- Collect travel and system data to identify areas of possible improvement
- Enhance mobility through sustainable innovative transportation solutions

History

The Farmhouse Gang started in 1996 as a collaboration between the Cascadia Project of Discovery Institute, interested citizens and private sector transportation providers, elected officials and governmental and planning bodies in the North Puget Sound area. Because many of its meetings have been at the Farmhouse Restaurant in Skagit County, it became known as “The Farmhouse Gang.”

Since its inception, participants have met several times a year to discuss priorities, develop funding mechanisms to complete research and pilot projects, and to advance the collective goals of the Farmhouse Gang.





Projects

Since its inception the Farmhouse Gang has overseen numerous initiatives and projects to advance its transportation goals:

- **Regional Transportation Governance Study** to develop positive working relationships in northwest Washington to improve the collaboration of participants.
- **Intermodal Connections and Commuter Study** to examine existing and future demand for work-based commuter transportation in northwest Washington.
- **Traveler Information Kiosk System** - this project established ten traveler information kiosks at major transportation crossroads around the region, including train stations, ferry terminals and airports.
- **Inter-County Transit Service** - this project came from the Intermodal Connections and Commuter Study and started the North Sound Connector Service which links Whatcom, Skagit, Island, and Snohomish Counties and beyond through connected services from Whatcom Transportation Authority, Skagit Transit, and Island Transit.
- **Business Case Study of Passenger-only Ferry Service Between Bellingham and Friday Harbor** - This pilot project examined the fiscal feasibility of such a service.

2015 Work Plan

The 2015 Farmhouse Gang Work Plan initiatives are participants' priorities for the region. Funding to complete these projects comes from the project management grant being completed by Whatcom Council of Governments. Funding will be to advance recommendations that result from the work plan reports.

Participants

There are two levels of participation in the Farmhouse Gang: the Steering Committee, which meets every few months and oversees the work plan and discusses new projects and initiatives; and the general Farmhouse Gang that consists of a large group of individuals and agencies with an interest in transportation issues affecting the five Farmhouse Gang counties (Whatcom, Skagit, San Juan, Island, and north Snohomish).

Key participating agencies include Whatcom Transportation Authority, Skagit Transit, Island Transit, Community Transit, public works officials from Whatcom County, Skagit County, Island County, and Snohomish County; metropolitan planning organizations in Whatcom and Skagit counties; Cascadia Center in Seattle; WA State Department of Transportation; WA State Ferries; bike coalition representatives, and more.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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