

## **Appendix B**

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## Local agencies looking for consensus on future projects for Highway 101

By Jordan Kline - Daily World writer

Wednesday, September 27, 2006 10:44 AM PDT

Nine separate studies have been completed in the last 15 years addressing traffic problems stemming from Highway 101's awkward path through the Harbor.

They came with countless recommendations and ideas, but none have been implemented. Last March, Sen. Mark Doumit, D-Cathlamet, secured \$500,000 in the state's transportation budget to put an end to the studies and to produce results.

Part of the money is going to the Grays Harbor Council of Governments, a planning agency that coordinates with local governments. Vicki Cummings, its executive director, has compiled the old recommendations and she is taking them to local stakeholders, including the cities of Aberdeen, Hoquiam and Cosmopolis, Grays Harbor County, the Port of Grays Harbor, the Economic Development Council, the Chamber of Commerce, law enforcement and area tribes, to evaluate and prioritize.

"Sen. Doumit wanted us to be proactive and put an end to the never-ending studies," Cummings said. So last night, she coordinated the first public meeting at the Port of Grays Harbor to allow general comment on all of the options and begin prioritizing the list of ideas, which range from installing new traffic signals to overhauling the Chehalis River Bridge.

"We didn't want to give the impression that DOT was telling us 'here's what you need.' We want to tell them what we want," Cummings said.

Attendees, which Cummings estimated at 55 to 60, were given stickers to place next to the projects they felt were needed most, and were given comment cards to write in suggestions. She said 14 comment cards were returned.

Cummings said the public's input will be taken back to the next stakeholders' meeting and be contrasted with their priorities. "We're pulling everybody together to give the senator a list of projects that we think will best solve our issues by November."

Doumit looking for funding

According to Cummings, Doumit will take this list of projects and then begin to seek funding.

The projects could be large or small-scale. "There are several projects that could be done in the next year with little changes and big impact. Things like widening corners, putting in turn pockets, and signals. But there are other projects that could cost billions of dollars and take 20 years," Cummings said.

Some of the larger projects include rerouting Highway 101, diverting rail lines near the Port, and new bridges over the Harbor's rivers.

### Consensus hard to reach

With so many stakeholders involved throughout the region, a consensus may be hard to reach. "We might not agree on what the most needed project will be, but we can all agree on a top five, and that's what we're going to give the senator.

"Each of these stakeholders has constituents to serve, but they have that added layer of coming together as a group and thinking for the region. We can put aside our internal differences and agree on a bigger picture," Cummings said.

The list developed by the stakeholders will take various external factors into account, including growth projections, collision statistics, disaster evacuation plans and regional planning. Cummings said she wants the project to make sense not just for 2007, but also for 2030.

The public is also invited to the final stakeholder meeting from 1 to 3 p.m. on Oct. 24 at the Port, and a final list of recommendations will be produced in November.

Interested citizens should visit the project's Web site at [www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/studies/US101/Aberdeen](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/studies/US101/Aberdeen) to submit their comments and track the progress of the project.

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## Transportation projects for Harbor get an unveiling

**By Jordan Kline - Daily World writer**

Wednesday, November 15, 2006 11:19 AM PST

Harborites got their first glimpse last night of what could be the region's future traffic flow.

For months, local government leaders have been meeting to look for a consensus on solutions to traffic issues related to the highway system's sometimes awkward path through Grays Harbor.

The series of meetings known as the Highway 101 Circulation Project culminated in an open house for the public at the Port of Grays Harbor offices.

The process identified five projects deemed to be the most effective ways to improve the Harbor's traffic problems. The projects aren't prioritized, but the idea is that should funding become available, the state Department of Transportation will know what the region thinks it needs.

Former Sen. Mark Doumit secured \$500,000 from the state's transportation budget, and gave part of that money to the Council of Governments, a planning agency that coordinates with local governments, to complete this task.

Now it will be up to local government leaders and legislators to push for the funding.

The projects

The largest of the five projects is a planned rerouting of the truck route through Aberdeen and Hoquiam to follow the Port Industrial Road, eventually connecting to Highway 109 west of Hoquiam. Theresa Julius, a planner with the Council of Governments, said the project would speed up drive times for everyone.

"Rerouting the truck route through Aberdeen and Hoquiam has been an idea since 1970," she said. "It would alleviate many of the problems stemming from the trucks that currently use city streets."

The plan would redo the off ramp system on the north side of the Chehalis River Bridge, forcing trucks to use State Street instead of Wishkah Street and Heron Street to go through Aberdeen. State Street would connect to the Port Industrial Road and hug the Port of Grays Harbor until crossing the Hoquiam River. The route would continue south of the Hoquiam downtown corridor on a new road that would connect with Highway 109 near Hoquiam High School.

This overhaul comes with a \$386 million price tag, with new bridges over the Hoquiam and Wishkah rivers accounting for \$270 million. Upgrading the Port Industrial Road to include a turn lane and traffic signals would cost another \$4 million.

Another priority is what planners called a "tri-city operational improvement plan," which would redo crosswalks, intersections, traffic signals and turn lanes throughout Aberdeen, Hoquiam and Cosmopolis at a cost of \$10 million dollars.

"It's 20 or so projects specifically submitted by the planners of the three cities," Julius said. "These can be done in the short term for an immediate impact."

The project also would improve access to the Wishkah Mall in East Aberdeen and generally smooth out the traffic mess along Wishkah Street at the entrance to town. At a cost of \$4 million, access points to

the mall will be "rerouted for a more intelligent design," according to Bernie Chaplin of Exeltech Consulting, a planning firm hired by the Department of Transportation.

He says the ultimate goal is to eliminate any left hand turns out of the mall by "internally improving the circulation" in the parking lot and improving the traffic signal coordination.

Another priority would install an "intelligent transportation system" — a series of changeable message signs, photo enforcement cameras, closed circuit television cameras for traffic monitoring and a highway advisory radio system at a cost of \$9 million.

Lastly, the planners want to fund seismic maintenance improvements for the Chehalis River Bridge and the Heron Street Bridge at a cost of \$10 million apiece. Vicki Cummings, director of the Council of Governments said that funding will likely come from a separate maintenance budget maintained by the Department of Transportation.

#### Funding options

Cummings said that they intentionally included several short-term projects like the tri-city plan and the intelligent transportation system to counterbalance the truck route plan, which could take 20 years to complete.

"We wanted to make big, long-term improvements, but while we're doing that, we'll be fixing things physically so that we're not just sitting here waiting for more money," she said.

Cummings is confident that they'll be able to secure funding, even without Mark Doumit in Olympia. "This is why we wanted to get the priority list as soon as possible, because we wanted to leave it done and ready for the next person that came into office," she said.

Cummings said the first target is to acquire funding for the studies and an Environmental Impact Statement for the truck route project, and move forward from there.

For a more detailed look at the plans, visit the project's Web site at [www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/studies/US101/Aberdeen](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/studies/US101/Aberdeen).

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