

Regularly scheduled opportunity to discuss all things PW – due to the earlier discussion in finance, I will only be providing you with highlights. I have sent you the full 12-page detailed update if you want to dive deeper.

Today's report:

1. Message: Mr. Brandon Gipson
2. Brief update on Division highlights
3. Road Fund Cash Flow Presentation (provided in the Finance Committee)
4. Questions

1. *Message: Brandon Gipson*

The January 28th update was provided in document form only due to the fatal accident and loss of employee.

In Memory of Brandon Gipson

Born: January 16, 1983

Passed: January 28, 2025

Hired by Whatcom County: October 31, 2021

Promoted to Senior RMW: November 10, 2024

Total Service to Whatcom County: 3 years, 2 months, 29 days

Brandon grew up in California and dedicated over a decade of his life to serving his country, spending 10 years in the U.S. Marine Corps—much of it overseas—and later serving stateside in the U.S. Army.

He began working with Whatcom County Public Works in 2021 and quickly found a sense of belonging. According to family friend Andrea Frakes, “When he started there, he found his home. He loved his co-workers. Even on rough days, he and the crew could always laugh and enjoy the moment. He was known for his sense of humor and his willingness to take on the toughest jobs. His co-workers weren’t just colleagues—they were his friends. He cherished time with them both on and off the job site.”

Brandon’s dedication and spirit left a lasting impact on the department and the community. During a council meeting held after the tragic accident, County Executive Satpal Sidhu and Councilmember Mark Stremmer both spoke warmly of Brandon and his contributions.

This has been one of the most difficult times for the Pwks team. Through it all, staff have shown resilience, compassion, and unwavering support for one another as they navigate this profound loss.

thank you to council, executive's office & HR, as well as the sheriff's office and emergency management for the immediate support.

In Brandon's honor, the Central Shop is organizing the procurement and installation of a memorial bench to be dedicated this summer. The date will be announced once the bench and plaque are finalized.

2. Division Updates/Highlights

River and Flood

- Flood Preparedness:
 - Consultant working on editing draft Substantial Damage Response Plan as required by the NFIP Community Rating System
- Flood Planning:
 - The FLIP steering committee worked with the small Cities and agricultural representatives to:
 - Develop potential flood mitigation scenarios for Everson-Sumas overflow corridor and secure funding for a feasibility study that will define the scope and resources needed
 - Conduct technical studies to evaluate the impacts of potential mitigation options on sediment transport and create an understanding of potential flood impacts to downstream areas
 - Conducted workshop focused on flood mitigation and growth in the City of Sumas and secured funding to advance concepts that came out of the workshop
 - Nooksack Transboundary Flood Initiative. Continued work with Canadian counterparts on transboundary modeling and flood control and habitat goals.
- Mitigation:
 - Acquisitions: Acquired Lautenbach easement (Commerce Grant) and Browning property (FEMA HMGP 4481 Grant) in April. Ongoing purchase process/negotiations for Sager, Campau, and Rogge properties. 1 easement acquired Rogge Acme Woody Revetment. Awarded demolition bid for 6 properties.
 - Elevations: Executed contracts with a new consultant and a local recovery group to assist homeowners with elevations. Held a workshop for homeowners and contractors in January to begin implementation of the elevations. We anticipate

at least 3 properties to begin elevation by early summer with others lining up behind them.

- Capital Program:
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 - Hudson Road Bridge Replacement project advertised for engineering consultant proposals
 - Dahlberg Advanced Wetland Mitigation project in contract negotiations with GeoEngineers
 - Nearing 60% design for the Ferndale Levee Improvement project

Natural Resources

- Fish Passage Program
 - Design:
 - Continued work with the consultant design team and salmon co-managers conducting site assessment, alternatives analysis, and preparation of preliminary designs for 5-6 fish barriers in the Black Slough area of the South Fork Valley. Phase 2 will entail final design for a subset of sites and will be completed by the end of 2025. This will position PW to apply for construction grants.
 - Advertised an RFQ, held interviews and began negotiating scope and fee for selected consultant team. Once under contract, the consultant will prepare preliminary designs and cost estimates for 11 passage corrections located throughout the County. This will position PW to apply for final design and construction grants.
 - Construction program:
 - Kenney Creek at North Fork Road fish barrier removal project contract awarded with construction scheduled to start in early June. Access to over 4 miles of salmon habitat will be restored while safety to the traveling public will be improved and long-term maintenance expenses will be reduced. The project is coordinated with NSEA instream wood placement upstream of the PW project area and with Whatcom Land Trust riparian restoration work on adjacent properties.
 - Cougar Creek floodgate and instream wood placement project is scheduled for summer 2025 construction which will restore salmon access to over 8 miles of habitat while correcting deficiencies in the Neveel levee.
 - WRIA 1 Fish Barrier Removal Coordination
 - Convened and facilitated meetings of WRIA 1 entities doing fish barrier removal to coordinate efforts, find collaboration opportunities, and share

funding needs and resources. Two meetings will be held annually moving forward.

- Worked with the WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery Lead Entity coordinator to develop the annual update of the WRIA 1 4-Year Fish Barrier Removal Work Plan that reflects the outcomes of the WRIA 1 coordination efforts.
- Whatcom County/Salmon Co-manager Memorandum of Agreement
 - Held monthly meetings of the Interagency Culvert Work Group composed of technical staff from Public Works and the Co-managers.
 - Held PW Fish Passage Program staff meetings twice monthly to coordinate program activities
 - Held internal staff and policy meetings to coordinate on key program issues and questions
 - Prepared a draft technical memorandum outlining prioritization criteria to be approved by the Policy Group in May. A vetted list of sites and a 5-year work plan will be appended to the memo subject to policy representative signature.
- Funding
 - Managed the Habitat Strategic Initiatives Leads/EPA National Estuary Program (HSIL NEP) Black Slough grant including preparation of progress reports, invoices, deliverables and coordination with WDFW, the granting agency.
 - Managed the Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board (BAFBRB) Black Slough grant including preparation of progress reports, invoices, deliverables and coordination with RCO, the granting agency.
 - Managed the Aquatic Organisms Passage grant including preparation of progress reports, invoices, deliverables and coordination with the FHWA through WSDOT, the local agency.
 - Prepared and submitted a federal fish passage grant application to NOAA to prepare final designs and construct a new fully passable structure for Bear Creek under Slater Road. Status of the application is still pending with a decision likely late summer to early fall.
- Adjudication
 - Provided outreach and technical assistance to water right holders.
 - Developed tools and website to assist water users in filing for adjudication
 - Held outreach events and conducted other outreach activities to inform the public about the adjudication process
 - Assisted the Department of Ecology with their outreach efforts
- Technical Studies
 - Continued groundwater-surface water interaction study
 - Initiated groundwater model assessment of potential wetland enhancement projects in the upper Bertrand Creek watershed
 - Initiated a field study of agricultural tile drain management strategies

- Initiated further investigation of potential water storage projects at Musto Marsh and Springsteen Lake in the South Fork Valley.
- Climate Action
 - Continued Future Shorelines project (2nd phase of sea level rise and riverine vulnerability assessment)
 - Completed Whatcom County Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Implementation Roadmap
 - Continued Whatcom County Fleet Electrification Study (complete April 2025)
 - Continued incorporation of climate change into Comprehensive Plan update, Draft Environmental Impact Statement, and development of new climate element, as required by HB 1181
- Lake Whatcom
 - Received approval for the 2025-2029 Lake Whatcom Management Program Work Plan
 - Presented 2024 Annual Report and presented it at April 2nd Joint Councils and Commission Meeting

Stormwater Division

- Capital Improvement Projects
 - Academy Rd Stormwater Improvement Project: Transfer agreement is currently being routed for county signatures, including PW Director and County Executive, and will then be transmitted to City for execution by city staff and Mayor. Project's construction contract is in the final stages of being closed out, awaiting the Notice of Completion certificate from L&I.
 - This project is being featured at this year's Unicom conference as a unique, collaborative system between WC and COB, featuring how an existing treatment facility was upgraded and incorporates new more effective treatment media. Cody Swan will introduce the project, Parametrix design consultant will provide detail on the specific design details of the upgrade, and Oldcastle, the supplier of the new replacement media will cover the technical aspects of the treatment media and why its unique characteristics made it a good addition to the treatment system.
 - Charel Terrace Stormwater Outfall Replacement Stabilization Project: the project 90% design was completed and the JARPA application was submitted in Q1. Project coordination with FEMA is ongoing and FEMA is coordinating with the local Tribes on cultural resource management that is required as a permit

condition. The permits are anticipated to be received with design progressing to bid ready in winter 2025-26. The construction is scheduled for Summer 2026.

- Central Shop NPDES Stormwater Improvement Project: The design report was approved by Ecology. The design will be finalized and will be prepared for bid. The construction is anticipated to start in 2025. The remaining work will be completed in 2026.
 - Lora Lane Drainage and Tide Gate Improvements: A consultant has been selected and given the notice to proceed on this project to be constructed in 2026 concurrently with Birch Bay Leisure Parks projects that connects with to the County owned culvert. We have been collaborating with Birch Bay Leisure Park to coordinate a joint project to lessen environmental, archaeological, and community impacts.
 - Cedar Hills Culvert Replacement: The County has received FEMA funding to begin preliminary design on a culvert that was damaged during the 2021 flooding event. The design is currently at 90%. Permitting and construction are on hold, awaiting clarity from FEMA on their level of funding participation.
 - Austin Court Stormwater Improvements Project: Preliminary design was initiated in 2024 and design will continue into summer 2025. Construction is anticipated to begin summer 2026.
 - Eagleridge Stormwater Improvements: This project's goal is to retrofit the existing stormwater conveyance system in the residential subdivision to provide phosphorus treatment for runoff entering Lake Whatcom. County staff will be hosting a public Neighborhood Meeting this spring to present findings of the consulting design engineer's Alternatives Analysis Report proposing facility retrofits.
 - Semiahmoo Drive South & Outfall Improvements: The consulting engineer, Tetra Tech, is actively working on the design and permitting. The project is scheduled for construction in 2026, subject to compliance with permit requirements.
- 2024 Maintenance/Small Works Summary – NPDES Repair Projects
 - Work completed in 2024 (coordinated effort between SW inspection staff and M&O Crews:
 - Cleaned 902 CBs
 - Repaired 53 CBs
 - Cleaned 38 flow control/treatment vaults; replaced 234 filter cartridges.
 - Regraded 12 stormwater treatment swales in the Lake Whatcom watershed.
 - 2024 NPDES Annual Report was submitted at the end of March.
 - 2024 Outreach Summary:
 - Completed annual programs for Household Hazardous Waste and Pet Waste Management.

- Staff tabled at 34 events for pet waste management, and held 8 pop-events for household hazardous waste.
 - Provided messaging and announcements through neighborhood, community, and county written e-newsletters, social media posts, letters and materials to target areas and businesses in the County, and radio ads.
 - The 12th Annual Run with The Chums 5K Fun Run was in September in Birch Bay and had 358 racers participate.
 - Staff also continued with other water quality-related programming (such as yard waste management) through ads, newsletters, and regular social media posts.
 - Community Outreach and Education:
 - Staff are planning another full summer of pet waste education focused on in-person community events. The events will take place most weekends at parks, trails, community events and pet stores throughout Whatcom County. The focus of the booths will be to get pet owners to pledge to scoop even in situations that are more difficult for them personally (bad weather, tall grass, low mobility, etc.)
 - Our “Scooping Ambassador Program” has taken off this year after a boosted (paid) Facebook post brought in almost 30 new program participants in one week. Staff are brainstorming on how to leverage this success in the future and utilize the community to help spread the scooping message. We have been working on recruiting program participants who want to be featured in community “scooper spotlight” stories that normalize and promote scooping behavior. The stories are spread through our digital channels and postcards to focus on watersheds.
 - Kate Rice will be presenting at the Municon Stormwater Conference in May with Karen Dubose (Skagit County) about Whatcom and Skagit’s joint pet waste program effort.
 - Staff are working with Whatcom Conservation District staff to plan our three annual community events in the Birch Bay watershed – Day at the Beach (June 7th), July 5th Beach Cleanup, and Run with the Chums.
 - Staff will continue to develop and send out the annual new homeowner guidebooks, annual newsletters, and quarterly e-newsletters for BBWARM and the Lake Whatcom watershed.
- BBWARM/LWSU details:
 - The 2024 Annual Reports for BBWARM and LWSU were completed in mid-April. They were emailed to the Council and posted online at:
 - <https://www.bbwarm.whatcomcounty.org/about/annual-report> and
 - <https://www.whatcomcounty.us/2830/Lake-Whatcom-Stormwater-Utility>.

- Staff are participating in the Phase 2 Climate Vulnerability & Shoreline Management Solutions Project. Public meetings focusing on future flood risk and adaptation strategies were held on April 28 (online and countywide focus) and May 6 (Birch Bay specific).
- A resolution to amend the 2006 Birch Bay Comprehensive Stormwater Plan to include the four Birch Bay subwatershed master plans (completed between 2013-2023) was approved by County Council on March 11.
- Two BBWARM advisory committee meetings have been held so far this year – January 16 and April 16
- Staff continue to collect stormwater samples at 8 locations in the Northshore/Britton area twice a month and/or after storms to evaluate several water quality parameters.
- The county's HIP program is now closed out. We will continue to offer maintenance rebates for the next five years, but no new projects will be undertaken.
- Staff are working in collaboration with the Sudden Valley Community Association to plan and implement a 6,500 square foot native plant demonstration garden on the shore of Lake Louise along with four interpretive signs about native plants, stormwater, wildfire resilience, pet waste, invasive species.
- Neighborhood Native Landscaping Program: 22 private property owners have committed to participating in the NNLP program in Lake Whatcom and Birch Bay this year. Over 50,000 square feet of lawn will be converted to native plant landscaping this fall. Over 200 homeowners are currently on the waitlist to participate.
 - By the end of this year:
 - Over 150,000 square feet of lawn converted to native landscaping
 - 9,300 native plants installed
 - 2,000 cubic yards of mulch installed
 - 70 homeowner participants

Engineering Division

- **2025 Planned Work and Major Items of Note**
 - N. Lake Samish Bridge Replacement – Ongoing
 - North Fork Road/Kenney Creek Fish Passage – Ongoing
 - Continue Fish Passage Program Ramp Up
 - Everson Goshen Paver from Smith to SR 544
 - FEMA Fix to Beach Ave & Island Dr (pending)
 - 2024 Small Area Paver – Closeout Ongoing
 - Birch Bay Beach Park Flashing Crosswalk

- 2025 Traffic Count Program to support the Concurrency Report

Central Shop (M&O and ER&R)

M/O

- ramped up crack seal operations to mitigate for the reduction in chip seal and capital paving
- Due to a lack of crew, we can only run 2 full crews (when fully staffed, we can run up to 5)
- It's spring! we are running a full mower complement (6 mowers)
- Striping is picking up steam
- 24-year-end fun facts:
 - 2122.39 line miles of White paint
 - 1239.55 line miles of Yellow paint
 - 61,456.7 gallons of paint used
 - 490,314 pounds of Reflective Glass beads used
 - 38,452 gallons of brine
 - 423 TONS of garbage
 - removed 31 hulk vehicles abandoned on county Property
 - Chip Seal
 - 2023 = 64.81 miles (Total running cost was \$2,326,272)
 - 2024 = 65.04 miles (Total running cost was \$2,235,657)
 - 2025 focus on central county and central county (northwest, Smith rd, ect.) – reduced due to budget \$1,600,000 planned \$2.3M

ER&R

- UNDERGROUND FUEL TANK REMOVAL STATUS: contract amendment with Sound Earth pending, target to start and complete this year. (pending contractor recommendation and water table level at the time of construction)
- CENTRAL SHOP STORMWATER STATUS: construction estimated to commence Summer of 2025, with a completion date of the end of the year 2026
- RECRUITMENT: Going a year with the mechanic vacancy, looking for new strategies to fill. if you know of any interested mechanics, send them our way
- FERRY: Commenced annual out-of-service outage with Lake Union Dry Dock; this year's shipyard bid out at \$600K, the engineer's estimate was \$602k.
- ASSEWORKS: In the implementation process, we expect to be rolled out by the end of the year
- EQUIPMENT PURCHASES

- Stores processed 5,243 invoices in 2024
- Shop completed over 2900 work orders in 2024

Ferry Division

- Addressed an emergency ferry system terminal repair in January. The emergency proclamation remains open, will be closing soon.
- Settled Peter Earle lawsuit in January – Single-ride fares were rolled back to the new (old) rate on 1/27/25, \$430K and change was transferred from the Road Fund to the user fee portion of the Ferry Fund.
- Ferry user fees continue to miss the 55% fare box recovery goal. The lack of revenue needs to be addressed immediately
- Processed and facilitated 2 rate changes- sold new rate punch cards beginning 2/19/25
- Hosted several exchange/buy-back events for punch cards in March and April.
- Undergoing Dry dock April 26 through approx. May 11.
- Made traffic improvements to the merging and queuing lanes at the Gooseberry Terminal to improve vehicle loading.

Administration

- Finance/Accounting
 - Report on the 2025 Road Fund cash flow analysis is next
 - 2026 Road Fund cash flow analysis pending
 - 2025 Flood Fund cash flow analysis pending
 - working through Mid mid-biennium inventory of services
- Construction Apprenticeship Program (CAP)
 - 2024 Public Works Annual CAP Report submitted to Council
 - Reviewed and approved the first 2025 CAP Utilization Plan for the N Fork Kenny Creek Project
- Title VI- Civil Rights Act
 - Developed content and added Four-Factor Analysis and Language Assistance Process to the Title VI Plan

- Reviewed additional vendor options for translation services before LOA expires in April
- Collaborated with IT on utilizing on-demand translation services using Language Line
- PW Pubic Records
 - Processed 58 PDRs in 2025-Quarter 1
 - Created PDR Fact Sheet
 - Developed PDR Training PowerPoint for PW all-staff meeting
- Safety and Training Division
 - Policy and Procedure Project 2025 is underway
 - Training for all staff in Heat Stress/Blood Borne Pathogens/Wildfire smoke is either completed or scheduled in advance of the summer weather.
 - New Training Tracking System being used to update the entire department on First Aid/CPR/AED, as well as other trainings.
 - Incident and Injury Data Analysis updated to include data from 2024
- Environmental Services (Permitting)
 - New Senior Scientist- Archeologist position filled, developing new and updated policy and procedures
 - Improved/streamlined archaeology review process throughout PW
 - Provide archaeological field support for M&O saving taxpayers ~3k/field day
 - Contracted with WCC to provide maintenance on mitigation property sites
 - Facilitated Army Corps of Engineers wetland and stream permitting training for all Public Works Engineering support with hydrological monitoring wells at Swift Creek, assistance with installations of plantings, and finalization of construction
 - New 5-year Swift Creek dredge and maintenance permits
 - Finalized an action and budget plan for fencing vegetation at the Birch Bay Berm
 - Provided permitting and environmental services to the Stormwater group for Central Shop NPDES
- Personnel – Recruitment, retention, and acceptance of job offers continue to be a major challenge due to competing compensation issues. 190 FTEs, XX Summer help. XXX are vacant.
- Other Notable Items:
 - The new Birch Bay Community Advisory Committee is up and running. WCPW is scheduled to meet with the committee to update them on all our projects in their community. Roland Middleton is the liaison for WCPW.

- Communications:
 - We continue to use a variety of outreach & engagement tools to meet folks where they are, including:
 - Email & text alerts
 - Social media-- Facebook, X, and joining neighborhood FB groups
 - Nextdoor
 - E-newsletters
 - Mailed newsletters (i.e. annual flood newsletter just released)
 - Podcast & video updates
 - Expanded our podcast reach with our 3rd season (21 total episodes), and broader availability on major platforms including Spotify, Apple Podcasts, iHeart Media, and Amazon Music.
 - Grew our bi-weekly newsletter audience through the new GovDelivery platform, making it easier for people to stay informed.
 - Highlighted our projects and safety priorities during National Work Zone Awareness Week and are gearing up for National Public Works Week promotions.
 - Launched spring public outreach campaigns focused on road safety, including updates on paint striping and our upcoming chip seal work.
 - Continued our “meet people where they are” approach by sharing updates on Nextdoor, in neighborhood Facebook groups, and at local community meetings.

3. Road Fund Cash Flow Presentation (provided in the Finance Committee)

4. Questions