

The *Gray Notebook* Evolution

“GNB the 3rd Generation”

*Content, communication and design:
Relevance for today*

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WSDOT's Brand for Communicating Performance

Performance Journalism:

“Because performance is more than just a number, it is a story”

Key principles:

Seven principles guide the production of the *Gray Notebook*. These principles stand the test of time and are as relevant today as when the publication began.

WSDOT's Performance Journalism Approach: Key Principles *(continued)*

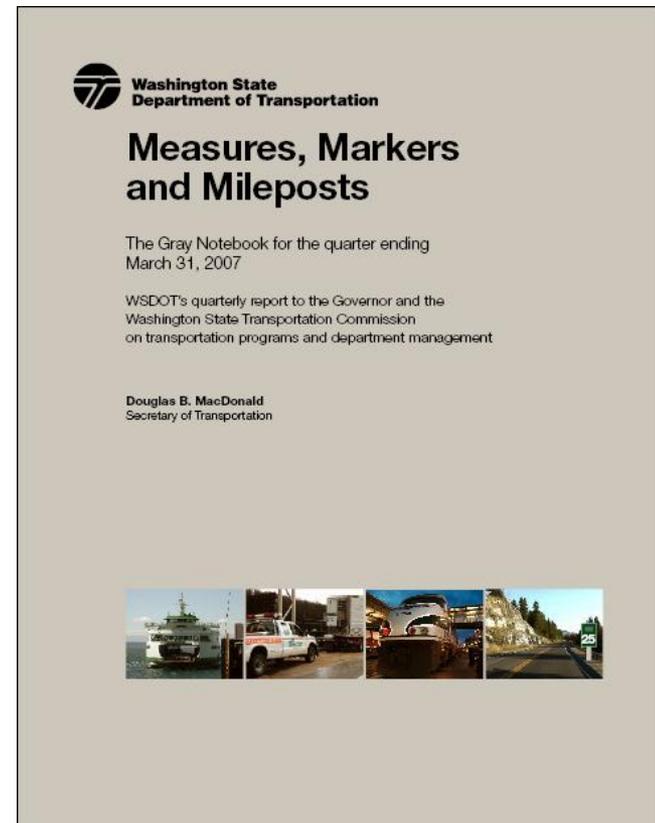
- ▶ **Good stories combined with good graphics:** Use narrative reporting to make it real and tell the story: sounds simple, but can be a difficult task
- ▶ **Good writing:** Use a reader-friendly approach
- ▶ **Good data and rigorous systems analysis:** Unyielding pursuit for data integrity and quality analysis

WSDOT's Performance Journalism Approach: Key Principles *(continued)*

- ▶ **Good graphics and visualization:** Every graph tells a story, every graph asks a question
- ▶ **Good format/presentation:** Content-driven design: entice the reader to engage with the material, quickly grasp the message, not distract from content
- ▶ **Quality control:** It's your credibility
- ▶ **Good timing:** Lead, don't follow; provide frequent and timely information

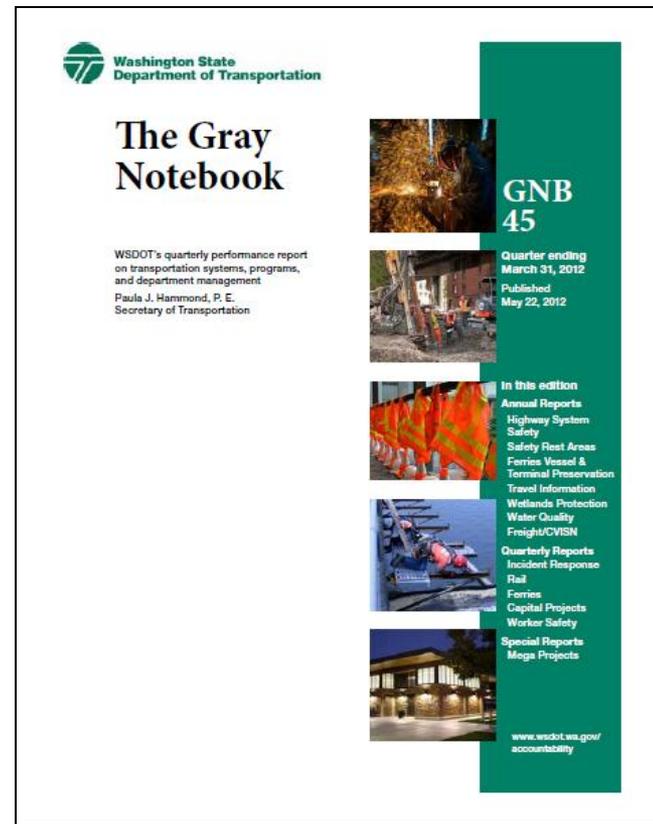
Evolution of the GNB

- ▶ The look of the *Gray Notebook* has evolved through the years.
- ▶ It began in 2001 as Measures, Markers and Mileposts and was referred to as the *Gray Notebook* after the color of paper on which it was printed.



Evolution of the GNB (continued)

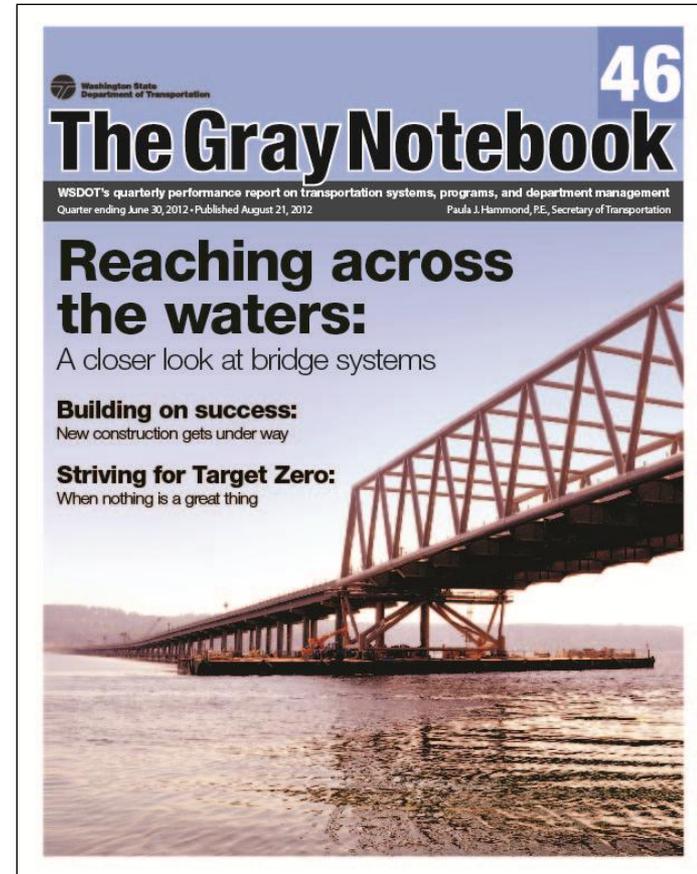
- ▶ The 2nd Generation: The last major change was with edition No. 30 in 2008.
 - Organization by state transportation policy goal
 - Close alignment with strategic plan “Business Directions”
 - Gray bars with summary results for each topic
- ▶ Starting the 3rd generation with edition No. 45 (March 2012), we made some subtle changes in to improve readability.



Strategy 3 for GNB Third Generation: “Retail” Approach to Design

The Reveal:

- ▶ Magazine-style cover
- ▶ Single, full-page photo related to key article
- ▶ Custom cover headlines for each issue
- ▶ More active headers on individual articles
- ▶ Performance measures up front in article
- ▶ Connection to press releases as well as social media
- ▶ Still evolving – more to come



Dividers

- To match our new cover look, our section dividers are changing, too.
- We are exploring including a “summary” element on dividers to tell the performance story at-a-glance.



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Safety

In Safety:

Worker Safety	2
Highway System Safety Programs: Focus on Traffic Fatalities	4
Highway System Safety Programs: Focus on Target Zero	5

See also

Incident Response	24
Workforce Training	69

Earlier safety-related articles

Find previous articles in these GNB editions:

Rest Areas and Rumble Strips	GNB 45
Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety	GNB 44
Highway System Safety Programs: Focus on Before and After Results of Projects	GNB 43
Highway System Safety Programs: Focus on Traffic Fatalities/ Target Zero	GNB 42

State policy goal
To provide for and improve the safety and security of transportation customers and the transportation system.

WSDOT's business direction
To vigilantly reduce risks and improve safety on all state-owned transportation modes; reduce fatalities and serious injuries; assist local communities in identifying effective solutions to transportation safety needs.

Congestion Report

Not to be outdone by our *Gray Notebook* cover redesign, the 2012 *Congestion Report* has a new look as well.

Content is focused on Moving Washington strategies.

Future work includes maps and GIS layers of the various corridor based metrics and results.



Recognized as a Leader: Truth, Transparency and Transportation

In September 2012, Governing Magazine wrote an article highlighting the *Gray Notebook*.



“The (Gray) Notebook provides **gold-standard** data in a way that tells a story and is accessible to the average reader...”

“... As Washington state’s experience is showing, **doing the right thing** by being transparent about performance can be a win-win. Making investments based on objective data showing that an agency is using public money efficiently is **how democratic government is supposed to work.**”

GNB The Third Generation: Why Evolve? Why Now?

- ▶ **Continuous improvement** – We are not resting on our laurels. The *Gray Notebook*, as a Best Practice, has a responsibility to stay current, relevant and innovative.
- ▶ **Lean times call for a lean approach** - The *Gray Notebook* should and must optimize the value it delivers to the agency and our stakeholders.
- ▶ **Demonstrating economic benefits** – new revenue discussions - Making the case for funding and demonstrating WSDOT's effective use of past gas tax revenues has been The *Gray Notebook's* greatest strength and WSDOT's asset - this will evolve further with focus on economic benefits.
- ▶ **Map-21 Requirements** - Renewed focus on performance analysis and reporting, possibly with changing metrics, national targets and new reporting standards.

Strategy 1 for GNB Third Generation: Refocus on Content-Driven Design

- ▶ While adhering to Performance Journalism principles focusing on content-driven design, the *Gray Notebook* evolution began with edition 45 and will continue:
 - Instead of report titles that read like stale labels, we are writing **engaging headlines** that draw the reader into the story.
 - We're moving **performance results up front**, to the first paragraph, whenever possible.
 - We are using **content-driven principles**, meaning the design is dictated by the content, not the other way around. For example, we create simple page designs that utilize the right amount of space for the article - and appropriate graphics - rather than expanding an article to fill the space.

Strategy 1 for GNB Third Generation: Refocus on Content-Driven Design (continued)

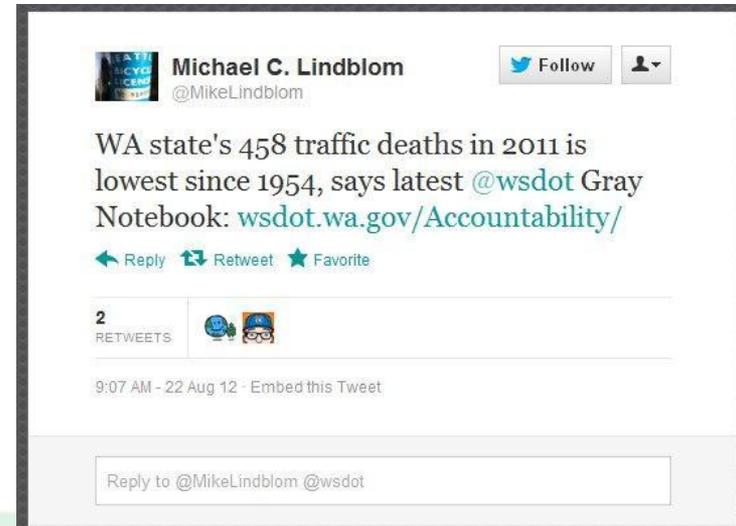
- We admit it – sometimes facts and figures can be boring. We’ve always taken a “**plain English**” approach to writing the *Gray Notebook*, but we can do better. So we’re making our writing more active in an effort to engage readers and better hold their interest.
- In the *Gray Notebook* evolution, we’re doing our best to just **say no to jargon and the overuse of acronyms**. And if we must use an acronym, we’ll make sure we explain it.
- Lean times call for a lean approach – we are **reducing our footprint** and beginning a process to evaluate not only what belongs in the *Gray Notebook*, but publication schedules as well. However, while we are seeking a leaner footprint (hence fewer pages), it is not about page numbers but about relevance and content.

Strategy 2 for GNB Third Generation: Communication

- ▶ Through 2011, when we published the *Gray Notebook* we sent a press release to tell the world about it.
- ▶ With GNB 45, we sent three separate press releases over the course of a month, highlighting key articles in the publication. Three press releases did a couple of things:
 - They increased the visibility of the publication
 - They gave the publication a longer shelf life

Strategy 2 for GNB Third Generation: Communication (continued)

- ▶ We think we're on to something here.
 - We're working with Communications staff to include **Gray Notebook references in WSDOT press releases** whenever possible.
 - We'll continue with **three releases**. We are currently evaluating sending a pre-publication press release "teaser" to establish early interest in the next edition.
 - We are **Tweeting**. We are leveraging the impact of social media.



Strategy 4 for GNB Third Generation: Focus on relevance

- ▶ Throughout the *Gray Notebook* evolution, **relevance** remains paramount. Our guiding philosophy:
 - The *Gray Notebook* is effective, efficient, innovative and performance-driven.
 - The *Gray Notebook* is a conduit that allows “just in time” response to inquiries (possible due to the public, on line repository of 11 years of detailed systems performance information gathered in the publication process) and tells our story.
 - The *Gray Notebook* serves many audiences and uses jargon-free plain English to translate technical information whenever possible.
 - The *Gray Notebook* is a tool used by programs to improve performance and manage program results.

Next Steps

- ▶ Our multi-phase process of updating the content, design and communication of the *Gray Notebook* will continue over the next several months. Among our tasks:
 - We will solicit management and stakeholder input on key elements.
 - We will discuss how management is using the metrics and results in day-to-day program management.
 - We will explore GIS applications to utilize a more visual approach to telling our story.

Next Steps (continued)

- We will focus on communicating the economic benefits of our investments.
- We will continue to improve the readability of the publication.
- We will emphasize our challenges and opportunities, such as efficiency gains and innovations, but also system backlogs and growing funding needs.
- We will continue to use our performance data to tell *THE STORY* to make a case for funding.

The *Gray Notebook* will continue to evolve, through content, communication and design that is credible, resourceful, reliable and relevant.

Questions?

For more information regarding the evolution of the *Gray Notebook*, please contact:

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