

The Lummi Nation announced today an extension of a 60-day deadline for Whatcom County to negotiate a lease agreement to continue operating its Lummi Island ferry from the reservation.

The deadline for completing negotiations is now May 15.

“Substantial progress has been made in negotiations toward the Nation’s goal of making traffic conditions safer for everyone,” said Richard Jefferson, the Lummi Nation planning director. “And negotiations are continuing.”

The Lummi Indian Business Council and the Whatcom County Council are expected to consider concepts developed by the negotiating teams at their next meetings. And on Wednesday, the negotiating teams plan to meet again.

Over the last three weeks Whatcom County has joined the Lummi Nation in discussions to improve traffic safety on Haxton Way and other areas impacted by the operation of the Lummi Island ferry.

Whatcom County has operated the ferry without a valid contract for 25 years. In January 2011, Whatcom County presented what it called a “best and final” offer, but it did not address the safety concerns. Whatcom County returned to negotiations after the Lummi Nation set its 60-day deadline.

The Lummi Nation’s expectation is that Haxton Way, the primary road for a majority of the Reservation residents and 900 Lummi Islanders, will be safer through this anticipated lease agreement. Making Haxton Way safer matters to everyone who drives, cycles and walks on it.

The Lummi Nation is hopeful that a lease agreement can be reached by May 15 to satisfy the needs of all involved.

Read more: <http://blogs.bellinghamherald.com/politics/lummi-island-ferry/lummi-nation-extends-ferry-deadline-to-may-15/#ixzz1IoENrK9R>