



For Immediate Release

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Government and Media Relations

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Washington State Patrol Refers Charges on Five Individuals Who Blocked I-5

- Charges Include: 2nd Degree Criminal Trespass, Failure to Disperse, Disorderly Conduct, and Obstruction
- Two Additional Individuals Investigated with Possible Referrals in Near Future
- Agency Seeks Public's Assistance in Identifying Additional Persons of Interest

Olympia, Wash. - The Washington State Patrol (WSP) has referred charges for five individuals (3 Males and 2 Females) who played roles in the protest and purposeful blocking of Interstate 5 in downtown Seattle on the afternoon of January 6, 2024. Charges, including 2nd Degree Criminal Trespass, Failure to Disperse, Disorderly Conduct, and Obstruction have been referred to the King County Prosecutor's Office who will make the final determination if criminal charges will be filed. Two other individuals have been identified and remain under investigation with possible referrals in the near future.

While free speech is a sacred right in our democratic system, protests that have illegally moved onto and caused the closing of our freeways and streets have led to deadly outcomes in our state and others and WSP is committed to deterring future incidents. WSP seeks the assistance of the public in the identification of the individuals in the attached photo gallery. These individuals are believed to have played a role in the dangerous freeway takeover in January and anyone with information on their identities or whereabouts or who have additional video or photographs that might assist in the investigation are asked to contact WSP at sistips@wsp.wa.gov or Sergeant Chase Van Cleave at (425) 240-4161.

"As I noted soon after the freeway closure incident, this is not about the rights of free speech or assembly. There can be no doubt that the Washington State Patrol respects and protects those rights. This is about holding people accountable for unlawful and dangerous acts that put the traveling public, our first responders, and yes, the protestors themselves, in danger," noted WSP Chief John R. Batiste. The Chief continued, "Stepping foot on a freeway to highlight your own individual cause is a self-centered act that is dangerous, foolhardy, disruptive, and most assuredly illegal. We have asked for public assistance in identifying suspected law breakers during otherwise legal protests before and we do so

when we see behavior that is too dangerous to be tolerated. We will exhaust all possible investigatory efforts to catch those responsible and deter others from engaging in similarly dangerous behavior in the future.”

On Saturday, January 6, 2024, beginning shortly after 1:00 p.m., all north-bound lanes of I-5 freeway were closed in downtown Seattle for approximately five hours after protestors illegally blocked the safe flow of traffic by the stopping and abandoning of 12 vehicles. In a coordinated effort, a large group of protestors cut through a WSDOT safety fence and began to occupy the freeway road surface. They refused to leave the area and subsequently eight individuals bound themselves together in a manner designed to further delay attempts at safe evacuation. As WSP gathered the equipment and personnel resources necessary to safely and effectively process a large crowd that was using choreographed tactics of delay, a squall of threatening weather dispersed the crowd before any on-site arrests commenced. After the protestors left the freeway, the abandoned vehicles had to be searched, using bomb-sniffing dogs, before being towed away.

WSP’s investigation of additional suspects continues and has included the review of over 40 hours of on-site video and social media posts, plus additional video received from concerned citizens, as well numerous news broadcasts and photographs. The extreme level of danger this sort of activity creates for all involved, added to the impact to local, state, and federal commerce caused by freeway closure, as well as the dangerous diversion of law enforcement resources from other emergency response duties, warrant continuing investigative efforts.

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