



King County

Reagan Dunn

Councilmember, District 9

Metropolitan King County Council

October 23, 2025

Secretary Julie Meredith
Washington Department of Transportation
310 Maple Park Avenue SE
Olympia, WA 98501

Secretary Meredith,

I want to thank you and Governor Ferguson for your effective leadership and lightning quick response to the White River Bridge emergency. I've rarely seen government move this fast and decisively. And your assistance came at exactly the right moment. The White River Bridge is a vital artery for our community, connecting families, small businesses, schools, and first responders with nearly 22,000 trips every single day. It was a privilege to join you and the Governor in announcing last week that the bridge was reopening weeks ahead of schedule.

In light of this successful outcome, I wanted to reach out to you regarding the troubling pattern of oversized vehicle strikes against Washington's transportation infrastructure. In addition to the subsequent bridge strike of SR-167 near the City of Pacific, as you know less than 48 hours ago, an oversized load struck the Bullfrog Road overpass on westbound I-90, severely limiting traffic on a key mountain pass and gateway to King County. These incidents impose heavy costs, not just due to repairs, but also in lost time, risks to public safety, disrupted freight movement, and significant economic harms. And I believe this problem is getting worse, not better.

To help prevent future strikes, I respectfully request that the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) conduct a comprehensive root-cause review of recent bridge and overpass strikes. This review could examine factors such as clearance signage, driver routing of oversize loads, pilot-car protocols, GPS and permit routing, and commercial-carrier training. I recognize that WSDOT may have already studied some of these issues; if so, our governments should be working to align county improvements with state efforts.

I also appreciate the steps you have already announced to strengthen infrastructure protections, such as enhanced advance-warning signage and improved detection

systems for vulnerable structures. I would like to offer my strong support for these ongoing efforts as you prepare for the next budget in Olympia. Please feel free to use my support to encourage lawmakers to not waiver in prioritizing these systems in future budget negotiations.

Finally, I firmly believe that any review addressing root causes of increased bridge strikes should consider frameworks to strengthen driver accountability. Under Washington law, drivers who negligently cause damage to public highways or bridges can already be held liable for repair costs. However, there may be ways to go even further—adopting a “Stupid Motorist Law”, similar to Arizona laws charging drivers for ignoring warning signs, to create per se negligence for over-height vehicle strikes, require steeper fines for operators of commercial vehicles for over-height violations, or enact stricter administrative penalties for repeat offenders. My office would be willing to engage with WSDOT to explore ways to increase the cost of negligence and, through deterrence, decrease the likelihood of future bridge strikes.

Thank you again for your partnership and decisive action in repairing the White River Bridge. Its reopening stands as a model of effective, responsive government. I look forward to continuing to work together to prevent future incidents and strengthen the safety and reliability of Washington’s transportation network.

Sincerely,



Reagan Dunn
Vice Chair, King County Council

CC: Governor Bob Ferguson