

SULTAN CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

ITEM NO: P-3
DATE: January 14, 2010
SUBJECT: Safety of Highway 2 in Sultan
CONTACT PERSON: Deborah Knight, City Administrator

ISSUE:

The issue before the city council is to hear a presentation prepared by students enrolled in the Community-Oriented Health Practice program at the University of Washington School of Public Health on recommendations to improve safety on US 2 in Sultan.

The University of Washington (UW) students prepared a report (Attachment A) titled, *"Safety of Highway2 in Sultan: Recommendations for the Snohomish Health District Board of Health and Sultan City Council."*

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Read the report prepared by the UW students, ask questions, and direct staff to areas of interest and/or concern.

SUMMARY:

A class of seven University of Washington students enrolled in the Community Oriented Public Health program spent two weeks in December 2009 investigating transportation safety on US 2 in and around Sultan. Their research included a site visit, interviews with local leaders and residents, and data analysis.

In preparing the report, the students took into consideration budget constraints at the local and state level which limit some types of actions and the capital investments already planned to improve traffic safety.

The recommendations in the report focus on low-cost educational interventions to improve traffic safety including:

- Raising personal awareness of alcohol consumption and empowering individuals to drive safely.
- Educating the public on the danger of speeding and the importance of using seatbelts.

- Designing education efforts to reach teens and changing risky driving behaviors.
- Promoting safe driving among recreationists traveling on US 2.
- Improving the visibility of pedestrians in the 5th Street crosswalk.

Each recommendation is followed by specific implementation actions the city could take, alone or with partners, to improve safety on US 2.

ATTACHMENTS:

A – Safety of Highway2 in Sultan: Recommendations for the Snohomish Health District Board of Health and Sultan City Council

COUNCIL ACTION:

DATE:

Safety of Highway 2 in Sultan: Recommendations for the Snohomish Health District Board of Health and Sultan City Council

December 11, 2009

Prepared by the Community-Oriented Public Health Practice Program at
the University of Washington School of Public Health

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Highway 2 from Everett to Skykomish



SUMMARY: Traffic safety on US Highway 2 has been identified as a concern at both the local and state levels. At the request of the Snohomish Health District, students from the University of Washington School of Public Health researched how to improve traffic safety in the City of Sultan, Washington. Eliminating preventable deaths on Highway 2 will require efforts in three domains: engineering, enforcement, and education. While we recognize the importance of engineering and enforcement, there are other entities that are dedicated to addressing these areas. This report will focus on areas where low-cost educational interventions can improve traffic safety. This report highlights traffic safety concerns in Sultan and provides recommendations for the Snohomish Health District Board of Health and Sultan City Council in the following areas: Driving under the influence, speeding, lack of seatbelt use, the need to target young drivers and recreation seekers, and pedestrian and bicycle safety. Collaboration between these two governing bodies, other organizations, and Sultan residents have the potential to improve safety on Highway 2.

INTRODUCTION: The scenic beauty of Sultan has drawn people to the area for generations. However, recent population increases and the expansion of local industry have created new opportunities for some, but threaten the quality of life for all. Most notably, the increase in traffic along US Highway 2 has contributed to higher rates of motor vehicle collisions. Due to the small size of Sultan and the surrounding area, each crash on Highway 2 hits close to home and sends ripples of alarm and loss through the community.

Over the past two weeks, our class of seven students in the Community-Oriented Public Health Practice program at the University of Washington School of Public Health investigated transportation safety in and around Sultan. We walked around Sultan for a firsthand look at the geography of the area and highway conditions. We spoke with a diverse group of community members ranging from shop owners to firemen and from high school faculty to residents walking through town. We interviewed both leaders and stakeholders in the community. We attended the US2 Safety Coalition meeting in Sultan and the Board of Health meeting in Everett. To learn more about successful interventions in other locations, we reviewed the academic literature, websites dealing with motor vehicle safety, as well as data compilations and initiatives that have occurred regarding Highway 2 and Snohomish County. We spoke with service providers in the area and interviewed regulatory bodies such as the Washington State Liquor Control Board and regional law enforcement to determine their jurisdiction and recommendations for improvement on the issue of safety on this highway. Sources for our recommendations are listed at the end of each section while a complete list of interviews can be found in Appendix 1.

Through our research, we have come to understand that traffic safety along Highway 2 is a unifying public health issue that affects each resident of Sultan. Sultan's residents use Highway 2 to go to work, grocery shop, take kids to school, and visit family and friends. They report making personal decisions such as where to live, what kind of car to drive, and what route to take based on the dangers of the highway. Congestion on weekends from mountain recreation seekers has further contributed to a town where the highway dictates individual behavior.

FACTS AND FIGURES:

- According to the city's comprehensive land use plan, Sultan's population will grow from 2,227 in 1990 to an estimated 5,874 in 2010.

From Monroe to Gold Bar on US Highway 2 (Segment 3, mile markers 15.65-30.27)

- Between January 1999 and December 2007, the Washington State Department of Transportation Collision Data and Analysis Branch reports 911 collisions, of which 36 were disabling or fatal.
- Rear-end collisions were the most common type of collision. The top contributing circumstance was following too closely.
- Of disabling or fatal collisions, opposite direction or "head-on" collisions were the most common. The top contributing circumstance was being under the influence of alcohol.

Official sources confirm local perceptions that Highway 2 is a dangerous roadway. High Accident Corridors are defined as stretches of highway over a mile long where the collision rate is higher than the state average. There are five High Accident Corridors located between Monroe and Gold Bar. This segment of highway also accounted for 37% of all traffic fatalities in the Highway 2 Safety Corridor between January 1999 and June 2006, more than any other segment in the Safety Corridor. Notably, of accidental childhood deaths in Snohomish County from 1999 to 2002, motor vehicle collisions were the leading cause, accounting for 31 deaths. More than three out of every four of those deaths were determined to be preventable using criteria from the Washington State Department of Health. If population trends continue, average weekend daily use of this segment of Highway 2 will almost double by 2030 to over 40,000 vehicles per day, exacerbating current safety issues.

These numbers begin to illustrate the extent of the problem. Unfortunately, budgetary constraints limit possible large scale improvement projects. In November 2009, the Snohomish Health District was forced to cut \$100,000 in programs. This recent Snohomish County and statewide budget crisis challenges Sultan residents to develop creative strategies to maintain their sense of community and quality of life. The recommendations included in this report have been formed with this in mind.

The City of Sultan, the US 2 Safety Coalition, and other groups have already invested significant resources into evaluating traffic safety and proposing improvements. Our recommendations are designed to complement those efforts. We hope that the community can use this report as an additional resource to help them become active players in improving the safety of their city.

Sources:

City of Sultan. (2008). *City of Sultan Comprehensive Plan*. Sultan, WA.

Washington State Department of Transportation. (2007). *US 2 Route Development Plan*. Olympia, WA.

Washington State Department of Transportation Collision Data and Analysis Branch. (2008). *US 2 Traffic Safety Corridor - Collision Data*. Olympia, WA: Washington State Department of Transportation.

EDUCATION: There are a multitude of educational opportunities to reach out and empower the communities that use Highway 2. Public information and education programs are most effective when they are well planned and executed in conjunction with engineering or law enforcement strategies. In other words, education is a first and important piece of the puzzle and one that could be looked at now during these budget limitations.

CONCERN: The Presence of Alcohol

The presence of alcohol contributes to motor vehicle injury and death. Alcohol use presents a two-pronged problem in relation to motor vehicle injury in Sultan. First, some homeless people are at risk of vehicular assault because they are either intoxicated or disabled and unaware of oncoming traffic. Secondly, some patrons who have been drinking in the bars, drive intoxicated afterwards and put pedestrians and other drivers at risk. As stated above, “opposite direction collisions” were the most common type of disabling and fatal collisions between Monroe and Gold Bar. The top contributing circumstance was alcohol. It should be noted that in August 2009, the Washington State Liquor Control Board (WSLCB) closed five offices. Therefore, sufficient capacity for enforcement could be difficult to maintain.

Objective 1: To raise personal awareness of alcohol consumption and empower individuals to drive safely.

Recommendations for Snohomish Board of Health and Sultan City Council

- Advocate for breathalyzer tests in Sultan bars to help drivers self evaluate whether they are within legal limits to drive home.
- Invite the Washington State Highway Patrol Breathalyzer RV to Sultan community events to educate public on the effects of alcohol.
- Raise awareness of the risk of using certain prescription drugs while driving and/or combined with alcohol.
- Educate public to call 911 if they see someone driving erratically.

Potential Partners:

Washington State Traffic Safety Commission: (360) 753-6197

Objective 2: Consider methods to address alcohol related motor vehicle collisions outside of police powers.

Recommendations for Sultan City Council

- Facilitate an alliance between members of the US 2 Safety Coalition and local bar owners.
- Encourage a peer-based program where bar owners monitor and motivate each other to comply with liquor licensing laws.

- Encourage drinking establishments to create formal procedures for dealing with intoxicated patrons and incorporate them into a one-on-one training program for servers.
- Consider ways to educate community members about the legal obligations of bar tenders to refuse serving alcohol to apparently intoxicated patrons. A public awareness campaign that supports servers could be introduced at the next Sultan Safety Rodeo.
- Encourage bars to stay open at least one hour after last call so patrons can metabolize alcohol and/or safely arrange alternative transportation.
- Encourage community groups to coordinate designated driver programs.
- Investigate funding to increase chemical dependency and harm reduction services.

Sources:

Charges filed in car assault case. (2009, August 18). Monroe Monitor and Valley News.

Allen, D. (December 3, 2009). Personal Communication. Sultan, WA.

Beason, T. (2008, July 20). Highway 2: Riding the line between urban frenzy and urban mellow. Seattle Times.

Buka, S., & Birdthistle, I. (1999). Long-term effects of a community-wide alcohol server training intervention. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 60(1), 27-37.

Keary, P. (2009, October 20). Sultan hit-and-run victim remembered. Monroe Monitor and Valley News.

Keary, P. (2009, October 13). Sultan woman killed in hit-and-run. Monroe Monitor and Valley News.

Robern, K. (December 3, 2009). Personal Communication. Sultan, WA.

Scott, M. S., & Dedel, K. (2006). *Assaults In and Around Bars*, 2nd ed. Center for Problem-Oriented Policing Retrieved December 3, 2009, from <http://www.popcenter.org/problems/assaultsinbars/1>

Sky River Mead Administrative Assistant. (December 3, 2009). Personal Communication. Sultan, WA.

Sky Valley Eagles Club Bar Tender. (December 3, 2009). Personal Communication. Monroe, WA.

Task Force on Community Preventative Services. (2001, April 13, 2009). *Reducing Alcohol-impaired Driving: Intervention Training Programs for Servers of Alcoholic Beverages*. The Community Guide Retrieved December 3, 2009, from <http://www.thecommunityguide.org/mvoi/AID/inter-training.html>

Turrisi, R., Nicholson, B., & Jaccard, J. (1999). A cognitive analysis of server intervention policies: perceptions of bar owners and servers. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 60(1), 37-46.

Walser, D. (December 3, 2009). Personal Communication. Monroe, WA.

Walser, F. (November 30, December 3, 2009). Personal Communication. Monroe, WA.

Washington State Liquor Control Board. (December 3, 2009). Personal communication. Seattle, WA.

CONCERN: Speeding and Lack of Seatbelt Use

The most common cause of collisions on the segment of Highway 2 around Sultan are following too closely, or exceeding a reasonably safe speed. Recent data shows that teens in Snohomish, Monroe and Sultan high schools had a rate of 84% seatbelt use in comparison to the state average of 96.4%. Additionally, community members have identified speeding as a serious and frequent problem in Sultan and the surrounding area.

Objective: Educate public on the danger of speeding and the importance of using seatbelts.

Recommendations for Snohomish Board of Health

- Work with local, county, and state stakeholders to increase support for media-based seatbelt use and anti-speeding campaigns.
- Work with local, county, and state stakeholders to educate public to call 911 if they see someone driving too fast.

Recommendations for Sultan City Council

- Work with local community members to develop grassroots anti-speeding and seatbelt use campaigns. Using simple lawn signs, citizen letters to local newspapers, or personal appeals to peers can be potentially even more effective and less costly than more official campaigns.
- Work with local, county, and state stakeholders to purchase radar speed signs informing drivers how fast they are going at high accident locations.
 - Recent studies show that radar speed signs can be significantly more effective at slowing traffic than traditional speed limit signs. Researchers believe that a majority of speeding occurs when drivers become complacent or distracted. While motorists may overlook ordinary speed limit signs, they are more likely to see and pay attention to radar speed signs.
- Work with local, county and state stakeholders to purchase traffic enforcement cameras.
 - Photo enforcement can be used to measure vehicle speed and mail tickets to offenders along with a letter explaining the dangers of speeding.
 - A 2007 study of speed cameras found a 50% reduction in the total crash frequency, with injuries falling by 40%.
 - Photo enforcement is cost effective and pays for itself over time.

Potential Partners:

Washington State Traffic Safety (*for help with media campaign*): (360) 753-6197

Fred Walser, Highway 2 Safety Coalition Chair: (425) 356-7720

WA State Highway Patrol Headquarters: (360) 596-4000

Sultan Police Department: (360) 793-1051

Snohomish County Sheriff, East Precinct: (425) 388-6260

Washington State Department of Transportation Headquarters: (360) 705-7000

Sources:

- City of Bellevue WA Transportation Department. (2009). Stationary Radar Sign Report. Bellevue, WA.
- Conan, N. (Writer) (2009). Do Speed Cameras Make Roads Safer? [Radio], Talk of the Nation: National Public Radio.
- Dick, T. (December 6, 2009). Personal Communication. Marysville, WA.
- Washington, S. (2007). Evaluation of the City of Scottsdale: Loop 101 Photo Enforcement Demonstration Program. Tempe, AZ: Arizona State University Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering.
- Washington State Department of Transportation. (2007). *US 2 Route Development Plan*. Olympia, WA.
- Washington State Patrol Officer. (December 7, 2009). Personal Communication. Seattle, WA.
- Washington Traffic Safety Commission. (2009, December 3, 2009). Click it AND Ticket?: Students at Monroe, Snohomish, and Sultan High Schools will be "Ticketed" for Buckling Up! Retrieved December 3, 2009, from <http://www.wtsc.wa.gov/pie/releases/ciat09.php>

CONCERN: Teens will not be as responsive to education efforts geared at the general public

Teens are noted to feel invincible against injury and death and are also noted to engage in riskier behaviors such as speeding, lower seatbelt use, drinking, and drugs. The CDC reports that teens are more likely than older drivers to speed and drive with shorter distances between the front of their vehicle and the back of the next. In 2008, close to three out of four teen drivers killed in motor vehicle accidents after drinking and driving were also not wearing a seatbelts. It is essential to address teens in a manner that is effective in reaching them. Social marketing sites such as Facebook, Twitter and MySpace are one way to connect with them.

Objective: Education efforts should be designed and delivered in ways that are most accessible and affecting to teens.

Recommendations for Snohomish Board of Health and Sultan City Council

- Campaigns should use social networking sites such as the ones stated above.
- Support “Click It and Ticket” campaign to run through high schools spanning Snohomish County. This program has proven to be effective.
- Encourage new teens to join the US2 Safety Coalition so that teens are assured a voice in future programming.
- Encourage a student assembly in high schools to include speakers who have been affected by traffic collisions on Highway 2.

Potential Partners:

Lizzie Monroe, Monroe High School senior in the US2 Safety Coalition: (360) 793-9860
Dave Wood, Volunteers of America: (360) 793-2400

Sources:

Monroe, L. (December 4, 2009). Personal communication. Sultan, WA.

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. (2009, December 3, 2009). Motor Vehicle Safety: Teen Drivers Fact Sheet. Retrieved December 3, 2009, from http://www.cdc.gov/MotorVehicleSafety/Teen_Drivers/teendrivers_factsheet.html

Washington Traffic Safety Commission. (2009, December 3, 2009). Click it AND Ticket?: Students at Monroe, Snohomish, and Sultan High Schools will be "Ticketed" for Buckling Up! Retrieved December 3, 2009, from <http://www.wtsc.wa.gov/pie/releases/ciat09.php>

CONCERN: Drivers Passing Through Sultan on Highway 2

People who live and work in Sultan know that year-round, Highway 2 traffic is heaviest on Friday evenings and Sunday afternoons, when mountain recreation seekers drive through for weekend excursions in Stevens Pass and Leavenworth. The sentiment among some Sultan community members is that recreationalists drive aggressively, without regard for or connection to the town through which they are passing.

Objective: Promote safe driving among recreationalists traveling on Highway 2.

Recommendations for Sultan City Council

- Support the Sultan Chamber of Commerce in advertising around Stevens Pass and Leavenworth to promote relationships between recreationalists and the town of Sultan.
- Through the Sultan Chamber of Commerce, create Highway 2 safety brochures that target recreationalists and promote safe driving through Sultan and other small communities. Brochures should highlight the enforcement of driving laws on Highway 2. The US2 Safety Coalition is a potential candidate for developing and producing these brochures, but would require funding.

Potential Partners:

Debbie Coppel, Sultan Chamber of Commerce: (360) 793-0983
Fred Walser, US2 Safety Coalition Chair: (425) 356-7720

Recommendations for Snohomish Board of Health

- Facilitate cooperation between the US2 Safety Coalition and Chambers of Commerce for restaurants and lodging accommodations serving recreationalists, as well as the Stevens Pass ski resort. The aim of this cooperation is to make the safety brochures described above available where recreationalists play, eat, and stay overnight.
- Recommend the addition of a note on the Stevens Pass ski resort website that encourages safe driving facilitated by the US2 Safety Coalition and if necessary, the Washington Traffic Safety Commission.

Potential Partners:

Fred Walser, US2 Safety Coalition Chair: (425) 356-7720
Washington Traffic Safety Commission: (360) 753-6197
Marketing Department, Stevens Pass: (206) 812-4510, ext. 4255

Sources:

Coppel, D. (December 9, 2009). Personal Communication. Sultan, WA.

Transportation Research Board of the National Academies. (2007). Research Results Digest 322. Washington D.C.: National Academy of Sciences.

CONCERN: Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety

Pedestrians and bike riders are unsafe when walking along and crossing Highway 2. Pedestrian and bicycle collisions are one of the three most common collision types on Highway 2 in Sultan as reported in the US2 Traffic Safety Corridor Collision Data. The homeless population in Sultan is especially vulnerable.

Objective 1: Improve the visibility of pedestrians in the 5th Street crosswalk.

Recommendation for Sultan City Council

- Advocate for creation of a crossing island and advance stop lines.
- Repaint crosswalk with high visibility paint.
- Install bright orange crossing flags.
- Increase length of time of walk signal.

Objective 2: Educate pedestrians and motorists about pedestrian and bicycle safety.

Recommendation for Sultan City Council

- Install signs that warn motorists about pedestrian crossings and the need to share the road with bicyclists.

Objective 3: Ensure that the needs of people who are homeless in Sultan are considered by Highway 2 safety initiatives.

Recommendation for Sultan City Council

- Advocate for a position for a social service agency representative in the US2 Safety Coalition. Having a liaison can ensure that any future highway advocacy can include the needs of the homeless.

Potential Partners:

Dave Wood, Volunteers of America: (360) 793-2400

Sources:

Wood, D. (December 3, 2009). Personal Communication. Sultan, WA.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center and the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals. (2009). PBIC Case Study Compendium. Retrieved December 7, 2009, from http://www.walkinginfo.org/case_studies/

Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center. (2009). Engineering Examples and Case Studies. Retrieved December 7, 2009, from <http://www.walkinginfo.org/engineering/case-studies.cfm>

Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center. (2009). Crossing Enhancements. Retrieved December 7, 2009, from <http://www.walkinginfo.org/engineering/crossings-enhancements.cfm>

CONCLUSION: Motor vehicle safety on US Highway 2 has long been a public health concern. Our conversations with Sultan residents made it clear that most people are keenly aware of the problem – they just aren't sure how to solve it. Restoring a sense of safety to the community will require improvements in highway engineering, efforts from law enforcement agencies, and targeted educational programs. Given current financial restrictions, engineering and enforcement solutions should be pursued in collaboration with organizations such as the US2 Safety Coalition. However, the City of Sultan is well equipped to implement low cost educational programs that could improve safety on Highway 2.

This report has identified areas of concern where the Snohomish Health District and the Sultan City Council could have an impact on traffic safety. We have outlined low-cost opportunities to address driving under the influence, speeding and lack of seatbelt use, the need to target young drivers and recreation seekers, and pedestrian and bicycle safety. The Snohomish Health District and Sultan City Council have different jurisdictions and areas of expertise. This will increase their potential to influence behavior if a concerted effort is made to improve safety along Highway 2. We look forward to a future when Highway 2 is both functional and safe, when it ceases to govern individual choices and instead increases opportunities available in Sultan.

APPENDIX 1: Individuals interviewed by COPHP students while researching highway safety in Sultan, Washington from November 24 through December 9, 2009.

Dr. Gary Goldbaum, Health Officer, Snohomish Health District Health Department, Everett, WA

Carolyn Eslick, Mayor, Sultan, WA

Jim Flower, Sultan City Council Member, Sultan, WA

Employee of Summit Rehabilitation L.L.C., Sultan, WA

Employees and customer at Hoot Owl Mini Mart, Sultan, WA

Linda Monroe, Sultan High School Counseling Office, Sultan, WA

Lizzie Monroe, Senior, Sultan High School, Sultan, WA

Cal Johnson, Principal, Sultan High School, Sultan, WA

Members of the US2 Safety Coalition, Monroe, WA

Fred Walser, Chair US 2 Safety Coalition, Retired Washing State Patrol, Monroe, WA

Washington State Liquor Control Board

Karen Robern, Owner, Sultan Liquor and Convenience, Sultan, WA

Bar tender, Sky Valley Eagles Club, Monroe, WA

Administrative Assistant, Sky River Mead, Sultan, WA

Donetta Walser, Mayor of Monroe, Monroe, WA

Debbie Allen, Sultan Chamber of Commerce, Sultan, WA

Debbie Coppel, Sultan Visitor Information, Sultan, WA

Dave Wood, Program Director, Volunteers of America, Sultan, WA

Jackie Personeous, Manager, Sultan Library Branch, Sultan, WA

Timothy Dick, Washington State Patrol Officer, Sultan, WA

Chris Shroy, Firefighter, EMT-I Snohomish County Fire District 5, Marysville, WA