

Lacey road money awaits OK

Bill would pay for upgrades to I-5 corridor

CHRISTIAN HILL
THE OLYMPIAN

LACEY — The city is close to securing \$500,000 in federal funding for a study that's key to upgrading the Interstate 5/Marvin Road interchange.

U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., included the funding in a transportation and housing spending bill that awaits Senate approval.

The study, which is under way, examines traffic volumes on the I-5 corridor from the Sleater-Kinney Road interchange to Nisqually. It will offer recommendations for improvements to the corridor and local roads if it determines the stretch of freeway will become too congested with projected traffic growth.

A likely recommendation is an upgrade of the I-5/Marvin Road interchange at an estimated cost of \$17.6 million. State and federal officials would need to sign off on improvements before moving forward.

Use of the interchange's five ramps has increased 18 percent to 33 percent from 2003 to 2006, according to estimates from the state Department of Transportation. The northbound offramp splits to take drivers to Marvin Road or Quinault Drive.

Residential and commercial development in Hawks Prairie and construction of new homes in Yelm have driven that growth in vehicle traffic. Marvin Road is a segment of state Route 510, a primary route into Yelm, where drivers then can continue to Mount Rainier National Park.

The interchange likely will see heavier use in November, when Cabela's is scheduled to open a 185,000-square-foot retail showroom in Hawks Prairie. The showroom will anchor a proposed 400-acre mixed-use urban center called Lacey Gateway. It is expected to draw millions of visitors each year.

The upgrade would transform the interchange similar to the U.S. Highway 101 interchange at Black Lake Boulevard in west Olympia, except the traffic signals would be on the overpass instead of under it.

Clarkson and City Manager Greg Cuoio had lobbied Murray for \$1.5 million, the total estimated cost of the study, preliminary design work and environmental review on recommended projects.

The city will spend about \$400,000 of its own money for the study.

The funding was a small portion of the \$173.5 million that Murray announced this week she had added to the spending bill for transportation, housing and community-development projects statewide for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1.

Murray is the chairwoman of the Senate Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Subcommittee. With Senate approval, negotiators will need to reconcile differences in the House version of the bill, and President Bush must sign it.
