



OP-ED

Arlington setting plan to invest \$168 million in transportation improvements in next six years

Mayor Barb Tolbert

It's no secret that traffic congestion is a major issue that affects the quality of life for Arlingtonians. As infrastructure investments seemed challenged at every level of government, Federal, State, County and local, we are taking a different approach to planning transportation improvements.

Each year the City of Arlington is required to review its plan for investing in transportation improvements in the next six years, including tackling congested areas, adding new roadways, and enhancing amenities for pedestrians and cyclists. This document, called the City's Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), is required to be updated annually with realistic expectations of what can be accomplished with available funding.

This year we approached the update of our TIP by looking at the plan holistically over a 20-year horizon, overlaying where growth and development is likely to occur or occurring, targeting traffic issues, installing sidewalks and trails, and continuing our plan to repair and repave roadways that are in need.

This new plan identifies over \$168 million in transportation improvements to be completed in the next six years. Our investments over the next six years will primarily address our most challenging corridors in Smokey Point, Island Crossing, Kent Prairie, and the area surrounding the Airport.

In Smokey Point, our plan includes projects that address congestion. The widening of SR-531 (172nd St NE) from 43rd Avenue NE to 67th Avenue NE is currently under design by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). This project is fully funded and construction is set to begin in 2021. In our plan, we have also included a project to expand SR-531 between 67th Avenue NE and SR-9 in partnership with WSDOT and Snohomish County. Also under way are projects to complete secondary access roads on 40th Avenue NE, 169th Street NE, and 173rd Avenue NE to provide alternative roadways to 172nd Street NE to address congestion and increase access in Smokey Point. These projects are being constructed by the developments occurring in the immediate area as part of their requirements to address impacts to the transportation system. The City will also complete a corridor study of Smokey Point Boulevard between 174th Street NE and 188th Street NE. This study will determine the best way to move traffic on Smokey Point Boulevard and through the neighborhoods in the immediate area, determining the appropriate number of travel lanes for all modes of transportation and addressing safety issues.

In Island Crossing, we are working in partnership with WSDOT, Snohomish County, and the Stillaguamish Tribe to construct a new roundabout on SR-530 to the east of Smokey Point Boulevard. The City has installed a temporary signal on the west end of Smokey Point Boulevard and SR-530 to make the intersection safer while a more permanent solution for the entire corridor, including intersections at 59th Avenue NE and 211th Place NE, can be designed and funded.

In the Kent Prairie area, we will be constructing a new roundabout on 204th Street NE at 77th Avenue NE to address significant safety and mobility issues. This project is fully funded and will be constructed in

2020. We have also designed a new signal for the intersection of 204th Street NE and 74th Avenue NE to address significant safety and mobility issues that is awaiting funding.

Near the airport, we are increasing mobility for pedestrians and cyclists, with the installation of new sidewalks to connect the Boys and Girls Club and adjacent parks with the 188th St NE trail, the Centennial Trail, and the Airport Trail. To the east of the airport, developers are also adding a new roadway to help reduce traffic on 59th Avenue NE and 172nd Street NE.

In total, the city has 48 projects programmed to complete within the next six years, and over 70 projects planned for the next 20-year horizon. These projects will be reviewed annually and adjustments to the priority projects will be made when necessary.

Our challenge will continue to be that we are surrounded on all four sides by State owned roadways; we will need to work directly with WSDOT and the state legislature to ensure the roads that lead to Arlington are addressed in both our plan and theirs. This is the work I do for you in Olympia each year, tirelessly advocating for a portion of our tax revenues to come back to the community in infrastructure investment. I have already begun meeting with high level WSDOT officials and our 39th District legislators.

You can help by reviewing the City's six year TIP and our 20-year plan on our [website](#) and provide input. The City Council will be reviewing the TIP at its October 14 workshop and will hold a public hearing on the list at the October 21 meeting. If you have any questions regarding the six-year TIP or our plan for transportation improvements over the next 20 years, I encourage you to come to these meetings or contact me.