September 24, 2020

Gail the Whale hits the road on Island Transit, sharing a “mask up” public health message during the pandemic

Coupeville, WA – To promote public health during the pandemic, Island Transit and Island County teamed up to feature Gail the Whale on the side of the Island Transit fleet, telling community members to protect each other by wearing a face covering.

“We truly are all in this together, as Gail advocates,” says Todd Morrow, executive director of Island Transit. Morrow says the agency used some of the CARES Act funds for the project and asked Island County to work with the transit system on the public health messaging.

“It made sense for us to partner with Island County as they work diligently to provide information to our community on how to slow the spread of this deadly virus.” Morrow says Island Transit’s entire fleet of 60 buses travel all over Whidbey and Camano islands from early morning to late at night, making the buses rolling billboards with a high level of visibility in Island County.

“Island County is proud to partner with Island Transit in sharing the message from Gail the Whale to support local business and our community by wearing your mask. Together we can be a strong and healthy Island County,” says Island County Commissioner Janet St. Clair whom also serves on the Island Transit Board of Directors. “Island Transit has been a partner in strengthening our community by assuring our residents have transportation access to jobs, healthcare, education and recreation. As an essential service during the pandemic, they are a key to our success in overcoming this crisis.”

Gail the Whale, illustrated by a Coupeville native and current Greenbank resident Scott Rosenkranz, also is being used by the Whidbey and Camano Visitors Bureau to spread the word about scientifically-supported behavior that protects against the virus.

Gail the Whale will remain on Island County buses into 2021. Installation of the bus boards are being done by Island Transit maintenance staff. The first bus rolled out with the new messages last week. The entire Island Transit fleet will carry the messages and installation should be completed by end of next week.

Already the promotion is getting noticed and people are paying attention. “Even our congressional delegation is asking us about Gail the Whale,” says Morrow. “I think that’s a testament to how important it is for us all to pull together during the pandemic and protect each other by doing simple things like covering our mouth and nose for the protection of others. We know how the virus is spread, so wearing a face covering in public, whether it’s on the bus or someplace else, is the safest way to protect everyone.”

Gail the Whale will be on the island for a while. “Island Transit is proud to be part of the best solutions we have available to us at this time to combat this virus,” says Morrow, adding the transit system has
gone to extraordinary measures to slow the spread of the virus among bus passengers with additional sanitizing equipment and cleaning routines, and new health and safety measures required for all operators and passengers. The system provides face masks to passengers who don’t have them and limits seating on the bus to promote social distancing. For more information Island Transit’s COVID-19 response, go to www.IslandTransit.org/COVID-19.

**Media Contact:** Rena Shawver, 360-878-1939

High-resolution image available on request.