

WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Regular Meeting Summary

July 15 & 16, 2014

Chairman Haley opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

Commissioner Tortorelli moved to approve the June 17 & 18, 2014 meeting summary as amended. Commissioner Litt seconded the motion and it was adopted unanimously.

Reema Griffith, Executive Director, briefed the Commission on a draft budget proposal for the public input program, including the Voice of Washington State, Ferry Riders' Opinion Group, and online discussion forums. If funded, the budget request would achieve:

- expanded membership of the FROG panel
- expanded membership of the VOWS panel
- expanded utilization and visibility of the statewide online discussion forums

Commissioner Tortorelli proposed that a subcommittee of himself, Commissioner Riveland and Commissioner Royer work with the Executive Director to develop and refine a budget proposal for the public input process. Commissioner Royer suggested that the Road Usage Charge work also may benefit from the public input process. Commissioner O'Neal seconded the motion and it was adopted.

Staff shared a draft outline of the 2014 Annual Report for input from the Commission. Commissioner Tortorelli noted that we should include our meeting with Idaho in the Annual Report. Commissioner O'Neal asked that the report be readable. He suggested that the title be "Dealing with Red." Commissioner Tortorelli suggested: "Leaning Over the Edge." Commissioner Haley asked if the Annual Report will connect the dots between what we have heard and done. Commissioner Riveland suggested a photo montage of rusting ferries, potholes and etc. Or, Commissioner Haley suggested using photos of headlights: "Finding the Way Through Darkness."

Chairman Haley and Ms. Griffith discussed the opportunity to schedule a retreat in the fall on November 20. A retreat planning subcommittee of Commissioners Litt, O'Neal and Royer was appointed.

Action/Follow-Up: None

UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION GRADE CROSSING PROGRAM

Anne Rendahl, Director of Legislation and Policy and Jason Lewis, Transportation Policy Advisor, Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) spoke about the role of the UTC in the regulation of railroads. The UTC is funded by regulatory fees on regulated industries.

- In 1905, the Washington State Legislature created the three-member Railroad Commission, with jurisdiction limited to railroad and express companies.
- Commission staff inspected and evaluated railroad company accounts, set rates, approved schedules, and regulated safety.

- In 1970 and 1980, Congress passed several acts that preempted states in all areas of economic regulation and in most areas of safety regulation.
- Over the years the Commission's role continued to evolve in the railroad industry and other areas of regulation.

Currently UTC Rail authority covers the following:

- Crossing safety
- Approve new crossings and modifications or closures of existing crossings.
- Inspect public crossings for compliance with federal safety standards.
- Grade Crossing Protective Fund – Fund safety upgrades at crossings and along railroad rights-of-way.
- Support the Federal Railroad Administration – Employ four inspectors certified by the FRA to enforce federal safety rules for hazardous materials, signal and train control, track, and operating practices disciplines. One of the four inspectors is certified to inspect cars carrying hazardous materials.
- Railroad employee safety –Inspect walkways within railroad yards and respond to requests for exemptions to overhead and side clearance rules.
- Respond to citizen complaints - Investigate complaints related to crossing conditions, walkways, and train noise.
- Promote public awareness of railroad safety – Coordinate activities of Operation Lifesaver Washington State, a non-profit public education program.

UTC staff inspects the 2,700 public railroad crossings at least once every three years. Last biennium, UTC issued 35 grants totaling \$433,000 to improve pedestrian and vehicle safety at and near railroad tracks, with lights, gates and signals, or fencing to prevent trespassing. Mid-road barriers have been effective to prevent drivers from evading the gates.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is responsible for establishing national railroad safety rules. There are 5 or 6 regional FRA inspectors and FRA has an office in Vancouver. Washington is located within FRA Region 8 which includes Alaska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, and Oregon. The Surface Transportation Board has jurisdiction over railroad rates, service issues, mergers, sales, construction and abandonment of rail lines. The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) regulates the design of tank cars. The UTC has no jurisdiction over emergency preparedness and response. The Washington State Emergency Management Department has surveyed first responders to assess preparedness.

Numerous federal agencies have taken action this year and last to improve safety of oil shipments, including a February 25, 2014 Emergency Order requiring the testing and proper classification of oil being transported and does not allow crude oil to be transported at the lowest packing group. Since May 7, federal law requires unit trains carrying 1 million or more gallons of Bakken crude to notify state emergency response centers.

- July 2011 – American Association of Railroads (AAR) Tank Car Committee adopted higher tank car standards.
- November 2013 - Freight railroads urged PHMSA to increase federal tank car safety through retrofitting or phasing out older tank cars.
- In a response to a PHMSA advanced notice of proposed rulemaking, AAR offered the following specific recommendations:
 - an outer steel jacket around the tank car and thermal protection,
 - full-height head shields, and high-flow capacity pressure relief valves;
 - installation of high-flow-capacity relief valves, and

- design modifications to prevent bottom outlets from opening in the case of an accident;
- Aggressively phase out older-model tank cars used to move flammable liquids that cannot be retrofitted to meet new federal requirements
- Eliminate the option for rail shippers to classify a flammable liquid with a flash point between 100 and 140 degrees Fahrenheit as a combustible liquid
- Proposals are pending before USDOT in rulemaking; at Office of Management and Budget for decision and posting in Federal Register.

Two years ago, oil transport to Washington State:

- 76% by ship
- 21% by pipeline
- 4% by rail.

Shipments by rail have steadily increased since then.

Key Dates for State Oil Transportation Study

- October 2014 – Presentation to the Pacific States/BC Oil Spill Task Force Initial Findings and Recommendations to the Governor
- December 2014 – Interim Report Due to Legislature and Governor
- March 2015 – Final Report Due to Legislature and Governor

[Rail Safety and Oil Transportation](#)

Action/Follow-Up: None

RAIL CAPACITY AND IMPROVEMENTS

Brock Evans, Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR), briefed the Commission on UPRR operations. Nationwide, UPRR revenue is \$22.0 billion. There are 32,000 route miles and 8,300 locomotives in 23 States, and 532 track miles in Washington. UPRR has 45,000 employees and 10,000 customers.

Union Pacific does not ship coal into Washington. Nationally, it has four key intermodal corridors: I-5, Central Corridor, LA to the east and a Midwest corridor.

UP has invested about \$42 Billion since 2000. Of the \$3.9 billion investment in 2014, 44% is track replacement and improvement.

UPRR is making capacity improvements in the PNW:

- Install Centralized Traffic Control (CTC) on eleven (11) sidings between Eastport and Hinkle.
- Sidings. Sidings being expanded to 10,000 feet, including extensions at Cheney, WA, and Wells, WA and a new siding at Sun Harbor, WA (Burbank).
- Mosier, OR Double Track Project over 5.8 miles of main track.
- Milam – Gibbon – Bonifer Double Track Project on 3.8 miles of 2nd main track.
- Brooklyn Intermodal Yard (Portland) Modernization, including new loading tracks, additional parking, and a new AGS inbound gate.
- Argo Intermodal Yard (Seattle) Automated Gate System (AGS)

UP frontloaded its contribution to the FAST corridor with \$3.1 million for grade separations. About \$1 million still unspent. There is still one or two projects to be completed.

Union Pacific Railroad

Action/Follow-Up: None

COMMISSION WORK SESSION

Commissioners reviewed the direction of the themes and strategies being proposed for the WTP 2035 Public Review Draft.

How does WTP 2035 mesh with WSDOT Strategic Plan? Amy Scarton, Assistant Secretary, Commerce and Economic Development, WSDOT answered that modal integration is part of the strategic plan. She agreed that there should be a better phrase than multi-modal. Need examples to explain what we mean by multi-modal.

Ms. Scarton emphasized that we have heard the call for more public transportation everywhere. It is important that the transportation system allow the public to move in a variety of ways, providing options so that people and products can get where they need to be.

Commissioners noted that funding is not just a state problem. It is revolutionary to be multi-modal, but not to call for revenue. Reverse the first and last themes. Don't lead with money.

The WTP should talk about how revenue is spent, as well as raised.

Action/Follow-Up: None

TRANSIT AND I-405 TOLL LANES

Mike Bergman, Service Planning Manager, Sound Transit (ST); Christina O'Claire, King County Metro Transit; and Carol Thompson, Manager of Service Development, Community Transit (CT) each shared perspectives on transit in the I-405 Master Plan. A 20-year vision for the corridor adopted in 2002 includes added roadway capacity, managed lanes, and transit improvements. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) was identified as a preferred transit mode for the I-405 corridor but the recession has delayed BRT and many other projects.

Express Toll Lanes Design and performance goals for Transit

- Facilitate transit access to stations, transit centers and park-and-rides
- Exempt transit from tolls
- Maintain 45 MPH transit speed 90% of the time, including peak
- Ensure transit reliability
- Share toll revenue to improve service and provide more capacity

Direct Access Ramps have been built in downtown Bellevue and Totem Lake (Kirkland); a third in Renton is proposed for I-405 expansion to the south. Sound Transit implemented a route last year that connects Sounder Rail at Kent Transit Center to Microsoft Campus.

Transit has been unable to meet all of the master plan objectives. The recession set things back – both capital and operations. Improvements to I-405 south need to happen before some transit improvements can happen.

On SR 520, transit added 120 daily trips and demand has grown significantly; traffic has decreased by 34%. With tolling on I-405, transit agencies expect demand for service will grow.

43% mode split into downtown; 35% to CTR sites; and 11% countywide during peak hours.

Metro is removing 200,000 vehicles from the state highway system, about equal to number of vehicles on I-405. Metro expects its cuts will add 30,000 vehicles back to roadways.

Metro estimates about 2-3% fare evasion in downtown. Drivers not instructed to insist on fares. ORCA card holders or transfer holders don't pay at farebox.

Metro has largest vanpool program in country. There are more vanpools than buses and over 25,000 park and ride stalls. Bus ridership is over 118 million rides annually. Over half the fares are purchased by employers.

Demand is increasing for transit in the I-405 Corridor. Transit agencies are moving first to larger vehicles to meet increased demand. In ST Fleet, most vehicles are high capacity, with 56 – 77 seats. Double-decker buses also have higher capacity. . Bergman said that the I-405 corridor is at the point where it is time to examine how to fund additional service and buses to meet demand, especially in peak hours. The transit agencies expect to see an additional mode shift to transit when the buses move more freely through the traffic. The Express Toll Lanes will help transit move and also will create demand.

Chairman Haley asked whether the number of additional buses and/or routes needed to reduce congestion by a specific percent is known. Ms. Thompson responded that question has not been explored. The I-405 study instead looked at how to improve the speed of the traffic already there, including the existing transit service. It is a good question, Ms. Thompson agreed, and CT would add service to the I-405 corridor now if it had the resources.

Community Transit is far behind in service hours provided and what T2040 requires. Currently about 40% below projections. PSRC wants Metro to double service by 2040, but Metro is making cuts. Metro cuts also will impact the 405 Corridor.

King County Executive Dow Constantine has moved forward with an Executive announcement to Sound Transit and King County Metro to continue integration with overlapping jurisdictional agency boundaries. Mr. Constantine asked for a report by Sept. 15 to highlight what the two agencies are doing now, what they will be doing moving forward to continuing to improve efficiencies.

Transit operators are experiencing increased demand but do not have adequate funding to address the growing demand in transit. Their sales tax revenues are not keeping pace with growth in demand ridership.

[Working to Improve Mobility](#)

Action/Follow-Up: None

2014 SURVEY RESULTS

Bill Young, FROG Survey Project Manager and Dominick Martin, Research Analyst, EMC, presented on the results of the surveys.

WSF Winter Survey Results:

- Overall we have seen a decrease in dissatisfaction.
- Overall, keep terminals clean, keep bathrooms clean, efficiently process vehicles and improve transit connections.
- The whole theme is that overall things haven't changed much.

[FROG WSF Freight Movers Survey](#)
[WSF Policy Survey 2014 Topline Report](#)
[General Market Assessment](#)
[FROG Winter Performance 2014](#)

Action/Follow-Up: None

POTENTIAL RAIL TRAFFIC FROM COAL AND OIL EXPORTS

Margie MacDonald, Regional Organizer, Western Organization of Resource Councils, explained that the organization asked for research on rail traffic impacts. Terry Whiteside, Whiteside and Associates evaluated the potential impacts of coal and oil trains on movement of agricultural products.

Currently, 39-40 million tons of agricultural products are shipped west from PNW; potential 170 million tons of coal shipped in the future. BNSF estimates only 2 or 3 export facilities will be built; even that equates to 50-100 million tons. Bakken oil – at projected peak – will require 22 unit trains per day. The coal/oil shipments equate to a 200% - 570% increase in rail traffic. Coal to PNW has doubled in the last year.

There are two primary bottlenecks: Billings and Sandpoint - Spokane. Mr. Whiteside expressed his opinion that BNSF is providing customers the worst rail service in modern history. Average train speeds are continuing to fall. Much of the 2013 crop from the upper Midwest has not been delivered to market. Long-term concern is that US is known as a reliable supplier of wheat to world markets. This reliability is at risk.

[Heavy Traffic Still Ahead](#)

Action/Follow-Up: None

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Cam Gilmour, Deputy Secretary, WSDOT, noted that the impacts of coal and oil shipments by rail will displace grain movement to truck and barge.

Mr. Gilmour noted that WSDOT has not yet drawn on the TIFIA loan for SR 520 construction. Sixty of 77 pontoons are now complete. Eastside transit and HOV system, and the West Connection Bridge will be complete this fall. Change orders have required spending \$281 million of the \$404 million reserve budget. \$124 million remains.

Mr. Gilmour noted that he sees a strong connection between WSDOT's Strategic Plan and WTP 2035. WSDOT tried to link its goals to bigger Results WA goals.

Commissioners asked how WSDOT would develop benchmarks using external input, both from other agencies and from the public. Mr. Gilmour noted that WSDOT has been a national leader in developing benchmarks and measuring outcomes for so long that he doesn't know how the benchmarks were initially set.

Action/Follow-Up: None

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

WSF PLANNING, IMPROVEMENTS AND REVENUE UPDATE

Ms. Griffith gave a brief overview of the Commission ferry naming process, in light of the start of construction of the third 144-car ferry. The Commission plans to take action to name the third 144-car ferry at its November 19 meeting in Lakewood.

George Capacci, Acting Assistant Secretary, WSF, WSDOT briefed the Commission on construction of the Olympic Class ferries. The Tokitae began service June 30 on the Mukilteo-Clinton route. The Samish is expected to enter service in February 2015 and the third vessel is scheduled to begin service. One of the Evergreen class vessels will be kept available as a spare vessel. Commissioners asked what it would take to keep two vessels available as spare vessels.

Commissioners also remarked on the FROG survey findings that bathroom cleanliness needs improvement. Commissioners also asked how WSF uses the FROG results. Commissioner Haley noted that results are collected by vessel and route.

Colman Dock is seismically vulnerable and will not survive a major earthquake. It consumes about 25% of WSF maintenance budget. The Colman Dock multimodal project will:

- Replace the timber portion of the dock with a new and reconfigured dock.
- Replace the main terminal building.
- Replace the vehicle transfer span and overhead loading structures (Slip 3).
- Replace the passenger-only facility with funding provided by King County.
- Improve accessibility and pedestrian connections to transit.
- Mitigate for 5,200 sq ft of new overwater coverage.

The project is at 30% design and is in environmental review. It is not too far along to accommodate additional private investment if the legislature chose to authorize a public-private partnership in the redevelopment. A key factor is using pilings adequate to support additional structure and weight.

Mukilteo-Clinton carries the most vehicles in the system. The Mukilteo Multimodal Project will solve traffic congestion and parking problems, add an overhead walkway and remove 2-3 % of the creosote pilings in Puget Sound. A Record of Decision is expected soon; 2018 or 2019 is the target for completion. Cost estimate is \$120 million.

Ray Deardorf, Planning Manager, WSF, WSDOT reported that WSF has produced two long range plans in the past 20 years:

- 1999 – this plan looked to the year 2015 and was geared toward system expansion
- 2009 – this plan looked to the year 2030 and focused on how best to utilize the system’s assets more effectively and preserve existing service

The 2014–2015 update will extend the planning horizon to 2040.

Goals for WSF Plan Update. Initial thinking discussed at June/July WSF Community Meetings:

- Market Understanding – how have demographics shifted?
- Review and Update Adaptive Management Practices – lessons learned and identify new strategies.
- Operational Paradigms – service frequencies and vessel replacements as some of the largest vessels in the fleet begin to retire after 2030.
- Technology Assessment – what could be applied to reduce operating and/or capital costs?
- Key Cost Drivers and Best Practices – what are the drivers of capital and operating costs and what could be done to reduce them? What are the opportunities to apply least cost planning principles?
- Financial Sustainability – update the long-term financial outlook.

Mr. Deardorf reported on accomplishments since the 2009 Long-Range Plan and briefed the Commission on the legislative directive in 47.60.327 to jointly develop operational strategies.

Common themes heard at WSF Community meetings in June and July:

- Transportation and intermodal connections have emerged as the most consistent theme. These were primarily focused on transit but also planning for increases in bicycle travel.
- Roadway capacity was also discussed, including the train crossing at Edmonds.
- The concept of smaller, more frequent vessels on routes to replace retiring large vessels is well received.
- Alternative vessel service life (both shorter – as low as 40 years, and longer – as long as 70 years) should be looked at.
- The process should ensure that local governments have ample opportunity to participate in the process.
- Sustainability measures in fuel and other aspects of operations.
- Planning should be done based on communities’ needs.

Mr. Deardorf agreed with Commissioners that fare collection and vehicle charging procedures need to be included in the planning discussions.

Jean Baker, Deputy Chief, Administration & Finance, WSF, WSDOT reported that revenue for the biennium is projected to be about \$1.25 million higher.

The capital surcharge generated \$6.2 million last biennium and is projected to generate \$7.5 million this biennium. In 2013, over \$43 million in bonds were issued

[WSF Long-Range Plan Update](#)

[Fare Revenue Update](#)

[Olympic Class Vessels](#)

[Seattle Multimodal Project at Colman Dock](#)

[Mukilteo Multimodal Project](#)

Action/Follow-Up: None

WSDOT FREIGHT MOBILITY PLAN

Barb Ivanov, Director, Freight Systems Division, WSDOT reported that the Washington State Freight Mobility Plan is guided by three objectives:

- Urban goods movement systems that support jobs, the economy, and clean air for all, and provide goods delivery to residents and businesses.
- Washington's competitive position as a Global Gateway to the nation with intermodal freight corridors serving trade and international and interstate commerce, and the state and national Export Initiatives.
- Rural farm-to-market, manufacturing and resource industry sectors.

Freight Dependent Industries support 1.46 million jobs and \$128.8 billion in regional domestic product statewide. The Freight Mobility Plan identifies

- Truck Freight Economic Corridors;
- First/Last Mile Connector Route Criteria;
- Rail freight corridors; and
- Waterway freight corridors.

Six performance measures are used to track the performance of the Truck Freight Economic Corridors.

Reducing:

1. Truck travel time
2. Direct truck operating costs
3. Truck engine emissions

Improving:

4. Economic output
5. Network resiliency
6. Reliability

Truck freight bottleneck categories include:

- Slow Speed (More than 50 percent of sampled trucks are traveling below 60 percent of the posted speed (35 mph on urban freeways))
- Reliability
- Resiliency
- Restricted Access for Legal Loads

Freight Rail Challenges include rail system capacity, community impacts, such as increased delays at highway-rail grade crossings and increased noise through communities, and maintenance of short-line railroads.

Freight Waterway Challenges include maintenance of navigation channel depth and lack of Columbia River Anchorages.

The Freight Mobility Plan uses maps and supply chain logistics to illustrate the complexities of goods movements from farm and factory to market or port.

[WSDOT Freight Mobility Plan](#)

Action/Follow-Up: None

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

ANNE E. HALEY, Chairman

JOE TORTORELLI, Vice-Chairman

ROY JENNINGS, Member

JERRY LITT, Member

DAN O'NEAL, Member

MARY RIVELAND, Member

CHARLES ROYER, Member

ATTEST:

REEMA GRIFFITH, Executive Director

DATE OF APPROVAL