

**MINUTES OF THE LOCAL MEETING OF THE
WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
April 21, 2009**

The local jurisdiction meeting of the Washington State Transportation Commission was called to order at 9:00 a.m., on Tuesday, April 21, 2009 at the Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites, Olympia Room, 22318 84th Avenue South, Kent Washington.

Commissioners present at the meeting were: Chair Dan O’Neal, Dick Ford, Bob Distler, Latisha Hill, Carol Moser and Philip Parker.

CHAIRMAN WELCOME AND COMMISSION INTRODUCTIONS

Chair O’Neal opened the meeting with Commissioner introductions. He thanked Mayor Suzette Cooke, City of Kent, for taking the Commission on a tour of local transportation projects underway.

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

Paul Parker, Senior Policy Analyst, Transportation Commission, gave a presentation that provided an overview of transportation related revenue.

CITY TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

Mayor Suzette Cooke, City of Kent, explained that like other communities around the state Kent faces many challenges. Because of its geographic location it also faces many development constraints. She noted that she is a member of the South County Transportation Board and the Puget Sound Regional Council Executive Board. These organizations are part of a larger group that works together on transportation issues in south King County. It is most important that these groups as well as cities, counties and the state continue the dialogue and keep the public involved. She briefly discussed voter initiatives and the resulting decrease in city revenues. In closing she emphasized that with the popularity of Commute Trip Reduction, vanpool, transit and hybrid cars the gas tax will soon be seen as a revenue source of the past.

Mayor Peter Lewis, City of Auburn, shared the city’s concerns regarding the regional freight mobility system. He explained that Auburn and eight other valley cities make up the largest industrial center in the Puget Sound. This industrial center moves freight in and out of the region by truck and train and generates unique transportation and land use impacts. He briefly touched on land use and industrial zoning within the valley and revenue sales tax collection at point of delivery. In closing he commented briefly on truck routes and damages to local arterials and the lack of revenue to repair those arterials, which will have huge impacts in the future.

Glenn Akramoff, Public Works Director, City of Covington, shared that Covington is a new city and celebrates its 12th birthday this August. Although Covington is not large it is a pass through city like Kent and Auburn. There have been a number of transportation successes in the last few years, but obtaining funding and getting transportation projects noticed is a challenge for a small city. He provided an overview of completed and ongoing city projects.

TRANSPORTATION 2040: THE NEXT REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Bob Drewel, Executive Director, Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), provided a brief overview of PSRC's role.

Aubrey Davis, Pricing Task Force Chair, Puget Sound Regional Council, shared that the future of transportation is changing and the biggest challenge is how we pay for infrastructure. The 2040 Transportation Plan will make some assumptions and suggest future alternatives.

Mike Cummings, Program Manager, Transportation Planning, PSRC, explained that Transportation 2040 is an attempt to deal with a newly adopted growth strategy in the region. The Plan will provide a view of what has changed the last decade since the plan was last updated. Policy analysis will assure that alternatives are consistent with Vision 2040 and meet regional goals. He briefly touched cost benefit analysis and declining gas tax revenue and how that impacts the entire state.

Commissioner Distler emphasized that PSRC should coordinate with the Washington State Ferries Planning Group regarding the 2030 vs. 2040 time line.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

Ron Lewis, Deputy Executive Director, Sound Transit Light Rail Program, provided an overview of 2008-09 milestones. He explained that in 2008 - 28 of 39 milestones were achieved, which is a 72 percent success rate. He spoke briefly about each of the service lines available at this time. In 2008 Sounder carried 10 million riders with trips between Seattle/ Everett and Seattle/Tacoma. For 2009 – 36 milestones have been set that will include service enhancements, construction groundbreaking and identification of future investments. In closing he expressed that Sound Transit continues to have a strong partnership with WSDOT and its bus service operator.

Steve Taylor, Planning Director, Muckleshoot Tribe, distributed a map of the reservation and provided an overview of its boundaries. He explained that most of the roads within the reservation are a combination of state highways, city streets, county roads and Bureau of Indian Affairs roads. It can be challenging to identify who maintains these facilities. Continued partnerships and open conversation with the state, cities and the county is key. The Tribe is currently working with local jurisdictions in an attempt to turn rural roads within the reservation boundary over to the Tribe.

Harold Taniguchi, Director of Transportation, King County, provided an overview of recent success stories that include the release of the Orca card (smart card).

Metro has seen unprecedented growth over the last three years. With the current state of the economy ridership is leveling off. Because of plunging sales tax revenues Metro's budget will face a \$100 million funding gap in 2010.

This shortfall will create service cuts by as much as 20 percent next year at a time when we are attempting to relieve traffic congestion. In closing he emphasized that Metro is a critically important part of Puget Sound's transportation system.

Jeanne Burbidge, Chair, South County Area Transportation Board (SCAT), provided a brief snapshot of Board issues. The SCAT Board recognizes the importance of participating in the planning process along with all transportation bodies in the area, monitoring existing programs, advocating for south county cities in terms of funding and being included in projects that are in the works. The Board also focuses on other issues that include commuter rail and various transportation related projects.

THE CHANGING DYNAMICS OF FREIGHT

Roger Nober, Executive Vice President, BNSF Railway, provided an overview BNSF's United States infrastructure that supports millions of supply chains. He explained that rail capacity funding is at a shortfall and can not keep up with capacity. Railroads can help reduce highway congestion by removing 280 long-haul trucks from the highways on one intermodal train. Rail is more efficient and emits a fraction of total greenhouse gas emissions that trucks emit. In closing he provided an overview of rail investment incentives.

Jordan Royer, Vice President External Affairs, Pacific Merchant Shipping Association, shared information regarding container shipping. He noted that there are approximately 500 container ships that are anchored because business is slow. He explained that Washington ports are facing severe economic threats due to competition from other ports.

Jim Harrison, Director of Transportation, Costco Wholesale, shared that Costco sales are flat due to the economy. Environmental impact has become a focus and there is more attention on how over-the-road loads can be reduced. Costco is a significant user of intermodal shipping and rail capacity is very important. Several steps have been taken in order to become more efficient. He spoke briefly about port initiatives and their impacts.

Kurt Beckett, Director of External Affairs, Port of Seattle, shared that there are double digit declines at ports due to the current state of the economy, although future projections indicate that this decline will turn around.

Dick Marzano, Commissioner, Port of Tacoma, shared that today's numbers are pretty grim. Port of Prince Rupert in Canada has made large investments in infrastructure and as a result has become very competitive. Their customers do not have to fight congestion as they do in Tacoma and Seattle, which makes it more appealing.

Commissioners discussed potential freight project investments, stakeholder priorities, funding options and the role of shippers in the future.

LOCAL PERSPECTIVES ON FREIGHT MOVEMENT IN SOUTH KING COUNTY

Stan Vander Pol, President, Peninsula Truck Lines, shared that there have been some successful highway improvements in the south end. On behalf of the Washington Trucking Association he provided an overview of various facilities that need improvement because of safety issues and bottlenecks.

Mayor Suzette Cooke, City of Kent, expressed that freight is an important economic engine especially to a city like Kent where freight passes through. Kent is the second largest warehouse distribution complex on the West Coast. The Kent Valley accommodates one-third of the all of the Ports of Tacoma and Seattle truck trips in the entire central Puget Sound. Over the last decade a total of \$75 million has been invested on three major freight corridors. In closing she emphasized that grade separation is a huge priority on many projects.

Dennis Dowdy, Public Works Director, City of Auburn, shared information regarding the city's street inventory and the condition of local arterials. He explained that most of the arterials are in poor condition because they are built on a silt/sand foundation which is common in the valley. He emphasized that current funding sources do not work for preservation of worn out infrastructure, so other alternatives need to be looked at. In closing he noted that because of underfunding the system will continue to fail in the long term.

Chuck Ayers, Executive Director, Cascade Bicycle Club, explained that it is important to get cars off the highways, whether it is a hybrid or not it still creates congestion. All of this relates to the decisions that are made in terms of land use policies. Until we see these policies corrected we will continue to see freight stuck in traffic and train grade problems.

Commissioners and participants discussed various issues regarding the interconnection of the transportation system and how some of these issues might be resolved.

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (WSDOT) REGIONAL PROJECTS AND PERSPECTIVES

Craig Stone, Administrator, Urban Corridors Office and Carol Hunter, Senior Transportation Planner, Urban Corridors Office, WSDOT, shared information on WSDOT's three-part strategy to address congestion on I-405/SR 167 continuing down to SR 512(Eastside Corridor). An overview of the I-405 Master Plan and the SR 167 Corridor Plan was provided. Both of these corridor programs have long-range plans with concurrent implementation; while both face regional population growth and increasing travel demand challenges with insufficient means to manage it. They moved on to share information on freight movement in and around the region and the benefits of toll lane concepts on both corridors.

Commissioners commented on funding, revenue options and tolling concepts for these corridors.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Paul Locke, citizen, expressed concerns regarding the escalating cost of projects and emphasized that taxes keep increasing to pay for these highway projects. Somehow the costs need to be lowered.

Mel Robertson, Kent Bicycle Advisory Board, shared information on the large amount of revenue that is generated from bicyclists all around the state. He emphasized that people should be educated about cycling and that safe facilities should be provided as an encouragement to cycle.

Mayor Ralph Shape, City of SeaTac, shared that he is an advocate for the completion of SR 509 as a freight mobility project. Moving forward on this project now would be more financially feasible rather than pushing it out to the future.

Sean Eagan, Port of Tacoma, emphasized that the Port of Tacoma understands the challenges being faced by surrounding cities. The Port wants to continue to be a partner with the valley cities to find solutions that work for everyone.

The Commission meeting adjourned at 5 p.m., on April 21, 2009.

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.

WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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ATTEST:

REEMA GRIFFITH, Executive Director

DATE OF APPROVAL