



2016 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA - DRAFT

PROJECT REQUESTS

<u>PROJECT DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>FEDERAL REQUEST</u>
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SR 432/SR 433 Highway & Rail Corridor Capacity and Safety Improvements	\$2,000,000
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SR 432 is a state route that connects industrial areas in Longview (including the Port of Longview and the Mint Farm Industrial Park), unincorporated Cowlitz County, and northwest Oregon (including the Port of Rainier) to I-5. When completed, this project will reduce truck and rail traffic conflicts and enable freight to move more quickly. The Industrial Way/Oregon Way intersection of SR 432 and SR 433 is one of the five highest truck tonnage intersections in the state.

The SR432 Highway Improvements and Rail Realignment Study Concept Development Report completed in September 2014 by a consortium of local agencies, WSDOT, and BNSF, projected significant growth in truck and rail traffic along this corridor and identified numerous intersections and at-grade rail crossings that would operate at unacceptable levels of service and safety. Projected frequencies of unit trains serving the industrial area will result in vehicle traffic not recovering for hours at several at-grade crossings. The Concept Development Report identified the top priority improvement is constructing a grade separated intersection at Industrial Way and Oregon Way; lower priority improvements at other locations were also identified. Local agencies and WSDOT have initiated the NEPA review for the grade separated intersection, but additional funding is necessary to complete the environmental review and acquire right of way. In 2015, the Washington State Legislature approved \$85 million for improvements to the Industrial Way/Oregon Way intersection. While state funding is a good start, the projected costs for all of the corridor improvements exceed \$300 million.

The project will address safety, system mobility, congestion, and freight capacity. A safe and efficient rail, highway, and river transportation system will promote regional economic development and global competitiveness. Account: TIGER Planning Grant

Longview Firefighter Personal Protective Equipment	\$1,715,000
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Longview Fire Department (LFD) is seeking a regional grant funding to replace Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) and other critical fire equipment. This regional grant will provide funding for Cowlitz Fire Districts, #1, #3, #6, Cowlitz/Skamania District #7, Cowlitz 2 Fire & Rescue, Longview Fire and Clark Fire and Rescue. Replacing SCBA is necessary not only because the equipment is old, but also because technological changes have been incorporated into current NFPA standards which better protect the health and welfare of firefighters. The population of this region is 150,348.

The regional partnership conducted internal risk assessments and identified SCBA replacement as a top priority due to the potential for firefighter injury. The assessment identified that the current inventory of SCBA equipment is dated and prone to breakage and failure despite proper maintenance and regular inspection.

In addition, the risk assessment found firefighters do not always have the size SCBA face piece they have been fitted for, resulting in potential inhalation of products of combustion because of ill-fitting seals. Firefighters have been withheld from duties until proper masks have been obtained. Personal Alert Safety Systems (PASS) failures on existing devices have resulted in false alarms or inoperable units and there have been low air alarm failures. At least one firefighter injury was identified due to failing SCBA equipment during use along with several “close call” incidents.

All of the SCBA equipment is at least 10 years old and most are older than 15 years. Account: FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant

Longview Fire Department Ladder Truck

\$1,100,000

The City of Longview has been unable to continue funding the Fire Apparatus depreciation and was compelled to zero out the balance of this account to balance the City of Longview General Fund following the economic downturn following 2008. Since that time, the City of Longview continues to financially struggle through the recovery. The Longview Fire Department has a fire apparatus committee that has examined the current apparatus fleet and has recommended replacement of the Aerial Platform Ladder Truck.

The Aerial Platform Ladder Truck is vital for protection of the City of Longview, but also protects the economic backbone of our community, the industrial waterfront along the Columbia River. There are 11 buildings within our community that are more than 3 stories tall and all of the industrial area requires a ladder truck to provide the best possible protection.

An Aerial Platform Ladder Truck has the required versatility that our community can benefit from, as it is the only “Truck” in Cowlitz County. This apparatus is requested for incidents anywhere in the County. Finally, the other jurisdictions in the County receive Washington Survey and Rating Bureau benefit for this resource being listed with other agencies for Automatic and Mutual Aid. Account: FEMA Assistance to Fire Fighters Grant

RiverCities Transit Facility

\$ 4,000,000

The City of Longview operates RiverCities Transit in the Longview/Kelso urban area, with funding assistance from a local Public Transportation Benefit Area (PTBA). In response to citizens in the PTBA voting to increase sales tax funding for public transit by 200%, RiverCities Transit increased service in August 2013 by adding routes and reducing headway times. Doing so required increasing the size of the transit fleet and staffing by 60%, which left the existing transit support facilities overcrowded and inadequate to meet the current needs of the transit system. In addition, RiverCities Transit shares space at Longview’s municipal corporation yard with other City departments and the transit expansion has consumed space used by other City departments.

After the service expansion, RiverCities Transit prepared a facilities master plan which determined the current and future needs of the transit system, and identified several properties as suitable sites to construct new transit facilities and relocate most transit activities out of the City’s corporation yard; transit fleet maintenance would still be conducted at the City’s Fleet Services garage. RiverCities Transit is currently preparing a preliminary design and NEPA review of facility options to select the preferred site location. The new transit facility will support RiverCities’ program for additional service enhancements. Account: FTA Bus and Bus Facilities

PROJECTS UNDERWAY

Longview Downtown Revitalization Project

\$ 400,000

The City of Longview is seeking funding support to complete a comprehensive downtown streetscape improvement project on Commerce Avenue. Improvements are intended to attract more visitors and customers downtown, encourage investment in private property, and draw businesses back to the City's commercial center. The project has broad support from the community and local businesses. The City has secured a variety of federal, state, county, and City funds to construct three blocks of the five block project. Construction of the first three blocks was completed in December, 2014. The City also secured \$600,000 from regional competitive STP funds toward construction of the fourth block, which was completed in the summer and fall of 2015.

The City is seeking funds to complete the final block of improvements, constructing street, sidewalk, lighting and other pedestrian friendly improvements in downtown Longview. The total cost of block five is \$881,000 and the City will be seeking \$400,000 in federal funds. Account: Community Development Block Grant, Transportation Alternatives Program

POLICY AGENDA

Protect Smaller CDBG and HOME Entitlement Communities

The City supports inclusion of report language in the FY16 House Appropriations bill that protects small entitlement communities from the Obama Administration's reform efforts. If small communities are eliminated from CDBG and HOME, Longview would lose approximately \$500,000 per year in critical housing and economic development resources. In addition, the City supports full funding for CDBG and HOME in FY16.

Police Equipment Funding

The City strongly supports funding for Byrne Justice Assistance Grants. There are very few funding options at the federal level to help police departments purchase equipment despite the fact that federal mandates continue to require costly upgrades. Federal funds for equipment upgrades are important especially for police departments with cash strapped budgets.

Amend the Water Infrastructure Financing Account

The City urges Congress to amend the "Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Authority" (WIFIA) bill to allow municipal bonds as a local match. The WIFIA program is generally unusable by municipal governments if the existing prohibition against municipal bonds is maintained. When the prohibition is lifted, WIFIA would lower the cost of capital for water infrastructure projects while having little or no long term effect on the federal budget.

FY 2017 Program Levels

Maintain adequate funding levels for TIGER, BYRNE Justice Assistance Programs, Economic Development Administration and Assistance to Firefighters funding.

Internet Sales Tax

The City supports the Marketplace Fairness Act and the Remote Transaction Parity Act (HR 2775), which would provide states and local governments with the authority to require out-of-state sellers to collect sales tax. At a time when our cities and towns face on-going budget challenges under lingering recessionary impacts, having the authority to collect sales taxes owed on Internet or out-of-state purchases is essential. The Washington State Department of Revenue estimates it would generate \$650

million for Washington local governments and \$1.3 billion for the state over the next five years. Over the 2015-2017 biennium, Longview would receive \$156,446 in sales tax.

Extend and Make Permanent the Alternative Fuels Credit

The Alternative Fuels Tax Credit expired on December 31, 2014. The provision provided a tax credit for a portion of costs associated with alternative fuel use by municipal governments and transit systems. The City of Longview supports a permanent extension of the Alternative Fuels Tax Credit as the City is transitioning vehicles in its fleet to a propane blend that reduces emissions and saves on operating expenses. In 2016, the City will begin the fleet conversion by purchasing three alternative fuel propane vehicles. The lifetime Alternative Fuel Tax Credit savings for these three vehicles is approximately \$40,000. In addition, 90,000 fewer pounds of carbon dioxide would be produced over their useful lives.

Regulatory Concerns and Unfunded Mandates

The City opposes legislative or regulatory initiatives that undermine local government decision making and contribute to reduction in our workforce.

HR 2698 - HRA - VEBA

This bill will provide Northwest employees of political subdivisions, such as cities, counties, port districts, and fire districts, with more flexibility in designating beneficiaries for their HRAs when they pass away. Many political subdivisions in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho participate in voluntary employees' beneficiary association (VEBA) trusts which provide HRAs. A 2006 IRS ruling imposes rules on HRAs which cause participants in these plans to lose earned benefits if they die without a spouse or dependent. In 2008, Congress passed the Worker, Retiree, and Employer Recovery Act of 2008 (HR 7327) that addressed this situation for certain HRA plans (those created in conjunction with public retirement systems) but not all. A technical fix is needed to include plans established by or on behalf of a state or political subdivision. This is a non-controversial, technical fix to prior legislation.

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