

Franklin Street sidewalk project moves ahead

City avoids deadline to return money to state

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Franklin Avenue is a straight road with a winding history.

In 1999, the city of Shelton received funding approval for a \$500,000 sidewalk project on Franklin between Fifth and Seventh streets. The project include removing and replacing sidewalk lid/caps, installing sidewalk ramps compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the state Department of Transportation, curb extensions, minor storm water drainage improvements and new barrier curbs.

The city received design money from WSDOT in 2005 and hired a firm to design the project the next year. The project was halted when Mason Transit Authority began designing its new Transit-Community Center on Franklin Avenue.

On Monday, the Shelton City Commission voted unanimously to complete the design for the project in 2016, and complete the construction in 2017. If the city had not made the commitment, it would have been forced to dip into its general fund to pay back \$63,153 to the state Department of Transportation.

The commission agreed to spend \$50,000 in 2016 to complete the project design, and \$50,000 toward construction in 2017, while receiving \$319,000 in construction funds from the federal government. The \$100,000 will come from sales taxes collected by the city's new



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Journal photo by Gordon Weeks

Transportation Benefit District (TBD), which was approved by city voters in November.

The commission's decision came with a deadline to act by the next day.

The state Department of Transportation had received notification from the Federal Highway Administration that

the project had been declared inactive because no expenditures have been billed for at least nine months.

Dec. 7 was the deadline to tell WSDOT whether the city would move ahead or pay back the \$63,153.

"There's almost no option but to continue," said Mayor

Gary Cronce.

Right now, only one side of Franklin Avenue looks good because of the improvements outside the Transit-Community Center, Commissioner Tracy Moore said.

"I think it will be great to have this project crossed off the list," she said.

Commissioner Mike Olsen said he also supports the project. He suggested the city establish a list prioritizing transportation projects to receive the TBD tax dollars. The district can collect taxes for 10 years.

"If we don't use it wisely, the voters won't support it," Olsen said.