

Chapter 36.79 RCW
ROADS AND BRIDGES—RURAL ARTERIAL PROGRAM

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36.79.901	Effective date—1983 1st ex.s. c 49.

RCW 36.79.010 Definitions. The definitions set forth in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Rural arterial program" means improvement projects on those county roads in rural areas classified as rural arterials and collectors in accordance with the federal functional classification system and the construction of replacement bridges funded by the federal bridge replacement program on access roads in rural areas.

(2) "Rural area" means every area of the state outside of areas designated as urban areas by the state transportation commission with the approval of the secretary of the United States department of transportation in accordance with federal law.

(3) "Board" means the county road administration board created by RCW 36.78.030. [1997 c 81 s 1; 1988 c 26 s 1; 1983 1st ex.s. c 49 s 1.]

RCW 36.79.020 Rural arterial trust account. There is created in the motor vehicle fund the rural arterial trust account. All moneys

deposited in the motor vehicle fund to be credited to the rural arterial trust account shall be expended for (1) the construction and improvement of county rural arterials and collectors, (2) the construction of replacement bridges funded by the federal bridge replacement program on access roads in rural areas, and (3) those expenses of the board associated with the administration of the rural arterial program. During the 2025-2027 fiscal biennium, the rural arterial trust account may also be used for staffing-related expenses of the board, contracting costs, and grants associated with bridge ratings. [2025 c 416 s 702; 1997 c 81 s 2; 1988 c 26 s 2; 1983 1st ex.s. c 49 s 2.]

Effective date—2025 c 416: "Except for section 723 of this act, this act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect immediately [May 20, 2025]." [2025 c 416 s 1302.]

RCW 36.79.030 Apportionment of rural arterial trust account funds—Regions established. For the purpose of apportioning rural arterial trust account funds, the state is divided into five regions as follows:

(1) The Puget Sound region includes those areas within the counties of King, Pierce, and Snohomish.

(2) The northwest region includes those areas within the counties of Clallam, Jefferson, Island, Kitsap, San Juan, Skagit, and Whatcom.

(3) The northeast region includes those areas within the counties of Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Ferry, Grant, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, and Whitman.

(4) The southeast region includes those areas within the counties of Asotin, Benton, Columbia, Franklin, Garfield, Kittitas, Klickitat, Walla Walla, and Yakima.

(5) The southwest region includes those areas within the counties of Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Skamania, Thurston, and Wahkiakum. [1983 1st ex.s. c 49 s 3.]

RCW 36.79.040 Apportionment of rural arterial trust account funds—Apportionment formula. Funds available for expenditure by the board pursuant to RCW 36.79.020 shall be apportioned to the five regions for expenditure upon county arterials in rural areas in the following manner:

(1) One-third in the ratio which the land area of the rural areas of each region bears to the total land area of all rural areas of the state;

(2) Two-thirds in the ratio which the mileage of county arterials and collectors in rural areas of each region bears to the total mileage of county arterials and collectors in all rural areas of the state.

The board shall adjust the schedule for apportionment of such funds to the five regions in the manner provided in this section before the commencement of each fiscal biennium. [1997 c 81 s 3; 1983 1st ex.s. c 49 s 4.]

RCW 36.79.050 Apportionment of rural arterial trust account funds—Establishment of apportionment percentages. At the beginning of each fiscal biennium, the board shall establish apportionment percentages for the five regions defined in RCW 36.79.030 in the manner prescribed in RCW 36.79.040 for that biennium. The apportionment percentages shall be used once each calendar quarter by the board to apportion funds credited to the rural arterial trust account that are available for expenditure for rural arterial and collector projects and for construction of replacement bridges funded by the federal bridge replacement program on access roads in rural areas. The funds so apportioned shall remain apportioned until expended on construction projects in accordance with rules of the board. Within each region, funds shall be allocated by the board to counties for the construction of specific rural arterial and collector projects and construction of replacement bridges funded by the federal bridge replacement program on access roads in rural areas in accordance with the procedures set forth in this chapter. [1997 c 81 s 4; 1988 c 26 s 3; 1983 1st ex.s. c 49 s 5.]

RCW 36.79.060 Powers and duties of board. The board shall:

- (1) Adopt rules necessary to implement the provisions of this chapter relating to the allocation of funds in the rural arterial trust account to counties;
- (2) Adopt reasonably uniform design standards for county rural arterials and collectors that meet the requirements for trucks transporting commodities. [1998 c 245 s 31; 1997 c 81 s 5; 1988 c 26 s 4; 1983 1st ex.s. c 49 s 6.]

RCW 36.79.070 Board may contract with department of transportation for staff services and facilities. The board may contract with the department of transportation to furnish any necessary staff services and facilities required in the administration of the rural arterial program. The cost of such services that are attributable to the rural arterial program, together with travel expenses in accordance with RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060 of the members and all other lawful expenses of the board that are attributable to the rural arterial program, shall be paid from the rural arterial trust account in the motor vehicle fund. [1983 1st ex.s. c 49 s 7.]

RCW 36.79.080 Six-year program for rural arterial improvements—Selection of priority improvement projects. In preparing their respective six-year programs relating to rural arterial improvements, counties shall select specific priority improvement projects for each functional class of arterial based on the rating of each arterial section proposed to be improved in relation to other arterial sections within the same functional class, taking into account the following:

- (1) Its structural ability to carry loads imposed upon it;
- (2) Its capacity to move traffic at reasonable speeds;
- (3) Its adequacy of alignment and related geometrics;
- (4) Its accident experience; and
- (5) Its fatal accident experience.

The six-year construction programs shall remain flexible and subject to annual revision as provided in RCW 36.81.121. [1983 1st ex.s. c 49 s 8.]

RCW 36.79.090 Six-year program for rural arterial improvements—Review and revision by board. Upon receipt of a county's revised six-year program, the board as soon as practicable shall review and may revise the construction program as it relates to rural arterials and the construction of replacement bridges funded by the federal bridge replacement program on access roads in rural areas for which rural arterial trust account moneys are requested as necessary to conform to (1) the priority rating of the proposed project, based upon the factors in RCW 36.79.080, in relation to proposed projects in all other rural arterial construction programs submitted by the counties and within each region; and (2) the amount of rural arterial trust account funds that the board estimates will be apportioned to the region. [1988 c 26 s 5; 1983 1st ex.s. c 49 s 10.]

RCW 36.79.100 Rural arterial improvements—Coordination with municipal and state projects. Whenever a rural arterial enters a city or town, the proper city or town and county officials shall jointly plan the improvement of the arterial in their respective long-range plans. Whenever a rural arterial connects with and will be substantially affected by a programmed construction project on a state highway, the proper county officials shall jointly plan the development of such arterial with the department of transportation district administrator. The board shall adopt rules encouraging the system development of county-city arterials in rural areas and rural arterials with state highways. [1983 1st ex.s. c 49 s 9.]

RCW 36.79.110 Coordination of transportation improvement board and county road administration board. The county road administration board and the transportation improvement board shall jointly adopt rules to assure coordination of their respective programs especially with respect to projects proposed by the group of incorporated cities outside the boundaries of federally approved urban areas, and to encourage the system development of county-city arterials in rural areas. [1988 c 167 s 7; 1983 1st ex.s. c 49 s 11.]

Savings—Severability—1988 c 167: See notes following RCW 47.26.121.

RCW 36.79.120 Rural arterial trust account—Matching funds. Counties receiving funds from the rural arterial trust account for construction of arterials and the construction of replacement bridges funded by the federal bridge replacement program on access roads in rural areas shall provide such matching funds as established by rules recommended by the board, subject to review, revision, and final approval by the office of financial management. Matching requirements shall be established after appropriate studies by the board, taking into account financial resources available to counties to meet

arterial needs. [2006 c 334 s 11; 1988 c 26 s 6; 1983 1st ex.s. c 49 s 12.]

Effective date—2006 c 334: See note following RCW 47.01.051.

RCW 36.79.130 Recommended budget for expenditures from rural arterial trust account. Not later than November 1st of each even-numbered year the board shall prepare and present to the office of financial management a recommended budget for expenditures from the rural arterial trust account during the ensuing biennium. The budget shall contain an estimate of the revenues to be credited to the rural arterial trust account.

The office of financial management shall review the budget as recommended, revise the budget as it deems proper, and include the budget as revised as a separate section of the transportation budget which it shall submit to the governor pursuant to chapter 43.88 RCW. [2006 c 334 s 12; 1983 1st ex.s. c 49 s 13.]

Effective date—2006 c 334: See note following RCW 47.01.051.

RCW 36.79.140 Expenditures from rural arterial trust account—Approval by board. At the time the board reviews the six-year program of each county each even-numbered year, it shall consider and shall approve for inclusion in its recommended budget, as required by RCW 36.79.130, the portion of the rural arterial construction program scheduled to be performed during the biennial period beginning the following July 1st. Subject to the appropriations actually approved by the legislature, the board shall as soon as feasible approve rural arterial trust account funds to be spent during the ensuing biennium for preliminary proposals in priority sequence as established pursuant to RCW 36.79.090. Only those counties that during the preceding twelve months have spent all revenues collected for road purposes only for such purposes, including removal of barriers to fish passage and accompanying streambed and stream bank repair as specified in RCW 36.82.070, and including traffic law enforcement, as are allowed to the state by Article II, section 40 of the state Constitution or RCW 36.82.070(2) are eligible to receive funds from the rural arterial trust account, except that: (1) Counties with a population of less than eight thousand are exempt from this eligibility restriction; (2) counties expending revenues collected for road purposes only on other governmental services after authorization from the voters of that county under RCW 84.55.050 are also exempt from this eligibility restriction; and (3) this restriction shall not apply to any moneys diverted from the road district levy under chapter 39.89 RCW. The board shall authorize rural arterial trust account funds for the construction project portion of a project previously authorized for a preliminary proposal in the sequence in which the preliminary proposal has been completed and the construction project is to be placed under contract. At such time the board may reserve rural arterial trust account funds for expenditure in future years as may be necessary for completion of preliminary proposals and construction projects to be commenced in the ensuing biennium.

The board may, within the constraints of available rural arterial trust funds, consider additional projects for authorization upon a

clear and conclusive showing by the submitting county that the proposed project is of an emergent nature and that its need was unable to be anticipated at the time the six-year program of the county was developed. The proposed projects shall be evaluated on the basis of the priority rating factors specified in RCW 36.79.080. [2015 c 223 s 2. Prior: 2001 c 221 s 2; 2001 c 212 s 26; 1997 c 81 s 6; 1991 c 363 s 84; 1990 c 42 s 104; 1984 c 113 s 1; 1983 1st ex.s. c 49 s 14.]

Purpose—Intent—2001 c 221: "The legislature recognizes that projects that remove impediments to fish passage can greatly increase access to spawning and rearing habitat for depressed, threatened, and endangered fish stocks. Although counties are authorized to use county road funds to replace culverts and other barriers to fish passage, and may conduct streambed and stream bank restoration and stabilization work in conjunction with removal of these fish barriers, counties are reluctant to spend county road funds beyond the county right-of-way because it is unclear whether the use of road funds for this purpose is authorized. The purpose of this act is to clarify that streambed and stream bank restoration and stabilization activities conducted in conjunction with removal of existing barriers to fish passage within county rights-of-way constitute a county road purpose even if this work extends beyond the county right-of-way. The legislature intends this act to be permissive legislation. Nothing in this act is intended to create or impose a legal duty upon counties for salmon recovery work beyond the county right-of-way." [2001 c 221 s 1.]

Purpose—Captions not law—1991 c 363: See notes following RCW 2.32.180.

Purpose—Effective dates—Application—Implementation—1990 c 42: See notes following RCW 46.68.090.

RCW 36.79.150 Allocation of funds to rural arterial projects—Subsequent application for increased allocation—Withholding of funds for noncompliance. (1) Whenever the board approves a rural arterial project it shall determine the amount of rural arterial trust account funds to be allocated for such project. The allocation shall be based upon information contained in the six-year plan submitted by the county seeking approval of the project and upon such further investigation as the board deems necessary. The board shall adopt reasonable rules pursuant to which rural arterial trust account funds allocated to a project may be increased upon a subsequent application of the county constructing the project. The rules adopted by the board shall take into account, but shall not be limited to, the following factors: (a) The financial effect of increasing the original allocation for the project upon other rural arterial projects either approved or requested; (b) whether the project for which an additional allocation is requested can be reduced in scope while retaining a usable segment; (c) whether the original cost of the project shown in the applicant's six-year program was based upon reasonable engineering estimates; and (d) whether the requested additional allocation is to pay for an expansion in the scope of work originally approved.

(2) The board shall not allocate funds, nor make payments under RCW 36.79.160, to any county or city identified by the governor under RCW 36.70A.340. [1991 sp.s. c 32 s 31; 1983 1st ex.s. c 49 s 15.]

RCW 36.79.160 Payment of rural arterial trust account funds.

(1) Upon completion of a preliminary proposal, the county submitting the proposal shall submit to the board its voucher for payment of the trust account share of the cost. Upon the completion of an approved rural arterial construction project, the county constructing the project shall submit to the board its voucher for the payment of the trust account share of the cost. The chair of the board or his or her designated agent shall approve such voucher when proper to do so, for payment from the rural arterial trust account to the county submitting the voucher.

(2) The board may adopt rules providing for the approval of payments of funds in the rural arterial trust account to a county for costs of preliminary proposal, and costs of construction of an approved project from time to time as work progresses. These payments shall at no time exceed the rural arterial trust account share of the costs of construction incurred to the date of the voucher covering the payment. [2009 c 549 s 4129; 1983 1st ex.s. c 49 s 17.]

RCW 36.79.170 County may appeal decision of board—Hearing. The legislative body of any county feeling aggrieved by any action or decision of the board with respect to this chapter may appeal to the secretary of transportation by filing a notice of appeal within ninety days after the action or decision of the board. The notice shall specify the action or decision of which complaint is made. The secretary shall fix a time for a hearing on the appeal at the earliest convenient time and shall notify the county auditor and the chair of the board by certified mail at least twenty days before the date of the hearing. At the hearing the secretary shall receive evidence from the county filing the appeal and from the board. After the hearing the secretary shall make such order as in the secretary's judgment is just and proper. [2009 c 549 s 4130; 1983 1st ex.s. c 49 s 18.]

RCW 36.79.901 Effective date—1983 1st ex.s. c 49. This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, and safety, the support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and shall take effect on July 1, 1983. [1983 1st ex.s. c 49 s 33.]