



CITY OF BLAINE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Blaine holds public hearings on Transportation Benefit District

TBD is first step in larger economic initiative

Blaine, Wash. – Residents and businesses in Blaine, Wash. are invited to two public hearings about a proposed Transportation Benefit District. The City will consider asking voters to fund the Transportation Benefit District during the April 2017 Special Election with a two-tenths of one percent (0.2%) sales tax.

“Our community recognizes that economic development is key to raising revenue for city services,” said Ravyn Whitewolf, Public Works Director. “Good streets and trails are the backbone to bringing people to shop and visit Blaine – and that’s what a Transportation Benefit District would fund.”

“Blaine has a lot to offer visitors, and our trails are a big part of that,” said Garth Baldwin, who serves on the City’s Park and Cemetery Board. “Making sure people can access our community and move safely on streets, sidewalks and trails is good for business and the city.”

The Blaine City Council is holding two public hearings to take input on the idea. Community members are encouraged to attend a meeting on January 23 or February 13 at 6:00 p.m. at 435 Martin Street, Suite 4000, Blaine, Wash. (98230). Councilmembers will vote whether or not to place the measure on the ballot for voter approval at the last meeting.

City staff considered a variety of funding options for streets and trails before making its recommendation to Council to form and request voter approval for funding a Transportation Benefit District. For example, the city could borrow money, but that would cost taxpayers more due to interest payments.

Another idea was to ask voters to approve a special property tax levy like they did in 1996. However, that funding method doesn’t take into account the high number of Canadians or other visitors using city services, streets and trails. Funding the Transportation Benefit District with a two-tenths of one percent (0.2%) sales tax means that visitors who shop or purchase services in Blaine will pay for city services they use, as well.

If approved by voters, Blaine's total sales tax rate would be 8.7%, which is the same as Bellingham, Lynden and Ferndale. It would generate approximately \$200,000 a year for transportation projects and programs, and help the city provide matching funds for grant requests to make local tax dollars go further.

A Transportation Benefit District is the first step in a larger Strategic Economic Initiative completed by the city in 2016. The final report, which is a reflection of more than 900 responses by community members, identifies economic development and tourism as a key way to fund city services.

More information about the Transportation Benefit District can be found at www.ci.blaine.wa.us/903/Transportation-Benefit-District-TBD. Members of the community are encouraged to attend the public hearings and share their thoughts on the proposal. Those unable to attend are welcome to send an email to TBD@cityofblaine.com, or send a letter to Ravyn Whitewolf, Public Works Director, 1200 Yew Avenue, Blaine, WA 98230. All communication is encouraged and becomes a matter of public record.

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The City of Blaine (pop. 4,900) is 110 miles north of Seattle and 35 miles south of Vancouver, British Columbia. The City is located between the beautiful Cascade Range and Puget Sound, and steeped in the rich history of a logging and fishing town. The natural beauty of Blaine attracts visitors from Canada and neighboring communities for shopping, professional services, and recreational opportunities. Visitors are central to a thriving economy in Blaine, which helps fund city services for local residents.