

Whatcom County Press Release

05/18/11, 4:45 p.m. *DE*

The Lummi Nation and Whatcom County have achieved tentative agreement on essential terms of a 35-year lease agreement that will permit the continued operation of the Lummi Island Ferry across lands owned by the Lummi Nation. Attorneys from the two negotiation teams are currently drafting the language of a final agreement for consideration and approval by their respective councils. The process for adoption by the County Council provides for public review and comment prior to final action.

The primary components of the agreement provide for continuation of the current lease payment of \$200,000 per year with periodic adjustments (required by the Bureau of Indian Affairs) based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), and for County road and traffic safety improvements in phases at key locations along the route across the Lummi Indian Reservation used by ferry commuters. In addition to several low cost traffic safety improvements that would be implemented in the very near future, the County commitment for the long-term improvements totals \$6 million. This County commitment will be used by the parties to leverage grants or other funds from non-County sources to secure the funding needed to construct the priority transportation improvements.

The amount to be spent from the County road fund for these improvements during the term of the lease falls within the amount of road fund tax revenue collected from within the boundaries of the Lummi Reservation, and will provide the Lummi Nation with both the certainty that traffic concerns of particular urgency will be addressed and the certainty of a schedule for timely construction of the safety improvements.