



## Washington State Transportation Commission

### Regular Meeting Summary February 17 & 18, 2016

#### **COMMISSION BUSINESS**

Chairman Anne Haley opened the meeting at 9 a.m. She welcomed Shiv Batra as a member of the Transportation Commission and asked each Commissioner and staff member to briefly introduce themselves.

***Commissioner Tortorelli moved approval of the January 12 & 13, 2016 meeting summary. Commissioner Jennings seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.***

Commissioners reported on meetings in their local areas. Commissioner Serebrin attended the PSRC Executive Committee and Transportation Policy Committee. She also attended a public transportation plan workshop. Commissioner Litt attended a Chelan-Douglas MPO meeting. Commissioner Tortorelli attended the NEW RTPO meeting. Commissioner Jennings attended a public transportation plan workshop; the group talked about one payment method for ferries and public transportation in the long-term future. He also met with several representatives and senators from Clark County and other areas. Commissioner Batra attended a public transportation plan workshop with Commission staff. He will be attending the PSRC Executive Committee in the future. Commissioner Young reported that she had attended a San Juan County Ferry Advisory Committee meeting.

Executive Director Reema Griffith briefed Commissioners on a proposed amendment to the Naming Policy for Transportation Facilities. The proposed amendment clarifies that when a transportation facility named by the Commission is replaced or rebuilt, it will retain its name so long as the new facility remains part of the same corridor. Commissioners asked whether the same type of process was used previously with new facilities.

***Action/Follow-up: Commissioner Jennings moved that the policy be tabled until March for further research. Commissioner Tortorelli seconded the motion, which was adopted.***

Ms. Griffith briefed Commissioners on the upcoming joint meeting in June with the California and Oregon Commissions. Commissioner Batra suggested more involvement from private sector in the autonomous vehicle session. Commissioner Haley suggested more time for discussion among commissioners.

#### **LEGISLATIVE REPORT**

Staff provided an update from the legislative session.

## **WASHINGTON TRANSPORTATION PLAN 2035**

Kerri Woehler briefed the Commission on WSDOT's progress in developing Phase 2 of WTP 2035. WTP 2035 is one statewide transportation plan in two phases:

Phase 1, adopted by the Washington State Transportation Commission in December 2014, is the Statewide Transportation Policy Plan replacing WTP 2030. It provides policy guidance and recommendations for all modes.

Phase 2 implements recommendations from Phase 1 and replaces the 2007-2026 WTP as the multimodal statewide transportation plan. It meets federal and state planning requirements for the multimodal transportation system plan network. It will be approved by the WSDOT Secretary and endorsed by Washington State Transportation Commission.

The same three-member Steering Committee and Advisory Group are guiding both Phase 1 and Phase 2.

Commission and WSDOT staff then advised that WTP 2035 recommend the Transportation Commission periodically evaluate and report on the status of WTP 2035 implementation at the state and regional level.

- The Commission plans to develop a scorecard to measure progress.
- Presentations at Commission meetings can assist in monitoring and evaluating key strategies.
- In 2015, the Commission focused on the strategies that implement the Safety and Mobility goals.

Staff recommends that in 2016, the Commission focus on the strategies that implement the Preservation and Economic Vitality goals. This focus will emphasize the important link between strengthening communities and maintaining and preserving the system and also follow through on the theme and recommendations in the 2015 Annual Report.

*Action/Follow-up: Specific topics addressed during 2016 will include:*

- *Economic and social benefits of the system*
- *System Capacity*
- *Transportation and Land Use*
- *Increase access for all modes*
  - o *Public transportation funding*
  - o *Ferry service levels*
  - o *Health and transportation*
  - o *Technology and access*
- *Application of practical design to ensure improvements are cost-effective and appropriate for the situation*

[Update on WTP Phase 2](#)

[WTP 2035 Phase I Implementation and Scorecard](#)

## **SR 520 TOLL RATE ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS**

Joel Emery, Director of Toll Finance, WSDOT, reported on traffic and revenue over the SR 520 Bridge. Net toll revenue is tracking well through the second quarter of FY 2016.

Tim Boesch, Project Manager, CDM Smith and Auden Kaehler, U.S. Advisory Services, WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff, reported on the preliminary results of four toll scenarios the tolling subcommittee proposed as alternatives to the FY 2017 Financial Plan toll rates.

# SR 520 Toll Rate Schedules Analyzed

Case	FY 2017+ Toll Schedule Features		
	Weekdays	Weekends	3+ Carpool Exemption
<b>Baseline</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial Plan toll rates for the new bridge</li> <li>Approx. 15% “step increase”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial Plan toll rates for the new bridge</li> <li>4.2% increase for midday peak only (11AM – 6PM)</li> </ul>	Yes
<b>Alternative A</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$4.35 max peak toll</li> <li>\$2.90 midday toll</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$2.50 max midday toll</li> </ul>	No
<b>Scenario 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uniform 15% increase</li> <li>\$4.50 max peak toll</li> <li>\$2.80 midday toll</li> </ul>	<i>Same as Alternative A</i>	No
<b>Scenario 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10% increase</li> <li>\$4.30 max peak toll</li> <li>\$2.70 midday toll</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10% increase</li> <li>\$2.65 max midday toll</li> <li>\$2.05 shoulder / \$1.40 off-peak</li> </ul>	No
<b>Scenario 3*</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Directionally tailored PM tolls</li> <li>\$4.25 max peak toll</li> <li>\$3.00 midday toll</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$2.75 max midday toll (+15%)</li> <li>\$2.00 shoulder toll (+8%)</li> <li>\$1.50 off-peak toll (+20%)</li> </ul>	No
<b>Scenario 4</b>	<i>Same as Baseline</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10% increase vs Financial Plan</li> <li>\$2.75 max midday toll (+15%)</li> <li>\$2.05 shoulder / \$1.40 off-peak</li> </ul>	Yes

Note: All cases include nickel rounding of toll rates and a \$1.25 minimum overnight toll starting in FY 2017.

\* For Scenario 3, quarter rounding was applied to the toll rates for vehicles with three or more axles, calculated as multiples of the two-axle rates.

Ellen Evans, Office of the State Treasurer, reported that \$1.7 billion in bonds have been issued for the SR 520 project. She also explained that there is important new flexibility for the Commission to consider:

- The state is not issuing more costly stand-alone toll revenue bonds for this project
- Repayment of federal TIFIA loans were delayed by a year (Dec. 1, 2016 to Dec. 1, 2017) with an agreed to change to the project completion date

As a result, the minimum net toll revenues necessary to cover project costs are lower than original financial plan anticipated.

OST therefore recommends that toll rate increases be phased in, in alignments with improvements to the driver experience, as possible. A multiple-step increase is feasible for Alternative A and Scenarios 1, 2, and 3.

[SR 520 Toll Rate Analysis and Options](#)  
[SR 520 Civil Penalty Account Quarterly](#)  
[SR 520 Corridor Account Quarterly](#)  
[Combined Fund Balance](#)

## CONGRESSIONAL UPDATE

Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers talked with the Commission about the FAST Act. Enacted with bipartisan support, it provides federal transportation policy and funding through FY 2020. Some highlights that she mentioned are:

- project environmental streamlining
- border infrastructure
- freight funding for expensive road, rail, intermodal projects

- bridge funding

Congresswoman McMorris Rodgers also indicated her support for a demonstration project for a road usage charge; given that gas tax revenue will decline as fuel efficient cars become more prevalent. A demonstration can help people to understand that people who drive less fuel efficient cars may actually pay less for road use.

*Action/Follow-Up:None.*

### **TACOMA NARROWS BRIDGE 2016 TOLL RATES**

Rob Fellows, Policy & Planning Manager, WSDOT Toll Division and staff provided an overview of the history of TNB toll setting. The current traffic and revenue is tracking well with the 2013 and 2014 projections and it appears that the anticipated \$0.50 cent increase on July 1, 2016 may be more than needed to cover debt service payments and other project costs.

WSDOT provided analysis for the Tolling Subcommittee and TNB Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) in support of their alternative proposals, including those being recommended today for the Commission's consideration:

- a \$0.25 cent increase for all three toll payment categories, as recommended by the Commission's Tolling Subcommittee; and
- a \$1.00 increase in the cash toll, but no increase to *Good to Go!* and photo-toll rates, as recommended by the CAC

Bruce Beckett, Chair of the CAC, reported that the CAC unanimously recommends the Commission increase the cash toll by \$1.00, resulting in toll rates that are \$5.00 *Good to Go!*, \$7.00 cash, and \$7.00 for photo tolling. Commission members noted that if the planned rate increase took effect (\$0.50), long-range projections indicate no further toll increases would be needed. Beckett replied that the CAC did not discuss whether the planned toll rate should remain in place until tolls are paid off, but noted such an approach would bank nearly \$20 million in revenue.

Randy Boss, CAC member, noted revenue projections are nearly the same for the Subcommittee's recommended across-the-board \$0.25 increase and the CAC's \$5.00/\$7.00/\$7.00 recommendation. He also posited that establishing \$7.00 as the toll rate for both cash and photo-tolling would eventually enable closing the toll booths for a substantial savings, while maintaining the \$5.00 Good to Go rate would increase TNB traffic volumes and spur economic growth in the greater Gig Harbor area.

Commissioners asked for clarification of the cost of the different methods of toll collection. WSDOT staff gave estimates of the collection costs and will report back with exact costs.

[Tacoma Narrows Bridge 2016 Toll Rates](#)  
[Tacoma Narrows Bridge Quarterly](#)  
[Combined Fund Balance](#)

## **I-405 EXPRESS TOLL LANES**

David Ungemah, Assistant Vice-President, WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff, talked about the purpose and history of managed lanes. He chairs the TRB Congestion Pricing Committee and has worked on managed lane implementation in several states, but not in Washington.

Mr. Ungemah explained that congestion is an imbalance between supply (highway lanes) and demand (highway travel). It results from the flow breakdown due to:

- Predictable factors:
  - Bottlenecks at known locations
  - Ramp merges, grades, weaving points, lane constrictions, bridges, etc.
  - Speed differentials between vehicles
- Unpredictable factors
  - Driver behavior that slows traffic, such as rubber necking or sudden braking
  - Spikes in traffic that yield short periods of high density flow

Options to address congestion include increasing capacity, reducing demand, and controlling access.

Pricing meters traffic in order to prevent breakdown into congested conditions. Pricing

- Generates Revenue
  - Allows us to build and maintain more than we could otherwise afford.
- Meters Traffic
  - Higher travel speeds accrue in medium and (especially) long term
  - Pricing more efficient than signalization or rationing

Mr. Ungemah reported that the number of managed lanes facilities and total miles have grown substantially. The number of miles of express toll lanes has doubled in last five years and almost will double again by 2020.

He emphasized that not all managed lanes are the same. When HOV lanes are converted to toll lanes, the benefits are less. When new lanes are built, the benefits are greater.

Mr. Ungemah explained that many express toll lane projects have generated controversy and needed adjustments. He shared several examples of projects that didn't work right at first:

### ***I-394 Minneapolis***

- Opened with 24 hours operation
- Increase in general purpose lane congestion
- Increase due to a reduction in GP lane capacity
- Legislature began considering a bill to reverse the I-394 Managed Lanes within first three weeks of operation
  
- MnDOT changed operations in response to the legislature and public, instituting a peak hour / peak direction policy.

### ***I-85 Atlanta***

- Restored flow to overused HOV lanes
- Substantial increase in general purpose lane congestion
- Dynamic pricing algorithm imposed very high toll rates, by overly considering conditions in general purpose lanes when setting tolls

- Governor Deal intervened in the first five days by placing a cap on tolls, reducing the toll rates, and opening additional access points. He also replaced algorithm with human setting of toll rates and changed the Algorithm which “shadowed” now helped inform human operators to no longer over-represent the general purpose lane conditions.

### *I-110 Los Angeles (a lot like I-405)*

- Northern end congestion resulted in backups in both managed lanes and general purpose lanes
- Congestion at access points
- High violation rates
- \$16M revenue reinvested for resolving traffic at bottlenecks
- Changes in dynamic pricing algorithm to adjust to growing traffic volumes
- Increased enforcement to reduce violation rates

### Lessons learned

- Managed lanes are becoming increasingly mainstream as a mobility option
- They are still a fundamental change in how we use highway capacity
- Big projects require big revenue
- Tolling for revenue requires different fundamental decisions than tolling for traffic management
- Success is driven by planning and policy
- Technical, institutional, and public acceptance issues can be overcome
- Establish performance measures and key policies early
- Revenue generation and traffic management can be complementary or in conflict. Traffic management can work so well as to reduce revenue generation.

Mr. Ungemah said there are about 5 – 10 facilities comparable to I-405 express toll lane facilities, out of about 30 across the nation. About half the facilities did not have a significant problem at start-up. But – some of the facilities, while acceptable to the public are not breaking even. None of the facilities have been dismantled.

Patty Rubstello, Assistant Secretary, Toll Division, WSDOT, reported on I-405 Express Toll Lanes (ETL) traffic and revenue. Both are significantly more than forecast.

### Early successes include:

- Initial express toll lane usage is higher than expected.
- Transit, vanpools and carpools have a more reliable trip in both directions. Both Community Transit and Metro have increased ridership and shorter travel times.
- I-405 is moving more vehicles during peak commutes.
- Southbound traffic is better across all lanes.
- Northbound traffic has shown improvement in the express toll lane system.
- Long and medium trips are receiving faster travel times.

### Challenges:

- Northbound traffic general purpose congestion has shifted to SR 527.
- Shorter trips are not seeing the same benefits, of long and medium trips, due to access and shifts in congestion.
- Weekend congestion has increased with the slower ramp up of infrequent users.
- The single lane system capacity constraint drives toll lane prices.

WSDOT has made several physical adjustments to respond to driver experience and is continuing to monitor operations.

- Carpool use is lower than expected, but has been steadily increasing.
- Demand for the single lane system has resulted in reaching the maximum toll rate sooner than predicted.
- It is reviewing the INRIX report and will work with them to understand analysis and assumptions.

WSDOT is analyzing operations options:

- For Nighttime Operations, WSDOT is evaluating whether “Open to All” hours should be 7:00 pm to 5:00 am or 8:00 pm to 5:00 am.
- For Weekend and Holiday hours, WSDOT is evaluating whether the approach should be “HOV 2+ Only” or “Open to All.”

Challenges include access points, consistency, including hours of operation with SR 167 and HOV network, signage, potential congestion due to the single lane section, and unintended consequences. WSDOT will coordinate its review and implementation with the State Patrol, transit, FHWA, and Federal Transit Administration.

Executive Director Reema Griffith provided an overview of the rulemaking process for moving forward with changes to the ETLs. There also is the opportunity to enact emergency rulemaking which takes effect for up to six months.

Commissioner Batra noted that WSDOT is doing a good job of adjusting the ETLs, while still collecting revenue.

[I-405 Express Toll Lanes Operations](#)  
[The National Perspective](#)  
[Four-Month review of I-405 Express Toll Lanes](#)

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

David Hablewitz, Stop 405 Tolls commented that tolling is less efficient than the gas tax to raise revenue. The price is unpredictable. Miami has maxed out on tolls but still has congestion. Transponders are a barrier to entry. Two-person car pools would work better.

Eli Darland suggested that some of the successes touted by WSDOT are not actually successes. He said that many of the lessons in other places can and should be applied to I-405 ETLs.

Mark Dublin, a former Metro bus driver, said that shoulder driving is not an answer. The transit system is a critical part of improving system operations. But the buses need help. You should have transit representation at every meeting.

Chris Johnson, representing the 600 members of the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce and East King Chamber of Commerce, said that WSDOT has been very responsive to requests for information. They see trip degradation on the GP lanes between Bellevue and Bothell. They would like to see full build out of the corridor and the I-405 Master Plan.

***Action/Follow-Up: Chairman Haley noted a request from legislators to change ETL operations and hours of operation. She and Acting Secretary Millar responded jointly that the Commission and WSDOT would consider changes quickly.***

***Commissioner Litt moved that the Commission file a CR-101 to initiate rulemaking and consider options in March. Commissioner Jennings seconded the motion.***

Commissioner Serebrin noted that the Commission should consider keeping the tolls in effect at all times to ensure free flow of traffic and reliable transit. She suggested an alternative of setting the minimum toll on evenings and weekends at \$0.00 to provide an alternative when congestion occurs on evenings and weekends.

Charles Knudson repeated the Governor's pledge that he will work with the Commission to provide relief and make the corridor work better.

Secretary Millar reminded the Commission that I-405 was congested prior to opening the ETLs. He pledged to work with the Commission to make the corridor work the best that it can.

Commissioner Young asked for clarification that the CR-101 can be filed without specifying what the changes are. And, that it won't preclude taking emergency action, if that is desired.

Commissioner Batra said that Bus Rapid Transit and vanpooling are also means to reduce congestion.

Commissioner Jennings talked about all the work and planning that occurred prior to opening the ETLs. The \$0.75 minimum is necessary to cover cost of collection; at one point the Commission considered a maximum rate of \$12 or \$15.

Chairman Haley also entered into the record the letter submitted from Doug MacDonald.

***The motion to file the CR 101 was adopted unanimously.***

## **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Roger Millar, Acting Secretary, WSDOT reported on implementation for the *Connecting Washington* program. He also spoke about WSDOT's management of the DBE program that requires that women and minority contractors be used on projects involving federal funds. He explained that in previous administrations, WSDOT incorrectly thought that it was enough to expect contractors to implement the federal requirements. It has changed this approach. WSDOT also has concluded there is no disparity in employment of Caucasian women owned businesses and has sought a waiver from FHWA to exclude them.

He highlighted items for future discussion:

### **Employees**

- Training/Career Development Opportunity
- Succession planning

### **Ferry System Sustainability**

- Reliable funding for operations
- Aging fleet

### **Bridge preservation**

- Become proactive rather than reactive



## **FERRY RIDERS' OPINION GROUP**

Bill Young briefed the Commission on the evolution of the FROG Survey and the upcoming surveys in 2016. He pointed out that the information from the freight survey has not been utilized. He noted that the policy survey, scheduled for an update in fall 2016, provides an opportunity to learn a lot about ferry riders.

Over 20% of FROG respondents have avoided fares and tolls by combining eastbound ferry travel and westbound TNB trips.

A new reservation survey will be done this spring. Commissioner Young asked about moving the timing of the reservation survey to pick up more summer users.

Commissioner Batra suggested that penalties be assessed on no-shows on crowded boats.

***Action/Follow-Up: Commissioner Young asked about moving the timing of the reservation survey to pick up more summer users. That can be done; there also can be snap surveys done.***

### **[WSTC Online Public Input Program](#)**

## **2016 TOLLING OUTREACH AND NEXT STEPS**

### **SR 520 Toll Rates**

Commissioners discussed whether to spread SR 520 rate increases over multiple years and still met revenue targets.

***Action/Follow-Up: Commissioner Tortorelli suggested taking directionally tailored afternoon tolls off the table. The consensus is to move forward with schedule alternative B, scenario 2, a 10% increase spread over several years.***

***Commissioners will seek additional analysis from the Office of the State Treasurer and file a CR-102 in March. Public hearings will be held on April 21 in Seattle and Bellevue or another location east of Lake Washington. A final hearing will take place in May at the Commission meeting.***

### **TNB Toll Rates**

Commissioners discussed two scenarios presented that would change the scheduled \$0.50 cent TNB toll increase on July 1, 2016. Commissioners appreciate the desire of the CAC to keep commuter toll rates as they are, but expressed concern that all bridge users should be treated fairly. Most commissioners prefer increasing the toll by \$0.25 across the board.

Commissioner Batra suggests increasing *Good to Go!* by \$0.25 and cash and pay-by-mail by a greater amount. His second choice is \$5/\$7/\$7, but he will join the consensus to propose \$0.25 across the board.

***Action/Follow-Up: The Commission indicated its intention to propose increasing the toll by \$0.25 across the board. It forwarded its recommendation to the CAC for further review and comment.***

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW: COUNTY ROAD ADMINISTRATION BOARD**

Walt Olsen, PE, Deputy Executive Director, and Derek Pohle, PE, Compliance and Data Analysis Manager, briefed the Commission on the County Road Administration Board (CRAB). CRAB provides

information technology, grants for mobility and rural arterial enhancements, and training. In 2015, CRAB provided over 4500 hours of training.

The County transportation dashboard provides metrics on the transportation goals set forth in RCW 47.04.280.

There are three county grant programs:

- County Ferry Capital Improvement Program (RCW 36.54) for auto ferries
- Rural Arterial Program (RCW 36.79) \$56 million/biennium for preservation. Fund requests exceeded \$90 million.
- County Arterial Preservation Program (RCW 46.68.090) \$21.2 million/biennium. Two-thirds of county preservation investment comes from county funds and one-third from CRAB.

Diversion allows county government to shift road funds for traffic enforcement. CRAB has created a new standard of good practice to limit diversion of road funds to other uses.

*Action/Follow-Up: None at this time.*

[CRAB Program Overview](#)

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW: TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT BOARD**

Steve Gorcester, Executive Director, Transportation Improvement Board, briefed the Commission on the activities of the Transportation Improvement Board (TIB). TIB provides grant services for street construction, sidewalk construction, preservation, street light conversion to LEDs, and complete streets programs. It has issued \$2.2 billion in grants since 1990 to cities and urban areas of counties.

TIB eligibility criteria is focused on assessed valuation, which is a better measure than population. In 2015, TIB issued \$119 million in grants, over \$80 million for urban arterials. Sidewalks being built in most small cities are done as a result of TIB grant requirements. TIB requires sidewalks built on at least one side of a street in a small city.

Cities can save 55-60 percent of energy costs with LED street lights. PSE and Avista are swapping out street lights across the state, saving \$3 million/year statewide. Sixty cities are participating this year. TIB also is partnering with the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory to measure light pollution in Goldendale. This will help determine whether the right fixtures are being installed.

The Legislature funded the TIB Complete Streets program in June with \$7 million. It is not an infrastructure program, but a merit award to improve design. The purpose of the incentive check is to spread the ethic of complete streets. The scale of awards will be based on the size of the project and jurisdiction. Agencies can't apply for an award; they will have to be nominated.

*Action/Follow-Up: None at this time.*

[TIB Program Overview](#)

# TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

\_\_\_\_\_  
ANNE E. HALEY, Chairman

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JOE TORTORELLI, Vice-Chairman

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SHIV BATRA, Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
HESTER SEREBRIN, Member

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ROY JENNINGS, Member

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DEBBIE YOUNG, Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
JERRY LITT, Member

ATTEST:

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REEMA GRIFFITH, Executive Director

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DATE OF APPROVAL