

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM. I'm Jim Burke, with local news and commentary for Tuesday, April 11, 2023.

The Washington State Department of Transportation has abandoned plans to shut the Hood Canal Bridge down for repairs for four consecutive weekends in July and August. State officials said the repair work will be done at night in May, June, and September. Local officials, business owners, residents, and others had roundly criticized the earlier plan to close the bridge from Friday through Sundays during the summer tourism season. Work on the floating bridge that links Jefferson County to Kitsap County will now start May 13, with a series of overnight closures which are too numerous to relate on the air. Here is a link to the *PT Leader* article (<https://ptleader.com/stories/update-new-closure-plan-announced-for-hood-canal-bridge,115010>). The State DOT website also has project information at <https://wsdot.wa.gov/construction-planning/search-projects/sr-104-hood-canal-bridge-center-lock-rehabilitation>.

The Washington State Department of Transportation announced its change in plans yesterday, April 10. In an update to the story, the *PT Leader* reported that County Commissioner Greg Brotherton said, "What can I say; this is public process at its finest. I am sure that everyone appreciates WSDOT's responsiveness to concerns from the Olympic Peninsula and the work schedule for this necessary work seems much palatable to travel of all sorts, from emergency, to commerce, to commuting and tourism." Brotherton added, "Thanks to the WSDOT for being flexible."

With the work being weather-dependent, some had stressed concerns that the timeframe for repairs would extend from July and August to even later – putting Port Townsend's Wooden Boat Festival and THING (the three-day arts and music festival at Fort Worden) at risk. The work in May and June will focus on restoring the pyramids on the bridge that help guide the two halves of the floating bridge together. The draw span will stay open during the work, which will be done by using boats and cranes in the water.

Officials also noted that emergency-response crossings on the bridge will not happen during the overnight closures in May and June. The move to abandon the four long-term weekend closures of the bridge will mean doing the repairs in three phases. The phased approach will allow the project's contractor to begin making repairs in late spring and early summer. Officials said weather conditions should be more favorable and keep the closure hours more manageable for residents and visitors alike.

As previously reported on KPTZ News and in the *PT Leader*, Rod Collen of Tacoma took off from Tacoma Narrows Airport at 5:35pm on Monday, March 6 and his plane fell off radar abruptly 45 minutes later. Yesterday officials with the Washington State Department of Transportation reported that he was found dead inside the wreckage of his 2006 Cessna T182 Turbo Skylane where the plane crashed in the forest near Queets. Authorities said Collen likely perished when the plane hit the ground.

Collen, 53, had been missing for 36 days. State officials said his family had been notified yesterday of the discovery. Initially the wreck was difficult to spot and not easily accessible. After the plane was reported missing on March 6, a two-week search started as teams covered a 36-square-mile wooded area for signs of the missing pilot or his plane. Search crews returned to the area on the West End of Jefferson County last Friday, April 7. Authorities said a new theory of what may have happened to the plane was provided by a search-and-rescue partner in British Columbia. Combined with warmer weather that reduced the snow level in the area, wreckage of the white plane was easier to spot. During last Friday's search flight, crews noticed some items of interest, but nothing that could be positively identified from the air, officials said. Returning yesterday morning, a combined team from WASH DOT Air Search and Rescue, Quinault Emergency Management, and a K9 team

from King County Search and Rescue hiked into the area of interest and identified the aircraft. Officials said the crash is being investigated by the National Transportation Safety Board, and the probe could take 12 to 18 months to complete.

The Washington State Department of Health website reports the two-week COVID-19 case rate in Jefferson County is 105 cases per 100,000 people. No one is currently hospitalized. There have been a total of 5007 cases in Jefferson County since the pandemic began. There were no new deaths this week, so the total number of those who have died due to COVID-19 is 36 in Jefferson County. There was a note on the DOH website that reads: “Wednesday, April 5, 2023: Due to clearing a data backlog, death counts may be artificially elevated this week. Interpret with caution.” So, it seems that we are in a transition phase in terms of getting the most accurate data and reporting on it, vis-a-vis COVID-19.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and five Monday through Friday and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us through news@kptz.org. This is Jim Burke. Thanks for listening!