

# Received

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To: Yelm City Examiner and Council Members  
Re: Wal-Mart and environmental issues (traffic and urban blight)

**I am in favor of the coming of Wal-Mart to this area.** Please permit me to respond to three alleged traffic problems that have been mentioned as reasons to reject Wal-Mart, general traffic patterns, tourist traffic patterns, and school traffic patterns. In addition, a fourth potential problem of urban blight has been mentioned, and I will address it briefly.

1. **General traffic patterns through Yelm.** It has been falsely claimed that the addition of Wal-Mart will create an unbearable amount of extra traffic through an already overburdened Yelm. This line of thinking is unreasonable. Let me point out two reasons why this issue should not be held against Wal-Mart.
  - A. It has been claimed that the existence of Wal-Mart will overload Yelm's already-clogged main street. Rather than rejecting Wal-Mart because it shows up Yelm's existing and future problem, let Yelm be thankful for the wake-up call and take the responsibility to deal with its problem. Yes, Yelm has a traffic problem. It is not Wal-Mart's fault. Someone in Yelm's past did not plan ahead. Let the present Yelm administration choose to recognize the problem and to **fix it**. Let Yelm recognize that, like every community in the whole world, it is going to grow as people are being born and as people and new businesses are moving in. Let Yelm choose to widen its main street and to provide for parallel through streets and to seek for not just one but multiple alternative "belts". Why should both locals and travelers have to dread going through the town of Yelm? Why should not Yelm be known as an innovative city that attracts people to its businesses by providing convenient traffic patterns and parking areas? Why not let this be a chance for Yelm to shine, to lead the way?
  - B. Although some future traffic will go to and from the new store, it will not be significantly more than the traffic that already travels *through* town for the purpose of *leaving* town to shop at Wal-Mart's and malls in Lacey, Spanaway, or other such places. Why should locals have to shop elsewhere? Why not fix Yelm's problems and keep its business (including Wal-Mart) local?
2. **Tourist traffic patterns through Yelm.** It has been mentioned that such environmental delights as Mt. Rainier (and various lakes, parks, and NW Trek) are in Yelm's large impact area, drawing tourist traffic through the town. This has been listed as another reason to reject Wal-Mart. Of course, this is totally unreasonable, as it is another example of an existing situation that Yelm needs to deal with, independently of Wal-Mart, or even perhaps in conjunction with Wal-

Mart. As a tourist drives to Mt. Rainier, he encounters one extremely unfriendly small town, Elbe. In fact, I cannot think of a single community on the way that actually welcomes visitors. Having come from an area where businesses thrive on the tourism industry, I find it to be a strange phenomenon that here they shun it. People need to be able to see what the environment has to offer in a safe and friendly manner. Yelm could capitalize on its location by offering tourists convenient traveling and cheerful eating, gift, restroom, overnight and other accommodations. A sign could read "Last friendly facilities before Mt. Rainier". Ok, so I'm partly joking, but seriously, why should not Yelm rise to the occasion and take this opportunity to recognize that it has a traffic problem (for tourists, locals, and Wal-Mart) and **fix it**? Don't hold it against Wal-Mart—they didn't create the problem.

3. **School traffic patterns through Yelm.** It certainly is true that the Yelm bus routes and ride lengths are a problem that needs to be improved. Again, this is an issue that Yelm needs to address, independently of the Wal-Mart issue. Wal-Mart has not caused the problem and should not be banned because of it. Yelm and the county and state chose to consolidate schools, some of them on Yelm's one main road, rather than to provide smaller schools throughout the community, closer to where students live. Testimony has been given that the ensuing long bus rides are unhealthy for students. Yelm and the county and state need to recognize their existing and future problem and **fix it**. Don't hold it against Wal-Mart.
4. Potential urban blight. It has been falsely suggested that urban blight will occur in Yelm if Wal-Mart is allowed to enter the area. On the contrary, people currently leave the area to travel to Wal-Mart and to malls in other areas. If there is a local Wal-Mart, it will keep some customers in Yelm. The shopping that people once did in other communities at the same time they went to Wal-Mart, could now be contained in Yelm—if the Yelm businesses are ready for it. Instead of all the constant whining and griping by Yelm businesses and their Commerce group, (which attitude repels potential customers), let them rise to the challenge to creatively plan how they can attract and serve existing and new customers.

Yelm, I hope you will choose to recognize and **fix** your existing and long-term traffic and business problems rather than ignoring them and blaming Wal-Mart. I hope you will choose to joyfully embrace the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and its natural growth. Wal-Mart is only one small part of that growth. Please work out the details peacefully. Perhaps together Yelm and Wal-Mart can even help each other to solve some of these and other social and environmental impact issues.

Thank you for your time and consideration.  
Sincerely,



Ms. MaryAnn Stuart