SR 3 Gorst Area Planning and Environmental Linkages Study

Executive Advisory Group Meeting #1 Summary

Meeting purpose

The purpose of the first Executive Advisory Group (EAG) meeting was to:

- Establish EAG roles and responsibilities.
- Provide a study overview.
- Solicit input on Purpose and Need statement.
- Present the conceptual Range of Alternatives for early input.

Meeting logistics

Nov. 20, 2024, 10 to 11:30 a.m.
Virtual meeting

WSDOT study team: Ashley Carle (WSDOT), JoAnn Schueler (WSDOT), Ahmer Nizam (WSDOT), Sandy Glover (Parametrix), Erinn Ellig (Parametrix), Kirk Wilcox (Parametrix), Sharese Graham (SCJ Alliance), Lauren Wheeler (PRR), Morgan Calder (PRR), Kate Shannon (PRR)

EAG attendees: Randy Neatherlin (Mason County), David Forte (Kitsap County), Katie Walters (Kitsap County), Ralph Rizzo (FHWA), Amber D. Lewis (Suquamish Tribe), Robert Putaansuu (Port of Bremerton), Becky Erickson (City of Poulsbo), Greg Wheeler (City of Bremerton), Kevin Shutty (Mason County), John Clauson (Kitsap Transit), Axel Strakeljahn (City of Bremerton), Ray Scott (Kitsap Transit)

Meeting opening and goals

The study team led welcome and introductions, followed by an overview of the meeting goals and outcomes to review and gather feedback on the SR 3 Gorst Area PEL Study Purpose and Need and conceptual range of alternatives. Zoom Meeting polls and open discussions were used throughout the meeting to gauge understanding and address questions and comments.

The study team shared that the goals of the meeting were to have the EAG actively participate and understand how the SR 3 Gorst Area PEL study process is organized. The outcomes of the meeting were to gain familiarity with and input on the draft Purpose and Need and conceptual range of alternatives, awareness of the evaluation process and to ask the EAG for additional data that the study team has not yet considered.

The roles and responsibilities of the EAG are to represent tribal nations and national and local agencies, provide input on and direction of the PEL study, and review recommendations made on a full range of alternatives to help build consensus and support for alternative(s) selection at the end of the process.

Engagement

The study team provided an overview of the advisory structure throughout the PEL process. Advisory groups are asked to provide resources and technical guidance throughout the PEL study. Advisory groups include the Technical Advisory Group, Executive Advisory Group (EAG) and Community Advisory Group (CAG). The primary focus of the TAG is to provide technical

input, data and feedback, while the EAG will review high-level recommendations, and the CAG will ensure community perspectives are represented in the PEL study process.

WSDOT is also engaging community-based organizations to share project information and gather community input through briefings and interviews. The study team shared a word cloud to depict feedback collected from listening sessions held in October 2024. WSDOT is seeking individuals interested in participating in the CAG and requested EAG members to help share the CAG application, available in English, Spanish and Tagalog, on the SR 3 Gorst Area Planning and Environmental Linkages Study webpage.

The study team shared that updates and public review periods are hosted on the study webpage. An online open house, pop-up events and an in-person open house are planned for early 2025 to collect input from community members in this early outreach phase. The study team aims to present the draft PEL Report to the advisory groups before the study is finalized in late 2025.

Following introductions and the schedule review, the study team requested feedback from the EAG using a Zoom Meeting poll.

Poll question #1: How familiar are you with the Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study process?

a) Very familiar– I know what the PEL study process is (2/11 or 18%)
b) Sort of familiar—I have heard of the PEL Study process but could use a refresher. (9/11 or 81%)
c) What is a PEL Study (0/11 or 0%)

Project background and desired outcomes
The study team began by acknowledging six previous studies conducted in the SR 3 Gorst area and encouraged attendees to share additional studies not included in the list.

Previous studies include:

- SR 16, Tacoma Narrows Bridge to SR 3, Congestion Study, 2018
- SR 3/SR 304 Bremerton Interchange Improvements Feasibility Study, 2015
- SR 16/SR 3 Corridor Analysis, 1994
- Sinclair Inlet Development Concept Plan, 2012
- SR 3 Freight Corridor Planning Study, 2020
- West Belfair to Kitsap Lake Trail Feasibility Study, 2018

Funding directive
The WA State Legislature appropriated $75 million of state and Federal funding over several biennia. The funding covers the PEL Study and National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) process(es), Right-of-Way acquisition, and partial design. There is currently no construction funding identified.

Focus areas identified
The study team presented the focus areas identified for the study which include transportation mobility, need for active transportation facilities, system resiliency, cultural resources and treaty resources (including existing fish passage barriers), access to local businesses and neighborhoods, the Navy railroad bridge and the existing environmental conditions. The team

highlighted that a benefit of using a PEL study is that it supports early engagement. A PEL study ensures the right project partners are identified and included in the conversation and allows for collaboration on study topics.

Desired outcomes

The study team shared that the desired outcomes of the PEL study are to define PEL Purpose and Need for improvements, gain consensus from the public and partners, conduct preliminary screening of alternatives, and conduct elimination of unreasonable alternatives. The team will document outstanding issues to pursue NEPA, develop an Implementation Plan and a Programmatic Mitigation Plan, complete the PEL Report in December 2025 and transition into NEPA in early 2026.

Federal Highway Administration concurrence points

The study team outlined the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) concurrence process:

1. Reason and Desired Outcomes (November 2024)
    a. Reason for PEL study and desired outcomes

2. Purpose and Need (February 2025)
    a. Study area and logical termini
    b. PEL purpose and need for NEPA adoption

3. Alternatives Evaluation (October 2025)
    a. Eliminate unreasonable alternatives
    b. Define, evaluate, and refine alternatives
    c. Feasibility determination
    d. Alternative evaluation results

4. Final Report (December 2025)
    a. Identify alternative(s) to advance into NEPA
    b. Identify potential mitigation measures
    c. Recommend NEPA strategy
    d. FHWA and WSDOT signed report

Poll question #2: How is your level of understanding for the SR 3 Gorst Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study thus far*?*

a) Great—I fully understand the direction and next steps. (9/10 or 90%)
b) Pretty good, but I still have a few questions. (2/10 or 20%)
c) I have questions about the study. (0/10 or 0%)

Study area limits

The study team shared a map of the proposed PEL study project area limits with five termini shown on the map of the corridor. The southmost terminus (#1) falls at the intersection of West Pleasant Street and SR 3 and the northmost termini (#2 and #3) are at the SR 3 and Loxie Eagans Boulevard interchange and the SR 3 and SR 304 interchange respectively. The final termini (#4 and #5) capture the eastern limits of the study area to SR 16, east of the Kitsap Marina and east of the SR 16 and SR 166 interchange. The study team shared that these limits are intended to capture access to urban areas including activities at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and Bremerton Ferry Terminal. The study team also intends to capture potential traffic changes due to lane reductions along the corridor.

Purpose and Need overview
The study team developed a draft Purpose and Need statement to receive feedback from EAG members during the Purpose and Need discussion. In advance of the discussion, the study team provided an overview of a Purpose and Need statement, a fundamental building block of a NEPA document (EA and EIS). The Purpose and Need determines the range of alternatives considered in a PEL study. The Purpose and Need can also limit the range of alternatives because an agency can dismiss without detailed study, to include alternatives suggested that either do not meet the purpose and need or are outside of the boundaries of the purpose and need.

Draft Purpose & Need
The study team presented four draft PEL purpose statements:

1. Provide a range of transportation options that improve person throughput and reduce congestion and delay for all vehicle modes.
2. Improve existing safety performance in terms of fatal and serious injury crashes and promote designs with fewer conflicts and greater separation for vulnerable roadway users.
3. Provide active transportation access between Port Orchard, Gorst and Bremerton with connections to local active transportation facilities.
4. Maintain operations and infrastructure to provide a vital regional connection and extend the lifecycle of the SR 3 facility.

The study team shared the overarching goals developed to guide the PEL study and the development of alternatives:

- Provide diverse transportation options that address the needs of vulnerable populations and overburdened communities.
- Boost regional economic growth by improving the movement of people and goods while enhancing safety and business access in the SR 3 Gorst area.
- Prioritize minimizing, avoiding, and mitigating potential environmental and cultural impacts from any recommended alternatives.

The study team shared a support statement to accompany each goal, which contextualizes the overarching goal to the conditions of this specific study. The first statement acknowledges that vulnerable populations and overburdened communities may require additional resources to serve their transportation needs. The next statement discusses the population growth the region is expected to encounter in the next 20 years, confirming the need for efficient movement of goods and people for successful economic growth. The final support statement addresses the presence of environmentally sensitive habitats and resources that require protection within the Gorst area.

Additional support statements include fish passage barriers that need to be addressed, negative health and environmental outcomes associated with vehicle emissions and the cultural resources present in the Gorst area that require consultation. The project team shared that WSDOT is working with the Suquamish Tribe to develop goal language around treaty rights.

<u>Draft need: Mobility</u>
The study team shared supporting need statements to accompany the first PEL purpose statement for mobility:

- The SR 3 and SR 16 corridors experience high travel demand and congestion during peak travel periods and the corridors have limited capacity to accommodate additional future vehicle travel demand.
- SR 3 provides important transportation and mobility for Department of Defense facilities and operations in Kitsap County, essential for troop deployment and military logistics support during a national emergency. Congestion and delay in the corridor have the potential to reduce military mobility during a national emergency.
- SR 3 experiences freight truck reliability and delay issues and is a key freight corridor in the state, connecting key freight hubs and military facilities including the Port of Bremerton, the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, and other ports located on the Kitsap Peninsula
- Emergency response times are impacted by traffic congestion and a lack of shoulders along SR 3, which emergency services use to respond to emergencies and connect to regional medical facilities.
- Transportation infrastructure in the SR 3 corridor that does not meet modern standards hinders the movement of freight and military vehicles.

Comments and questions received:
John Clauson (Kitsap Transit) raised an issue regarding the current design and enforcement of HOV lanes in the corridor. The HOV lane on SR 304 is misused by single occupancy vehicles. He relayed information shared with him by Washington State Patrol, sharing that enforcement in the SR 3 corridor is unviable due to safety concerns, requiring vehicles to cross two active lanes to pull someone over.

Draft need: Safety
The study team shared a supporting need statement to accompany the PEL purpose statement for safety:

- Crashes resulting in fatalities and serious injuries have occurred on the SR 3 corridor, including crashes involving pedestrians and bicyclists.

The study team shared that between 2019 and 2024, data shows there were 1,605 occurrences of crashes along the SR 3 corridor, including 10 that were fatal and 28 that resulted in serious injuries.

Draft need: Active transportation

The study team shared a supporting need statement to accompany the PEL purpose statement for active transportation:

- Active transportation users have no dedicated facilities along the SR 3 corridor, which is subject to Complete Streets policies.

Comments and questions received:
Ahmer Nizam (WSDOT) suggested including access to transit facilities explicitly, noting that while the statement mentions connections to local active transportation networks, transit connections are currently omitted.

- Erinn Ellig (Parametrix) acknowledged that access to transit will be evaluated as a part of all alternatives in the study. She expressed openness to feedback on how this aspect is described in the draft need statement to ensure clarity and completeness.

Draft need: System resiliency
The study team shared a supporting need statement to accompany the PEL purpose statement for active transportation:

- The Gorst area is vulnerable to coastal hazards that include tsunami inundation, flooding from multiple sources, future sea level rise and heavy precipitation events due to climate change. High tides combined with heavy rainfall cause periodic flooding along SR 3 that impacts mobility and resiliency of the transportation system.

Poll Question #3: After reviewing the draft Purpose and Need, does it include everything you expected?

a. Yes, the Purpose and Need meets my expectations and my organization's preferences. (8/9 or 88%)
b. The Purpose and Need includes some of what I expected, but not all. (1/9 or 11%)
c. No, I would like to provide input to help shape it further. (0/9 or 0%)

Transportation existing conditions
The study team shared preliminary findings related to transportation existing conditions, separated by vehicle mode. Delays and congestion exist heading northbound in the morning and southbound in the afternoon and evening. Vehicle demand is influenced by Naval Base Kitsap-Bremerton and Washington State Ferries arrivals and departures. Travel times between Port Orchard and the Naval Base Kitsap-Bremerton increase by more than 25 percent in the morning and more than 100 percent in the afternoon and evening.

By vehicle mode:

- Active transportation: There are no continuous active transportation facilities and minimal crossing locations.
- Transit: Mason Transit and Kitsap Transit provide service in the study area; Naval Base worker/driver buses operate between Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and Bangor; and Bremerton Ferry Terminal provides connections to Seattle, Annapolis, and Port Orchard.
- Freight: SR 3 is a T1 facility between Gorst and Bremerton with annual truck tonnage of 10,470,000; movement of oversized vehicles is limited by Naval Rail Bridge; the SR 3 corridor is included in the Strategic Highway Network.

Railroad bridge
The study team shared that the Naval Railroad Bridge was built in 1945, is U.S. Navy-owned, and likely nearing the end of service live and is vulnerable to earthquakes. The bridge imposes mobility restrictions with a vertical clearance below the current standard.

Comments and questions received:
John Clauson (Kitsap Transit) suggested the inclusion of worker-driver buses from South Kitsap to the naval base and noting transit routes (SR 3 and 16) for completeness.

Environmental existing conditions

The existing environmental conditions reports that the study has analyzed, with the exception of the streams and shoreline, were collected through reconnaissance level inventory. The goal of the review is to identify current conditions and align with what is required from a regulatory context.

By discipline:

- Stormwater and water quality: There are existing facilities deficiencies; the Gorst Creek and Sinclair Inlet are on 303(d).
- Wetlands and aquatic habitat: There are numerous stream crossings on SR 3 and SR 16 corridors, estuarine wetlands, nearshore or intertidal and marine habitat, and freshwater wetlands.
- Vegetation and wildlife: The study area is in a primarily urbanized area. However, there is potential marbled murrelet habitat in the study area and the Sinclair Inlet.
- Floodplains and sea-level rise: Hydraulic and geomorphological modeling are needed; the study area is susceptible to flooding and storm surge.
- Geology and soils: There is a high to moderate seismic risk.
- Hazardous materials: There are known sites in the project vicinity classified as Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) and Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA).
- Visual quality: The study area is highly developed and a mix of built and natural resources.
- Land use, farmlands and 6(f): There are a variety of land uses with access from state routes and Sinclair Inlet wildlife area.
- Section 4(f): Avoid and/or minimize potential impacts to City and State-owned parks and public areas.
- Cultural resources: The study area hosts known archaeological sites and ethnographically named and significant locations. The study team is planning for Section 106 through ongoing coordination with agencies and the tribe.
- Air/greenhouse and gas/energy: The study area is affected by heavy traffic congestion and data indicates a potential for higher levels of traffic-related air pollution.
- Noise: There are known sensitive receivers immediately adjacent to the SR 3 corridor.
- Socioeconomic and environmental justice: Demographic analysis of the study area indicates presence of Environmental Justice populations.

Fish passage barriers

The study team is identifying fish barriers in the study area and will compare data with the range of alternatives for potentially affected sites. The Wright Creek culvert replacement is part of this study.

The study team requested EAG members to review the list of data sources and share additional data sources by Nov. 27, 2024. Following the meeting, the community outreach team has followed up with advisory members to extend the review and data source submissions to Dec. 11, 2024.

Comment and questions received:

John Clauson (Kitsap Transit) shared that Kitsap Transit is conducting an alternatives analysis to develop a marine maintenance facility. One potential site under evaluation is the Kitsap Marine Properties located at the edge of the study area. He expressed need for communication

between our study team and Kitsap Transit to ensure alignment with future infrastructure planning.

- Sharese Graham (SCJ Alliance) acknowledged this information and inquired further about their alternatives list and accessing this information.

Ahmer Nizam (WSDOT) informed the study team and FHWA that one of the culverts near the study area, an unnamed tributary to Sinclair along SR 166, is the subject of a FHWA Culvert Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP) joint grant application between WSDOT and the City of Port Orchard. Later coordination determined it was outside the study area.

Alternatives development and evaluation
The study team shared the timeline for the alternative evaluations. The team is currently developing the range of alternatives. The selected alternatives will be sent through two levels of evaluation and screening, the second level of evaluation will be complete in September 2025.

The study team described the conceptual range of alternatives, which are split into three areas (A, B, and C) and organized by three modes (roadway, active transportation, and transportation demand management):

A. SR 3/SR 16 interchange roadway
B. SR 3 corridor—Gorst to SR 304
C. Loxie Eagans and SR 304

Active transportation facilities
The study team is analyzing potential connections to local networks in the study area. Potential networks are organized by existing facilities, planned facilities, and residential areas.

Range of alternatives
The study team shared images of the initial range of alternatives and requested feedback from EAG members.

Area A alternatives – SR 3/SR 16 interchange roadway

- Access management: Access management, driveway consolidation and limited access to properties and property buy outs.
- Access management plus capacity: Limited access with frontage roads and elevated local road crossing and at-grade roundabouts with frontage roads.
- Elevated roadway for regional traffic.
- Active transportation: Connections to SR 166, SR 16, and SR 3/Sam Christopherson Avenue/Belfair Valley Road.
- Complete streets where applicable: Waterside of SR 16/SR 3, landside of SR 3 and grade separated crossing of SR 16.

Area B alternatives – SR 3 corridor roadway

- Added lanes**:** Minor widening for SB hard shoulder running, add shoulders northbound and southbound, implement hard shoulder running and add one lane in each direction (general purpose or HOV).
- New alignments: Direct alignment between SR 16 and SR 3 and consider bypass corridors.

- Active transportation: Connections to waterside and landside of SR 3, on a new roadway bridge and on Sherman Heights Road and local streets.

Area C alternatives – Loxie Eagans/SR 304 roadway

- Connections: Westbound SR 304 to southbound SR 3 and extend parallel ramp to 1500 feet, Loxie Eagans to southbound SR 3 change to parallel ramp, extend southbound HOV lane from SR 304 to SR 3, meter ramps from Loxie Eagans and SR 304 to southbound SR 3.
- Active transportation connections:
    - Loxie Eagans/West Werner Road using Pointdexter Avenue, Oyster Bay Avenue, SR 3 westside, SR 3 eastside/Bremerton Boulevard West and National Avenue West.
    - SR 304 using the waterside of SR 304, the landside of SR 304 and Charleston Beach Road West.

Additionally, the study team presented six Transportation Demand Management non-roadway options:

- Vehicle ferry (Port Orchard to Bremerton)
- Shipyard shift revisions
- Additional worker buses
- Additional transit service
- Commute trip reduction policies
- Charge parking fees

Comments and questions received:

John Clauson (Kitsap County) raised the potential application of congestion pricing strategies, such as the High-Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes seen on I-405. He raised this as a potential topic for evaluation, not as an endorsement of the method.

- Ashley Carle (WSDOT) acknowledged the suggestion, noting that the WSDOT tolling office has been tasked by the state legislature to explore HOT lanes for various corridors, including SR 3. Coordination with the tolling office is ongoing.

Next steps

The study team shared the 2025 PEL advisory group meeting schedule and highlighted the goals of the next meeting which will take place in March 2025. Moving forward, EAG meetings will follow TAG meetings to allow EAG members to be debriefed by their TAG counterpart beforehand. EAG members were requested to submit comments and questions on the Purpose and Need, conceptual range of alternatives, and existing conditions data sources by Nov. 27, 2024. Following the meeting, the community outreach team has followed up with advisory members to extend the review and comment period to Dec. 11, 2024.

The WSDOT team committed to the following:

- Distribute meeting materials for review and feedback.
- Hold a public open house series in early 2025.
- Send out EAG #2 meeting invite.

The meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.