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MTA board seeks permanent park and ride in Belfair

By **ANDREW DAVIS**
andrew@masoncounty.com

The Mason Transit Authority is moving forward with plans to create a permanent park and ride in Belfair.

At a meeting Jan. 19, the Mason Transit Authority Board of Directors moved to send out requests for qualifications for consulting services to move to the planning phase.

MTA General Manager Brad Patterson said the transportation service has been operating a temporary park and ride at Belfair Assembly of God, but that space is under-utilized.

"The utilization rate for 2015 was 25 percent," he said. "Most of the (bus) traffic is northbound for people going

to Seattle and shipyards."

Patterson said MTA leases 20 to 40 spaces at the church for \$4.40 per-space, per-month, which has always been a temporary fix.

"That park and ride has been a long-term temporary solution and newer was intended to be permanent," he said.

Now, with plans moving ahead on the Belfair bypass – the state has recently allocated funds to start construction in 2019 – Patterson said the MTA is looking at parcels north of Belfair on state Route 3 to better suit northbound commuters.

The bypass project will alleviate traffic through downtown Belfair, spurring economic growth, according

to county officials.

"We want to put a parking lot up by Log Yard Road," he said. "That way it would be where the bypass is coming to meet state Route 3."

The MTA will use state transportation grant funds to improve all Mason County park and rides over the next two years, Patterson said, including a permanent Belfair location.

"We have identified about 10 parcels that look like they might be suitable," he said.

In the meantime, the MTA will look to replace the Belfair Assembly of God's temporary park and ride for a more accessible location.

"It would be used for about a year and half," Patterson said.

Belfair Assembly of God has leased parking spaces for a park and ride since 2005, according to a document provided to the Mason Transit Authority Board.

According to the document, it is estimated that a 100-space lot will be needed to offset what unleased spots at QFC and the church provide.

Development on permanent park and ride locations started in 2014, when the MTA "initiated meetings with area agency transportation to determine need and scope of work moving forward with a countywide park and ride development program in anticipation of developing a grant application," according to the document.