



SR 539 Guide Meridian Community Engagement

- SR 539/I-5 to Kellogg Road - Paving & ADA upgrades (MP 0.0-0.83)
- SR 539/ Guide Meridian Complete Streets Pre-Design Sandy Williams Connecting Communities grant- Year Two project

Summer 2025 Engagement Summary

Overview

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Northwest Region Mount Baker Area (MBA) is conducting community engagement to better understand community needs and wants on State Route 539 (Guide-Meridian). Locally, this road is referred to as “the Guide.” The project is located between Interstate 5 (I-5), milepost (MP) 0.00, and Kellogg Road, MP 0.83, in Bellingham. The purpose of this community engagement is to inform WSDOT work in the project area including the Complete Streets Pre-design for the [SR 539 I-5 to Kellogg – Paving and ADA upgrades project](#).

The Washington State Legislature identified pavement rehabilitation funds for SR 539 from the I-5 interchange (MP 0.0) to Kellogg Road (MP 0.83) in Bellingham. The WSDOT Capital Program Development and Management Division programmed these funds to be utilized in 2027. This pavement rehabilitation project will include:

- Asphalt grinding and new inlay (pavement), and
- New curb ramps at select intersections in compliance with state and federal Americans with Disabilities (ADA) guidelines.

The Washington State Legislature passed Senate Bill 5974 in 2022, which added *Street access—Principles of complete streets—Requirements* (RCW 47.04.035) to Public Highways and Transportation General Provisions. This directs WSDOT to incorporate the principles of complete streets with facilities that provide street access with all users in mind. State transportation projects (a) starting design between July 1, 2022, and July 31, 2025, that are \$500,000 or more must adhere to specific criteria including identifying multimodal facilities and conducting local consultation, among other requirements.

The community engagement plan is funded by the [Sandy Williams Connecting Communities Program \(SWCCP\)](#) grant. It is designed to gather invaluable multimodal



transportation and socioeconomic data by involving the community to capture local uses, needs, and experiences along, across, and connecting to the Guide.

Engagement Methods

The community engagement team produced a webpage and flyer to inform the public about the project and to direct interested parties to a community questionnaire for this project. The intent of the questionnaire was to collect data related to needs and vision in the project area.

The project and the questionnaire were promoted through press releases in English and Spanish, weekly WSDOT regional update listserv, and social media platforms like Bluesky, X, and Reddit. In addition, the City of Bellingham Public Works amplified the effort on its monthly e-newsletter. Different community groups or neighborhood associations were asked to share with their members or clients.

WSDOT project staff visited 37 business in the project vicinity to hand out flyers, talk about the project, and encourage participation in the questionnaire. Additionally, WSDOT staff visited Fire Department Station 6 (Deemer) and Whatcom Transportation Authority Cordata Station and distributed flyers to be posted at two public libraries: Bellingham Public Library's Bellis Fair Mall branch and Ferndale Public Library.

Engagement Results

The Community Questionnaire was open from July 10 to August 14 in English and Spanish and there were 633 respondents. There were eight questions related to a person's relationship with the project area and seven optional demographic questions. The following figure reflects an important understanding about this segment of SR 539.

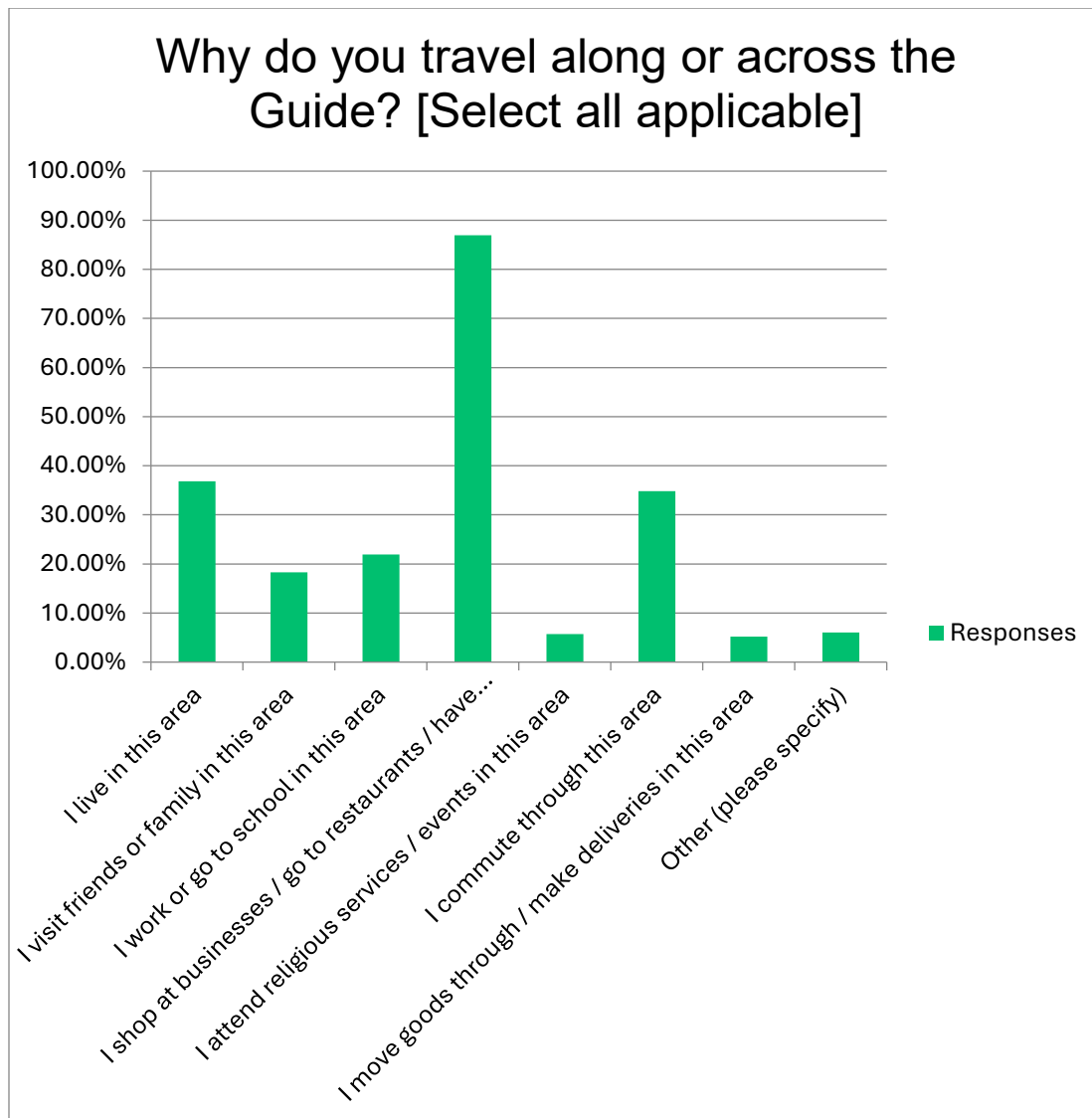


Figure 1. Graph of SR 539 use by percentage

Clearly, the project area is an important, central, daily hub for commerce as nearly 90% of respondents indicated shopping and restaurants as a reason for using the Guide. Also notable are the nearly equal percentages of users who live in this area and those who commute through this area.

These data point to intricate balance of this corridor for local movement and regional through-put in the context of a heavily utilized commercial center. **Six themes** emerged from questionnaire responses, in-person conversations with local business owners and employees, and feedback from other interested parties.



Themes

Six themes include:

- This is the most **direct route** for many respondents
- Many respondents try to **avoid this area** because it is stressful
- Nearly **equal split** between respondents who want bolstered bike facilities on the corridor and those who want it be vehicles only
- **Separate bike facilities** are important to many respondents
- Access– **too many driveways** make it challenging for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians
- **Congestion at Telegraph/I-5 NB offramp** is challenging for vehicles and active transportation users who rely on the same limited space

How these themes are being used

This information was shared with the project team and is being used to inform the pre-design plans. While decisions for the project ultimately are determined by WSDOT based on a number of factors including programmed project funding, legislative mandates including [RCW 47.04.035](#) requirements for Complete Streets, traffic analyses, and engineering standards found in the WSDOT Design Manual, the community's voice is very important in sharing local needs and experiences of the users of the transportation network.

After receiving community feedback, WSDOT staff are continuing to explore options for the corridor that include:

- Traffic operations including channelization and signals
- Supporting increased through-put for truck operators and commuters
- Facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians
- Crossing enhancements
- Techniques for reducing delays for transit operators

Next Steps

WSDOT staff will continue to refine pre-design concepts and determine what is feasible within the scope and budget of the project. We will continue to coordinate closely with the



City of Bellingham to align with adopted plans, and other partners like the Port of Bellingham and the Whatcom Transportation Authority.

When we have options or considerations ready, we will conduct another round of community engagement to ask for your feedback.

We encourage interested parties to check the [project webpage](#) for updates and to [subscribe to receive email notifications](#) about the project and other local topics through GovDelivery.