



## Washington State Transportation Commission

Spokane Valley Meeting Summary  
November 15, 2017

Chairman Jerry Litt called the meeting to order at 9:00 am. He then asked Commissioners and staff to introduce themselves. Spokane Valley Mayor Ron Higgins welcomed the Commission to Spokane.

### **COMMISSION BUSINESS**

Staff presented the proposed 2018 meeting schedule, noting that Oak Harbor staff had not yet confirmed date and location availability at Oak Harbor City Hall. Commission staff indicated that other Island County locations could be available if Oak Harbor fell through.

***Action: Commissioner Young moved adoption of the 2018 meeting schedule, as revised, with a meeting in Oak Harbor or elsewhere in Island County on November 14. Commissioner Jennings seconded the motion, which was adopted 5-0.***

Staff also reported that HB 1490 requires that WSDOT consult with the Commission and the Association of Washington Cities and recommend to the Legislature whether to continue the statutory requirement that cities report pavement preservation rating information to WSDOT and the Commission. Commission staff has worked with WSDOT staff and city staff and there is agreement that the information should be provided in a simple format that does not create additional workload for cities or WSDOT.

Commissioner Tortorelli and Commissioner Jennings indicated support for developing a uniform pavement condition reporting system for cities.

### **TRANSPORTATION 101**

Staff presented an overview of the fiscal and policy framework of the statewide transportation system.

### **THE BIG PICTURE**

Sabrina Minshall, Executive Director of Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC) reported that many things are happening in the region. “We can either plan for it, or it will happen to us.”

SRTC membership includes the cities, Spokane County, Spokane Transit Authority, Spokane Airports, and WSDOT. Commissioner Tortorelli also sits on the SRTC Board.

Statewide, there are 12 federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organizations, 14 state-authorized Regional Transportation Planning Organizations, and Transportation Management Areas (TMAs) for populations over 200,000.

Ms. Minshall reported on the guiding principles for Horizon 2040, the SRTC long-range transportation plan: economic vitality; stewardship; safety and security; quality of life; choice and mobility; system operations, maintenance and preservation; and cooperation and leadership. She noted that they are nearly the same as the transportation planning goals in state statute.

Spokane County has a population of 488,310. Average travel time to work is 21 minutes, compared to 26 minutes nationally and 28 minutes in King County.

Challenges:

- pavement preservation and maintenance
- spend a dollar today to save \$6 later
- Seven of the state's top 50 high priority grade crossings, with five of those in Spokane Valley
- Fatal and serious crashes; 35% in the region involve non-motorists

Successes:

- Don't need a car when you are downtown
- New Park and Rides/new connections to downtown Spokane
- Central City Line will change the face of transportation and economic growth downtown

### **CITY OF SPOKANE VALLEY TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES**

John Hohman, Deputy City Manager, and Mike Basinger, Economic Development Manager, briefed the Commission on transportation in the City of Spokane Valley. The City's Vision Statement:

*A community of opportunity where individuals and families can grow and play and businesses will flourish and prosper.*

Spokane Valley's population is 96,480; the 10th largest city in state. Its' main industries are retail trade, health care, and manufacturing. A net importer of jobs, Spokane Valley coordinates, planning, transportation, and economic development through a unified city department. Spokane valley's pavement preservation rating is PCI 70.

When the city incorporated, there were few sidewalks. There is now a large walkable network and an extensive bike route network with plans to expand sidewalks and bike routes. By 2020, the Appleway Trail will run from city hall to Liberty Lake.

Spokane Valley has identified available trips to streamline development in four SEPA Infill exemption areas and has developed a Planned Action Ordinance for the Northeast Industrial Area. The City has 26 rail crossings within the city limits. Train traffic frequently adds up to

three hours of gate downtime per day on BNSF mainline. The priority grade crossings to eliminate:

- Barker Road \$19 million project cost, over 2/3 funding secured.
- Pines Rd.

Brandon Blakenagel, Senior Engineer, City of Spokane, reported that Spokane is continuing to coordinate stormwater and road improvements. Spokane has been using chip seals in the city to extend life of streets. The past winter was the wettest on record resulting in a lot of freeze-thaw impacts on streets and roads. Spokane injected an extra \$1 million into the street budget to address potholes and heaves.

Mr. Blakenagel also noted the many grade crossings in the City of Spokane and added that working with railroads takes time. Delays are real and must be acknowledged. For the University Gateway Bridge project, the City set aside two years for acquisition of air rights, and agreements with the railroad.

Andrew Staples, City Engineer, and Katie Allen, City Administrator, talked about transportation in the City of Liberty Lake. A planned community, Liberty Lake's population is now 10,000, and will be 25,000 at full build out. The city has 8,000 people coming into the city to work in the morning. Currently there is one interchange, with 32,000 vehicles entering largely in peak times, and only one crossing over I-90. The city wants redundancy in its infrastructure but it doesn't want to overbuild.

About 90% of homeowners live in HOAs. A Transportation Benefit District (TBD) in Liberty Lake has generated revenue to build trails. The city plows its trails so people can use them year-round.

### **SMALL CITIES TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES**

Mike Ulrich, Senior Transportation Planner, Spokane Regional Transportation Council, stressed the importance of access to TIB grants and resources for small cities. TIB is a primary source of funding (design, engineering, construction) for small city projects. He introduced:

- Roger Krieger, Community Service Director, City of Deer Park. With a 4,100 population and two state routes, including Main Street, Deer Park has a current budget of \$724,000 for maintenance and \$300,000 for preservation (from utility tax). TIB funding is essential and helped Deer Park change a 4-way stop intersection to a roundabout.
- Tom Richardson, City Planner, City of Millwood. It's population is 1,790 and the city has 12 miles of paved streets and 3.2 miles of sidewalks. It has invested \$1.4 million for the Millwood Interurban trail, in construction in 2018-19.

### **SPOKANE COUNTY TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES**

Matt Zarecor, Assistant County Engineer, Spokane County, talked about the county's challenges and successes in expanding the Bigelow Gulch corridor, a project to improve east-west freight movement and safety and mobility. The county has separated the project into several phases and is completing it over many years.

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES**

Rob Eaton, Director, Government Affairs - West, Amtrak talked about the state's two interstate long-distance trains:

- Empire Builder, service from Chicago to Seattle/Portland.
- Coast Starlight

Amtrak Cascades is a state supported corridor, with current ridership over 800,000 annually.

Starting December 18, Amtrak Cascades will add two additional round trips. The long-range plan is for 13 roundtrips daily. When state rail plan is built out, the Holgate crossing would be closed 12 hours/day.

Amtrak in Washington State supports 1,740 jobs and \$84,428,000 in earnings. Nearly half the ridership are tourists who generate \$4.5 million in tourist spending. A rider survey reveals that if Amtrak were unavailable, 47% of riders would drive. He noted that

Mr. Eaton praised the state rail plan as a key asset. He noted that in addition to the two additional roundtrips on Cascades, ridership is rebounding, and there are two new Amtrak stations in Stanwood and Leavenworth and a request from Ritzville for a station.

He recognized the interest in new Eastern Washington service on two fronts and characterized additional east-west service as both a challenge and opportunity:

- Stampede Pass service to Ellensburg, Yakima, Tri-Cities
- Daylight service between Seattle and Spokane

Challenges:

- Current fiscal environment
- PRIIA section 209 requires state to pay operating costs on routes under 750 miles

Opportunities:

- State rail plan
- Federal grant programs
- Population and demographics
- Type of passenger rail service
- Leverage and increase multimodal connections to intercity rail
- Improve productive travel
- Develop an integrated/layered passenger rail system

Mr. Eaton recommended the state first, increase access to what you have already and then examine growth opportunities, beginning with ridership studies. He offered to help with a workshop to further develop options.

Brandon Ropez-Betty, Customer and Community Relations Manager, Spokane Transit Authority (STA), emphasized that STA listens and responds to community needs. It is focused on mobilizing people and driving the local economy.

STA resources and facts include:

- 134 fixed route buses on 36 routes

- 108 paratransit vehicles, 50% in-house and 50% contracted
- Vanpools over 104% cost recovery
- Lowest demand-response (paratransit) per ride cost in the state at \$27.32 per ride
- Second highest passengers per revenue hour
- Farebox recovery is 20%. Expects to be 22% after July 1, 2018 increase. To mitigate that impact, there is a seven-day pass (in addition to a monthly pass).

New investment priorities at STA include increased frequency and connections, new routes, extended service and late night service, and new transit facilities and vehicles.

**TRIBAL TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES**

Mike Tedesco reported that the Spokane Tribe has excellent relations with the SRTC and NorthEast Washington RTPO. He reported that SRTC helped to facilitate relations with STA to enable roundtrip bus service between Spokane and Wellpinit.

Mr. Tedesco stressed that partnerships with tribes make sense. Federally recognized tribes have economic development advantages that state and cities don't have. He suggested that the state leverage tools at its disposal with the 29 federally recognized tribes in the state.

**FREIGHT RAIL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Johan Hellman, Executive Director, State Government Affairs PNW Region, BNSF Railroad talked about Spokane's long railroad history. While rail traffic continues to be a major factor in the economy and in transportation patterns, multiple global and national factors impact railroad business models.

<u>BNSF Volume (millions)</u>	<u>2016 systemwide carloads</u>	<u>vs. 2015</u>
• Consumer products	5.2	+1.1%
• Coal	1.8	-20.9%
• Industrial products (inc. petroleum)	1.8	-7.6%
• Agricultural	1.0	+6.9%

The state's marine cargo forecast does not anticipate significant increase or decrease in commodities, unless new port facilities open.

Positive train control: predictive, advance train control safety technology. Allows for remote ability to slow or stop trains.

Mr. Hellman noted that grade crossing collisions are down by 35% since 2000. Grade crossing regulations are site-specific and land use matters. BNSF is federally required to provide 5% of the solution for closure of a grade crossing. Typically an overpass or underpass costs \$30-\$50 million. Although the 5% sounds small, it helps politically in getting grants and it also brings in engineering horsepower from the railroad. The railroad also is interested in closing crossings; it wants to channel surface traffic through the new crossing.

**Economic Development and Transportation**

Larry Krauter, CEO, Spokane Airports, reported that Spokane Airports receives no local tax money. Of its \$75 million budget, only about 30% of the revenue comes from airlines. Other sources include rental cars and leases.

Spokane International Airport (GEG) had 10% passenger growth in 2017 and added five new destinations:

- Chicago O'Hare
- SF
- Sacramento
- DFW
- San Diego (summer only) San Jose (starting April 30, 2018)

In April 2018, Frontier is returning to Spokane.

Spokane continues to exceed all comparison markets on seats per capita and it has the lowest average airfare. Alaska's market share in Spokane has dropped from 40% to 37%. Due to the pilot shortage impacting Horizon, Alaska has had to cancel about 7% of Horizon flights and use larger jets and SkyWest.

GEG has organized ground transportation service:

- Transportation Network Companies Uber and Lyft provide 11,000 trips/month
- 31 Cab Companies with over 130 cabs licensed to serve the Airport provide 5,000 trips/month
- All major downtown hotel shuttles serve the Airport

Spokane International received \$2 million grant to extend a railroad spur to the airport. It supports the first county/city PDA in the state to develop the West Plains airport area. It anticipates air cargo opportunities to ship from Spokane and other places, instead of Sea-Tac (such as cherries).

Cheryl Kilday, President and CEO of Visit Spokane, emphasized that the power of travel is significant. Spokane received nearly a billion dollars in 2016 from direct tourist spending and \$70 million in tax revenue. She asked the state to improve signage to and from I-90. She also indicated that the state is not always looking at tourism opportunities. The Port of Seattle has seen a huge increase in international travel; how can eastern Washington see the impacts of the added visitor traffic.

Cheryl Stewart, representing GSI's Transportation Policy Committee, emphasized the need for a long-term maintenance solution.

Ms. Stewart also spoke about development of The Yard, a large industrial park, adjacent to the North Spokane Corridor. Is LIFT an option to flesh it out and pave the roads within it?

Ms. Stewart also said that workforce development is important:

- 79% of WA employers reported having trouble filling craft positions

- For every 5 people leaving the industry, only one is entering

### **NAMING SR 27 TO HONOR SAM STRAHAN**

Brad Miller reported that Freeman and Spokane were forever changed on September 13, 2017 when Sam Strahan stepped toward the danger, instead of away from the danger, giving us a hero to celebrate.

In late September, Brad Miller began a petition – which now has over 7500 signatures—to name SR 27 in his honor.

Ami Strahan, Sam’s mom, shared a photo of Sam with the Commission, and talked about him. He loved Freeman and Freeman High School.

“He was an ordinary kid who did an extraordinary thing.”

Chairman Litt read Resolution 734 naming a portion of SR 27 the “Sam Strahan Memorial Highway.”

***Action: Commissioner Tortorelli moved the Commission adopt Resolution 734. Commissioner Jennings seconded the motion, which was adopted by a 5 – 0 vote.***

### **MOBILITY AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES**

Heleen Dewey, Health Program Specialist, Spokane Regional Health District talked about health and transportation. What is health?

***“a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”***

**-World Health Organization**

In Spokane County, bicycle and pedestrian plans have been adopted by the City of Spokane Valley, the City of Spokane, and SRTC. Spokane Valley inventoried the entire city for walking and bicycling. The health district has done health impact assessments on the Spokane Downtown, University District Gateway Bridge, and the Division Street Gateway. There are Safe Routes to School programs in seven schools and every school in the county has received an OSPI grant for safe walking and biking. Kids who participate in walking school bus have better attendance.

*Walk, Bike, Bus* is an individualized marketing program to increase active transportation. The City of Millwood had 429 participants:

- Walking trips increased from 1.54/week to 2.67/week
- Biking and busing also increased
- Almost 90% of participants met their goal

### **WSDOT TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES**

Mike Gribner, Eastern Region Administrator, focused his comments on the NSC. It is now fully funded with an additional \$879 million through Connecting Washington. Construction begins in 2019 with completion in the 2027 – 29 biennium.

The Black Tank contamination in the NSC pathway is legacy of Northern Pacific rail operations. BNSF and Husky Energy/Marathon Oil are the “Responsible Parties.” A 1999 Department of Ecology review indicated soil removal and site cap as a viable solution, but a 2012 BNSF/Marathon study revealed indicated “substantial soil contamination” with a Bunker C Oil plume 170 feet deep penetrating drinking water aquifer. WSDOT’s settlement will require cleanup and allow NSC completion to continue.

Remaining NSC milestones:

- Spokane River to Freya Construction: 2019 -2025
- Spokane River Bridge Construction: 2021 -2025
- Sprague Avenue to Spokane River Construction: 2021 -2027
- I-90 to Sprague Construction: 2023 -2029
- All sections open to traffic: No later than June 30, 2029

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

Tom Trulove, Chair of SRTC, reported that SRTC has made great strides. When he joined it as Mayor of Cheney, it was out of compliance on almost everything. Now it is in compliance on everything, and with Sabrina Minshall, it is poised to be a leader in transportation statewide.

- The region is growing. The projection is 600,000 population by 2040, and 250,000 jobs.
- Urban densification
- New issues
  - Emerging technology. Truck platoons, drones,
  - Social media and transportation

Kootenai County is interested in transit connections, but it is working to get its own transit operations underway. A large number of license plates at the Liberty Lake Park and Ride are Idaho plates.

Why are cities integrating land use, transportation, economic development, water quality?

- Out of necessity.
- City of Spokane is committed to fiscal stewardship. Upfront costs may be higher, but savings are long-term.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Action: None

### **REFLECTIONS AND NEXT STEPS**

Things have a changed a lot since the late 70s and early 80s. Lot of interlocal coordination. Land use and transportation linkages came through clearly today; STA is doing good work.

Planning for performance – heard it from STA and from SRTC. Moving people where they want to go.

Amtrak offered to help plan for increased east-west access.

**TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

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JERRY LITT, Chairman

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ROY JENNINGS, Vice-Chairman

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ABSENT  
SHIV BATRA, Member

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HESTER SEREBRIN, Member

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JOE TORTORELLI, Member

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DEBBIE YOUNG, Member

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VACANT

ATTEST:

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REEMA GRIFFITH, Executive Director

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DATE OF APPROVAL