TO: Hansville Area Residents  
DATE: June 10, 2013  
RE: Greater Hansville Area Traffic Safety Study Recommendations & Follow-up

Dear Hansville Area Residents:

While this letter is somewhat impersonal, it seems to be the most effective way to reach as many residents in the Hansville area as possible.

One thing I’ve learned over the past many months is that traffic safety will always be an emotionally charged topic, no matter how it might be defined. This particular conversation has been a long and, at times, a difficult journey involving many meetings, groups, studies and correspondence.

As promised following the Greater Hansville Area Traffic Safety Report I commissioned last year, I am outlining my decision on the safety issues addressed in the report. The study and this letter are intended to address broad community concerns about traffic safety in the Hansville area and bring closure to what has been a divisive and contentious issue.

Throughout this process, the County’s focus on safety has been our primary objective. The County’s commitment to traffic safety in the Hansville area is demonstrated by the numerous road improvement projects completed in the last decade. Construction of intersection improvements on Hansville Road, shoulder paving and other significant projects in the area have improved safety and conditions for motorized and non-motorized roadway users. Unfortunately, these efforts have been largely overshadowed by the County’s 2007 installation of speed tables on Hansville, Twin Spits and Hood Canal Drive.

There’s been a great deal of discussion, consternation and debate about whether speed tables were warranted and appropriate in this area. There have also been allegations that installation of the speed tables was merely a political process serving a select few. Actually, installation of the tables followed community meetings where there was widespread support voiced by emergency responders and the general public. While some people chose not to participate in this process, efforts were made to involve the greater community. It’s time for the community to recognize that construction of the speed tables was a judgment call made at the time after weighing available public input, along with conventional practice. While traffic calming measures are not generally used on roads classified as “collector arterials”, the Hansville area is unique because of the residential character of the area. A previous Board directed Public Works to move forward with construction of the speed tables after considering all factors including the desires of constituents, staff recommendations and available funding.

After several years of experience, it is time to review the use of the tool and get to a point of closure, or at a minimum a point of acceptance. We move forward with the knowledge that there’s no path forward that will generate complete public support. There will be logical arguments pro and con for any proposals made.
Following the public meeting on March 12th, I’ve taken an opportunity to review the study findings, existing engineering reports, traffic data and public comment. I’ve also met with the County’s Public Works Director, County Engineer and Traffic Engineer. Based on these factors, the following measures will be taken:

- While many may disagree about whether speed tables are appropriate in this application, the study showed there is no question that they are an effective tool for slowing traffic. However, one comment I heard several times (also highlighted by the study) concerned the inconsistency of the table heights. The tables were built to standards at that time, but standards have changed. The current recommended height is 3 inches. Therefore, the existing speed tables on Hood Canal drive will be lowered by up to an inch in an effort to meet this standard and to allow an average driver to traverse them at a speed closer to the posted speed limit. It should be pointed out that the speed at which the tables can be crossed is dependent on an individual driver’s desired comfort level and vehicle.

- Public Works will be reviewing street lighting, traffic signs and pavement markings in the study area and taking appropriate measures where warranted. Additional radar speed indicator signs will also be considered.

- There are a number of intersections in the study area where potential safety issues have been raised. Public Works will be reviewing these intersections and developing a range of options to address concerns. Potential solutions range from clearing vegetation from sight lines to constructing improvements.

- The Sheriff’s Department has been requested to provide additional traffic enforcement in the area. Please remember that the majority of speeders are local residents. Encourage your family members, neighbors and guests to observe posted speed limits and drive safely.

We’re hopeful that the above measures will address the community’s broader traffic safety concerns while addressing desires for increased mobility. Safety on neighborhood roads is everyone’s responsibility and government can only offer so much to the discussion. While public education, traffic enforcement and engineering solutions may improve safety; it’s largely up to individuals to drive responsibly and in a manner respectful of others.

It is an honor and pleasure to serve as your commissioner and I look forward to working with you on a host of issues important to your community.

Respectfully,

Robert Gelder
County Commissioner
District 1