



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
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Frequently Asked Questions About.....

Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Answers to commonly asked questions about the Six-Year TIP and who to contact for further information.

Q. What is the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)?

A. Bellingham's Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program is the funding mechanism for expensive capital improvements to Bellingham's multimodal transportation network. Cities ([RCW 35.77.010](#)) and counties ([RCW 36.81.121](#)) are required to prepare and adopt a comprehensive transportation program for the ensuing six calendar years, after one or more public hearings, that is to be filed with the Secretary of the Washington State Department of Transportation after adoption. These six-year TIPs are to be consistent with the city or county comprehensive plan transportation element. Bellingham's Six-Year TIP must be adopted by the City Council before July 1st of each year.

Q. What kind of transportation projects are appropriate for inclusion on the Six-Year TIP?

A. The Transportation Element of the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan (adopted June 2006) contains a project list of over 120 multimodal transportation needs for the 20-year planning period (2002-2022), based on travel demand forecast modeling conducted for the Comprehensive Plan update. Approximately 120 of the identified transportation improvements are for sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and transit-supportive measures. While sidewalks, bicycle lanes, enhanced crosswalks, and arterial street improvements are appropriate for inclusion on the Six-Year TIP, off-street capital improvements, such as a multimodal trail projects, must have a very clear *transportation* benefit to be included on the Six-Year TIP. *Traffic calming requests are not appropriate for the Six-Year TIP, but are be addressed through Bellingham's Neighborhood Traffic Safety Program (which is funded from the Six-Year TIP).*

Q. What is the public process for updating the Six-Year TIP each year?

A. During the course of each year, Bellingham's Transportation Planning staff monitors safety, congestion, and multimodal mobility issues on the citywide transportation network, as well as emerging opportunities for grant funding and even public-private partnerships. The primary source of transportation improvements is from the identified project list in the Transportation Element of the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan, for consistency with State law ([RCW 35.77.010](#)). Transportation improvement projects not listed in the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan may not be eligible for grant funding. All project recommendations are considered for, commonalities, costs and benefits, grant eligibility, engineering staff resources available, and where possible, projects are combined with other capital improvement and maintenance opportunities (sewer/water main replacements, asphalt overlays, re-channelization, etc.) to maximize cost savings.

Public Works staff coordinates with the City Transportation Commission and produces a DRAFT Six-Year TIP in early May, which is the professional staff recommendation for transportation investment priorities, for public and City Council review. The Transportation Commission provides a recommendation to the

City Council regarding the DRAFT TIP. A public hearing before the City Council is held in late May, additional work sessions or public meetings are held as deemed necessary by the City Council, revisions and/or additions to the Six-Year TIP are made as recommended by the City Council, and the annual Six-Year TIP must adopted by a majority vote of the City Council prior to July 1. The City must submit the adopted Six-Year TIP to the State within 30 days of adoption.

Q. Is the Six-Year TIP fulfilling Bellingham's multimodal and alternative transportation goals?

A. Yes. The projects funded in Bellingham's Six-Year TIP are primarily from the Transportation Element which has a very clear multimodal emphasis, including over 120 bicycle, pedestrian, and transit supportive projects. In fact, since 2000, the number of bicycle- and pedestrian-specific projects funded through the Bellingham Six-Year TIP has steadily increased, while the number of automobile-specific projects have decreased. In 2010, all (100%) of the transportation improvements listed in the DRAFT 2011-2016 TIP are multimodal, meaning that they include transportation facilities for multiple and/or alternative transportation modes.

Q. How many projects are normally added to the Six-Year TIP each year?

A. The answer to this question is completely dependent on economic circumstances. In the past there have been as many as 22 projects on Bellingham's annual Six-Year TIP. Recently, due to the national recession and lack of revenue available, the number of projects has diminished to 15. Each year Public Works must prioritize among public safety improvements, traffic congestion issues, alternative transportation opportunities, Transportation Concurrency needs, and other issues. All of these needs and issues must be balanced with economic realities and the actual amount of money that is available to plan, engineer, and construct transportation infrastructure. There are always more transportation needs and requests than there is funding to allocate for transportation improvement projects. This means that the Six-Year TIP is a highly competitive process and there is no guarantee that any particular project request will ultimately be included in the annual Six-Year TIP.

Q. What are the priorities that Public Works uses to recommend additions to the Six-Year TIP?

A. All project requests must be evaluated for citywide transportation benefit and must be feasible with available staff resources and funding sources. The Six-Year TIP is a funding mechanism, not a wish list. Including more projects on the Six-Year TIP each year than is actually feasible would raise community expectations that could not realistically be met due to lack of funding, staff resources, or project complications, such as environmental permitting delays.

Public Works staff looks for commonality that may exist among project priorities to determine what is possible, fundable, buildable, and likely to compete well for grant money available from State and federal agencies, which is typically required for the more expensive Six-Year TIP projects. Public Works also looks for opportunities to combine project requests with other capital improvement and maintenance needs (sewer/water main replacements, asphalt overlays, re-channelization, etc) to maximize cost savings.

Q. What happens when a project does get added to the Six-Year TIP?

A. Transportation projects that are added to the 6-Year TIP are typically listed in the 4th, 5th, and 6th years of the TIP to establish that they are City priority transportation projects, but do not have full funding available. Projects cannot be listed in the 1st, 2nd, or 3rd years of the Six-Year TIP unless they are fully funded. However, sometimes opportunities for "low-cost, high-value" projects emerge unexpectedly and are added as funded projects which can be made ready for the next construction cycle. These are infrequent, but relatively inexpensive projects that add great transportation benefit to the citywide system.

Q. Why do some transportation projects stay on the Six-Year TIP for more than 6 years?

A. Some transportation improvements are so expensive and/or complex due to engineering, topography, right-of-way, environmental impacts, etc, that it can take more than 6 years to secure enough funding to complete the project. Many of the largest and most expensive projects face this possibility. Examples

are James Street between Sunset Square and Bakerview Road, West Horton Road, the Birchwood-James Connector, and some of the transportation infrastructure, such as bridges, needed for the Waterfront District.

State and federal funding agencies require full funding for projects listed in the 1st, 2nd, or 3rd years of the TIP and projects without full funding must be listed in the 4th, 5th, or 6th years of the TIP until they do have full funding. When it is difficult to secure funding for large transportation projects, then they may be included on the Six-year TIP for far longer than just 6 years. Inclusion on the Six-Year TIP is often one of the important scoring criteria for many transportation grant funding agencies.

Q. What are the funding sources for projects on the Six-Year TIP?

A. Transportation funding comes from a variety of local, regional, state, federal, and sometimes private funding sources.

Q. Are Transportation Impact Fees (TIFs) used to fund projects on the Six-Year TIP?

A. Yes. However, Transportation Impact Fees may only be spent for transportation projects that are needed to accommodate the projected growth adopted in the Comprehensive Plan and not for maintenance and operations or retrofitting residential streets with sidewalks not related to new development.

City of Bellingham Web Site Resources

The following transportation planning documents are available on the City of Bellingham Public Works web site at:

<http://www.cob.org/services/neighborhoods/community-planning/transportation/index.aspx>

Transportation Reports on Annual Concurrency (TRAC)

Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The City's Transportation Goals and Policies are adopted in the Transportation Element available at:

Bellingham Comprehensive Plan, Transportation Element

<http://www.cob.org/services/neighborhoods/community-planning/comprehensive-plan.aspx>

Public Works Transportation Planning Staff

In addition to the transportation planning documents listed above, specific Public Works staff can be reached by telephone at **(360) 778-7900** between 8:00am and 5:00pm, Monday through Friday, or by email, listed below.

Chris Comeau, Transportation Planner.....**ccomeau@cob.org**
(Six-year TIP, Comprehensive Plan, Transportation Concurrency, Impact Fees, Neighborhood Traffic Safety Program)

Brent Baldwin, Development Manager.....**bbaldwin@cob.org**
(Land Use and Transportation Development Requirements)