

**CITY OF BLAINE**  
**REQUEST FOR COUNCIL ACTION**  
**MEETING DATE:** November 23, 2020

**SUBJECT:** Resolution 1836-20, Adopting the 2021 Legislative Agenda

**DEPARTMENT:** City Manager

**PREPARED BY:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Digital Signature)

**AGENDA LOCATION:**  Consent Agenda       Council Action       Unfinished Business

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**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Resolution 1836-20 – Adopting the 2021 Legislative Agenda
2. Association of Washington Cities 2021 Legislative Priorities

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**BACKGROUND/SUMMARY:**

The 2021 legislative agenda was presented to the City Council in draft on November 9, 2020. The legislative agenda has been revised slightly and is presented here for City Council consideration.

The agenda includes six items:

1. A request to reallocate funds for the Bell Road/Peace Portal Drive project to allow construction of an at-grade, signalized intersection (instead of the grade separation), and allocation of \$1.1 million more to complete funding for the project.
2. A request for \$1.0 million to supplement \$700,000 to be spent by the City on a downtown revitalization project.
3. A request for \$3.1 million for reconstruction of Marine Drive.
4. Support for local transportation funding options, specifically including an option for a second “penny per gallon” tax for border communities.
5. Support for the RCO Aquatic Lands Enhancement Program funds to be allocated by the State, which would provide grant funding for the City’s Marine Park beach reconstruction project.
6. Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) flexibility to allow the use of REET funds for maintenance of capital facilities during recovery from the COVID-19 fiscal impacts.

The 2021 Legislative Agenda is attached. With this in hand, staff, Council, and our lobbyists can advocate for legislative actions that are beneficial to the citizens of Blaine, and it will help our legislators support us in these efforts.

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**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:**  In Current Budget       New Request       Non Budgetary

There are no financial impacts associated with amending the legislative agenda.

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the City Council approve Resolution 1836-20, adopting the City of Blaine’s 2021 Legislative Agenda.

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**REVIEWED BY:**

City Manager \_\_\_\_\_ Finance Director \_\_\_\_\_ City Clerk \_\_\_\_\_  
(Digital Signature) (Digital Signature) (Digital Signature)

**RESOLUTION NO. 1836-20**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF  
BLAINE, WASHINGTON, ADOPTING THE CITY OF BLAINE'S  
2021 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA.**

**WHEREAS**, efforts of representation on behalf of the City of Blaine to influence, affect or guide the passage of legislation in the Washington State legislature are enhanced by a comprehensive package of priorities that have been officially adopted by the City Council pursuant to this resolution.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the City Council of the City of Blaine, Washington, adopts the attached City of Blaine 2021 Washington State Legislative Priorities as the position of the City of Blaine on the items stated therein.

**PASSED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BLAINE, WASHINGTON**, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of November 2020, and approved by the Mayor on the same day.

**CITY OF BLAINE, WASHINGTON**

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Bonnie Onyon, Mayor

ATTEST/AUTHENTICATE:

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Samuel Crawford, City Clerk



## CITY OF BLAINE 2021 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

### Addressing Train/Vehicle Delays at Bell Road (SR 548)

Bell Road (SR 548) connects the communities of Birch Bay and Semiahmoo to downtown Blaine and Interstate-5. There are serious local traffic delays on this roadway caused by the Vehicle and Cargo Inspection System (VACIS). The VACIS is operated by US Homeland Security to monitor goods leaving or coming into United States from Canada. Cargo trains going through the VACIS move very slowly, and block traffic across Bell Road (SR 548). This traffic backs up on to Interstate 5 at Exit 274. A grade separated crossing over the train tracks is the ideal solution to address this congestion, enhance public safety, connect Blaine with Birch Bay and Semiahmoo, promote economic development, and support the movement of goods into and out of the United States. However, evaluation of the project has uncovered significant engineering challenges, local access issues, and an unexpectedly high construction cost. Based on WSDOT evaluation of alternatives, the City supports construction of an at-grade, signalized intersection with channelization improvements (bypass lanes) to improve traffic flow and reduce delays.

The City of Blaine requests that the Legislature authorize a total of \$2,293,400 for the project, including a project scope change to utilize the existing \$1,100,000 currently allocated to the grade separation project, and an additional \$1,193,400. The City applied to the Transportation Improvement Board Grant Program for the remaining funds but was unsuccessful. In a separate effort, the City is utilizing \$475,000 of combined TBD revenue and WSDOT local programs funding for lane improvements that will set the stage for the signalization project.

### Downtown Blaine Revitalization Project

The City of Blaine requests \$1.0 million to supplement \$700,000 allocated by the City for downtown commercial district improvements to support the business community. The project includes pedestrian-oriented amenities to reinforce downtown as the heart of the community and a tourism destination. The place making effort builds on the City's "Blaine-by-the-Sea" tourism branding campaign. The project replaces aging benches and trash cans; adds recycling receptacles; installs new flower planters, street furniture, bike racks; and constructs two gateway arches to anchor historic downtown. For safety and ADA accessibility, the project replaces 7,300 feet of aging and uneven sidewalk, along with removal of select street trees that have contributed to sidewalk buckling. Concurrent updates to utilities are also expected.

### Marine Drive Reconstruction Project

The City of Blaine and the Port of Bellingham request \$3.1 million in transportation funding to reconstruct Marine Drive. The easternmost section of Marine Drive has been closed to vehicle traffic since 2015. This segment of road serves as access to Jorgensen Public Pier and is a component of the breakwater for Blaine Harbor. Access to adjacent fish processing industries has been compromised due to the road closure. The City and the Port of

Bellingham are coordinating on an effort to reconstruct the roadway to ensure access to the pier and protection of the harbor. Under the proposed project, a new truck-compatible roadway will serve the industrial shipyard. A single vehicle lane, a bike/ped lane, and a bulkhead will continue for the final 300 feet to provide access to the public pier.

#### Local Transportation Revenue

Cities throughout the state lack financial resources to adequately maintain and operate the city-owned transportation system. The City of Blaine asks that the state provide increased local funding tools to meet city transportation needs. As a border community, the City of Blaine is unique from other communities. Visitors from Canada frequently travel into the City of Blaine and utilize Blaine's infrastructure without contributing to the tax base. To address this, the state previously authorized border communities to impose a "border gas tax" with voter approval. The City of Blaine, Sumas and Nooksack have utilized this authority. One option to increase local funding tools to meet city transportation needs would be to authorize these communities to increase the border gas tax by another cent.

#### REET Flexibility

The City of Blaine supports flexibility in the use of Real Estate Excise Tax to allow the funds to be used for maintenance and preservation of capital facilities during COVID-19 recovery. The City requests a minimum three-year allowance, sunseting in December 2023, to use REET excise tax for such maintenance and preservation in addition to capital construction. During these trying times it is important that the city maintain existing infrastructure before purchasing or constructing new infrastructure.

#### RCO Aquatic Lands Enhancement Program

The City of Blaine supports funding for the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) for the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) to grant awards for the 2021-23 biennium. The City submitted a grant application and is ranked number 13 to receive an ALEA award to rebuild the beach at Marine Park. This project will create near-shore habitat for fish and other wildlife, create public access, and protect infrastructure and park improvements.

The City of Blaine supports the legislative priorities of the Association of Washington Cities.

# 2021

# City Legislative Priorities



## State-shared revenues

Maintain revenue sharing with cities. Cities support increased shared revenue distributions to cities (especially when there is a commensurate increase in state revenue) and ask the state to look for other opportunities to expand revenue sharing.



## Transportation revenue package

Adopt a new transportation revenue package that emphasizes maintenance/preservation funding and provides an equitable level of local funding as well as additional local revenue options for cities.



## Fiscal flexibility

Provide cities greater flexibility to use funds from existing revenue sources to help cities manage the impacts of the current economic downturn. This will allow cities to direct scarce resources where they are most needed when responding to pressing community conditions.



## Housing stability assistance

Work in a coalition to develop additional resources to address housing instability created by the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including rent assistance and foreclosure/eviction prevention assistance.

### AWC's advocacy is guided by the following core principles from our Statement of Policy:

- Local decision-making authority
- Fiscal flexibility and sustainability
- Equal standing for cities
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Strong Washington state partnerships
- Nonpartisan analysis and decision-making



## Statewide policing reforms

Support local control over city law enforcement policy decisions to meet the needs of each community and appropriately contain costs. Cities understand our obligation to address racial equity in policing – both state requirements and local policies.

### Cities support the following statewide reforms:

- Develop a statewide standard for use of force that preserves the right of local jurisdictions to enact more restrictive standards based on community input.
- Create a database to track officers who have been fired for misconduct.
- Expand grounds for decertification to include use of force violations.
- Require that officer misconduct investigations be completed, regardless of an officer's resignation.
- Establish a duty for all law enforcement officers to immediately intervene and report misconduct or illegal activity by a fellow police officer.
- Require that all officers receive regular support for vicarious trauma and mental well-being, including peer support, mental health counseling, and appropriate mental health screenings. Officers involved in any fatal use of force must undergo a mental health screening prior to returning to duty.

Contact:

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