

Rep. Rick Larsen
Transportation
Report

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Introduction

In Washington state, transportation means jobs. Long-term investments in sustainable transportation and infrastructure are key to creating economic growth and job opportunities in the Pacific Northwest. Today's challenges also present an opportunity to invest in the development of clean technologies and renewable energy sources to combat climate change and protect Washington's environment. This report summarizes U.S. Representative Rick Larsen's efforts to study the specific local needs across the Second Congressional District and promote investment in critical transportation and infrastructure projects. Rep. Larsen recently visited projects in each of the five counties in the district to hear from local government officials on the challenges communities face to accommodate changing transportation and infrastructure needs and how the federal government can support this work. Rep. Larsen has championed federal investment in transportation and infrastructure as a pathway to economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic. Federal investment in these projects will support well-paying jobs and help improve local communities while reducing carbon emissions and combating climate change

Local Needs

Rep. Larsen geared his transportation visits toward projects that will repair aging infrastructure and propel future economic growth. The high cost of infrastructure improvements is often a barrier for local governments. During his visits, Rep. Larsen heard local officials explain how federal investment can help localities complete long-standing projects. Local transportation priorities include:

- Expanding fleets of electric buses using federal grants
- Widening roadways to improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Replacing or repairing aging bridges in Skagit and Whatcom counties
- Improving connectivity between communities with sidewalks, bike trails and park-and-ride stations
- Providing more grant opportunities for small and medium-sized cities unable to compete for funding with higher impact areas

H.R.2, *Moving Forward Act* Overview

In July 2020, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the *Moving Forward Act* (H.R.2), a \$1.5 trillion proposal to rebuild U.S. infrastructure and invest in innovation to improve local communities. Included in the 2020 *Moving Forward Act* was the *INVEST in America Act*, a nearly \$500 billion investment in the nation's transportation infrastructure over the next five years. As a senior member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Rep. Larsen played a key role in moving this package through the House. The 2020 *Moving Forward Act* also included significant funding for schools, child care, affordable housing, safe drinking water, clean energy, broadband internet and health care.

The 2020 *Moving Forward Act* would bring approximately \$7 billion in federal investment to Washington state transportation programs and projects over the next five years. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, investments to improve aging infrastructure will create jobs and economic opportunity in Washington.

The 2020 *Moving Forward Act* would also help put people back to work creating a safer, smarter and greener transportation network.

This bill would also improve workforce development programs and job training to better prepare the next generation of U.S. transportation workers. Rep. Larsen championed a provision in the bill to promote career opportunities and improve diversity in the transportation workforce.

MOVING FORWARD ACT

- Climate Change**
Clean transportation initiatives to build resiliency, foster alternative fuel infrastructure, promote zero emission technologies and multi-modal options
- Roads, Bridges, Highways**
Invests \$7 billion in Washington state's transportation network for economic recovery and improving safety, efficiency and accessibility
- Buses**
Includes \$5 billion for bus grants, \$1.6 billion for bus facility and fleet expansion grants and \$1.73 billion for zero-emission bus grants
- Aviation**
\$4 billion annually for the Airport Improvement Program, \$1 billion for alternative fuel and low emission aviation technology program and \$1 billion to update air traffic control facilities
- Ferries**
\$245 million for passenger ferries, including a new grant program for zero and reduced-emission ferries and a 50% funding increase for construction of ferry boats and terminals

The *Moving Forward Act* did not receive a vote in the Senate in 2020.

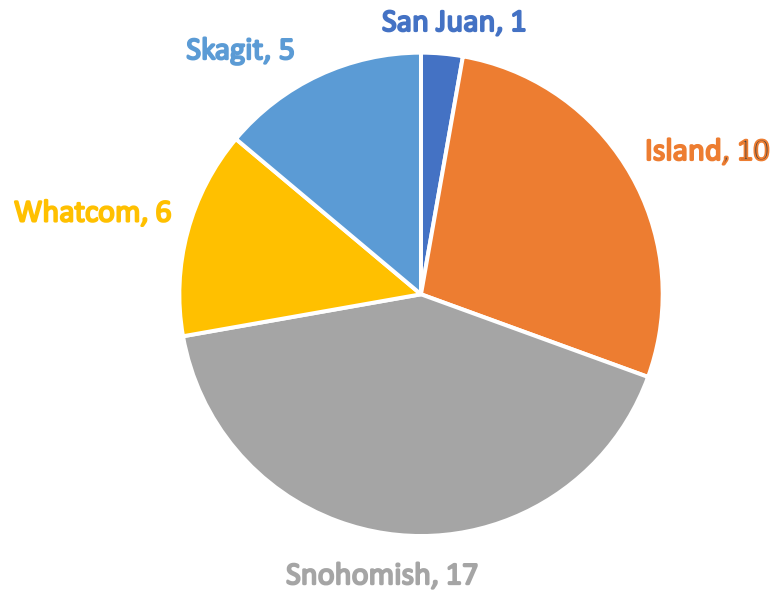
In 2021, House Democrats are prepared to offer an updated version of this transformative legislation while allowing members the opportunity to direct funding to priorities in their districts on a limited and transparent basis.

Recent Transportation Visits

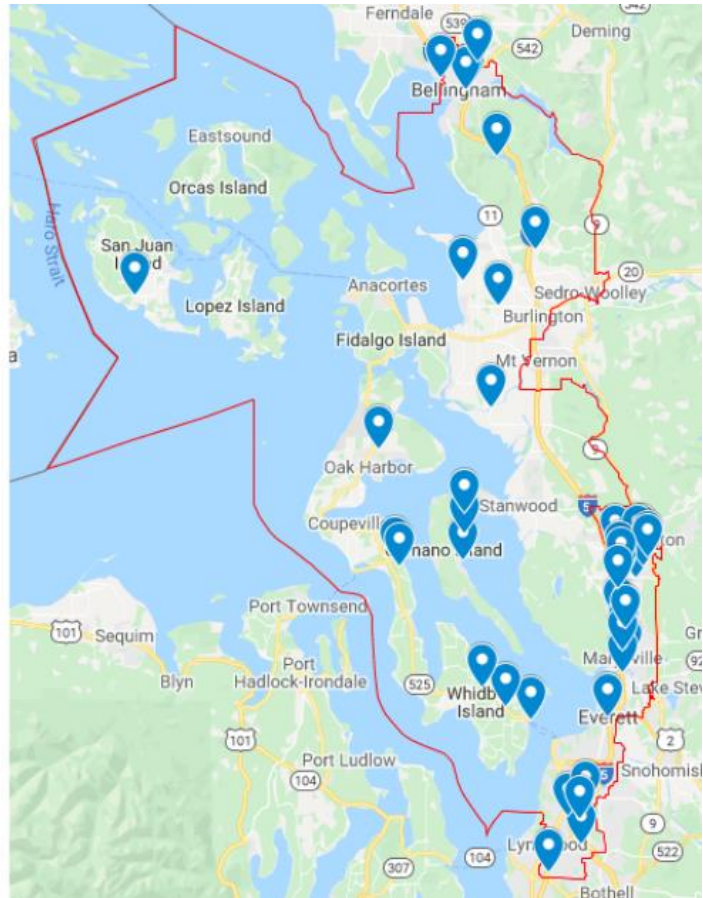
Over the past 3 years, Rep. Larsen has toured 38 transportation projects across the Second District with leaders from Whatcom County, Skagit County, Island County (Whidbey and Camano Islands), Snohomish County, San Juan County, the cities of Bellingham, Everett, Arlington and Marysville, as well as Sound Transit, the public transit agency that serves the greater Seattle metropolitan area. Rep. Larsen visited projects local leaders identified as critical to the movement of people and goods in their communities.

Type of Project	Number Visited
Roads	11
Bridges	5
Roundabouts	4
Interchanges	3
Bike/Pedestrian Improvement	3
Electric Buses	2
Overcrossing	1
Park and Ride	1
Tide Gate	1
Culvert	1
Outfall/Drainage	1
Freeway on-ramp	1
Light Rail	1
Electric Vehicle Charging	1
Estuaries	1
Trails	1

TRANSPORTATION VISITS BY COUNTY



- 9/17/2018 Everett Transit Electric Bus Ribbon Cutting
- 7/6/2020 Joe Leary Slough Tidegate
- 7/6/2020 Josh Wilson Road
- 7/6/2020 North Fork Bridge Replacement
- 7/6/2020 Bow Hill Road
- 7/8/2020 North Lake Samish Bridge
- 7/9/2020 Donna's Travel Plaza
- 7/16/2020 211th/SR530 Roundabout
- 7/16/2020 Smokey Point BLVD/SR530 Roundabout
- 7/16/2020 59th/SR530 Roundabout
- 7/16/2020 74th/204th St Intersection
- 7/16/2020 SR531 Corridor
- 7/16/2020 67th Ave - PH2 Pavement Preservation
- 7/16/2020 Smokey Point BLVD/188th St Roundabout
- 7/16/2020 169th St Connecting Segment
- 7/16/2020 74th Ave Trail
- 7/16/2020 Smokey Point BLVD Pavement Preservation
- 7/16/2020 Smokey Point BLVD Corridor
- 7/17/2020 Meador Ave Bridge
- 7/17/2020 James St Bridge
- 7/17/2020 State St/Ellis St Bridge
- 7/17/2020 Little Squalicum Estuary Project
- 8/6/2020 Crescent Harbor Regatta Intersection Project
- 8/6/2020 Future SR20 Widening Project
- 8/6/2020 Clinton Ferry Terminal Access Improvements
- 8/6/2020 Bridge to Boat Trail Effort
- 8/6/2020 Oakes Road Completion
- 8/6/2020 Whidbey Airpark Industrial Zone Access
- 8/7/2020 Marysville First Street Bypass
- 8/7/2020 SR529 Interchange and I-5 Northbound HOV Extension
- 8/7/2020 Grove Street Overcrossing
- 8/7/2020 State Avenue Corridor Widening
- 8/7/2020 156th St NE Overcrossing
- 9/4/2020 Cavalero Beach Drainage and Boat Ramp Improvements
- 9/4/2020 Kristoferson Creek Fish Passage Culverts
- 9/4/2020 East Camano Cross Island Roundabout
- 10/19/2020 SR524 Corridor Improvements
- 10/19/2020 36th/35th Ave. W. Improvements
- 10/19/2020 Ash Way Improvements
- 10/19/2020 Ash Way Direct Access Ramp Completion
- 10/23/2020 Bailer Hill Road Improvements
- 10/19/2020 MLT Sound Transit Light Rail
- 1/15/2021 Whatcom Transit Authority Electric Bus



District Transportation Needs

In Snohomish County, transportation projects need to address continued growth while preventing increase in emissions. Given these priorities, Everett Transit used Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding to purchase electric buses. Everett Transit put its first electric bus into service in September 2018 and will add two more to its fleet in March 2021. The transit authority plans to fully electrify its fleet over the next several years, contingent on additional federal grant money. Meanwhile, as electric vehicles become more affordable and common, the charging infrastructure must expand. Donna's Truck Stop in Marysville is a good example of this; during Rep. Larsen's visit, owners described plans to add electric vehicle (EV) charging stations.

The City of Bellingham aims to be carbon-neutral by 2050, with an intermediate goal of reducing its carbon emissions to just 15 percent of its 2000 levels by 2030, consistent with the city's 2018 Climate Protection Action Plan. To achieve these benchmarks, the Whatcom Transit Authority (WTA) has begun replacing its bus fleet with electric buses. Rep. Larsen visited WTA headquarters to see the new charging stations for the first two electric buses, the first of which will be delivered March 22 and the second shortly thereafter. WTA used the FTA's Low/No Emissions grant program to fund the purchase of the first two electric buses and associated charging stations. WTA plans to purchase up to 10 more electric buses in the near term as funding becomes available.

Projects in unincorporated Snohomish County and the cities of Arlington and Marysville focused on accommodating population and economic growth over the next several decades. Snohomish County is expected to gain 200,000 more residents by 2035, according to the county's Growth Monitoring Report. Population growth will increase traffic, which could reduce quality of life in local communities. Leaders from the three Snohomish County jurisdictions discussed the need to improve travel east from Interstate 5 (I-5) to facilitate access to residential areas, job centers and public transportation hubs. For example, the Cascade Industrial Center (CIC) in Arlington and Marysville is expected to generate thousands of jobs in coming years, but roads connecting I-5 to the CIC need improvements to accommodate the expected traffic volume. Marysville Mayor Jon Nehring also discussed the importance of new ramps to enable drivers

to bypass the railroad crossing and ease congestion to and from I-5 at State Route 529 (SR 529). The City of Everett also supports this project.

With Link Light Rail coming to Mountlake Terrace and Lynnwood in 2024, one of the county's primary concerns is accommodating the increase in traffic to the new stations and other transit hubs. The county highlighted projects on SR 524, 35th/36th Streets and Ash Way that will widen roads and help facilitate vehicle, bicycle, pedestrian and public transit access to the new Link Light Rail station in Lynnwood, the Ash Way Park-and-Ride and surrounding communities. Community Transit's "Swift" Bus Rapid Transit lines will provide a convenient and climate-conscious way for commuters and others to access future Link Light Rail stations in Lynnwood and Everett.

The expansion of Link Light Rail north of Seattle is a prime example of the importance of federal partnership to accomplish major local and regional transportation goals. Other major transportation projects include replacing the US-2 trestle between Everett and Lake Stevens and improving freight mobility along main corridors, especially I-5 to West Marine View Drive. Both projects are transportation priorities for the City of Everett.

The mayors of Marysville and Arlington explained why it is difficult to compete for federal grants against larger cities with higher-impact projects. Still, projects in small and medium-sized cities are essential to their growth. In Marysville, the Grove Street Overcrossing is necessary to keep east-west traffic flowing. At \$24 million, the project is a significant investment that calls out for partnership with the federal government. Grants from the FTA may help Arlington accommodate its own heavy east-west traffic using roundabouts and intersection improvements.

In Island County, transportation projects focus on increasing safety and connectivity as well as reducing congestion to accommodate population growth and tourist traffic. These efforts include widening roadways to make them safer for both motorists and bicyclists. The shoulder-widening project on SR20 at Outlying Field Coupeville is one example. Several projects aim to improve traffic flow through heavily used intersections like the East Camano Drive/Cross Island roundabout.

On Whidbey Island, many projects focus on increasing access for bicycles and pedestrians. For instance, improvements to crosswalks and park-and-ride stations in Clinton will improve connectivity to the ferry system and neighborhood businesses. The Bridge-to-Boat trail plan will connect the entire island with a multimodal trail network, allowing bicyclists and pedestrians to walk onto the ferry in Clinton or camp at Deception Pass State Park while reducing vehicle congestion in small cities like Langley.

In Skagit and Whatcom counties, replacing aging bridge infrastructure is an acute need. Elected officials discussed the difficulty in replacing aging bridges that do not have a low enough deficiency rating to receive immediate replacement funds. Skagit County has 112 bridges, 42 of which are more than 50 years old, eight are more than 70 years old, and two are more than 80 years old.

The collapse of the I-5 Skagit River bridge in 2013 is a reminder of the safety and economic consequences of failing to replace deficient bridges and the impacts of infrastructure failures on the broader transportation network. When bridges become unusable, alternative transportation paths suffer additional consequences. While the Skagit River bridge was closed, traffic was redirected through rural roads such as Best Road through Fir Island. These roads were not prepared to handle the weight and volume of cars during the freeway closure. Rural roads also connect county residents to jobs near industrial areas. Repairing the roads and updating infrastructure with features like roundabouts are vital to the county's efforts to expand its economic footprint and handle future emergencies.

San Juan County officials focused on the growing need for multimodal transportation improvements in rural areas. County officials and trail advocates highlighted Bailer Hill Road, which has a particularly dangerous intersection that needs to be widened to safely accommodate pedestrians and bikers. This is among several roads in the county that need widening for pedestrian safety; however, current federal funding opportunities are limited for nonmotorized road improvements. The county is a hot spot for tourists in the summer, most of whom prefer to bike or walk around scenic island destinations. Bailer Hill Road connects visitors to local trailheads and beaches that are popular for whale watching. Increased funding opportunities to improve road safety for pedestrians will help

reduce accidents and promote the use of nonmotorized transit to reduce carbon emissions in San Juan County.

Key Federal Programs

Roads

Many of the projects Rep. Larsen visited were funded by the Surface Transportation Program (STP), including bridge projects in Skagit and Whatcom counties. STP funds can be used for highway, bridge and tunnel projects, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and certain transit projects.

The 2020 *Moving Forward Act* would adjust the STP to benefit cities in the Second District. Currently, 55 percent of STP funds are sub-allocated to jurisdictions based on population size. Under the bill, this portion would increase, program-wide, to between 57 – 60 percent over the next five years. The bill would also improve the STP sub-allocation bands organized by population so projects would compete for funding against projects in similarly sized cities. For cities like Arlington and Marysville, this new formula could improve the chances of securing federal funds.

The 2020 *Moving Forward Act* would also establish a Community Transportation Investment Grant Program at \$600 million per year to support local investments in projects to improve safety, accessibility and the environment. The program would include 25 percent set-asides for rural projects and for projects in cities with populations of 5,000 to 200,000. In its application evaluations, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) would consider improvements to safety and reduction in fatalities, state of good repair, access to jobs and services and reducing carbon emissions. In Arlington, the roundabout at the intersection of 211th Place NE and Highway 530 is a potential candidate for this funding. It would address a significant safety risk and improve access to jobs and services.

Bridges

The STP funded many of the bridges Rep. Larsen visited. 2020 The *Moving Forward Act* would change how STP funds are allocated, leading to an increase of approximately \$1 billion for off-system bridge funding nationwide.

The 2020 *Moving Forward Act* would invest \$28 billion for bridges and establish a \$250 million Rebuild Rural grant program to improve transportation safety and support infrastructure projects in rural areas. Eligible projects would improve the state of good repair for off-system bridges and increase access to jobs and services in rural communities. This would be a suitable funding source for certain bridge projects in rural areas of the Second District.

Skagit County would benefit particularly from the bill's bridge investment, but there is potential for other Second District communities to improve the state of their bridges as well using these federal funding sources.

Rail

The 2020 *Moving Forward Act* would increase funding for the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure & Safety Improvement Program (CRISI), establish a 50 percent set-aside for projects over \$100 million and expand eligibility for funding. The program is a logical fit for projects like the Grove Street Overcrossing, but Marysville's applications for this program have not been successful. Increased funding may improve the chances of success for smaller cities like Marysville.

The 2020 *Moving Forward Act* would also establish a standalone railway crossing program that would replace the current 10 percent set-aside through the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP). The new program would also expand eligibility, as HSIP dollars are currently limited to railway-highway crossings. Instead, projects that eliminate hazards at railway crossings or create improvements for bicycle and pedestrian use at grade crossings would be eligible. This program would benefit Second District communities that have safety and congestion concerns related to rail traffic.

Trails/Bike and Pedestrian Infrastructure

As Second District communities work to expand multi-modal transportation for commuting, tourism and recreation, federal funding for trails is increasingly important. The 2020 *Moving Forward Act* includes provisions Rep. Larsen championed to increase funding for the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and a proportional increase in the program's set-aside for recreational trails. TAP funds are currently obligated for completion of a section of the Bridge-to-

Boat trail at Fort Ebey State Park on Whidbey Island. Additional funding for this program could be used to complete further sections of the trail network.

The 2020 *Moving Forward Act* would also establish a \$250 million Active Transportation Connectivity grant program to invest in connected active transportation networks. Eligible projects would link active transportation networks to points within a community, support development of “complete streets” and improve connectivity to public transportation. This program would benefit the Bridge-to-Boat trail and the pedestrian and park-and-ride improvements in Clinton, which aim to improve connections to transit and ferry services. These improvements would also complete streets by adding sidewalks, crosswalks and trails. The program could also fund projects connecting transportation hubs in south Snohomish County.

Coastal Restoration and Resilience

The 2020 *Moving Forward Act* includes robust public lands and resiliency investments to strengthen the nation’s coasts and restore critical habitats and marine ecosystems. Specifically, the bill provides \$3 billion for a coastal resiliency fund to support shovel-ready coastal restoration projects. These projects focus on fish and wildlife conservation and climate change adaptation. In addition, the bill includes \$250 million for a new EPA Program Office for Puget Sound and \$50 million for living shoreline grants to improve resilience. Projects like the Kristoferson Creek Fish passage culverts on Camano Island, Little Squalicum Estuary in Bellingham and the Joe Leary Slough tide gate in Skagit County could benefit from these robust funding sources.

Press

- [Mountlake Terrace News: Congressman Larsen gets light rail update in Mountlake Terrace](#)
- [North County Outlook: Larsen tours transportation projects in Marysville](#)
- [North County Outlook: Larsen visits Arlington transportation projects](#)
- [South Whidbey Record: Series of big-ticket county projects in works](#)

Conclusion

Rep. Larsen's visits to transportation projects in the Second District highlighted the critical need for federal infrastructure investment to spur economic recovery and pave the way for future growth in Northwest Washington. Funding these projects will create well-paying jobs and increase the global competitiveness of Washington state's workforce. Federal infrastructure spending will also make roadways, bridges and railways in the Second District safer for the traveling public. Further, wise investments now in clean technologies and net-zero emissions energy sources will help combat climate change and keep Washington's public lands and waters clean for everyone to enjoy. In the 117th Congress, Rep. Larsen is focused on delivering a bold, FDR-like investment in transportation infrastructure like the *Moving Forward Act* to drive economic recovery, create jobs and fight climate change.