



Washington State Transportation Commission

WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION Regular Meeting Summary March 15 & 16, 2016

COMMISSION BUSINESS

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

Action: Commissioner Joe Tortorelli moved approval of the Meeting Summary for Feb 17-18, 2016. Commissioner Jerry Litt seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Commissioners reported on their Commission activities.

- Commissioner Jennings indicated that the Tolling Subcommittee would be making recommendations today on toll rates for the Tacoma Narrows Bridge (TNB), SR 520, and toll policy changes for the I-405 Express Toll Lanes (ETL).
- Commissioner Tortorelli attended the monthly meeting of the Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC). The SRTC approved a performance measurement tool kit, which he will provide to the Commissioners.
- Commissioner Young reported that the Ferry Team met and will be making a recommendation on naming the newly funded 144-car ferry.
- Commissioner Litt reported that he attended a WTP 2035 Phase 2 team meeting in Seattle. He also attended a meeting at the WSDOT North Central Region office where the Governor unveiled Connecting WA signs for 4 projects and the new regional HQ building.
- Commissioner Serebrin also attended the WTP 2035 team meeting and the PSRC Transportation Policy Board, which had a “State of Transportation” presentation and climate change presentation.
- Commissioner Batra attended a meeting of the SR-167 Executive Board and participated in tolling subcommittee meetings. He was a guest speaker at Bellevue Chamber of Commerce transportation committee meeting.
- Chairman Haley reported that she is happy to have a full complement of commissioners.

Staff then presented the proposed Facility Naming Policy Amendment, drafted to address the question: *Should the old name remain on the facility when the facility replaced?* At the previous meeting, Commissioner Batra asked how naming was handled in the past with the replacement of the I-90 bridge. Staff reported:

- No Commission policy existed until 1995. Before then, authorization came from the Legislature, for the official naming by the Highway/Transportation Commission.
- With the policy in place since 1995, the option exists for Commission to take up naming or renaming without Legislative authorization

Commissioner Jennings asked if the Commission has renamed a facility named previously. The Commission renamed the Keystone ferry terminal as the Coupeville ferry terminal. The Commission also renamed the bridge connecting Camano Island to the mainland, at the request of the Legislature.

Action: *Commissioner Jennings moved approval of the amendment to the naming policy. Commissioner Young seconded the motion, which was adopted unanimously.*

Follow-up: None at this time.

WTP IMPLEMENTATION: CORRIDOR SKETCHES

Kerri Woehler, Director, Multi-Modal Planning, WSDOT, and Faris Al-Memar, Systems Analysis and Planning Manager, WSDOT, briefed the Commission on corridor planning. It is part of the WTP 2035 implementation approach and also how WSDOT is implementing practical solutions. It is focused on outcomes instead of the type of travel we're going to take. From a system perspective, WSDOT is figuring out what is needed to move people, including the full transportation network, even beyond a more narrowly defined corridor.

Corridor sketches are not a substitute for detailed planning and not a list of detailed actions or projects – the purpose is to focus on strategies that need to be taken, in cooperation with partnerships. Corridor sketches will support and complement regional planning efforts by RPTOs, provide a consistent framework for practical solutions, and align with the updated Highway Systems plan. Corridor sketches also will consider freight mobility and rail plans.

The core of the corridor sketch program is developing a common set of performance goals with our partners, identifying performance gaps, and considering all possible options within the context of the community – the most expensive option may not fit best.

Challenges include:

- Defining performance measures with the right scope
- Finding agreement on performance measures between the locals
- Data collection

There will be a 2-3 page summary for each corridor with description, map, current and future function, what's working well and what needs to improve. All in all, the time frame is 2-3 years. Elements not fully under WSDOT's control, such as demand management, come back to the partnerships – people at the table need to own the decisions.

Commissioner Batra noted that major cities in the world use water transportation as part of their system. He urged that sketches should address water specifically to help people to consider water when thinking of multi-modal solutions. He also asked if WSDOT is working with Army Corps of Engineers to address freight movement on Columbia River, an important water highway.

Commissioner Tortorelli asked how performance measures will reflect flexibility for differences between regions. WSDOT is working with USDOT on MAP-21 performance measures, in cooperation with RTPO partners. There needs to be a blend of statewide and regional measures. Commissioner Litt followed up, asking how flexibility is built in when measures are tied to funding distribution. How do you ensure necessary infrastructure, even if some measures are not

met (ex.: congestion relief) WSDOT answered that giving weight to addressing future performance that can be maintained / improved with funding for improvements now is a key part of corridor sketches. It also helps to consider a variety of strategies to address the problem to better meet funding limitations and to plan for future activity patterns.

Commissioner Haley indicated that she generally likes the bottom-up approach described, but thinks it could be of value to bring in an outside perspective as well to provide insight from outside the RTPO. She cited how freight avoids the US 395 corridor through Pasco/Kennewick, opting instead for US 12 and SR 730 through Umatilla. Haley suggested that we may need to fund research on use of alternative routes/corridors. Woehler thinks the corridor sketch approach does try to get at asking how to align regional needs/perspectives for the corridor with statewide plans/goals.

Staff asked how a corridor is defined. WSDOT assessed chunks of routes, then reached out to WSDOT regions and RTPOs for tweaks. Corridor sketches start with highway needs (performance gaps), but look for solutions beyond the strict corridor definition.

Action: None

Follow-up: None at this time.

[WTP Corridor Sketches](#)

LEGISLATIVE SESSION WRAP-UP

Staff reported on the items that passed the Legislature. Not many major transportation bills passed, following passage of Connecting WA last June and it being a supplemental budget year. It was noted that the public works trust fund, relied on by many local governments to build infrastructure projects, may be swept to pay for additions to the operating budget.

SR 520 PROJECT STATUS AND WORK PLAN

Julie Meredith, SR 520 Program Manager, WSDOT, briefed the Commission on the history of the full SR 520 improvement and expansion project, from Redmond to I-5. The cost of the bridge alone is \$1.2 to 1.3 billion, which includes the floating bridge and landings (approaches).

The bridge is designed to allow for the addition of light rail in the future: pontoons are structured to accommodate additional weight and probably would result in displacement of an existing traffic lane, likely an HOV lane. If this happens, it is very far into future.

The existing pontoons will be reused. The contractor found buyer(s) at no cost to state. The sale revenue will go to the contractor.

Action: None

Follow-up: None at this time.

[SR 520 Project](#)

DEBT AFFORDABILITY STUDY

Ellen Evans, Deputy Treasurer, Office of the State Treasurer (OST) reported that the state has been enthusiastic about using future revenues to pay for projects now, which means debt. We are a young, vital, growing state, with much to build. A triple pledged bond is currently issued only for SR 520 because it's the only facility with bonded toll revenue.

State borrowing is restrained by the Constitutional debt limit, which is relative to general state revenues – as revenues go up, capacity increases, as revenues go down, capacity decreases. Washington is not conservative in its issuance of debt; this is not inappropriate, but we need to be aware of the circumstances. Transportation debt has been growing.

Ms. Evans stressed that investors view all General Obligation (GO) bonds as a single credit, so they see no difference between transportation and non-transportation debt. Bond issuance greatly increased with the Nickel transportation package – there was much higher leveraging of the transportation revenues than before. The main concern for OST is how debt impacts cost of capital for other projects.

Coverage ratios compare revenues to debt service. Currently the coverage ratio is 2.00. Most states issue debt as revenue bonds, which results in higher ratios. Washington decided in the mid-70's to have transportation projects benefit from the lowest possible buying costs.

Chairman Haley asked whether the State Treasurer anticipates bonding against tolling revenue for the SR 99 tunnel. There is not currently a plan to do so because of diversion issues and the shorter distance of the project. Chairman Haley noted that the Legislature expects \$200 million in SR 99 toll revenue, and that the Commission shares the concern about revenue potential, due to diversion in particular.

Action: None

Follow-up: Chairman Haley asked that the Commission be involved as future tolling bonding resolutions go forward. Ms. Evans said the Commission definitely would be involved.

[Debt Affordability Study](#)

I-405 EXPRESS TOLL LANES RULEMAKING

Patty Rubstello, Assistant Secretary, Toll Division, WSDOT, provided an update on traffic and operations on the I-405 Express Toll Lanes (ETLs).

Early successes continue as WSDOT continues to make operational adjustments:

- Initial express toll lane usage is higher than expected
- Transit, vanpools and carpools have a more reliable trip in both directions
- I-405 is moving more vehicles during peak commutes
- Southbound traffic is better in general purpose and express toll lanes
- Northbound express toll lane traffic has improved overall compared to HOV
- Long and medium trips are receiving faster travel times

Challenges also remain:

- Northbound general purpose traffic is more congested in some locations
- Weekend congestion has developed in spots along corridor
- Some shorter trips are not seeing the same travel time benefits as longer trips

In addition, WSDOT continues to monitor weekday carpool usage, which was lower than projected, but has been steadily increasing. Toll rates continue to reach the maximum rate.

Ms. Rubstello then outlined the operational options WSDOT considered and its recommended changes to the ETLs, based on data collected over the last 5 months of operations:

- Weekday hours: 5:00 am to 7:00 pm
- Nighttime operations: “Open to All”
- Weekends operations: “Open to All”
- Holidays: Six major Federal holidays (same as current WAC)

[I-405 Express Toll Lanes Rulemaking](#)

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chris Johnson, Bellevue Chamber of Commerce: supports the proposed ETL changes, but also requests additional action for addressing congestion.

Todd Woosley, involved resident, local/current planning commissioner: support, with request to continue considering changes.

Victor Bishop, Eastside Transportation Association representative: supports today’s actions, with request for improved data collection, such as for 3+ carpools, in particular before action is taken to adopt a permanent rule. Collect data in the corridor, but also south of I-90; encourage WSDOT to do the shoulder widening as rapidly as possible.

Bill Popp, transportation professional/consulting engineer, ETA member, former Assistant Director of Transportation for Puget Sound Council of Governments: when the HOV lanes were planned in the ‘70s, they were never expected to raise revenue – this is elitist. It is a significant hardship on low-income drivers to pay the toll rates.

Action: Commissioner Tortorelli moved that the current administrative code be amended by emergency rule. Lanes will be toll free between the hours of 7 p.m. - 5 a.m., Monday-Friday, weekends and six major federal holidays: New Year’s Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. No HOV requirements and no transponder required. This will take effect on Friday, March 18 at 7 p.m. He further recommended the CR-102 be filed by early April to make the changes permanent. Commissioner Jennings seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion: Charles Knutson, Governor’s Transportation Advisor, thanked the Commission for its quick action. He noted that funding for additional improvements are included in the budget, such as hard shoulder driving, emergency response services, auxiliary lane support.

Chairman Haley noted her appreciation for the collaborative approach between the Governor’s Office, the legislature, WSDOT, and Commission in making these revisions.

Commissioner Serebrin expressed concern about no minimum tolling on nights and weekends – she wants to be sure there is data on impacts on congestion during that time before the Commission acts on a permanent rule.

Representative Clibborn thanked the Commission for all of its work.

Follow-up: Rulemaking for the permanent rule would begin within the next week or two with the final rule proposal filed and published. A public hearing would take place at the May 17 – 18 Commission meeting in Olympia.

TACOMA NARROWS BRIDGE TOLL RATE SETTING

Commission staff reported that the Washington State Legislature provided \$2.5 million in gas tax revenues to pay for the bridge's debt service payments coming due between July 1, 2016, and June 30, 2017. This means the 50-cent toll increase planned for this July is no longer needed.

Action: Commissioner Young moved to not implement the 50 cent increase that would become effect July 1, 2016 for fiscal year 2017 (July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017). Commissioner Jennings seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Follow-up: The Commission will hold a public hearing at the May 17 – 18 Commission meeting in Olympia to finalize the action on TNB toll rates.

SR 520 TOLL RATE SETTING

Brent Baker, Vice President, WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff reported on the results of several SR 520 Toll Rate Scenarios modeled at the request of the Commission and its tolling team.

Multi-step Options for Phasing in Scenario 2 Tolls

Case	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2022	Summary
Scenario 2	+ 10% + night tolling	no change	no change	Increases FY 2016 toll rates by 10% on both weekdays and weekends in FY 2017 and adds night tolling between 11 PM and 5 AM at the rate of \$1.25; no further changes assumed.
Scenario 2.A	+ 5%	+ 5% + night tolling	no change	Two step increase achieves Scenario 2 toll rates in FY 2018. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5% increase in FY 2017 • 5% increase in FY 2018 plus night tolling added
Scenario 2.B	+ 5%	+ 5%	+ night tolling	Three step increase achieves Scenario 2 toll rates in FY 2018 except for nights which are added in FY 2022. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5% increase in FY 2017 • 5% increase in FY 2018 • Night tolling added in FY 2022
Scenario 2.C	+ 4%	+ 4% + night tolling	+ 2%	Three step increase achieves Scenario 2 toll rates in FY 2022. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4% increase in FY 2017 • 4% increase in FY 2018 plus night tolling added • 2% increase in FY 2022

NOTES:

- Toll rates are assumed to be rounded to the nearest nickel; average percentage increases and percentage increases by time period may differ.
- For all cases, HOV 3+ carpools are assumed to pay tolls (not exempt) while transit busses and registered vanpools are assumed to be exempt.
- Other assumptions: Pay By Mail toll increment is \$2.00, *Good To Go!* Pay By Plate fee is \$0.25, and Short Term Account discount is \$0.50.

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The Tolling Team then provided its recommendation:

Adopt Scenario 2.A: Two-steps with a 5 percent increase in fiscal year 2017 and 5 percent increase plus addition of night tolling (\$1.25) in fiscal year 2018. This scenario maintains current exemptions for transit and registered vanpools. The Commission would review traffic, revenue, and costs annually, and modify rates, as necessary.

Action: *Commissioner Jennings moved a 5 percent increase effective fiscal year 2017 and 5 percent increase plus night tolling added effective fiscal year 2018. Commissioner Young seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

Follow-up: WSDOT Toll Division and SR 520 Project Office will hold open houses prior to the start of the Commission public outreach meetings. Meetings will be held April 21st. Union Station, Sound Transit Board Room - 12 noon to 2 p.m. and ~~Bothell, City Hall~~ - 6-8 p.m. (now being held at Bellevue City Hall.)

Representative Clibborn expressed her appreciation to the Commission.

[SR 520 Rate Setting](#)

TOLLING REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

Patty Rubstello, Assistant Secretary, Toll Division, WSDOT, briefed the Commission on the toll division's report to the Legislature as directed in a budget proviso on tolling operations. The civil penalty process for toll violations impacts only 2% of toll transactions. 93% of SR 520 and 96% of TNB toll transactions are paid without delay.

The new Customer Resolution program has had a strong impact:

- Significant increase in civil penalty related tolls paid, totaling \$1.1 million (131.5% increase in the amount of unpaid tolls collected)
- Fees and penalties are being dismissed (\$11.5 million have been or are in the process of being dismissed)
- Significant reduction in administrative adjudication caseload and costs (down 54.3% and 31.3%, respectively)
- Significant increase in resolution of DOL vehicle registration holds

Following much research and preparation, the Customer Service Center Procurement will begin with release of an RFP on December 1, 2016. The solicitation is expected to last 9 months and the design and development phase will take an additional 24 months post-award. Release of the Operator RFP is planned a few months after System RFP award to allow for potential operators to bid knowing the system provider and allow for input during the design and development phase.

WSDOT continues to use consultants in its tolling operations because tolling in Washington is still new and national toll industry expertise is required:

- To provide staffing during peak workloads, such as the opening of a new toll facility
- To provide tolling expertise, such as regular Traffic and Revenue forecasts

Action: None

Follow-up: None at this time.

[Tolling Report to the Legislature](#)

DRONE TECHNOLOGY IN TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

Walt Olsen, PE, Deputy Director, County Road Administration Board and Jim Ayres, PE, Design Systems Engineer, County Road Administration Board, provided a briefing on how UAVs can operate safely and effectively in transportation projects.

Information Technology is one of CRAB's Core Missions. CRAB investigates and researches innovative, cost effective, technical strategies for counties for possible implementation. Drone or UAV's (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles) technology has grown rapidly over the last decade and the future growth is almost assured. Data obtained from UAV's is 1% to 10% of the cost of conventional aircraft and it is owner-controlled data with better quality, clarity, and safer. UAV data also is gathered and processed for usage more quickly.

UAV applications in the public works arena include inspections (existing bridge structures, quarry and pit site operations and depletion surveys, and waste site operations and cell development surveys, and construction project progress and conflict resolution surveys) and mapping and surveying (aerial photography, LIDAR data for 3D modeling of surfaces, and

environmental assessments and evaluations). It also is useful for observation and monitoring of wild land fires, search and rescue, environmental and transportation incidents, and emergency/disaster response and recovery efforts.

New proposed FAA Rules will increase the ability to use UAVs:

- No need for previously licensed FAA pilot as operator.
- An extra Visual Observer is not required for flights.
- No need for Air Traffic Control clearance in class G airspace.

Action: None

Follow-up: None at this time.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Acting Secretary Roger Millar reported that the Tunnel Boring Machine is now in Safe Haven 3 and remain there about a month for testing. The viaduct will be closed for two weeks when the tunneling resumes under the viaduct.

Millar spent a day last week at Eagle Harbor, the WSF maintenance and repair facility. He is concerned about the age of the fleet and the age of the staff running the WSF.

Millar is focused on three primary initiatives:

- Practical Solutions
- Workforce Development. WSDOT is planning a salary survey; agency staff are somewhere between 15 - 40% below peers in the market. He is more concerned about people who are leaving for city and county government. A traffic engineer left for the City of Seattle and got a 40% pay raise. Recruitment and retention in WSF is also a concern.
- Inclusion. WSDOT wants a workforce that looks like the people we serve.

Millar is concerned about employee safety. WSDOT is working to develop a multi-agency safety campaign. He also is concerned about raising the speed limit on I-90 in Eastern Washington. There may be a few places on I-90 and I-82 where the limit can be increased; WSDOT will do an economic analysis of the benefits and costs and conduct public hearings in Moses Lake and Ritzville. He is getting input from the Traffic Safety Commission and the State Patrol.

Action: None

Follow-up: Commission staff offered to assist WSDOT in spreading the word about the need for better worker protection.

FAST ACT FEDERAL FUNDS DISTRIBUTION

Jay Balasbas, Senior Budget Assistant, OFM, briefed the Commission on distribution of FAST Act funds to cities and counties. Historically, Washington has engaged with local partners on distribution of Federal funds beyond what is required. In some states, the state DOT decides.

Passage of the FAST Act happened too late to incorporate FAST Act elements into the Governor's supplemental budget, so the distribution used in the past will continue this year:

- State highways get 66% of federal funds.

- City streets and county roads get 34%.
- City streets and county roads constitute 86% of state and local road miles.

The 2016 Supplemental Transportation Budget:

- Generally appropriates FFY 2016 funds only using the current state-local split of federal funds.
- For the remainder of the 2015-17 biennium, the budget appropriates:
 - \$14.1 million of new federal freight funds to asphalt and concrete roadway preservation projects. The budget also directs WSDOT to update the state freight mobility plan and work with stakeholders on a recommended project list for the 2017-19 biennium.
 - \$9.3 million of new NHPP and STBGP funds to chip seal, asphalt and concrete roadway preservation projects.
 - \$8.8 million of additional federal funds for ferry preservation.
 - Project list contains an assumption of \$14.3 million of additional NHPP funds for structurally deficient bridges in the 2017-19 biennium.

Lon Wyrick, representing the MPOs and RTPOs across the state, agreed that there are cooperative relationships between the state and local governments. He pointed out that over time, the percent of state gas tax going to locals has decreased (from 50/50 to 30/70), although county roads and city streets comprise 86% of public road miles. The cities, counties and RTPOs are looking to re-work the state/local distribution of Federal funds to help address funding needs. He suggested that the distribution be revisited every 2 – 3 years.

Later this spring, the Governor’s Office and the Office of Financial Management will engage counties, cities, ports, MPOs and RTPOs, transit, tribes, and the Legislative Transportation Committee Chairs and Ranking Members to recommend an allocation method for FAST Act funds to the Governor and Legislature starting in the 2017-19 biennium.

Chairman Haley asked how TIFIA loans and GARVEE bonds relate to the FAST Act. Alison Camden, Director of Governmental Relations, WSDOT, said the state is required to use obligated federal funds to first repay GARVEE bonds. The state has obligated about \$102 million annually through 2020 to repaying GARVEE bonds.

Action: None

Follow-up: Continue to monitor.

[FAST Act Federal Funds Distribution](#)

OVERVIEW OF MINORITY AND WOMEN’S CONTRACTING IN TRANSPORTATION

Teresa Berntsen, Director, Office of Minority and Women’s Business Enterprises (OMWBE), briefed the Commission on contracting opportunities for minority and womens’ businesses. A Disadvantaged Business Enterprise or DBE is a for-profit small business concern that is at least 51 percent owned by one individual or at least two individuals who are both socially and economically disadvantaged. In the case of a corporation, 51 percent of the stock must be owned by one or more socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. In addition, the business management and daily business operations are controlled by one or more of the socially and

economically disadvantaged individuals who own it. A firm's annual gross receipts averaged over the last 3 years must be under \$22.41 million to be eligible for certification.

OMWBE certifies firms that qualify and want to do business with the state. People look to OMWBE and the Department of Enterprise Services for help.

Commissioner Batra asked several questions: Does OMWBE keep track of the firms certified vs. demographic change? Does OMWBE do outreach? Do firms graduate out as a small business or a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)?

Yes, OMWBE looks at how state contracting compares with demography and it does outreach. OMWBE doesn't track success of its certified businesses, but businesses need to recertify every three years. The current criteria as DBE is income under \$23 million a year.

Businesses might learn about certification from a prime contractor, from the state website for business services, or from other businesses. OMWBE is trying to also raise awareness of the benefits of certification. Firms generally apply for certification to be eligible for federal contracts, but sometimes private companies use the certification as a qualifying step as well for doing business with other companies to meet their own goals. The agency is about to begin a regulatory scrub and look into streamlining its rules.

Commissioner Batra, who had a DBE business 35 years ago, noted the importance of setting the appropriate goal. If goals are set too high, you may fail.

Ms. Berntsen said that since enactment of I-200 there has been a lot of hesitancy to set goals. She noted that Governor Inslee has taken a bold step to increase diversity and opportunities.

Results Washington has set goals, by 2017, to increase state agency and educational institution's utilization of state-certified firms in public works and other contracting and procurement to: 10% minority; 6% women; and 5% veteran.

In 2014, minority and women's prime contractors accounted for 0.54% of WSDOT state dollar expenditures. This does not include payments to subcontractors.

Secretary Millar acknowledged that WSDOT is not meeting the state goal, but is exceeding the federal goal. Statewide, annually, the goal is 11.6%. At the federal level, there is a DBE goal, not a separate goal for women and minorities. Some contractors in the state would like to see specific goals for racial/ethnic groups. Projects in different parts of the state have different goals, based on geographic diversity.

Millar noted that goals are a metric, but he wants diversity to be the right thing to do. He is trying to get from meeting the targets as the goal to engaging the community to be the goal -- to be reflective of who WSDOT serves. WSDOT also is aware that there are people in the construction industry who disagree with goals and do not want to see preferential treatment for minorities and women. He sees subcontractor development as really important because the size of WSDOT projects most often requires a prime with capacities beyond those of small businesses.

Chris Liu, Director of the Department of Enterprise Services (DES) said that customers and communities say that there are barriers to doing business with the state. They say the process is difficult and inconsistent, and better engagement and support are needed.

Liu gave kudos to the work that Millar is doing. He said the Subcabinet on Diversity he chairs may adopt many of the practices engaged in by WSDOT. The Subcabinet includes the 5 largest non-education spending agencies, as well as the Department of Labor and Industries, as they have 11-13% minority participation by contractors (L and I has a strong community of practice – so their experience helps the subcabinet learn from their best practices).

Liu is intent on developing a state-wide community of practice for procurement to inform women and minority procurement practices. He also plans to loop into national groups that help inform about best practices in other states.

Action: None.

Follow-up: None at this time.

[Overview of Minority and Women's contracting in Transportation](#)

WASHINGTON STATE FERRY NAMING

At the January Commission meeting, the Commission received presentations advocating a name for the next 144-car Olympic Class ferry from the Suquamish Tribe, the Cowlitz Tribe and Cowlitz County, and the City of Sammamish. Staff reported the results of the FROG and VOWS surveys conducted in January, and the Ferry Advisory Committee recommendations, providing community input on the ferry name.

Action: *Commissioner Young moved that the new ferry be named “Suquamish.” Commissioner Jennings seconded the motion. Chairman Haley then read Resolution 726, and it was adopted unanimously.*

Follow-up: **Commissioner Jennings said it was a difficult decision and asked that the Cowlitz proponents reapply in the future. Commissioner Young agreed that it was a difficult decision. Chairman Haley asked that the christening be scheduled on a date that will allow the Commission to attend.**

WASHINGTON STATE FERRIES PLANNING AND PERFORMANCE

Ray Deardorf, Planning and Community Services Manager, Washington State Ferries (WSF) briefed the Commission on the WSF Long Range Plan. Its completion is planned for 2017 and has a 2040 planning horizon. It will focus on:

- Improving transportation connections and anticipating future transportation needs. Community engagement in 2016 emphasized improving multi-modal capacity for ferries/terminals.
- Aligning long range planning issues with six goals of WSDOT strategic plan.
- Update of operational strategies with the Commission will be an early action item.

WSF sees a role for FROG panel in next steps for external coordination, along with consideration of visioning groups utilized by transit agencies.

Key planning issues:

Fleet Size and Makeup

- How many vessels?
- What size and when should they be constructed?

Terminal Configuration and Supporting Access

- How should WSF's terminals function?
- Improved access for foot passengers.
- Additional options for travel at terminals – e.g. Car2Go and transit.
- Tie in with WSDOT Corridor Sketch and modal plans.

Operational Requirements

- New account based fare collection system.
- Maintaining a robust workforce.

Connectivity

- Managing customer mobility for the whole trip
- Computerized maintenance management

ESHB 2358, enacted in 2007, guides ferry planning efforts. WSF and the Commission jointly developed an evaluation and prioritization of operational strategies. Broader aspects of ESHB 2358 pertaining to adaptive management strategies also were addressed, including pricing.

Status update of Operational Recommendation:

- Reservation System – three phases w/1 & 2 complete
- Transit Enhancements – aligned Edmonds ferry schedule with Sounder schedule Fuel conservation – reduced fuel use
- Differential vehicle and passenger pricing – considered and applied in last 2 fare cycles, but continues to be controversial

Fare Revenue Update:

- Calendar Year 2015 showed continued growth in ridership.
- Total ridership 23.9 million, up 2.9% from 2014
- Increase driven by passengers – up 3.4%; vehicles were up 2.4%
- WSF ridership is projected to grow 1.1% in FY 2016

The next fare change process will begin late 2016. Issues that will likely arise next fare cycle:

- Potentially applying school group flat fee to other categories
- Orca card integration, especially as next generation of Orca cards developed

Commissioner Serebrin noted a disparity between motorcycle and bicycle fares. Deardorf explained that passenger fares are round-trip and motorcycles pay both ways. She also asked if the ORCA card offers potential for a low-income fare. Deardorf said it has not been considered – there would be revenue and transaction impacts.

Chairman Haley suggested the 2017 fare cycle might also consider additional issues raised by FROG. Commissioner Litt suggested reducing and simplifying the number of fares.

Commissioner Batra asked if capital investment is part of the long-range plan. Deardorf said that expansion needs to be looked at within financially constrained parameters. Commissioner Batra said the first goal should be sustainability; then plan for growth.

Chairman Haley asked whether provision of passenger ferries would require a statutory modification. Deardorf confirmed that passenger ferries are the responsibility of cities and counties. Commissioner Batra said it is important to have the conversation to drive the issue for state participation if it makes sense for relieving pressure on surface transportation system.

Chairman Haley and Commissioner Litt agreed it made sense to look at additional ways ferries can relieve congestion in long-term, such as supporting passenger ferries.

Commissioners Young and Tortorelli are glad to see multimodal connections on the list.

Commission staff noted it may be potentially challenging and distracting to work on long-range plan while Commission/WSDOT consider an expected rate increase next spring.

Action: None

Follow-up: Ferry team to engage with WSF staff and Ferry Advisory Committees on long-range planning.

[Washington State Ferries Planning and Performance](#)

PUBLIC COMMENT

Rick Hughes, San Juan County Councilmember, Ferry Advisory Committee member, and a member of the Farmhouse Gang (North Sound Connecting Communities Program) said that ferries are much more than a transit system – they are an iconic symbol of WA and an essential for movement of goods and access to services.

He wants to see capital growth in the system: add a new ferry without decommissioning an old one. We can't get rid of Evergreen class ferries – we need vessels that size as reserve boats. He wants year-round Sidney coverage (San Juan County is working on developing air service from Friday Harbor to Canada). We need to add slips to terminals as well.

He also wants consideration of north/south routes on Puget Sound (like Mukilteo to the north). He fully supports reservation system but is cautious about the impact of future operational changes – we need to maintain fluidity for filling boats and ensuring access for those using the reservation system.

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

ANNE E. HALEY, Chairman

JOE TORTORELLI, Vice-Chairman

SHIV BATRA, Member

HESTER SEREBRIN, Member

ROY JENNINGS, Member

DEBBIE YOUNG, Member

JERRY LITT, Member

ATTEST:

REEMA GRIFFITH, Executive Director

DATE OF APPROVAL