



Trail Permit

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is a Trail Permit?

A: A trail permit gives permission to use non-maintained county right-of-way for permanent access to private property. The typical need is access to a single-family home. The requirements of the permit are directed by WCC 12.14.

Q: How do I apply?

A: Application forms are available at, and are submitted to, Whatcom County Public Works, Engineering Division. The permit fee is \$250.00, and includes recording fees. Application forms are also available on our website at https://www.whatcomcounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/7532/TrailPermitApp_2019.

The following information is required on the application: assessor's parcel number, location of site, location of proposed driveway on parcel, purpose for right-of-way use, and the direction from the maintained public road you wish to access to your parcel.

Additionally, a scaled detailed sketch of the proposed improvements that includes existing roads, easements, fences, buildings, creeks, ponds, drainage ways, topographical features, and any other relevant features that will aid in analyzing the impact of the proposed roadway. You are required to notify other users on the roadway, if any, of your intent to use and obtain a permit.

Your application will be reviewed and specific requirements will be detailed on your permit. The application is normally processed within two weeks.

Q: What will my requirements be?

A: As a holder of a trail permit, you may be required to construct a new gravel road, upgrade the existing road, or pave a portion of it. You and the other trail permit holders on that road are responsible for continued maintenance of the road until the road has been upgraded to a minimum paved, public road standard. The right-of-way is and remains public. As each situation is different, trail permit requirements will vary.

Generally, the first user is required to clear a portion of the right-of-way and construct a gravel road, with appropriate drainage, within the right-of-way. A survey may be required. A fee for a "End of Maintained County Road" sign and/or street name sign may be required. The permit will also be reviewed by the Critical Areas group – Planning and Development Services.

Each additional user will further upgrade the road by widening and/or other improvements, typically following the private road standards for the zoning.

In addition, all users will provide turnarounds and/or pullouts as required by the County Fire Marshall for emergency vehicles.

The conditions of the trail permit are required to be completed before a final building inspection is performed.

Q: Who inspects the road?

A: The road will need to be inspected two or more times by an inspector from the Division of Engineering. The inspection requirements are listed on your trail permit.

Whatcom County Public Works – Engineering Services

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