



KITTITAS COUNTY

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Kirk Holmes, Director

August 23, 2010

Kittitas County Public Works Department submits Federal Funding Request

Interstate 90 (I-90) crosses the United States from Seattle to Boston, MA. In Washington State, I-90 spans 300 miles from the Port of Seattle to the Washington/Idaho border. The Snoqualmie Pass portion of I-90 (elevation 3,022 feet) is located in Kittitas County and is the most heavily traveled east-west highway crossing in Washington State. Washington State is increasing safety, reducing traffic congestion, and stimulating job growth and the economy by using a phased approach to improve this critical transportation safety corridor. This proposal focuses on a portion of Phase 2 of the I-90 Corridor Improvement Program referred to as Phase 2A – Keechelus Dam Vicinity.

As the main east-west corridor across Washington State, I-90 Snoqualmie Pass is the critical link connecting western Washington's large population centers, businesses and ports with the rural communities, agricultural industries, and recreational opportunities of central and eastern Washington. Safe and reliable travel over I-90 Snoqualmie Pass is essential to the economic vitality and livability of Washington State. Interstate closures due to avalanches, extreme weather, and rock fall can cripple Kittitas County's economy. When I-90 is closed, large portions of Kittitas County are rendered unreachable. Phase 1 of the I-90 Corridor Program is currently underway in the economically distressed Kittitas County and will continue to infuse the economy with much needed construction related jobs for years to come.

Phase 2 is a 10-mile section also divided into sub-phases that begins near the Keechelus Lake Dam (milepost 59.9) and ends near the town of Easton (milepost 70). Phase 2 improvements included: adding a new lane in each direction; replacing deteriorating concrete of existing lanes; building wildlife crossing structures, including overpasses; rebuilding bridges and culverts; adding and extending chain up/off areas; replacing low-clearance interchanges; adding truck climbing lanes' stabilizing slopes; and installing intelligent transportation systems.

Phase 2A, the portion of the project requesting TIGER II support, is located between milepost 59.9 and 60.9 and is referred to as the Keechelus Dam Vicinity Project. Kittitas County's economy is dependent on I-90. The integrity of this lifeline must be maintained for the county to thrive. Therefore, Kittitas County is requesting \$12.32 million in TIGER II funding to continue design and construction of several much needed improvements of Phase 2A. Funding support from TIGER II will be invested in design and construction of Washington state's first wildlife overcrossing to improve ecological connectivity. The project also completes design engineering for one-mile phase of the project, which includes adding a new lane in each direction, replacing deteriorating concrete pavement of existing lanes, building chain-up areas, and stabilizing a rock slope. While matching funds are not mandated by the TIGER II grant guidelines for rural projects, WSDOT's Secretary of Transportation, Paula Hammond, has signed a letter committing state funds as a 20% match if TIGER II funding is received. WSDOT, along with approval from Washington State Legislature, will provide 20% matching funds, or \$3.08 million, for this project utilizing cost savings realized on construction projects in Phase 1.

Kittitas County Commissioners are empowered to set county policy, adopt laws, implement them, and, except for the responsibilities of other elected officials, carry out day-to-day operations of the county. The Kittitas County Public Works Department reports to the County Commissioners. Kittitas County is the departmental unit within County Government seeking TIGER II grant money. Other project parties include:

- WSDOT
- Central Washington University
- I-90 Wildlife Bridges Coalition
- Federal Highways Administration
- United States Forest Service (land owner)