

## BACKGROUND

The City of Richland (City), as lead agency among a partnership including the City, Benton County, City of West Richland, and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), contracted with J-U-B Engineers Inc. (JUB) to evaluate and compare the potential capacity benefits of improvements in at least three distinct corridors (George Washington Way (G Way), State Route 240 and a new Kingsgate Way Connection), providing north-south connectivity. As part of the process, the team will complete public involvement, including these stakeholder interviews to gather input and understand their concerns and issues related to north-south traffic flow in the area in order to set the study priorities and focus in a direction that will serve the varying needs.

These interviews along with an advisory group, mass survey and open house will help foster transparency and open communication at the public, project, program, policy and political levels and will reduce stakeholder impacts and frustrations for a community-appropriate solution.

## METHODOLOGY

Conversations were conducted with a set of predetermined questions, yet informally to allow the stakeholders to drive the direction and discuss the issues that were most important to them; therefore, the resulting summary includes themes, not quantifiable data. Instead, this report is intended to provide a window into the opinions, issues, and concerns that exist among the diversity of stakeholders. Notes are made to identify comments and ideas that were mentioned more than a few times.

## STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED

<b>Regional North-South Transportation Corridor Study</b>		
<b>STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS: MAY 30/31 &amp; JUNE 3-5, 2019</b>		
<b>Interviewed?</b>	<b>Regional Transportation</b>	
Yes	Patrick Pittenger	Benton Franklin Council of Governments
Yes	Tony Kalmbach	Benton Franklin Council of Governments
Yes	Erin Braich	Benton Franklin Council of Governments
Yes	Dave Beach	Bike Tri-Cities (bicycle advocates)
Yes	Roger Wright	Port of Benton
<b>Key Businesses</b>		
Yes	Edward Gottschalk (Ed)	Preferred Freezer
Yes	Stephanie Swanberg	Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce
Yes	Lana Strickling	Mission Support Alliance (for Hanford)
Yes	Kyle Swenson	Mission Support Alliance (for Hanford)



J-U-B ENGINEERS, INC.



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GATEWAY MAPPING INC.  
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OTHER J-U-B COMPANIES

Yes	Andy Foster	Mission Support Alliance (for Hanford)
Yes	Karen Blasdel	Pacific Northwest National Lab (PNNL)
Yes	Michael Paoli	Energy Northwest
Yes	Ben Reynolds	Framatome
Yes	Staci West	Bechtel
Yes	Dennis Kylo	Central Washington Corn Processors, Inc.
<b>Ben Franklin Transit</b>		
Yes	Bill Barlow	Ben Franklin Transit
<b>Emergency Service Providers</b>		
Yes	Tom Huntington	Fire Chief
<b>Richland School District</b>		
Yes	David Conrad	Richland School District
Yes	Cynthia Eskeli	Richland School District
<b>Interested Organizations/Agencies</b>		
Yes	Jason Rose	Kadlec Regional Medical Center
Yes	Denise R Gilbert	Kadlec Regional Medical Center
Yes	Ray White	Washington State University
Yes	Dr. John Mancinelli	Washington State University

## FINDINGS

### Overall Feedback:

- Peak traffic congestion needs to be managed for safety and to allow continued growth.
- Stakeholders work around peak traffic times or deal with the delays, but safety and effective traffic flow could use improvement.
- Regarding where to focus key improvement efforts (not everyone had a preference, and people acknowledged bias toward certain routes per their own locations and interests):
  - Over one third of interviews stated that SR-240 should be the focus corridor.
  - One fourth of interviews emphasized that G Way needs attention to keep traffic flowing effectively downtown and to areas of interest, beyond work, at Washington State University.
  - The vast majority of interviews acknowledged that the Aaron Drive/G Way/Columbia Point Drive needs attention to improve mobility.
  - One fourth of interviews don't see that the Kingsgate Connection would be the best way to meet this study goal.
  - Another fourth of the interviews suggested that an additional north-south corridor could potentially be helpful.

### Problems:

- PM southbound rush hour is the worst, from approximately 3:45 to 6 p.m.
- AM northbound rush, 5:30 to 8:45 a.m., is bad, but not as congested.
- Lunch rush – there is a mini one on G Way at noon, but not on SR-240.
- In cases of emergencies at the industrial park, where everyone tries to leave at the same time, traffic gets gridlocked for hours – safety and mobility issue.
- George Washington Way (G Way):
  - At Columbia Point Drive and Aaron Way is a much agreed upon area to focus on improving.
  - Traffic slows near the Court House/downtown at PM peak time.
- SR-240:
  - Stevens Drive intersection is congested more than others.
  - Van Giesen intersection gets congested more than others.
  - Terminal Drive intersection is dangerous during peak PM traffic due to the back up on Van Giesen.

#### Causes:

- **Trains** affect traffic flow and cause schedule and responsiveness problems, specifically for BFT, semi-trucks and emergency services.
- Several entities mentioned that the **large employee base** in north Richland is a significant factor to the congestion, despite acknowledged efforts (van pooling, staggered release times and flexible schedules) to proactively manage it.
- SR-240 is not designed to keep traffic flowing with pedestrians traveling east-west across it; the use of **pedestrian signals** affects the north-south timing and flow.
- **School traffic** is an added factor to the north-south commuter traffic causing congestion.
- **Vehicles turning left** hold up north-south flow.
- The **high number of traffic signals**, especially on SR-240, impede effective north-south flow.
- There is perception that **signal timing** seems like it could be re-evaluated to prioritize north-south traffic flow during rush hours.
- **People like driving**; getting drivers to change habits and reduce their flexibility by not taking their own car will take incentives and education.
- Specifically for emergency services, **medians and bridges** impede needed mobility.

#### Concerns:

- **Safety** for both vehicles and pedestrians at rush hours on both SR-240 and G Way.
- **Air quality**, due to the congestion, is reaching a low quality that will negatively affect quality of life, as well as require measures to improve.
- **Emergency management** is difficult when so many vehicles have limited routes to leave the same area.
- **Quality of life** for residents is negatively affected by additional travel time, and reduced mobility during rush-hour traffic.
- **Visits are reduced to the Richland and north Richland area** for pleasure (shopping/tourist attractions), recreation and academics because of congestion.

### **Creative Ideas:**

- Ride sharing helps congestion – incentivize/penalize and educate more.
  - Work together with big businesses to accomplish this.
- Staggered departure times and flexible schedules help the congestion, but could use more strategic focus.
- Water taxis.
- Light rail – mixed feedback.
  - The region isn't ready for it *versus* start the process now to get ahead of all the growth.
- Passenger rail to Hanford.
- Public Education:
  - Cost of travel to and from work to incentivize ridesharing.
  - Negative effects of congestion on air quality.

### **Roadway Improvement Ideas:**

- Fifty percent of interviews mentioned that a north bridge would improve mobility and connectivity in the region (though acknowledged as costly).
- Not roundabouts, too much traffic in the congested areas (two interviews said this).
- SR-240:
  - Conversion lanes for peak traffic direction – mixed understanding of how this could effectively work, but agreement that they could be effective.
  - Overpasses, mentioned by more than one for Van Giesen.
  - More designated left turn lanes.
  - Restricted left turns during peak travel times.
  - HOV lanes – mixed feedback on how they could be helpful.
    - Suggested to evaluate other alternatives by whether it negatively or positively impacts the ability to implement HOV in the future.
  - Widen roadway.
- George Washington Way:
  - Couplet with Jadwin – mixed response between it'll help traffic flow versus it'll negatively affect businesses.
- Build Kingsgate from SR-240 to Van Giesen.
- Bike infrastructure north-south along the river is good, need to explore connections east-west across the key routes, without backing up traffic.

### **Additional Stakeholders to Consider Talking to:**

- Small businesses on G Way
- Franklin County
- Residents

### **Public Messaging and Communication:**

- Variable message signs in study area for open houses.
- Outreach through schools.
- Ben-Franklin Transit website.

**Stakeholder Assessment Summary Report**  
**Regional North-South Travel Capacity Study 2019**



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OTHER J-U-B COMPANIES

- Through internal business newsletters/email lists:
  - Bike Tri-Cities
  - Port of Benton
  - Preferred Freezer
  - Nikki Torres for Hispanic outreach
  - PNNL
  - Bechtel
  - Kadlec Regional Medical Center
  - Washington State University
- Through organization social media:
  - Bike Tri-Cities
  - Fire Department
- General public outreach:
  - Newspapers
    - Tri-City Herald Newspaper
    - Business Journal - reach community leaders
    - Tu Decides - reach Hispanic audience
  - Radio
    - NPR radio - suggested during rush hours
    - KONA AM - only talk radio in town and reinforced by government agencies, such as schools with closures
  - Television
    - KNDU and KVEW are most watched news channels
  - Service groups
    - Columbia Center Rotary, Kiwanis, Unions