

# WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

## Meeting Summary

May 17 & 18, 2011

The regular meeting of the Washington State Transportation Commission was called to order at 9:00 a.m., on Tuesday, May 17, 2011, in Room 1D2 of the Transportation Building in Olympia, Washington.

Commissioner Parker gaveled the meeting to order and welcomed Commissioner Anne Haley to her first meeting. Commissioner Haley shared that her interest in transportation comes first as a consumer, then as a wheat grower, and businesswoman.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

*It was moved by Commissioner O'Neal and seconded by Commissioner Moser to adopt the summary of the April 19, 2011 local meeting. The motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Haley abstained as she was not present at the April meeting.*

Commissioner Parker reported on a discussion in Southwest Washington that was a reminder that the Commission needs to discuss the reasons for tolling each time it begins a tolling process. He suggested that, for each project to be tolled, we share an estimate of how much of a gas tax increase or sales tax increase would be required to raise the necessary funds.

### **WASHINGTON STATE FERRIES (WSF) WORK SESSION**

David Moseley, Assistant Secretary, Ferries Division, WSDOT briefed the Commission on the legislative topics affecting WSF – many of which are still in play.

Michael Hodgins, Berk and Associates, joined Mr. Moseley in briefing the Commission on the 2011 Tariff issues:

- The financial plan assumes a 2.5% fare increase
- Assumes a surcharge mechanism is put in place
- Fare revenue (without any surcharge) is \$312.8 million
- Other revenues projected at \$7.1 million

The possible policy changes that WSF is considering in developing 2011 tariff proposals:

- Passenger/Vehicle Fare Ratio – options for discussion
  - Continue to increase fares proportionately
  - Increase vehicle fares by a slightly greater amount
  - Increase vehicle fares more dramatically
- Anacortes-Sidney Market Screen – options for discussion
  - Increase these fares at the same ratio as other routes
  - Move toward market parity with BC Ferries and improve farebox recovery
- Modification of vehicle categories under 30-feet – options for discussion
  - Status quo
  - New categories for vehicles < 14', 14-22' vehicles, and 22-30' vehicles, including small commercial trucks, recreational vehicles and cars with trailers

- Eliminate bicycle surcharge and permit fees for bicycle commuters and riders using multi-ride
- Fuel surcharge
- Out-of-state resident surcharge

[Overview of Transportation Budget and Financial Plan for WSF](#)

[2011 Fare Setting – Policies Under Review and Schedule](#)

**FERRY RIDERS’ OPINION GROUP (FROG) – FERRY FARE SURVEY RESULTS**

Bill Svendsen, Market Decisions Corporation, shared that the most recent survey (March 18 – April 4) explored reactions to various fare strategies. Some key findings and comments include:

- Over half of all respondents would support an additional \$0.25 charge for ferry capital improvements.
- There are mixed and varied results for extending the summer surcharge, but 46% of the respondents are neutral.
- Commissioners noted that the neutral response was high in many categories and suggest that those responses be accorded proper weight.
- Younger users are significantly more receptive to peak pricing than middle-aged or older drivers.
- More than 2/3 of respondents agree with the current passenger/vehicle fare ratio (30% of vehicle fares).
- Improved connectivity is necessary to encourage more walk-on passengers.
- Multi-ride ticket holders are less inclined to raise fares in multiple categories.
- One-third of respondents oppose both fare increases and service reductions, but 61% would support fare increases. Among that 61%, the average fare increase supported is 14.2%.

[Ferry Riders Opinion Group \(FROG\) Ferry Fare Survey Results](#)

**PUGET SOUND REGIONAL COUNCIL (PRSC) TRANSPORTATION 2040 MONITORING: CONGESTION AND MOBILITY REPORT**

Stephanie Rossi, Principal Planner, PSRC, provided an overview of the Congestion and mobility plan required since ISTEA (1991) for MPOs over 200,000. The 2010 Congestion and Mobility Report is the baseline for prioritization and future action. T2040 prioritization work proceeds through Spring 2012; the discussion will inform performance measures for T2040 monitoring and CMP.

[Transportation 2040 Monitoring: Congestion and Mobility Report](#)

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE - STATE ENERGY STRATEGY UPDATE**

Roel Hammerschlag, Senior Energy Policy Specialist, Department of Commerce, noted that this effort was directed by the Legislature. A two-track process: (a) policy and implementation, and (b) analytic process. It is expected to be a living strategy, regularly updated. An Update was completed last year, catching the low-hanging fruit, with a full revision now underway, looking toward 2035.

Although the Department of Commerce co-chairs the Committee and OFM sits on it, most of the state input occurs through the ETC (Energy, Transportation, and Climate) Cabinet. In January 2011, the Advisory Committee decided to focus on transportation efficiency. It is obvious that there is a lack of transportation expertise on the Advisory Committee; however, Matthew Kitchen (PSRC) and Mark Hallenbeck (University of Washington) sit on the Technical Experts Committee.

Goals of this effort:

- Maintain competitive energy prices
- Foster clean energy economy and jobs
- Reduce GHG emissions

Commissioner's expressed interest in the ramifications of vehicle electrification. By charging EVs during off-peak hours, you can almost avoid increasing peak demand. There will need to be improvements in the electric distribution network.

Cars using internal combustion engines are only 10-20% efficient, compared to EVs, which are 80-90% efficient. Vehicles are a massive opportunity for increasing energy efficiency. Metropolitan transit systems are not typically fuel-efficient systems, generally due to the low ridership at the end of routes.

### [State Energy Strategy Update](#)

## **TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION BUSINESS**

*It was moved by Commissioner O'Neal and seconded by Commissioner Ford to amend the Ferry Naming Policy as proposed in March. The motion passed unanimously.*

Commissioners O'Neal, Moser and Cowan agreed to serve as a Nominating Committee for new officers.

The Commission filled the vacancy on the tolling subcommittee by adding Commissioner Haley. She joins Commissioner Ford and Commissioner Parker as members of the tolling subcommittee. The Commission discussed the need for an independent review and asked Commissioner Ford whether he could objectively participate given his previous involvement in the I-405 workgroup. The Commission concluded that he should continue on the tolling team, particularly since the full commission would be reviewing and acting on the work done by the consultant, as guided by the subcommittee.

The Commission created a Survey Team, headed by Commissioner Haley and joined by Commissioner Cowan and Commissioner O'Neal.

The Commission appointed Commissioner Ford as temporary appointment to the Joint Transportation Committee Public Private Partnership group.

## **Legislative Update**

Paul Parker, Senior Policy Analyst, WSTC briefed the Commission on legislative items, the budget, the additive funding bill (SHB 2053) and the Governor's Transportation Advisory Group.

Reema Griffith, Executive Director, WSTC briefed the Commission on the hiring process for the Senior Financial Analyst position.

### **Scheduling**

Ms. Griffith asked the Commission to schedule a June morning meeting to propose a ferry tariff schedule and an afternoon meeting for outreach on the Eastside Toll Express Lanes. It is scheduled for Wednesday, June 29, 9:30 -12:30 in Seattle and 2-4 (TBD, probably Bellevue), or on June 28, as a backup.

The Commission discussed whether the tariff proposal should include 2.5% revenue increases in both 2011 and 2012, to reduce the time and cost of considering similar changes two years in a row. Staff also discussed community outreach meetings on the ferry tariff changes. The Commission agreed in concept to about nine meetings, including one in Friday Harbor and one on the San Juan Inter-Island Ferry.

The Public Hearing will probably be scheduled the week of August 23, perhaps August 25.

### **GRAY NOTEBOOK (GNB) OVERVIEW**

Laura Cameron, Production Editor, Gray Notebook, WSDOT provided an overview of *The Gray Notebook*, WSDOT's quarterly performance report, with details on the following topics:

#### **Freight**

Barb Ivanov, Director, Freight Systems Division, WSDOT, reported on freight and goods movement, which increased in 2010 over 2009. The Truck Performance Measurement Pilot Program allows WSDOT to identify the worst truck bottlenecks in the state. Some may be due to grade or weather; others can be improved.

George Xu, Manager Planning & Strategic Assessment, State Rail & Marine Office, WSDOT, reported on marine and rail freight trends. Container freight through seaports increased nearly 15% from 2009 to 2010. The 12-year trend average is 2.4%. Washington State ports are more stable than other west coast ports.

The state leases 25 refrigerated rail cars for the perishable produce program; the state owns about 100 Grain Train cars and the Port of Walla Walla owns another 18. The Grain Train is now financially self-sustaining.

Anne Ford, Commercial Services Administrator, ITS, WSDOT, reported on the growing use and abilities of [CVISN \(Commercial Vehicle Information Systems & Networks\)](#). Transponders allow WSDOT/WSP to screen for about 60 different criteria. WSDOT conservatively estimates that truckers using CVISN equipment save \$8.5 million annually. New technology used at weigh stations allows automatic detection of defective brakes.

#### **Highway Safety Plan**

Pat Morin, Program Manager Systems Analysis, Capital Program Development and Management, WSDOT, presented on Run-off-the-road and intersection collisions. A third focus area in the previous Target Zero – cross-over collisions – has been substantially reduced due to installation of cable median barriers, centerline rumble strips, and other safety engineering investment.

There is debate over what can be done and how to address unsafe or impaired drivers. WSDOT is not collecting data from non-accident incidents, such as non-injury run-off-the-road incidents. Target Zero partners are putting more effort into enforcement. As a result of discussion, it appears there should be a clear way to alert law enforcement to dangerous drivers and places where incidents occur. Perhaps there should be information provided when licenses and tabs are renewed.

Matt Enders, Transportation Supervising Engineer, WSDOT talked about fatal and serious injury collisions on county and city roads. WSDOT is distributing \$45 million over six years to counties for safety improvements.

### **Stewardship**

Todd Lamphere, GMAP & Policy Analyst, WSDOT, shared that Washington State is investing \$1.5 billion in transportation improvements due to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Jay Alexander, Director, Capital Program Development, WSDOT, talked about the progress made on delivering capital programs. Over \$4 billion has been spent on 300 completed projects. The remaining 121 projects involve a total of \$11.5 billion.

## **SR 520 CARPOOL PILOT PROGRAM INTERIM REPORT AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES TO INCREASING RIDESHARING**

Keith Cotton, Urban Programs Manager, Seamus Misek, Rideshare Program Manager and Stan Suchan, Puget Sound Transportation Manager, WSDOT, talked about creating and expanding a shared pool to connect cars and riders.

“Slugging” refers to the practice of riders congregating at a toll point to gain a ride in a time/place for the driver to benefit with a lower toll or HOV capacity.

Avego (Nelson/Nygaard and U-W Trac) and WSDOT collaboration required participants to provide substantial information to protect riders and to protect the state from liability, including a driver abstract, social security number, insurance coverage certificate, and a driver promise that the vehicle is maintained to manufacturer standards. To date, 962 have shown interest and there are 9 approved drivers and 89 approved riders.

*RideshareOnline.com* provides customizable ride-matching and trip reduction management tools. It is based on social networking and provides only information.

[Rideshare Tools](#)

[Carpool Pilot Program](#)

## **TOLLING WORK SESSION**

Craig Stone, Director, Toll Division and Jeff Caldwell, Assistant Director, Financial Planning & Analysis, WSDOT, briefed the Commission on TNB Traffic and Revenue. Both traffic and revenue are below projections. Traffic is 3.5 – 4.0% less than projected, which is consistent with traffic statewide. Revenue losses are higher than expected, due in part to the problems with transponder readers.

The current information indicates that FY 2012 will fall short of the Commission-designated “sufficient minimum balance” by 634,000. Projections indicate that unless the tolls are increased in FY 2013, revenue will fall short of the “sufficient minimum balance” by over \$13 million.

Mr. Stone has developed a tentative schedule for TNB 2013 toll setting to begin in November 2011, and concluding as early as February 28, 2012, to allow for legislative approval, if necessary.

Mr. Stone then provided a schedule update for SR 520 tolling. WSDOT is currently about halfway through functional testing of the toll system. After that concludes, extended operational testing – running 1,000 to 10,000 transactions a day. Then, a third level of testing all systems will begin. Once WSDOT is satisfied that all systems are operating well, the WSDOT Secretary will certify that photo tolling can begin. Mr. Stone does not anticipate tolling will begin until July.

Mr. Stone and Ms. Denise Cieri, I-405 Deputy Project Director, discussed EHB 1382, the legislation directing further study on the Eastside Corridor. The I-405 Master Plan was developed between 1999 and 2002. The Record of Decision was adopted in October 2002. The 2003 and 2005 funding packages provided \$1.457 billion for I-405 improvements; to date, \$1.7 billion of improvements have been funded.

The priority system gaps that remain are Renton to Bellevue and the I-405/SR 167 connector. Option 4 from the 2010 Eastside Corridor Study proposes:

• I-405 Elements	Costs
○ SR 520 to I-5 widening	\$388 million
○ SR 167 Direct Connection	\$490 million
○ SR 169 to SR 520 widening	\$960 million
• SR 167 Elements	
○ SB HOT Lane Extension	\$82 million
○ NB HOT Lane Extension	\$30 million
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	\$1,950 million

So far, \$470 million is authorized, leaving a funding gap of \$1,480 million.

Commissioners asked several questions about the success of SR 167 HOT Lanes, the proposal to build new general purpose lanes on I-405 and charge all vehicles \$1, and how the work given by the Legislature to the Commission is reconciled with the engineering work and assumptions already made by WSDOT. Mr. Stone explained that the SR 167 Pilot was designed for traffic management, that the Eastside Corridor is intended both to manage traffic and to generate revenue. He also added WSDOT intends to work very closely with the Commission to complete the tasks assigned by the Legislature.

### [Tolling Update](#)

### **I-405 TRAFFIC AND REVENUE STUDY**

Jeff Buxbaum, Cambridge Systematics, set out the questions to be answered:

- Are Express Toll Lanes a workable solution in the I-405/SR 167 Corridor?
- What range of revenue will they generate?
- How will Express Toll Lanes affect traffic operations?

The Study will not examine tolling all lanes on the corridor and will not look at other project options.

Questions raised by legislators, but not in the legislation, include the possibility of adding lanes, removing the HOV designation, and operating the expanded corridor as general purpose. Legislators do not want the Commission to look at designating the entire corridor as a toll road.

As the Commission discussed the possibility of studying the Master Plan, Mr. Stone replied that the 2000 I-405 Master Plan proposed additional GP Lanes and keeping the existing HOV lanes at an \$11 billion cost.

*It was moved by Commissioner Ford and seconded by Commissioner ? to authorize the Commission's Executive Director to finalize the contract with Cambridge Systematics. The motion passed 6-0. Commissioner Moser was absent.*

[I-405 Traffic and Revenue Study](#)

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Ann Dash shared her concerns with the steady drop in ferry ridership. When ridership was growing, children went for half-price and many more people used 10-ride passes.

Only 10% of seniors are living in poverty, whereas 20% of kids are. In Bremerton, about 60% of children qualify for free and reduced lunch. No other North American ferry system charges more for children than for senior adults.

She also expressed skepticism regarding Mr. Moseley's forecast of expanding ridership as the economy recovers. She also asked that the 20' vehicle size be maintained.

## TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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PHILIP A. PARKER, Chair

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DICK FORD, Vice-Chair

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TOM COWAN, Member

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DAN O'NEAL, Member

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CAROL MOSER, Member

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ANNE HALEY, Member

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LATISHA HILL, Member

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TERESA BERNTSEN, Ex-Officio Member  
Governor's Office

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PAULA HAMMOND, Ex-Officio Member  
Secretary of Transportation

ATTEST:

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REEMA GRIFFITH, Executive Director

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DATE OF APPROVAL