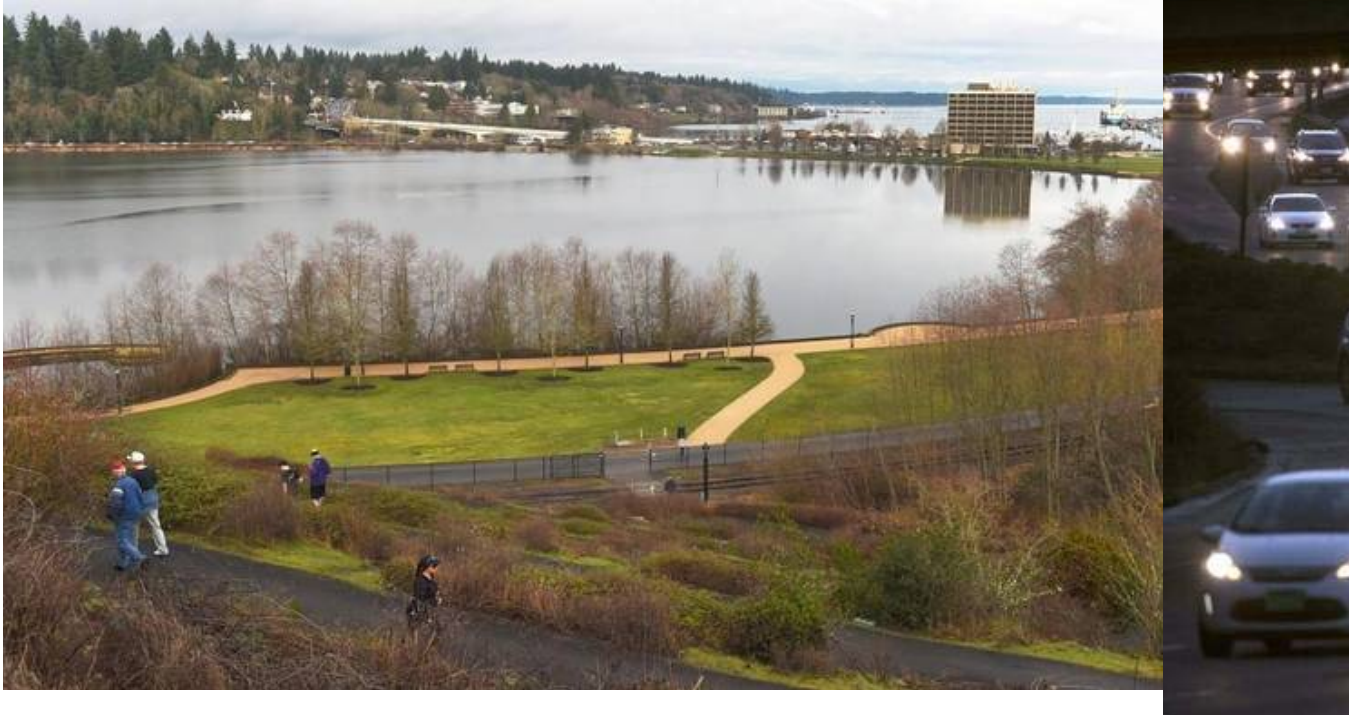


**POLITICS & GOVERNMENT**    DECEMBER 25, 2016 1:45 PM

# Topping region's legislative wish list: Lanes, lake and lager



◀ 1 of 3 ▶



BY ANDY HOBBS  
[ahobbs@theolympian.com](mailto:ahobbs@theolympian.com)

Thurston County cities and economic leaders are backing a set of regional priorities in the 2017 legislative session that focuses on Capitol Lake's future, Interstate 5 traffic and Tumwater's craft brewing/distillery project.

This shared legislative agenda involves Olympia, Lacey and Tumwater along with the Port of Olympia, Thurston Regional Planning Council, Thurston County Economic Development Council and the Thurston Chamber of Commerce.

The three legislative priorities will have a broad appeal and impact on the region in addition to being a significant investment in Thurston County's economic infrastructure, said Doug Mah, a public affairs consultant and former Olympia mayor who was hired by the chamber.

"All three requests are very strategic and incremental," Mah said. "These are measurable things we can do."

## **Capitol Lake's fate**

An environmental impact statement, commonly called an EIS, is likely the next step in the debate over whether Capitol Lake should remain a lake, revert to its natural state as an estuary, or become a combination of both.

The state has included \$5.19 million in Gov. Jay Inslee's 2017-2019 Capital Budget to go toward an EIS. This study is required before any permits can be issued.

Located at the mouth of the Deschutes River, the 260-acre man-made Capitol Lake is filling with sediment and has long generated concerns about pollution, flooding and invasive species such as the New Zealand mud snail.

A committee of state and Thurston County stakeholders has been meeting for the past year in response to directions by the Legislature to "make tangible progress" on a long-term management plan for the lake.

Although a solution to the lake-estuary debate is several years away, the committee is exploring five options: a restored estuary that would create a 500-foot opening at the Fifth Avenue Dam; a managed lake similar to today's scenario; a managed lake with a stream bed that connects Percival Creek with Budd Inlet; a hybrid option that would establish a saltwater estuary on one side of the lake with a reflecting pool on the other side; and a hybrid option with a larger reflecting pool and freshwater input instead of saltwater.

## **Tumwater project**

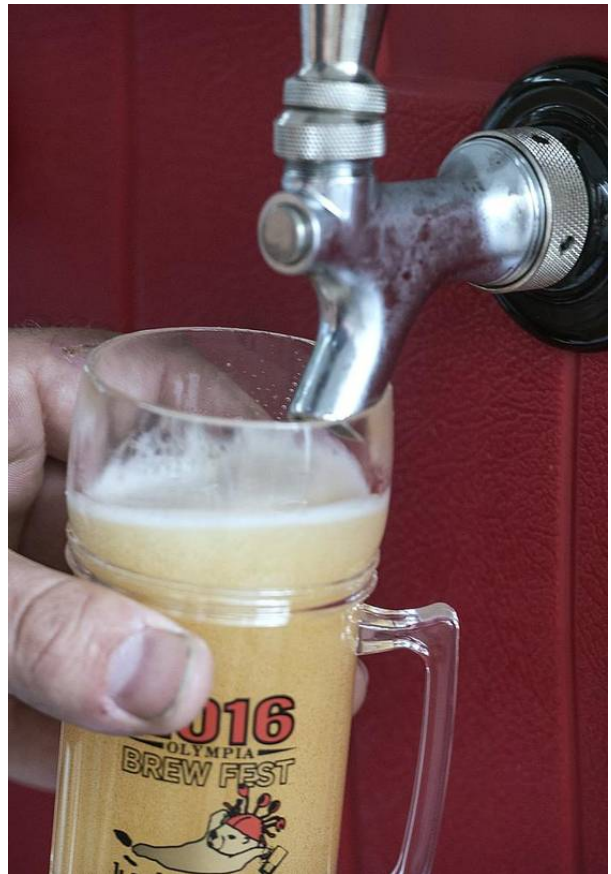
Tumwater is moving forward on a plan to revitalize its long-dormant brewery district by creating a craft brewing and distillery center.

If the grand vision comes to fruition, the center could become an economic and educational hub that capitalizes on Washington's burgeoning craft beer, spirits and cider industry.

The region's 2017 legislative agenda seeks \$2 million in state funding to buy brewing and distilling equipment. South Puget Sound Community College has already committed to a 20-year lease as a partner in the project and is developing an industry-related curriculum, said SPSCC President Timothy Stokes.

Negotiations also are in the works for a private distiller in the Puget Sound region to relocate to Thurston County as part of the project, Stokes said, noting that the company's identity cannot be disclosed until an agreement is reached, expected in early 2017.

According to a 2015 study, Tumwater's craft brewing and distillery proposal could generate up to 662 jobs and more than \$101 million for the local economy.



## **I-5 traffic in Thurston**



The region will lobby for \$5 million to study long-term traffic planning for Interstate 5 between Mounts Road and 93rd Avenue (Exit 116 to Exit 99).

The idea behind this funding request is to prepare that stretch of I-5 for a future lane expansion to accommodate more vehicles.

The state is already targeting congestion on I-5 through Joint Base Lewis-McChord. Nearly \$500 million has been approved by the Legislature to add one lane in each direction on a 7-mile stretch of I-5 between Lakewood and DuPont. Construction could begin as early as March on the southern portion of the project. The overall project will be funded by a 11.9-cent-per-gallon gasoline tax increase that was approved in 2015.

Lacey City Manager Scott Spence said the improvements near JBLM will likely move the congestion south into Thurston County — which means longer commutes and delayed freight shipments through the area. He said a traffic study between Mounts Road and 93rd Avenue is a logical next step for the corridor.

“I-5 is the lifeline of the state of Washington,” Spence said.