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PROPOSED BY: <u>DONOVAN</u>
INTRODUCTION DATE: DECEMBER 5, 2023

RESOLUTION NO.____

ENCOURAGING THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE TO PURSUE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROPERTY ACQUISITION THAT PROMOTES CONSERVATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM ASSOCIATED WITH BELLINGHAM TO MT. BAKER TRAILS

WHEREAS, in 2016, the Whatcom County Council adopted a Comprehensive Plan that included goals and policies to promote opportunities to link trails from Bellingham to Mt. Baker; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 9 of that Plan includes goals and policies that support parks and recreational facilities; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 9 of that Plan includes Goal 9C: Expand outdoor recreation opportunities for county residents by providing enjoyable trails for hiking; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 9 of that plan also includes Policy 9C-2: Incorporate existing and proposed trails into a comprehensive and integrated system of looped and interconnected trails which give users a wide choice of routes and environments; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 9 of that plan also includes Policy 9C-3: Trails should link other recreational uses in the Foothills area and connect to existing trail systems in the National Forest and state land; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 9 of that plan also includes Policy 9C-26: Bay to Baker Trail – Develop and implement a plan to secure Rights of Way for trail segments along the abandoned RR R/W in conjunction with the Nooksack River Trail to achieve a contiguous trail system between communities and recreation areas; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 9 of that plan also includes Policy 9C-27: Nooksack River Trail – Develop and implement a plan to acquire Rights of Way for a trail corridor and picnic areas along the Nooksack River between Ferndale and Glacier, to provide recreation opportunities, inter-community transportation, and tourism development; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 10 of that plan includes Goal 10A, Protect natural resources and systems, life, and property from potential hazards; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 10 of that plan also include Policy 10A-10 Support acquisition, conservation easements, open space, and other such programs to protect high-value natural areas as identified through the GMA planning process, the Natural Heritage Plan, the state Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) program, the Lake Whatcom Management Program, and other sources; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 10 of that plan also includes Policy 10A-11: Designate high-value open space and natural areas for acquisition, conservation easements, open space, and other such programs to protect these natural areas upon request or consent of the property owner; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 7 of that plan states the goals and policies related to prompting tourism as a means for economic development; and

WHEREAS, Policy 7H-7 of the that plan states: Encourage growth of tourism, recreational activities, and businesses that provide for diversity of the natural resource industry, provided they comply with County regulations and, when located in a rural area, preserve the rural character; and WHEREAS, on February 23, 2016, the Whatcom County Council approved Resolution 2016-005, adopting the 2016 Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan (CPROS); and WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Parks, Recreation & Open Space (CPROS) Plan outlines goals and policies to protect the environment, preserve historic lands, and encourage the retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities, natural resources, and parks; and WHEREAS, in 2016 Whatcom County Council added the Bellingham-Mt. Baker trail to the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan, Conceptual Trail Corridors Map; and WHEREAS, the County remains committed to its stated goals of acquiring land to further these Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies; and WHEREAS, on November 21, 2023 Whatcom County Council approved Resolution 2023-049 requesting that the Whatcom County Executive and staff pursue public access opportunities for trails on all county owned land and easements; NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Council requests that the Executive pursue opportunities for property acquisition that promotes these stated goals related to conservation, economic development, tourism, as related to Bellingham to Mt. Baker trails. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Council requests that the Executive consider property acquisition opportunities that promote connectivity near properties that have access existing easements with the County; and BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that Council requests the County Executive approach willing sellers who may be interested in promoting these goals and policies. **APPROVED** this day of , 2023. WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL ATTEST: WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council **Barry Buchanan, Council Chair APPROVED AS TO FORM:** /s/Karen Frakes approved via email on 12/5/2023/MR **Karen Frakes, Civil Deputy Prosecutor**