

**MINUTES OF THE LOCAL MEETING OF THE
WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
June 22, 2010**

The local jurisdiction meeting of the Washington State Transportation Commission was called to order at 9 a.m., on Tuesday, June 22, Grays Harbor Council of Governments, Port of Grays Harbor, 115 South Wooding Street, Aberdeen, Washington.

Commissioners present at the meeting were: Chair Carol Moser, Bob Distler, Dick Ford, Elmira Forner, Dan O'Neal and Latisha Hill.

CHAIRMAN WELCOME AND COMMISSION INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Moser called the meeting to order and introduced Commission staff and welcomed staff from Senator Cantwell and Representative Dicks' office.

Commissioners introduced themselves and shared their backgrounds and perspectives.

**TRANSPORTATION 101 – A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF FUNDING AND PLANNING
IN WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION**

Paul Parker, Senior Policy Analyst, Transportation Commission, provided a presentation on the source and distribution of transportation revenue.

To view this presentation please click on the link:

http://wstc.wa.gov/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2010/June22/20100622_BP02_Transportation101.pdf

CITY TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

Mayor Bill Simpson, City of Aberdeen, thanked the state for the work it has done and asked that it continue to invest in seismic retrofits.

Larry Bledsoe, City of Aberdeen Public Works Director, estimated that a city the size of Aberdeen should be spending about \$614,000 a year on asphalt preservation. The city's road construction budget, which includes seal coats, overlays and patches, has shrunk from \$375,000 in 2001 to \$75,000 last year. During that time, the public works department laid off 13 people. He recommends the state fund an asphalt preservation program and reduce state funding going to other state grant programs. Currently most projects funded by the state require additional improvements (such as sidewalks); he asked for greater local flexibility in how the funds are spent.

Commissioners asked if Aberdeen considered other revenue sources. He responded that a Transportation Benefit District would generate \$120,000 annually. Partnership is important; jurisdictions from the entire county proposed a county-wide paving project to receive stimulus funds. The Downtown improvements grant that Aberdeen received, and

other TIB projects across the state, are examples of investments that are nice, but not essential.

Asked whether the requirement for matching funding is reasonable, Mr. Bledsoe responded yes the match funding is a good requirement.

Mayor Jack Durney, City of Hoquiam, stressed that Hoquiam and Aberdeen work together on transportation. Priority 4 of “Hometown Hoquiam” is improving traffic flow on state highways.

Hoquiam’s sidewalk project emerged from a community visioning process. The city has installed 3000 lineal feet of sidewalks, partnering with homeowners. Labor was provided by the city and concrete was paid by the homeowners. The project won an award for “Best Public Works Project” in the State.

Hoquiam faces the same preservation challenges: only \$50,000 available, but \$6 million in six-year street plan. It is mostly preservation projects. The 6-Year Street Plan should be renamed the “City Wish List.” When grant funds are used, people need to know where the money came from – the money often doesn’t match highest local priorities.

To view this presentation please click on the link:

http://wstc.wa.gov/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2010/June22/20100622_BP03_LarryBledsoePres.pdf

Follow-Up/Action: None

COUNTY TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

Commissioner Al Carter said that Grays Harbor County has leveraged \$ 60 million in state and federal funds with county investment. He talked about the importance of rerouting truck traffic through the industrial areas of Aberdeen and Hoquiam and out of downtown and neighborhoods. Without rerouting trucks, Hoquiam cannot succeed in its downtown revitalization effort.

Does WSDOT have a Hoquiam River bridge through the industrial area on its wish list? Commissioner Carter said that’s unknown. “The County gets what the state gives us,” he explained. “But now things are happening in the County – it’s been discovered.” The pontoon project is huge; 2000 construction jobs and – permanent jobs.

The Commission noted that transportation projects for Grays Harbor County should consider the benefits of improving the economy and reducing unemployment.

Follow-Up/Action: None

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

Vicki Cummings, Executive Director, Grays Harbor Council of Governments, noted that partnerships and economies of scale are part of its operating procedure. RTPOs provide

the connection between local approaches and state/federal governments. The Southwest Washington RTPO is in the WSDOT Olympic Region.

The Surface Transportation Program provided nearly \$5 million for local projects, including \$425,000 for sidewalks from Safe Routes to Schools. All this can happen only if planning is done beforehand.

US 101 Regional Circulation Project, completed recently, recommended several improvements to improve traffic flow and reduce the impact on the community of 3000 truck trips a day in the area. The full truck route, including the new bridge described by Commissioner Carter, would cost \$386 million.

Regional successes in Grays Harbor County include:

- Transit center
- Scenic Byway designation on SR 109
- WSDOT SR-520 Pontoon Construction
- Port Industrial Road Construction

Additional needs include:

- an overpass from SR 12 to Keys Road to access the Satsop Development Park
- Sidings for the Puget Sound and Pacific RR. Rail traffic is growing by leaps and bounds, interfering with auto traffic to/from Aberdeen's Gateway Mall and blocking intersections in Elma. Rail America/PS Pacific RR is paying for the engineering for this Washington Coast Corridor Freight Project.
- Roadway Maintenance Funding
 - Minor collectors and off-system roads don't qualify for federal funds

To view this presentation please click on the link:

http://wstc.wa.gov/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2010/June22/20100622_BP05_VickiCummings_GHCOG.pdf

Mark Carlin, General Manager, Grays Harbor Transit, explained that transit operates 7 days a week. GH Transit has a total budget of about \$7.5 million, operating eight fixed routes and 31 coaches. He pointed out what the Commission has heard across the state: when a community loses jobs, transit demand increases and revenue drops. GH Transit used \$1.26 million in reserve funds in 2009 and reduced service hours by 16%.

Nevertheless, despite the challenges, there is positive news:

- During the week, GH Transit provides six daily trips to Olympia.
- \$1.7 million Aberdeen Transit Center improved safety and increased park ride lot from 10 to 35 spaces.

To view this presentation please click on the link:

http://wstc.wa.gov/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2010/June22/20100622_BP05_GraysHarborTransitTranspCom.pdf

Follow-Up/Action: None

TRIBAL TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

Coni Wilson, Councilwoman, Quinault Indian Nation, noted that it's ironic that the tribes have had transportation challenges since the beginning of time. The Quinault reservation is 208,000 acres on the Coast, three villages: Taholah (population 864), Queets and Amanda Park. People say that Taholah is "at the end of the road, but we say we are at the beginning of SR 109." Quinault Indian Nation is now the largest employer in Grays Harbor County.

Tribal people are accustomed to traveling by canoe. Before white settlement, all travel was by canoe.

Jonathon Ciesla, Tribal Transportation Planner, explained that the Tribal Priority List often doesn't align with state and regional transportation priorities. He asked how tribes can access federal money if they are competing with RTPOs?

There remains a problem with the inventorying of tribal road networks with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), which impacts the allocation of road funds. The Indian Reservation Road (IRR) TIP is supposed to be attached to the state TIP. The Quinault Nation could submit projects through the RTPO process, but it is located in two different RTPOs, and due to resource issues, can't fully participate; therefore, the Nation must choose how and where to participate.

Historically, tribal governments have only received transportation money through IRR Program – about \$200-300,000 for construction. The Nation saved money for several years to pave streets and build sidewalks in Queets. Also, the Federal Allotment Act has complicated ownership and ability to improve roads. Commissioners commented that it would be more logical for tribes to have direct relationship with USDOT rather than struggle for funds from the BIA.

On a positive note the Quinault Nation is starting up a tribal transit system to connect with Gray Harbor Transit and Jefferson Transit.

To view this presentation please click on the link:

http://wstc.wa.gov/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2010/June22/20100622_BP06_QINWA.pdf

Follow-Up/Action: What does the state agreement on tribal gas tax allocation require? Isn't that revenue supposed to be used on transportation?

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTEMT OF TRANSPORTATION REGIONAL PROJECTS AND PERSPECTIVES

Kevin Dayton, Olympic Region Administrator, WSDOT, talked about projects in the area. It is almost exclusively a Maintenance and Operations Program. In April 2011, the Olympic region will lay off 30-50 people due to declining revenue. Although the area is a hotbed for growth, transportation will limit future growth of the area at some point. He noted that in the 1950s, about 3% of GDP nationally went into infrastructure. Today it is less than half that.

Follow-Up/Action: None

MAIN STREET COMMUNITIES AND STATE HIGHWAYS AS MAIN STREETS

Allyson Brooks, Director, Washington State Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) and Kathleen Davis, Director, Highways and Local Programs Division, WSDOT shared information on the Main Streets Program.

WSDOT is proposing a State Highways as Main Streets Program:

- There are 500 miles of state highway that are Main Street state highway thoroughfares in about 180 cities.
- A \$20 million program could help make a difference in 8-12 communities

This isn't going to be a preservation program; it will be about community design and planning/visioning.

The State's Main Street Program was moved to DAHP. It is about bringing back our downtowns and jobs. Downtowns are centers for business, employment, and government. Main Street is a comprehensive partnership. It does not require historic buildings; DAHP will play a facilitation role to bring together developers and communities.

To be a Main Street Community requires:

- Partnerships
- Design
- Economic Restructuring (tax credits for historic renovation, property valuation remains in pre-rehab state)
- Stakeholder engagement

Port Townsend is a case study of a Main Street Community, with \$38 million in rehabilitation investment. Seattle, Tacoma and Spokane looking to create a separate Big City Main Street program.

Commissioners noted that there are challenges in the grass roots organizing with absentee owners, tax consequences to the community at large. But, the Commission is glad to see DAHP and WSDOT working together. Commissioners suggested the Main Street Program link to the State's Urban Forestry and Housing programs.

To view the presentations please click on the link:

http://wstc.wa.gov/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2010/June22/20100622_BP08_MainStreetApproach.pdf

http://wstc.wa.gov/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2010/June22/20100622_BP08_KathleenDavisResearchNoteHighwaysAsMainstreet.pdf

Follow-Up/Action: None

US 101 CORRIDOR AND COASTAL HIGHWAYS

Brent Hunter, Marketing and Public Relations, Grays Harbor Tourism, shared information regarding local tourism.

There are about 4.7 million annual visitors to Grays Harbor County. Areas for improvement in transportation include:

- Signage
 - Exit 88 off I-5; people need to know where they're going
 - SR 8 and US 101: the mile of confusion – have a sign that shows a Y and identifies the Olympic Peninsula Loop
 - Signage for historic locations, tourist destinations and activities
- A Rest Area westbound on SR 12 between Elma and Montesano
- Eliminate the SR 109 flooding problems
- Need shoulders for better bike safety – bicycle tourism is growing.
- A State level Transportation and Tourism Task Force
- More state and local coordination on maps and signage
- Expand Rails to Trails

Since Grays Harbor is a deepwater port, someday we also could bring tourists in by boat.

To view this presentation please click on the link:

http://wstc.wa.gov/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2010/June22/20100622_BP09_BrentHunter.pdf

Roy Nott, President & CEO, Paneltech International shared that he located his business in Grays Harbor County because of 3Ps: People, Place and Process – it is clean and green – and a fourth P: Partners. His company produces petroleum-free resins and recycled papers.

It is a value-added industry that relies on truck transportation. It needs to connect with cluster partners and needs to attract smart people here to work and live. Transportation is part of the quality of life.

The Port of Grays Harbor gives us a huge advantage; but the distance to markets is also a disadvantage. He recommends congestion taxes, carbon taxes and value-added taxes to provide money to improve transportation.

Regarding the need for scheduled air service, while it would be a valuable addition to the Grays Harbor area, there remain significant commercial (traffic related) and logistical (airport infrastructure) barriers to resumption of flights.

Follow-Up/Action: None

A PORT IN TRANSITION

Gary Nelson, Executive Director, Port of Grays Harbor and Steve Hefley, General Manager, Puget Sound and Pacific Railroad (PSPRR) provided an overview of Port activities.

Once a leading log export port, in 2009 the Port of Grays Harbor was the nation's leading soybean meal export facility. The Westport Marina is largest fish landing port on West Coast.

The airport is jet-capable, but old; the runway needs structural improvement. And adjacent to a National Wildlife Refuge, some pilots will no longer fly in due to the birds.

Puget Sound Pacific Rail has 108 miles of track and connects with the main line railroads at Blakeslee Junction. Its 40 customers **are** served by 10 engines and 33 employees. The \$5 million loop track at the Port helped bring AGP (the soy meal exporter).

By 2013, AGP expects to triple agricultural exports. The Port is adding track on port land for railcar storage. The Port's Chrysler contract is 24,000 autos a year with the Pasha Group Partnership. Lumber and paper also head east.

The Port also is building an incubator Research and Development Lab. PanelTech and Imperium will be tenants.

To view this presentation please click on the link:

http://wstc.wa.gov/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2010/June22/20100622_BP10_PortGraysHarbor.pdf

Follow-Up/Action: None

RTPO PRIORITIZED PROJECTS

Rosemary Siipola, Southwest Washington RTPO, shared that the RTPO is the largest RTPO in the state, with five counties and the Kelso-Longview-Rainier MPO. It has a fantastic partnership with the Grays Harbor Council of Governments.

Project needs in the RTPO cost \$7.1 billion. On the local side, all of the revenue collected goes to preservation. Major projects and needs include the following:

- About 40% of the ARRA money coming to the state will upgrade the Class I mainline segment in the I-5 corridor for high-speed rail. In Centralia, there will be some station improvements.
- The Port of Longview is building new grain terminal.
- Port of Kalama continues to have major grain exports.
- A new Puget Island Ferry is very important for Wahkiakum County.
- I-5/Mellen Road improvement is needed in Lewis County.
- Woodland needs to have I-5 raised to reconnect a road that can unite the city.
- The Kelso Airport has a huge potential for economic development.
- Rails to Trails are very big projects in this area.

In our region, she emphasized, we take what we've got and implement it. In our region, we need to modernize what's been here for a long time.

How are projects prioritized? By the ability to attract multiple funding sources. We put projects forward where they meet the funding opportunities.

To view the presentation please click on the link:

http://wstc.wa.gov/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2010/June22/20100622_BP11_MRTP.pdf

Follow-Up/Action: None

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

This meeting has been recorded. If you would like additional meeting details, tapes are available for a nominal fee. Please contact the Transportation Commission Office at (360)705-7070.

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