

WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Meeting Summary February 20 & 21, 2013

The regular meeting of the Washington State Transportation Commission was called to order at 9:00 a.m., on Wednesday, February 20, 2013, in Room 1D2 of the Transportation Building in Olympia, Washington.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

Chairman O'Neal opened the meeting at 9:05 a.m.

Commissioner Haley moved adoption of the January meeting summary. Commissioner Tortorelli seconded the motion. The January meeting summary was adopted unanimously.

Legislative Update

Staff led the Commission through an update on 2013 legislation impacting the Commission and its work. The Chairman and Executive Director briefed the Commission on their testimony in Committee on several bills:

- Supporting HB 1051 and SB 5584, authorizing the sale of naming rights;
- Opposing SB 5502 and SB 5592, establishing specific limits and requirements for toll-setting;
- No position on SB 5611, specifying geographic and political representation for Transportation Commissioners

Commissioners also reported on meetings with legislators and the general agreement with the pace and direction of the road usage charge work.

Scheduling for TNB and SR 520 toll setting

Commissioners agreed to the following dates for public input and public hearings on tolling revisions.

For TNB toll-setting:

- Public Input Meeting, April 15 in Gig Harbor
- Public Hearing, May 20 in Gig Harbor

For SR 520 toll-setting, if needed:

- Public Input Meeting, April 18 in Bellevue
- Public Hearing, May 23 in Seattle

The Next WTP

Staff briefed the Commission on the need to phase work on The Next WTP as a result of slower than expected federal guidance on performance measurement. The proposed revised workplan would generate an updated WTP Policy Plan by December 2014 and a complete, federally compliant WTP about 16 months later.

Commissioner Parker moved adoption of the revised workplan and budget. Commissioner Litt seconded the motion and it was adopted.

Commission Reports

Commissioner Haley indicated that her presentation to the Tri-Cities Good Roads Association generated the usual questions about funding and road usage charging. She gave kudos to Judy Lorenzo for her work in bringing along the Walla Walla-Milton-Freewater MPO.

Chairman O'Neal reported on his participation in a Freight Roundtable in Auburn organized by the Port of Seattle.

Commissioner Tortorelli indicated that the Spokane Good Roads Association would like to host the Commission for lunch when we visit Spokane in September.

Action/Follow-up: (1) Provide the revised workplan and budget for the Next WTP to legislative staff and legislators. (2) Work with Commissioner Tortorelli on the Spokane trip.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Secretary Hammond thanked the Commission for its support over time. She also talked about the progress in developing support for transportation funding in the 2013 legislative session and her hope that the Commission continue to stress the need to fund maintenance and preservation.

The Chairman thanked Paula Hammond for her leadership. ***The Commission adopted Resolution 711, honoring Secretary Hammond, by acclamation.***

Commissioner Haley congratulated Secretary Hammond for setting the path and the example for women in transportation, especially by placing so many women in key roles throughout the agency.

WSDOT REGIONAL OVERVIEWS – EASTERN REGION

Keith Metcalf, Regional Administrator, briefed the Commission on key projects and work in his 7-county region with 3600 lane miles and 1560 center lane miles.

The North Spokane Corridor is the largest project. A 10.5 mile, multimodal, north/south route through Spokane, it is a 60 mph freeway linking US 2 and US 395 north to Canada. It directs regional freight and vehicle traffic away from downtown, schools, and neighborhoods. The north half – 5.7 miles – is complete and opened to traffic in 2012. Completing the southern half to I-90 is the region's top priority.

The cost of the unfunded portion totals \$1.3 billion. To get to Interstate 90, \$750 million will build a drivable, 4-lane, divided facility from Francis Avenue to I-90 in 3 useable segments to open as work progresses:

- Francis to Spokane River - \$260 Million
- Spokane River to Trent - \$160 Million
- Trent to Interstate 90 - \$330 Million

The revamped design will allow use of the full 10.5 mile corridor, expandable as traffic needs increase, with an interim I-90 connection.

The *MV Sanpoil*, the new ferry replacing the Keller Ferry connecting SR 21 in Ferry and Lincoln Counties, will be trucked to Grand Coulee Dam and assembled beginning in March. *MV Sanpoil* is on schedule to launch in July 2013.

Other major work or needs in the Eastern Region includes:

- Widening I-90 from Spokane to the Idaho border (partially funded)
- I-90 west Plains interchange improvements (unfunded)
- US 195 Hatch Road to I-90 improvements (partially funded)
- Widening SR 904 from Four Lakes to Cheney (unfunded)
- Pavement preservation is seriously underfunded. Routes with lower levels of freight movement are being converted from asphalt to chip-seal. But, even by stretching funds like this, there is still not enough money to maintain all the roadway. The Eastern Region usually resurfaces 250 miles a year; this year it plans to resurface only 150 miles.

Eastern Region Update

Action/Follow-up: None

TACOMA NARROWS BRIDGE (TNB) CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC)

Chris Meyer and Al Weaver, representing the TNB CAC, responded to the Guiding Principles adopted by the Commission in January. The TNB CAC suggested the following modifications:

- Principle 1 “The Sufficient Minimum Balance shall not be less than 12.5% (equivalent to having 45 days of working capital) year round, measured on a three-month rolling average.”
- Principle 2 “Maintaining the relationship between the levels of payments – ETC, cash, Pay by Mail – at a minimum of \$1.00 or greater, respectively, to reflect actual costs, revenue foregone, and incentive the frequent user.”
- Principle 3 Continue to annually review the toll rates.

Commissioners discussed the modifications of principle 1 and agreed to the suggested change. The CAC representatives, with commission staff, discussed the significance of measuring the SMB policy under a 3-month retrospective average versus a monthly measurement. The CAC expressed concern that requiring fund balance to not be less than 45 days of working capital measured on a monthly basis was very restrictive and could cause a rate increase because of failure to meet this test in a 1 or 2 month period. Instead, it was discussed that applying a three month trailing average would help remedy the issue of providing flexibility yet maintaining the integrity of the 45 day working capital requirement. Commissioners acknowledge the CAC’s concern and agreed to the 3-month trailing average measurement. The commission further discussed principles 2 & 3 but no decision was made.

Action/Follow-up: None

TACOMA NARROWS BRIDGE TOLL RATE SETTING UPDATE

The commission took a vote to amend the SMB Policy and adopt the newly discussed 3-month rolling average test. The vote carried 6-0.

Craig Stone Assistant Secretary, WSDOT Toll Division, walked through the TNB 1st and 2nd quarter financial results and the results of the requested toll rate scenarios. Commissioners asked why transaction costs have increased. Toll booth collection costs have risen because more toll payers are using credit cards to pay rather than using cash. Additionally, toll booth customers’ transaction volume has decreased which causes the per transaction cost allocation to increase over the smaller volume of customers.

CAC toll rate recommendation:

Al Weaver, representing the CAC for the Tacoma Narrows Bridge provided the CAC rate proposal: The CAC recommended the following 2-Axle toll rates become effective July 1, 2013.

Good-To-Go: \$4.25
Toll Booth: \$5.25
Pay By Mail: \$6.25

Chairman Weaver commented that the recommended toll rates meet the newly adopted three month trailing average test under 2 of the 3 traffic test discussed by the Commission and the CAC for FY2014. He further commented that the CAC desires to continue with the annual review process for the toll rate structure.

WSDOT also reported that the payment rate on pay-by-mail and violations is higher for SR 520 than TNB.

Commissioner Haley moved the Commission adopt the revised TNB Toll-Setting Policy. Commissioner Royer seconded the motion. It was adopted unanimously.

[TNB Toll Rate Setting Update](#)
[Notice of Citation Proviso Report July-Sept](#)
[Notice of Citation Proviso Report Oct-Dec](#)

Action/Follow-up: None

SR 520 TOLL RATE SETTING UPDATE

Craig Stone Assistant Secretary, WSDOT Toll Division and Helena Kennedy Smith, Director of Tolling Finance and Program Management, briefed the Commission on the SR 520 1st and 2nd quarter financial results. After one year of operation, the second quarter results show:

- Average weekday daily traffic exceeds forecast by +3.8%
- Average weekend daily traffic exceeds forecast by more than +22%
- Overall, average daily traffic was +6.7% above forecast

Adjusted gross revenue, after an allowance for doubtful accounts, was 7.8% above forecasts after the second quarter of FY 2013.

Craig Stone and Helena Kennedy Smith next briefed the Commission on the SR 520 and the results of the requested toll rate scenarios for SR 520. The Base Case, currently used for the financial plan, assumes a 2.5 percent rate increase in FY 14, 15, and 16 and a one-time increase in FY17 (15 percent-weekdays; 2.5 percent-weekends). There are no planned increases for financial purposes after 2017.

The scenarios selected for testing are:

- Scenario A: No rate increase for FY 14 (all other years continue with rate increases currently used for financial plan)

- Scenario B: 3.5 percent rate increase for FY 14 (all other years continue with rate increases currently used for financial plan)
 - Scenario C: 2.5 percent rate increase, peak afternoon period is extended until 7:00 pm (currently peak period is 3-6 pm)
 - Scenario D: Gradually growing rate increases in order to avoid larger increases later
- Only Scenario A did not meet the financial plan requirements.

[SR 520 Toll Rate Setting Update](#)

Action/Follow-up: Commission tolling team will work with staff to develop a toll rate proposal.

SR 167 HOT LANES

SR 167 HOT Lanes use and revenue continues slow, steady growth. Year-to-date net revenue is \$178,000.

Action/Follow-up: None

I-90 TOLLING PROJECT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Craig Stone, Assistant Secretary, Toll Division, WSDOT and John White, Director of Toll Corridors Development, WSDOT briefed the Commission on its I-90 tolling work. Tolling I-90 was studied by the 2006 Expert Review Panel and the 2008 520 Toll Implementation Committee. Tolling was recommended by the 2009 Legislative Work Group to start no sooner than 2014, if additional funding for SR 520 is not found. The work underway complements WSDOT's I-90 Bellevue to North Bend Corridor Planning Study a strategy for transportation improvements east of I-405.

In January, WSDOT kicked off environmental assessment (EA) to review effects of tolling on I-90 between I-5 and I-405. The process includes outreach to communities along the corridor and working with local jurisdictions. Three scoping meetings were held in Mercer Island, Bellevue, and Seattle. The public scoping period concludes on February 22. Public hearings are expected in November 2013, with findings in early 2014.

WSDOT is analyzing travel patterns on Mercer Island through travel demand, a license plate survey, a residential travel survey to be mailed to all residents, and a business travel survey that will reach 3000 businesses.

General themes in comments so far:

- Tolls not fair to Mercer Island residents, businesses, economy
- Leaves MI residents no free option to get off the Island
- General opposition to tolls on I-90; public overtaxed
- Look at other ways to fund SR 520 besides tolling I-90 (i.e.: MVET)
- Look at regional tolling rather than just I-90 users
- Questions about precedent for tolling one facility to pay for another
- Questions about legality of tolling an Interstate

Mr. Stone clarified that WSDOT has never talked about tolling both ways off Mercer Island.

Multiple tolling options will be considered:

- Tolls collected between Seattle and Mercer Island
- Toll collected between Bellevue and Seattle and Mercer Island
- Partial tolls in each direction off Mercer Island

Some Commissioners noted that tolling on I-90 should be considered as tolling a corridor or system. Mr. Stone explained that WSDOT is eligible to toll I-90 under the Federal Highway Administration's Value Pricing Pilot Program (VPPP). Washington is one of 15 states part of the VPPP. Under this program, excess revenue over and above debt service and operations and maintenance costs for the I-90 tolling system would be available to help fund the SR 520 program. FHWA requires the completion of a formal tolling agreement between the two agencies prior to the commencement of tolling operations.

[I-90 Tolling Update](#)

Action/Follow-up: None

SR 167 CORRIDOR COMPLETION COMPREHENSIVE TOLLING STUDY

Craig Stone, Assistant Secretary, Toll Division, WSDOT and Kevin Dayton, Regional Administrator, Olympic Region, WSDOT briefed the Commission on the SR 167 tolling study. For full build-out, the SR 167 project needs:

- Funding for remaining right of way, design and construction (\$1.5 billion)
- Purchase remaining 30% of right of way (\$186 million)
- Complete design, acquire permits, build project.

Staging the project to reduce up front capital costs is highly likely.

A toll feasibility study for SR 167 was directed by a 2009 legislative proviso. The 2009 study found tolling is feasible and could contribute funding for construction. A 2011 legislative proviso provided \$1 million "solely for the department to continue work on a comprehensive tolling study of SR 167 corridor." Estimated toll revenues are less than \$100 million.

Analysis from the 2010 feasibility study assumed toll rates are set for maximum revenue generation, all vehicles except transit pay tolls, toll rates vary by time of day based on congestion levels, and trucks pay higher tolls.

Toll financial capacity analysis was based on current market conditions Updated assumptions for 2012 study included no tolling of existing facilities, a lower value of time, lower population and employment growth forecasts, and no toll rate escalation.

Toll rates assumed in 2012 study:

- Segment tolling (3 toll points)
- Tolls ranged between 50 cents and \$3.50 depend on the time of day and number of segments traveled
- Average toll was \$1.50

[Transmittal Letter](#)

[SR 167 Corridor Comprehensive Tolling Study](#)

[SR 167 Corridor Completion](#)

Action/Follow-up: None

PUBLIC COMMENT

Paul W. Locke noted that Metro buses on the SR 520 corridor are full and they need to add more buses. But buses don't pay the toll.

He also recommends eliminating ferry routes and building boats elsewhere as ways to reduce WSF costs.

Ira Appelman, from Mercer Island, asked the Commission to urge WSDOT to respect a memorandum agreement between the state and I-90 communities and cease the I-90 tolling environmental assessment.

WASHINGTON STATE RAIL PLAN UPDATE

John Sibold, Director, Rail Division, WSDOT and Kerri Woehler, Planning & Strategic Assessment Manager, Rail Division, WSDOT briefed the Commission on the work WSDOT is doing to update the state rail plan.

The State Rail Plan is designed to fulfill federal and state requirements by providing an integrated plan for freight and passenger rail, including 5- and 20-year funding strategies. It builds on previous plans and serves as a strategic blueprint for future public investment in the state's rail transportation system. Years of collaborative, consistent planning and substantial state investment prepared WSDOT to compete for and ultimately secure nearly \$800 million in federal funds for passenger rail improvements.

WSDOT is now working across the Oregon and BC borders to improve efficiency through tri-party agreements for joint operation of the corridor. Emerging issues are addressed through the Washington-British Columbia Joint Transportation Executive Council.

The Rail Plan Update builds on previous plans, including the 2006 Statewide Rail Capacity and System Needs Study done by the Transportation Commission, and the 2010 Washington Transportation Plan, which recommended:

- Keep moving forward with incremental high-speed passenger rail improvements
- Local transportation plans should protect rail corridors from encroachment by incompatible land uses and also provide for future expansion.
- Participate in preserving and improving the rail transportation system where there are sufficient public benefits.
- Identify and improve gaps in inter-modal connectivity for freight movement
- Accommodate the needs of an aging population through universal design principles for all modes.

Commissioners and Mr. Sibold talked about system reliability, especially for passenger service north of Seattle.

Stakeholder Feedback so far advocates:

- Improve the efficiency and reliability of existing rail services
- Improve connections between rail and other modes

- Strengthen rail as a competitive and environmentally-friendly transportation option
- Maintain infrastructure in a state of good repair
- Prevent loss of rail right-of-way
- Encourage compatible land use development near rail infrastructure
- Enhance safety on the rail and at at-grade crossings
- Preserve and expand facilities and services to accommodate future demands
- Develop inter-agency and public-private partnerships
- Consider cost effectiveness and return on investment of public investments and monitor success
- Achieve financial sustainability

Next Steps in Plan Development will emphasize defining the problems and opportunities that will be the focus of plan recommendations. Priority actions and an implementation plan will be identified. The draft Washington State Rail Plan will be released for public review and comment in Summer 2013.

[State Rail Plan Update](#)

Action/Follow-up: Continue to monitor and participate in Advisory Group.

WASHINGTON STATE FERRIES (WSF) PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Jean Baker, Deputy Chief, Administration & Finance, Ferries Division, WSDOT briefed the Commission on the WSF performance measures dashboard. The performance goals were set by an ad hoc committee appointed by the Governor's office for:

- Maintenance and capital program effectiveness
- Safety of passengers and crew
- Passenger satisfaction, service reliability and on-time performance
- Success of cost containment

WSF met its goals for all measures except for preliminary engineering costs for terminals and passenger satisfaction with telephone or web service requests.

[WSF 2012 Performance Report](#)

Action/Follow-up: None

PROJECT SCOPING AND DESIGN

Matt Neeley, Priority Programming Engineer, Capital Program Development & Management, WSDOT briefed the Commission on the Highway Safety Manual (HSM). The HSM is designed to provide the best factual information and proven analysis tools for crash frequency prediction. It will facilitate integrating quantitative crash frequency and severity performance measures into roadway planning, design, operations, and maintenance decisions.

The HSM helps change how highway safety is considered. Nominal safety is examined in reference to compliance with standards, warrants, guidelines and sanctioned design procedures. Substantive safety is the expected or actual crash frequency and severity for a highway or roadway.

The Highway Safety Manual has four components:

- Human factors fundamentals
- Roadway safety management process
- Predictive method
- Crash management factors

Safety Analyst is software that helps WSDOT evaluate the factors contributing to crashes and compare and contrast different improvements. As an example, analysis of the SR 161 Corridor north of Eatonville was able to focus better on the specific factors causing crashes, suggesting \$3 million of safety needs as compared to a full standards design improvement costing \$7.5 million. Washington State was chosen to work with FHWA and AASHTO to test and improve Safety Analyst software.

WSDOT also has a Highway Safety Executive Committee. The state knowledge and experience with the HSM and Safety Analyst can be transmitted to cities and counties through Highways and Local Programs.

Pat Morin, Manager of Asset Management, Operations and Policy for the WSDOT Capital Program Development and Management Office, then talked about how the principles of the safety manual can be applied through flexible design to other aspects of the capital program. WSDOT recognizes there are investment tradeoffs between projects and corridors and integrates enterprise risk management into its decision making. WSDOT executives establish decision making policy for business processes in the safety and other capital programs.

Analysis of the SR 240 Corridor between Richland and Vernita indicated that a significant proportion of the crashes were run-off-the-road collisions due to sleep. The driver would veer off to the right into softer material, overcorrect to the left and leave the road. Solutions included rumble strips and wider shoulders.

Mr. Morin reflected that in the past, WSDOT generally had sufficient funds to address the highest priorities, but budgets don't allow for that approach anymore. Planning to optimize performance allows WSDOT to use the savings to other locations on the transportation network. WSDOT is applying the same type of evaluation beyond safety improvements to other areas of work, such as evaluation of pavement management.

The discipline asks:

- How efficiently are pavements performing?
- Are the most cost-effective decisions being implemented?
- Is pavement structure over designed or under designed?
- Are freight corridors designed with the most efficient pavements?
-

WSDOT has made significant changes in its approach to pavement management over the last 20 years. Due to heat, cold and studded tires, in Eastern Washington the pavement rehabilitation cycle is 10-12 years; in Western Washington, the cycle is 17-20 years.

Steps to Optimization include:

- Set a goal at the planning phase, what performance is necessary to achieve that goal?
- Do I have existing assets in place to achieve that performance?
- If I don't, what additional assets or approaches do I need and when?

- What risks and costs am I willing to accept to achieve that performance at the location?
- What risks and costs am I willing to accept at that location versus across the network and competing objectives?
- Do I need to modify my business processes to achieve my performance goals at acceptable risk levels?

[AASHTO Highway Safety Manual](#)
[Project Scoping and Design at WSDOT](#)

Action/Follow-up: None

CABLE MEDIAN BARRIERS AND RUMBLE STRIPS

Pat Morin, Manager of Asset Management, Operations and Policy for the WSDOT Capital Program Development and Management Office, briefed the Commission on the safety improvements from rumble strips and cable median barriers.

Shoulder Rumble Strips have been installed on the shoulders of Interstate Highways starting in the mid 1990's. Beginning in 1997, they have been required on rural interstates. In the early 2000s, experimental locations were installed on a few miles of undivided highways. WSDOT began working with bicycling groups in 2001 to evaluate shoulder rumble strips on undivided highways. A policy established in 2003 applies a strategic, site specific approach. Crash experience is balanced with bicycling concerns. A full standard solution costs \$2 - 3 million per mile; rumble strips cost \$8000/mile.

The WSDOT cable median barrier program began in 2001. Cable median barriers are in place at all locations targeted in 2001, with 238 miles currently in place.

[Cable Median Barriers](#)
[Rumble Strips](#)

Action/Follow-up: None

The meeting adjourned at 1:55 pm.

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

DAN O'NEAL, Chairman

TOM COWAN, Vice-Chairman

ANNE HALEY, Member

PHILIP PARKER, Member

JERRY LITT, Member

CHARLES ROYER, Member

JOE TORTORELLI, Member

ATTEST:

REEMA GRIFFITH, Executive Director

DATE OF APPROVAL