

= Washington State Route 542 =

State Route 542 (SR 542) is a 57 @. @ 24 @- @ mile @- @ long (92 @. @ 12 km) state highway in the U.S. state of Washington , serving Mount Baker in Whatcom County . SR 542 travels east as the Mount Baker Highway from an interchange with Interstate 5 (I @- @ 5) in Bellingham through the Nooksack River valley to the Mt . Baker Ski Area at Austin Pass . It serves as the main highway to Mount Baker and the communities of Deming , Kendall , and Maple Falls along the Nooksack River . The highway was constructed in 1893 by Whatcom County as a wagon road between Bellingham and Maple Falls and was added to the state highway system as a branch of State Road 1 in 1925 . The branch was transferred to Primary State Highway 1 (PSH 1) during its creation in 1937 and became SR 542 during the 1964 highway renumbering .

= = Route description = =

SR 542 begins as Sunset Drive and the Mount Baker Highway at a partial cloverleaf interchange with I @- @ 5 to the northeast of downtown Bellingham . The highway travels northeast through suburban neighborhoods along Squalicum Creek and passes Squalicum High School as it leaves the city of Bellingham . SR 542 continues northeast through rural Whatcom County , crossing the Nooksack River and intersecting SR 9 at a roundabout . The concurrent SR 9 and SR 542 travel southeast through the community of Deming along a BNSF rail line and passes Mount Baker Senior High School . SR 542 leaves SR 9 east of Deming and turns north along the North Fork of the Nooksack River and the eastern slope of Sumas Mountain to Kendall , where it serves as the southern terminus of SR 547 . The Mount Baker Highway turns east and continues along the Nooksack River North Fork into the Mount Baker @- @ Snoqualmie National Forest at Glacier in the foothills of Mount Baker . SR 542 turns south and serves the Mt . Baker Ski Area on the northeast side of the mountain before splitting into a one @- @ way pair around Picture Lake . The Mount Baker Highway continues through Austin Pass and ends at Artist Point , located at 5 @, @ 210 feet (1 @, @ 588 @. @ 01 m) above sea level on Kulshan Ridge .

Every year , the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) conducts a series of surveys on its highways in the state to measure traffic volume . This is expressed in terms of average annual daily traffic (AADT) , which is a measure of traffic volume for any average day of the year . In 2011 , WSDOT calculated that the busiest section of SR 542 was the I @- @ 5 interchange in Bellingham , serving 38 @, @ 000 vehicles , while the least busy section of SR 542 was the one @- @ way pair around Picture Lake in Mount Baker @- @ Snoqualmie National Forest , serving 230 vehicles . The Mount Baker Highway is designated as a National Forest Scenic Byway and serves as the eastern section of the Ski to Sea Race between Mount Baker and Maple Falls , a 90 @- @ mile (140 km) Memorial Day race with seven legs hosting seven events . The eastern terminus of SR 542 , at Artist Point on Kulshan Ridge , is closed annually by WSDOT between October and July due to extreme weather conditions .

= = History = =

The Mount Baker Highway was constructed by Whatcom County in 1893 as a wagon road traveling northeast from Bellingham along the Nooksack River through Deming and Kendall to Maple Falls . The wagon road was extended from Maple Falls through Glacier to the Mt . Baker Ski Area at Heather Meadows began 1921 and ended in 1926 . The Mount Baker Highway was added to the state highway system in 1925 as the Austin Pass branch of State Road 1 and was extended to its current terminus at Artist Point in 1931 . The highway was closed seasonally between Glacier and Artist Point until the filming of The Call of the Wild in 1934 and 1935 prompted interest in the Mount Baker area . The Department of Highways began clearing the highway of snow during the winter of 1934 for the film and continued annually between Glacier and Heather Meadows ; however , the highway was not cleared during World War II due to gasoline shortages . The highway was designated as the Austin Pass branch of PSH 1 during the creation of the primary and secondary

state highways in 1937 and renumbered to SR 542 in 1964 . The entire route , between Bellingham and Austin Pass , was designated as part of the Washington State Scenic and Recreational Highways program in 1987 and a National Forest Scenic Byway on November 1 , 1988 .

= = Major intersections = =

The entire highway is in Whatcom County .