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## Transportation Fund – Frequently Asked Questions

July 13, 2020

### What is the Transportation Fund?

The Transportation Fund (TF) is specifically for transportation improvement projects in Bellingham and is derived from a two-tenths of one percent (2/10ths of 1%) sales tax on all consumer goods purchased within the city limits of Bellingham. As an example: 20 cents in TF sales tax is added for every \$100 purchase and over the course of a year, this Transportation Fund sales tax can generate over \$5 million dollars. Since it was first approved by voters ten years ago, the Transportation Fund has provided funding for street resurfacing for vehicles and cyclists; upgrades to existing curb ramps, sidewalks, crosswalks, and bus stops to federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards; building new sidewalks and bicycle lanes; supporting WTA transit bus service; and for technology to help support the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from transportation, such as electric vehicle charging stations. If approved by voters, the extension of this sales tax would fund projects designated in the City Council-approved [Transportation Improvement Program \(TIP\)](#) -both new projects and continued work.

### Who pays this sales tax?

We all do, whenever we buy food or products in Bellingham. The Transportation Fund is a sales tax, which means that anyone who purchases consumer goods sold in Bellingham is contributing a very small amount to the Transportation Fund. This sales tax applies to out of town visitors from Whatcom County and Canada, who spend a great deal of money every day in Bellingham, which is the regional center for employment, shopping, medical services, education, and entertainment. The Transportation Fund is also paid for by many different types of users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and vehicle drivers alike because everyone buys consumer goods and contributes to the Transportation Fund.

### Who benefits from this tax?

Everyone who moves through Bellingham – now and into the future – will benefit from the Transportation Fund, no matter how they travel. That’s because the Transportation Fund is used to resurface streets for vehicles and cyclists; upgrade existing curb ramps, sidewalks, crosswalks, and bus stops to federal Americans with Disabilities (ADA) standards for people walking or using wheelchairs; build new sidewalks and bicycle lanes; support WTA transit bus service; and for technology to help support the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from transportation, such as electric vehicle charging stations.

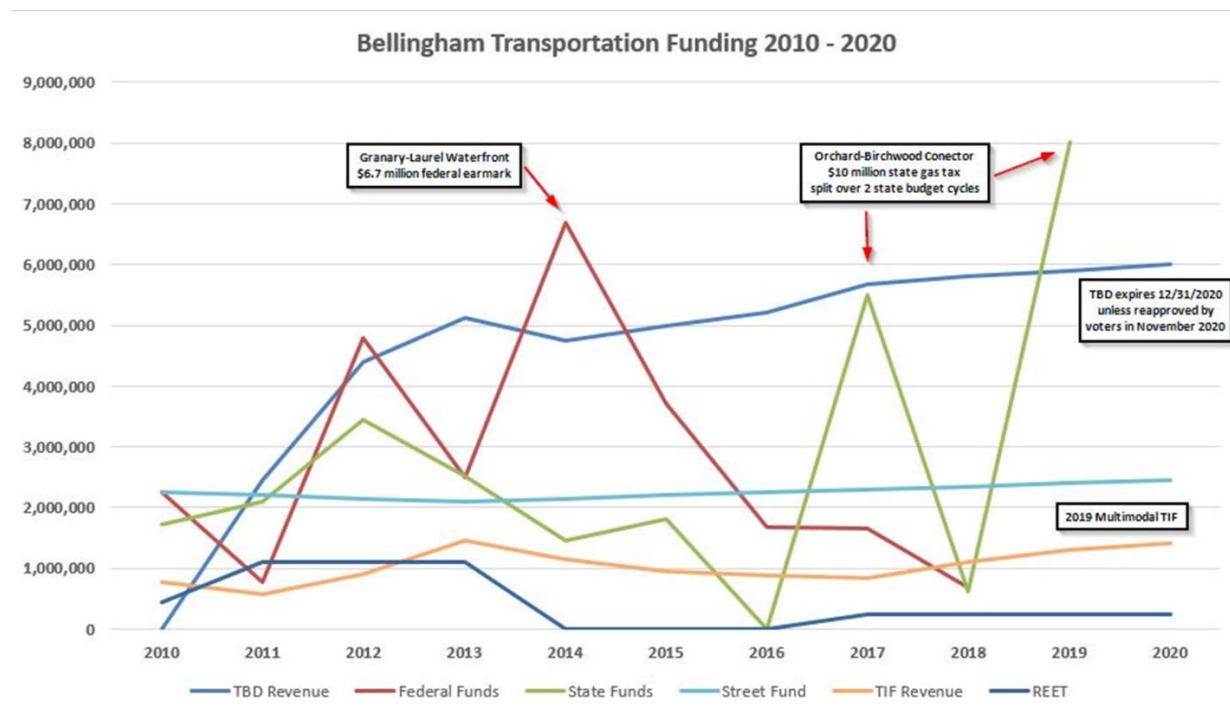
### If voters approve the tax, will my shopping bills increase?

No, because it is a renewal of the existing transportation sales tax that has funded extensive vehicle, bike, pedestrian and transit projects over the past 10 years. You will not see an increase in the cost of your purchases. In addition, this tax is shared with visitors and others who make purchases in Bellingham, and also use the streets, sidewalks and bike lanes. This means that Bellingham residents

enjoy the benefits of a safer and more comfortable transportation system while being able to share the cost with those from out of town.

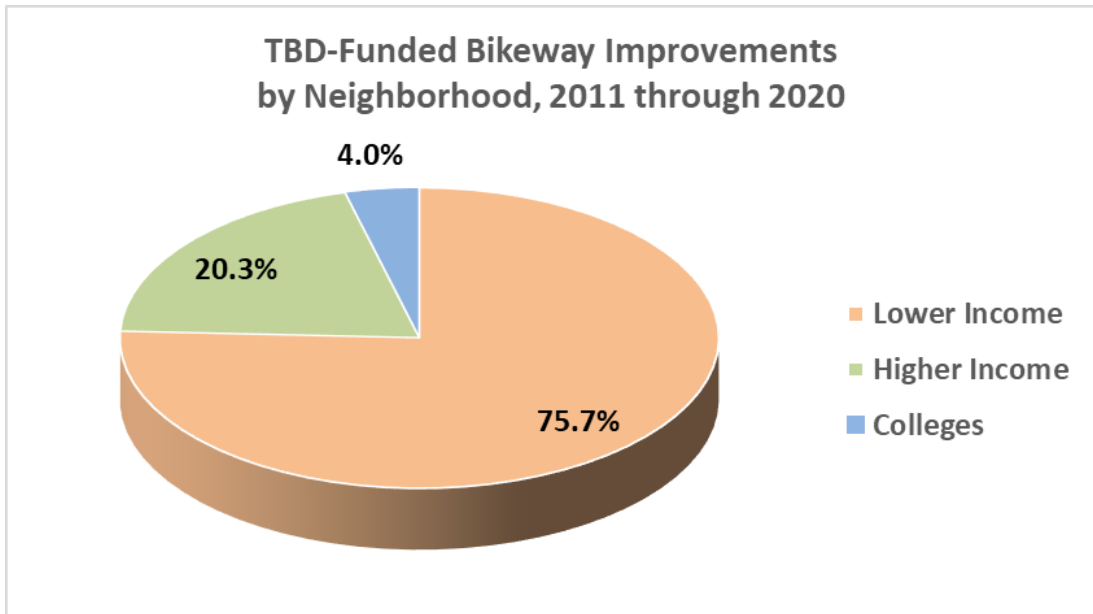
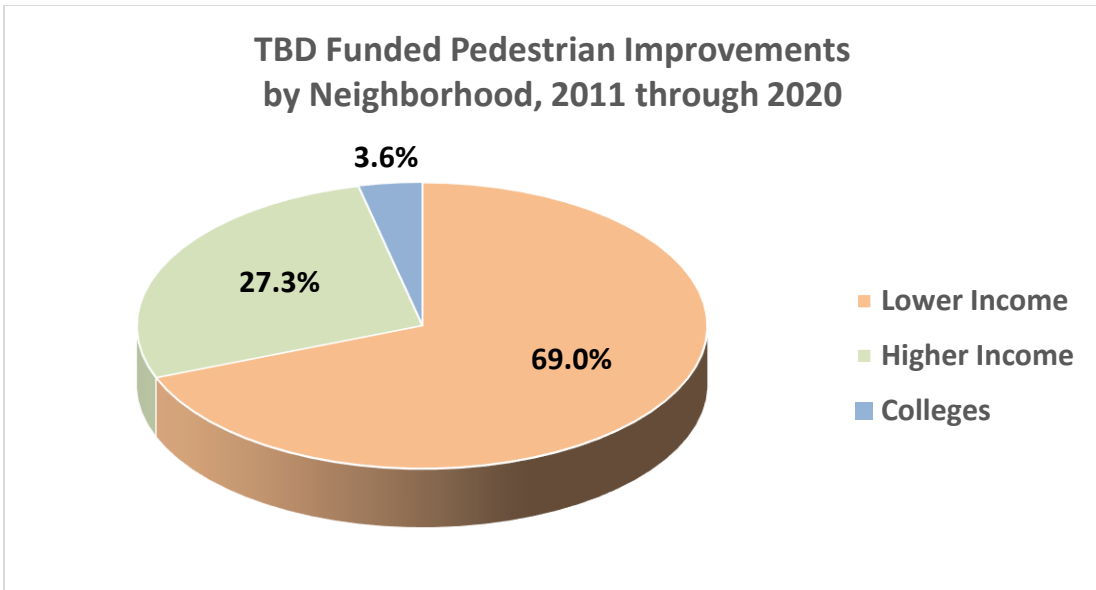
### What happens if the Transportation Fund sales tax is not renewed?

If the sales tax to fund transportation improvements is not renewed, then the progress made to provide safer mobility citywide will be significantly decreased. Without the Transportation Fund, there would be no dedicated funding source for resurfacing streets, building sidewalks, crosswalks, and bike lanes, or for WTA transit expansion and reduction of transportation generated greenhouse gas emissions. The City would have to rely on very limited local transportation funding and increasingly competitive and inconsistent grant funding, fewer improvements would be made each year, and bigger projects would take far longer to find funding for. For example, one undesirable outcome would mean that for people pushing children in strollers and people using wheelchairs, it would take longer for curbs and sidewalks to be improved for accessibility.



### How is this funding used to reduce social and economic inequities in our community?

The Transportation Fund, originally the Transportation Benefit District, was approved in November 2010 and funding became available in 2011. Among the first things funded were creation of both [the 2012 Pedestrian Master Plan](#) and the [2014 Bicycle Master Plan](#), both of which heavily emphasized transportation needs in low-income neighborhoods and transit dependency. The prioritized project lists in these plans are heavily weighted to favor sidewalks and bicycle improvements in low-income neighborhoods and Transportation Fund projects have overwhelmingly been in low-income neighborhoods. Since 2010, 69% of Transportation Fund pedestrian improvement projects and over 75% of bicycle improvement projects have been in low- to moderate-income neighborhoods in Bellingham.



How are decisions made about where and what projects are completed with these funds?

Transportation Fund resurfacing projects are primarily based on pavement ratings and repair needs for under-street sewer, water, storm water utilities, as well as implementing the city’s Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans. Public Works always works to maximize transportation benefit, while minimizing cost to taxpayers, when street construction is planned and funded.

Transportation Fund non-motorized projects are based on a combination of factors, such as:

- Documented transportation improvement needs (safety, collisions, connectivity, congestion, growth);
- High priority in adopted City Comprehensive Plan and Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans;

- Competitive grant funding candidates;
- Public-Private Partnerships (Whatcom Transportation Authority, Western Washington University, Whatcom Community College, Bellingham Technical College, Bellingham School District, Whatcom County, private);
- Fast-growing parts of city and economic development; and
- Local knowledge and professional transportation planning judgement.

### How does removing traffic lanes for bicycle-only use improve traffic flow?

The City of Bellingham has a long history of improving streets so that all users are provided access for safe and comfortable use. Generally, this philosophy is known as “Complete Streets,” but Bellingham has taken this to the next level with its “Complete Networks” program, which focuses on connected and complete networks for each transportation mode. On some streets, there is plenty of room for all users, but on others there is not. That means that compromises must be made on how much physical space is devoted to each transportation mode.



Multi-lane roads can be less safe than single lane roads because multiple lanes invite speeding, lane weaving, passing, turning conflicts and have higher collision rates - all of which make the street feel less comfortable for those walking, biking, and getting to transit bus stops. Bellingham has changed several streets to balance the amount of physical space for user groups, sometimes by removing a vehicle lane or parking lane to gain the physical space necessary to install bicycle lanes. The City only does this after a study has been completed to demonstrate that there will not be significant impacts to the transportation system. These changes make our streets safer and more comfortable for all users, including vehicle drivers.