

APPENDIX L:

Resource agency review

Federal and state resource agencies, including the departments of archeology, ecology, fish and wildlife, natural resources, transportation, and the Northwest Clean Air Agency, the Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration were given the opportunity to review the major capital projects within the metropolitan planning area in the regional transportation plan as part of the consultation process. The capital projects in the transportation plan are fiscally constrained and predicted to be complete by year 2032. These projects were highlighted both in spatial and tabular formats with brief descriptions and submitted to resource agencies. As a result, resource agencies provided comments on projects with potential environmental impacts to Whatcom Council of Governments.

United States Environmental Protection Agency review

Thank you for sending these documents! With one of our GIS specialists, I was able to take a look at the projects with the red dots with overlays for land cover (satellite image or aerial photo) and wetlands and streams. We also looked at Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) data. We don't have WDFW's Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) data to overlay. Based on this limited, cursory view of the project areas, three projects surfaced as having notable potential for resource concerns. They are:

West Horton Secondary Arterial Extension, Phase 1: The project vicinity appears to include Cordata Park and its forested habitat. Freshwater emergent wetlands may be within or near the project

area. Preliminary potential concerns/impacts include forest habitat loss and fragmentation, wetlands impacts, and the incremental cumulative loss of forest cover and increase in impervious surface. If this road would impact a public park, and you are planning to seek federal funds, permits, or other approval to construct the project, then Section 4(f) would apply, which requires that public parks, historic properties, recreation areas, and wildlife refuges be avoided, or, if impacts are unavoidable, that the impacts would be *de minimus* in nature. Minimizing the clearing of native vegetation and maintaining or providing for habitat connectivity for resident wildlife species and natural hydrology and ecological processes would be important. Efforts should first be devoted to avoiding and minimizing these and other potential impacts, then to mitigate any unavoidable impacts. For example, if there is no alternative to building a new stretch of road through this area, it would be important to incorporate wildlife crossings, such as, enlarged culverts or other design, to make the roadway permeable to wildlife movement, enable fish passage, and provide for natural stream flows, channel form and function. Species needing terrestrial habitat connectivity may include but are not limited to amphibians and reptiles, small, medium, and large mammals, e.g., deer.

East Bakerview, Phase 1 Principal Arterial Improvement: Initial concerns in this project area are potential impacts to intact forest, freshwater forested wetlands, riparian areas and stream corridor. The need here is to avoid these natural areas, maintain the habitat corridor/landscape linkage potential of this habitat, and maintain overall connectivity and function within this habitat complex. Similar guidance as discussed for the first project above would also apply to each of these three projects.

Orchard Street Secondary Arterial Extension: This project area appears adjacent to or crossing I-5. Notable resource concerns here include the potential for impacts to and/or fragmentation of intact forest, forested wetland, freshwater emergent wetland, and/or the freshwater pond.

These observations are rough first impressions based on limited data and no project information other than the red dot on the map. We also cannot say that none of the other proposed projects, whether they are marked as black or red dots, have no substantial resource impacts. We just don't have the information to make that determination. I have also forwarded your request and documents to Krista Rave-Perkins of our Aquatic Resources Unit for possible comment in addition to what I am submitting.

No additional responses have been received.