



NEWS from U.S. Senator

PATTY MURRAY

Washington State

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Murray Press

Office

June 24, 2009

(202) 224-2834

Senator Murray Announces Release of \$2.6 Million for Tri-Cities-Walla Walla Highway Safety Improvements

Funding will support upgrades to U.S. 12 from Tri-Cities to Walla Walla

(Washington, D.C.) – Today, U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) announced that \$2,667,600 has been released by the U.S. Department of Transportation to upgrade the US 12 corridor from the Tri-Cities to Walla Walla. Senator Murray secured funding for this project in the 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, which provides funding for most federal government programs and targeted community projects for Fiscal Year 2009. *“This investment is a big win for Walla Walla as we work to fix one of the most dangerous stretches of road in our state and preserve construction jobs in the area,”* said **Senator Patty Murray**. *“Investing in our transportation infrastructure is one of the best ways to help our communities, create jobs, and boost the economy.”* *“Senator Murray has been instrumental in securing federal funding to develop a four-lane divided highway between Walla Walla and the Tri-Cities,”* said **Jim Kuntz, Executive Director of the Port of Walla Walla and member of the US Highway 12 Coalition**. *“She clearly understands safety will be greatly enhanced and lives saved as the existing dangerous two-lane highway gets expanded to four lanes. We are very fortunate to have Senator Murray champion this project.”*

This project is the fifth of six construction phases on the corridor improvement that will upgrade the U.S.12 corridor from the Tri-Cities to Walla Walla. Expanding U.S. 12 from two lanes to a four-lane, divided highway is critical for improving safety, fostering economic development throughout southeast Washington, and addressing growing congestion.

Expanding US 12 from two lanes to a four-lane divided highway from Burbank to Walla Walla is critical for improving safety, fostering regional economic development, and addressing growing congestion. Environmental documentation for the project will be complete in 2009. Design is planned to be complete in 2011.

This project will limit access to the highway, reducing the estimated 114 access points (intersections and approaches) on this stretch of highway. WSDOT will construct a median between the opposing lanes, to reduce head-on accidents. Other safety improvements include flattening slopes, realigning the roadway to current design

standards, and providing new and updated barrier where needed. Previous widening projects in this corridor have so far reduced total injury accidents by over 13 percent.

The new alignment for US 12 avoids environmentally sensitive areas, including the McNary Wildlife Refuge, Madame Dorian Park, and other Native American cultural/archeological sites.

As the Chairman of the Transportation and Housing Appropriations Subcommittee overseeing funding for the Department of Transportation, Senator Murray worked to ensure that investments in transportation were included in the 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Bill.

###

--

Eli Zupnick
Deputy Press Secretary
U.S. Senator Patty Murray
202-224-2834
eli_zupnick@murray.senate.gov
<http://murray.senate.gov/>