

WSDOT's Corridor Sketch Initiative is a collaborative planning process with agency partners to identify performance gaps and select high-level strategies to address them on the 304 corridors statewide. This Corridor Sketch Summary acts as an executive summary for one corridor. Please review the User Guide for Corridor Sketch Summaries prior to using information on this corridor:

*SR 546/SR 9: SR 546/SR 539 Jct to SR 9 to Canadian Border*

This 12-mile east-west corridor is located in northern Whatcom County between Lynden and the Canadian border crossing in Sumas, approximately 12 miles north of Bellingham. The corridor consists of State Route 546 and a portion of SR 9 between the junction with SR 546 and the U.S.-Canadian border at Sumas including the SR 9 Spur truck crossing access. The character of the area around the corridor is chiefly rural with agriculture and rural residential being the most common land uses. In addition, Nooksack Valley High school is located directly on the corridor in this rural area. The character of the corridor near Lynden and Sumas, supports suburban development with denser residential and commercial uses. There is also some industrial use in Sumas, supported by a freight rail line that crosses the U.S.-Canada border. The surrounding terrain is generally flat with a view of Mount Baker on clear days.



**Current Function**

SR 546 is an east-west connecting route between SR 539 and SR 9, which have border crossings into Canada. SR 9 is a north-south route connecting the northeast Seattle metro area and the U.S.-Canada border and also serves as an alternate route to Interstate 5. The corridor supports the movement of people and goods in northern Whatcom County to the Canadian border by providing access to the Sumas/Huntingdon crossing into British Columbia, and a connection between SR 539 and SR 9 and to the nearby Lynden/Aldergrove crossing via SR 539. The corridor is a primary freight route to the Sumas/Huntingdon border crossing, a 24-hour passenger and commercial vehicle crossing. The Port of Entry there is the second busiest pedestrian crossing (serving more than 46,000 crossings a year), fifth busiest passenger crossing, and eighth busiest commercial crossing on the entire U.S.-Canada border, with \$6 million in trade crossing each day. Traffic generators include services in Lynden, the border crossings, and recreational opportunities in the north Cascades and Canada. The Lynden Airport is located south of the corridor. Whatcom transit provides infrequent bus service to Sumas on SR 9.

**Future Function**

Based on the projected population, land use, and economic trends, the future function of this corridor is expected to remain the same. Industrial development in the city of Lynden is expected to expand and increase freight demand.

## Highlights and Performance

SR 546 and SR 9 are two-lane, undivided highways with right turn only lanes at intersections along the corridor as well as three roundabouts in Lynden. The annual average daily traffic along this corridor is highest at the SR 539 intersection northwest of the city of Lynden and lowest on the SR 9 spur at the Sumas border crossing.

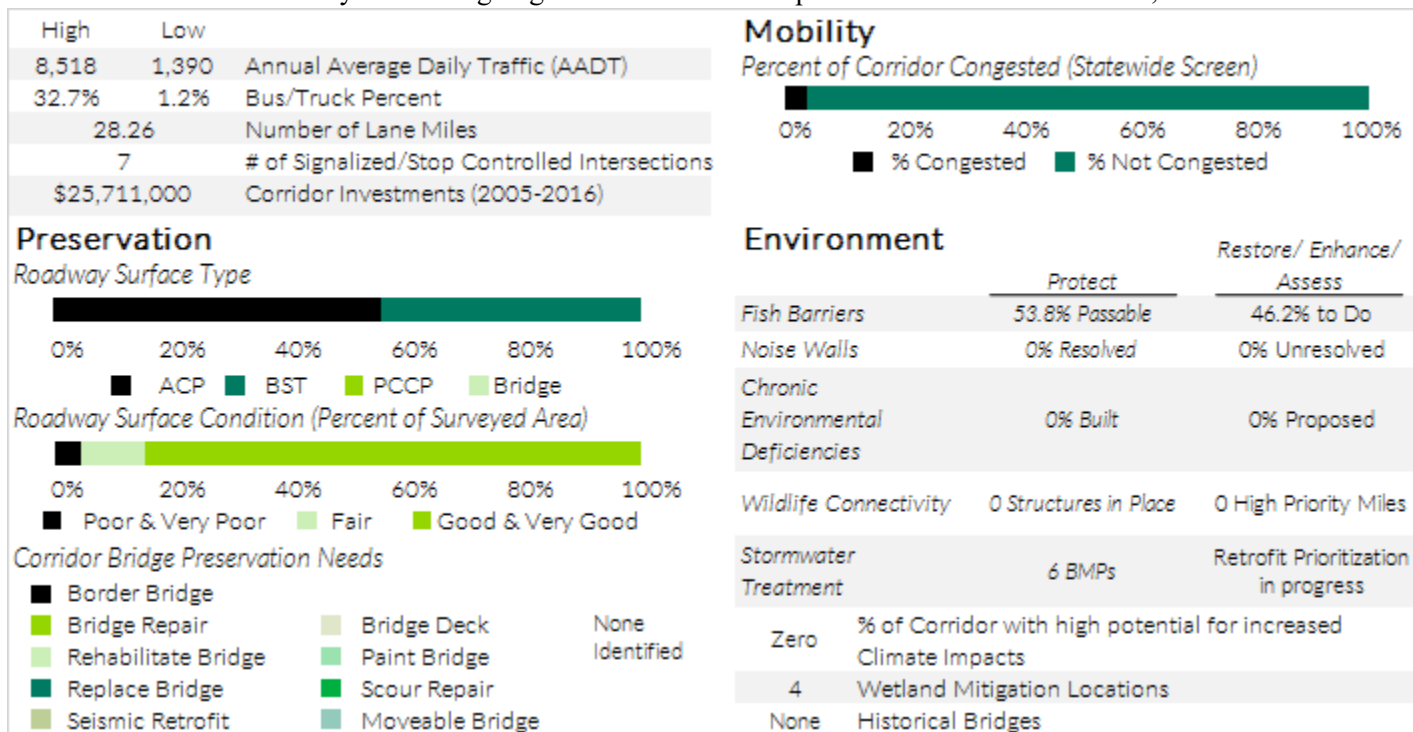
### What's working well?

- Roughly 95% of surveyed pavements on the corridor are in fair or better condition.
- The new alignment on SR 9 between Garrison Road and Morgan Road is working well.
- The NEXUS lane at the border crossing is well used, reducing queues and supporting increased activity.
- An Intelligent Transportation Systems sign in Sumas diverts truck traffic during congested periods to free up space for passenger vehicles reducing queues.
- WSDOT uses Advanced Traveler Information systems to help travelers choose a route and reduce queues at border crossings.
- WSDOT installed roundabouts at Depot, Bender, and Northwood roads which have relieved congestion and improved access and safety.

### What needs to change?

- About 4% of this corridor experiences congestion on a regular basis.
- Left turn acceleration and right turn deceleration challenges are present on the rural portions of the corridor.
- Gaps in local pedestrian facilities impede circulation and reduce access for community and cross border travelers.
- Long queues develop at the border crossing in Sumas that prevent access to local streets.

WSDOT monitors the state system in ongoing efforts to track asset performance. For this corridor, WSDOT finds:



1) 2015 data unless otherwise noted. 2) For more information see the User Guide for Corridor Sketch Summaries at <http://bit.ly/WSDOTcorridorsketch>

### What we heard from our partners

WSDOT collected feedback from agency partners. Key themes included:

- Concern over the border patrol needing to take the street in the wrong direction to access facility.
- Concern over freight needs such as parking, identifying truck bottlenecks, and access to services.
- The city of Sumas has expressed concerns about the bottleneck of the Johnson Creek bridge hindering ability to expand the roadway.
- Interest in operational solutions to improve access and efficiency of border crossings such as variable message signs that explain conditions, or delineate lane usage.

## Strategies

WSDOT identified the following strategies and associated actions to keep the corridor working well and address performance gaps. Regional partners collaborated on high-level mobility strategies. The identified strategies are not meant to be all-inclusive, nor an established list of priorities. Further evaluation is needed before any strategy can be recommended as a solution to address performance. Project funding decisions will take place at the programming phase, and are subject to statewide prioritization. For more strategy information, visit the Corridor Sketch Summary User Guide.

### Policy Goals / Strategies Description and Near-Term Actions

#### **Economic Vitality**

Under Development	<i>WSDOT will continue to work with partners in developing strategies to address economic vitality.</i>
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#### **Environment**

Protect and Maintain	<i>Protect and maintain existing assets that provide environmental function (these include WSDOT's mitigation sites, storm water systems, fish passable culverts).</i>
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Enhance or Restore	<i>Enhance or restore natural areas and environmental functions associated with the multimodal transportation system.</i>
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Fish Barrier Retrofit	<i>WSDOT has prioritized the removal of state-owned culverts that block habitat for salmon and steelhead. See interactive map of uncorrected fish barriers at <a href="http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/FishPassage/default.htm">http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/FishPassage/default.htm</a>.</i>
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#### **Mobility**

Assessment	<i>Further information about the proposed strategies can be found attached at the end of this document.</i>
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#### **Preservation**

Maintenance	<i>Based on expenditure history, it is expected that the top three activities will continue to be maintenance on snow and ice control, rest areas, and pavement repair.</i>
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Pavement	<i>WSDOT has identified one Pavement action in the next six years encompassing 45% of the corridor.</i>
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Structures	<i>WSDOT has identified two Structures actions in the next six years at specific locations within this corridor.</i>
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#### **Stewardship**

Planning	<i>Under Practical Solutions, the Corridor Sketch Initiative identifies corridor performance, and assesses alternative strategies to improve the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of the transportation system.</i>
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This corridor is one of five border crossings between Washington State and Canada, this crossing accommodates passenger vehicles, commercial freight, and pedestrian and bicycle movement. This border crossing has the second highest concentration of pedestrian and bicycle movements across the U.S.-Canada border.

Heavy freight movement can cause congestion restricting road capacity and blocking access to local streets and business. There are limited facilities for bicycle and pedestrian circulation across the border.

### Corridor Segment Characteristics

- This segment of SR 9 runs from the city limits of Sumas to the U.S.-Canada border.
- The speed limit is 25 mph.
- Average daily traffic was 6,864 vehicles in 2015. Freight accounted for 48% of traffic.
- The SR 9 Spur, is a truck crossing with 32.7% of traffic comprised of heavy trucks.
- The SR 9 Spur has narrow shoulders for truck parking which takes up a portion of travel lanes.
- Second busiest pedestrian border crossing between the U.S. and Canada.
- There are no bicycle facilities and limited pedestrian facilities connecting across the border.
- This corridor segment splits downtown Sumas.
- The bridge that crosses over Johnson Creek is narrow.
- Transit service available on the corridor.

### Contributing Factors

- Security and inspection processes at the border impact throughput resulting in long queues.
- Poor pedestrian and bicycle circulation across border result in poor connections between communities.
- Heavy commercial freight crossing border affects local mobility.
- Lack of storage for border traffic results in vehicles parking along the corridor and local streets.
- Queues at border crossing develop that impact local traffic circulation.

### Mobility Strategies: Operational Improvements

- Monitor queues as they develop and use dynamic active traffic management tools to alert travelers and reduce potential backups.
- Provide traveler information to drivers on roadway conditions to reduce local access conflicts and manage congestion.

### Demand Management

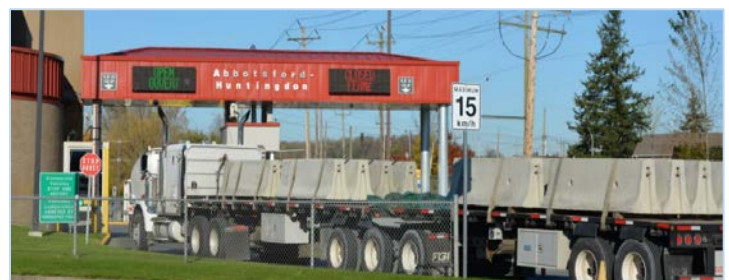
- Improve pedestrian facilities, signage, and circulation to accommodate walking and biking.
- Designate strategic bicycle facilities that connect on both sides of the border to increase bicycle accessibility on the corridor.

### Policy Change

- Work to leverage funding for mutually beneficial improvements on local and state system.
- Coordinate with agencies on linking border inspection operations with transportation system to facilitate efficient and effective operations.



Sumas Border facility



Truck Crossing Sumas Border

## For more information

To find out more information about this corridor or how to get involved, please contact:

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Washington State Department of Transportation's Corridor Sketch Initiative is a set of planning activities that engage our partners to define the context and performance information for all of the state's 304 highway corridors. The Corridor Sketch complements and supports regional planning processes in Washington. It is not intended to duplicate, substitute or compete with other planning efforts; nor is it intended to generate lists of projects.

Under 23 U.S. Code § 148 and 23 U.S. Code § 409, safety data, reports, surveys, schedules, lists compiled or collected for the purpose of identifying, evaluating, or planning the safety enhancement of potential crash sites, hazardous roadway conditions, or railway-highway crossings are not subject to discovery or admitted into evidence in a Federal or State court proceeding or considered for other purposes in any action for damages arising from any occurrence at a location mentioned or addressed in such reports, surveys, schedules, lists, or data.

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