

WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Regular Meeting Summary

December 8 & 9, 2015

Chairman Haley convened the Transportation Commission meeting at 9:00 a.m.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

Commissioner Litt moved approval of the November 17, 2015 Renton meeting summary. Commissioner Jennings seconded the motion. The meeting summary was adopted unanimously.

Commissioners proceeded with reports of recent activity:

- Commissioner Jennings reported that he met with Senators Rivers and Cleveland.
- Commissioner Litt reported that he and Paul Parker attended a GMA 25 year anniversary conference on November 13. He participated in a panel discussion along with Margaret Pageler and John Hempelmann, moderated by Paul Parker.
- Commissioner Tortorelli reported that the Road Usage Charge (RUC) Steering Committee held its second meeting of 2015 on December 1. It was well-attended, including four legislators. The Steering Committee is recommending again that the Legislature provide funding for a demonstration project. He also participated in a newspaper interview on the new federal funding, followed by television and radio interviews.
- Commissioner Brogan has been attending meetings of the Puget Sound Regional Council Transportation Planning Board. There is a lot of work at this time on transit integration. She also attended a conference, called Xconomy 2035 Seattle. It featured a mix of euphoria over technology options and doom and gloom over climate change. Panelists from Microsoft and the University of Washington talked about vehicle communication and smart cars. One panelist predicted that cars will be a hobby in twenty years.
- Chairman Haley briefed the Commission on RUC and tolling meetings. She noted that Craig Stone is leaving the Toll Division to lead the work on the Gateway project.

Staff discussed the *DRAFT* 2015 Annual Report with the Commissioners and noted suggested changes. Staff will revise and complete the text for the 2015 Reflections and Recommendations and send full text to the Commission by Monday, December 14.

ROAD USAGE CHARGE UPDATE AND 2015 RECOMMENDATIONS

Allegra Calder, Principal, Berk Consulting, Travis Dunn, Partner, D'Artagnan Consulting and Jeff Doyle, Principal, D'Artagnan Consulting, briefed the Commission on the work of the Road Usage Charge (RUC) Steering Committee this fall.

The business case analysis examined:

- RUC cost of collection, including one-time set-up costs and operational costs
- Three fuel economy scenarios:
 - **Stuck In Traffic:** MPG improves slowly due to persistent low oil prices that result in purchases of lower MPG vehicles, increased congestion leading to lower on-road MPG, and slower fleet turnover.

- **CAFE Detroit:** MPG improves in line with U.S. EIA expectations based on automaker technology improvements driven in part by automaker technology improvements in conventional engines (EVs and PHEVs are less than 2% of new sales by 2040).
- **Shift Happens:** MPG improves quickly due to faster adoption of EVs and PHEVs (20% of new sales by 2040).
- The Policy Alternatives
 - Flat fuel tax
 - Indexed fuel tax
 - Transition to RUC

RUC Cost of Collection:

The cost of collection declines as more vehicles use the RUC system. There also are advantages to having private partners engaged in RUC collection:

- Easier to keep pace with technology
- Competition and value-added services drive cost efficiencies and customer (taxpayer) acceptance
- Easier to interoperate and share costs with other jurisdictions
- Allows state to focus on core public functions of oversight, audit, and enforcement
- Some customers may prefer or even be required to use a state account manager

The Policy Alternatives:

The DRAFT RUC Report includes a chart comparing the flat fuel tax, the indexed fuel tax and the RUC for cost effectiveness, fairness, long-term financial sustainability, and ability to keep up with inflation. The flat fuel tax and the indexed fuel tax are most cost effective and the RUC is the most fair. However, the cost effectiveness of RUC improves with time. The RUC is best for financial sustainability as to miles per gallon; the indexed fuel tax is best for keeping up with inflation.

The FAST Act 5-year bill provides \$305 billion in federal funding, including \$95 million for user-based transportation funding demonstrations for states. Grants will require a 50% state match.

Ms. Calder walked the Commission through the roadmap illustrating the history of RUC work to date by the Commission and work that remains to be done before:

- starting a demonstration project
- a legislative decision to enact road usage charging

The Steering Committee recommends that the demonstration be evaluated by an independent third-party, as California will evaluate its pilot. The current focus, preparation for a Demo Project, requires:

1. Prioritization of unresolved issues
2. Develop evaluation criteria
3. Develop strategic communications plan
4. Final design of demonstration test

The Steering Committee also learned about RUC technology from four firms:

- True Mileage, Seattle WA: Ryan Morrison (automated mileage reporting)
- Vehcon, Atlanta GA: Fred Blumer (Uses photos to collect vehicle data including odometer readings for analytics including insurance industry)

- Azuga, San Jose CA: Nate Bryer (telematics company that provides end-to-end reporting technologies, account management, and customer support for RUC as well as value-added services)
- SmartCar, Mountain View CA: Alex Harvey-Gurr (provides data from on-board telematics systems including mileage, fuel, and location; activation of data sharing based on user opt in)

The Commission will use existing resources and an interagency workgroup including WSDOT and the Department of Licensing to develop a grant proposal. The proposed 2016 Workplan, if the Legislature provides funding, is:

1. Address prioritized unresolved policy issues.
2. Develop an evaluation framework for a demonstration.
3. Design a public input and communications plan.
4. Create a demonstration plan that works for Washington.

[Washington State Road Usage Charge](#)

Action/Follow-up: Commissioner Litt moved, seconded by Commissioner Jennings, that the Commission:

- accept the recommendations of the RUC Steering Committee
- support the proposed 2016 Workplan and \$600,000 budget, and
- authorize the RUC team to finalize the Report to the Legislature

The motion passed with Commissioners Haley, Tortorelli, Litt, and Jennings voting aye. Commissioner Brogan abstained.

DEPUTY MICHAEL J. MCNABB MEMORIAL HIGHWAY NAMING

Henry Griffith asked the Commission to name a section of SR 14 between Lyle and Murdock for Deputy Michael J. McNabb, who was killed in a head-on collision by a drunk driver on that stretch of highway.

Commissioner Litt moved adoption of the Resolution naming a section of SR 14 the “Deputy Michael J. McNabb Memorial Highway.” Commissioner Jennings seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

SR 520 BRIDGE TOLL RATE SETTING

Patty Rubstello, Assistant Secretary, Toll Division, along with Kamran Khan, Senior VP, CDM Smith, Andrew Bjorn, Community Attributes, and Brent Baker, VP, WSP|Parsons Brinckerhoff, briefed the Commission on SR 520 traffic and revenue.

The actual 2015 traffic and revenue, compared to November 2014 forecasts, show transactions 0.6% higher than anticipated. However, normalized for construction impacts, average weekday transactions were .4% lower than anticipated, and average weekend transactions were 2.2% lower than anticipated. The share of total gross revenue from *Good To Go!* was 0.9% lower than forecast, while the share from Pay by Mail was 0.9% higher than forecast. Overall, gross revenue was 0.6% (\$400,000) higher than anticipated.

Community Attributes reported:

- Overall population and employment growth is generally consistent with past forecasts
- Population forecast was adjusted slightly upwards for King County and for the region

- More population growth took place in four major cities (Seattle, Kirkland, Bellevue, and Redmond)
- For employment, the regional and King County growth rates were adjusted upwards in the immediate short term
- Employment estimates for the four cities combined were slightly reduced in the short term and revised upwards starting in 2017.

Toll Model Revisions for Future Rates:

- Prior forecasts assumed that Pay-by-Mail customers would pay \$1.70 above *Good To Go!* toll rates for 2-axle vehicles. In the new forecast, the Pay-by-Mail toll increment for 2-axle vehicles is assumed to be \$2.00.
- Other toll rate assumptions are unchanged, including FY 2017 variable step increase ranging from 12% to 18% for weekday account-based toll rates, and 0% to 4% for weekend rates.
- FY 2015 and FY 2016 forecast weekday transaction profiles adjusted to better reflect observed hourly distribution of transactions
- Refinement of the time of day profile in the tolling model results in more transactions forecasted during peak hours
- Leads to increased gross toll revenue.

Carpool assumptions:

- Similar to prior forecasts, the updated baseline forecast assumes that 3+ carpools are exempt from paying tolls starting in FY 2017
- Current year and future year 3+ carpools levels adjusted down based on detailed counts from May 2015
- 3+ carpool exemption applies only if vehicles are traveling in the HOV lane and if they have a *Good To Go!* Flex Pass transponder
- It was assumed that 90 percent of 3+ carpools will meet the requirement, and therefore will be traveling toll-free.

Other revisions to the toll model added the I-90 Reversible Lane Project, changed the assumptions on *Good to Go!* penetration rates, the gas price forecast change, the share of truck transactions, and truck toll rate multipliers. Near term, the biggest revenue impacts are due to continued construction on the west end near Montlake.

Mr. Baker described the status of net toll revenue for SR 520. Alternative Forecasts were modeled:

- In the Baseline, 3+ carpools are exempt from paying tolls from FY 2017 forward if they have a Flex Pass
- In Alternative A, 3+ carpools pay regular tolls for the entire forecast period
- In Alternative B, 3+ carpools pay regular tolls through FY 2025 and are exempt from paying tolls from FY 2026 and beyond if they have a Flex Pass.

CDM Smith reported on key changes in traffic and gross revenue inputs:

- Forecasted toll transactions are generally lower through FY 2024 and slightly higher thereafter
- Forecasted Gross Toll Revenue Potential is higher in all years except FY 2019-21
 - Reflects a \$0.30 increase in the assumed Pay-by-Mail toll differential

- Assumes more of the forecasted traffic during higher toll, peak periods
- Slightly higher volume of Pay-by-Mail transactions through FY 2030 from slower growth of *Good To Go!* share of total transactions (88%)

Changes in net revenue inputs and assumptions for SR 520 include revenue adjustments upward due to increased share of Pay-by-Plate trips, reduced revenue due to an assumed increase in Pay-by-Mail transactions with unidentified owners and/or addresses, and HOV violation leakage. In addition, there are changes assumed to O&M Costs and Repair and Replacement Costs.

Modeling also indicates that toll leakage from exempting a 3+ Carpool from tolling would decrease net revenue by \$38.4 million over the FY 2016-56 forecast horizon. Enforcement costs for a 3+ Carpool HOV exemption are forecast to reduce net revenue by \$42.3 million over the FY 2016-56 forecast horizon.

Preliminary financial sufficiency analyses were conducted by the Office of the State Treasurer of the Baseline, Alternative A, and Alternative B Forecasts.

- Maintaining the existing policy on exemptions (Alternative A and B Forecasts) meets all of the sufficiency tests. The lack of carpool exemptions reduces costs and leakage, providing additional net revenue that helps meet sufficiency requirements.
- The Baseline Forecast falls short of the 1.15x policy target for the TIFIA loan debt service coverage factor in FY 2018.

Commissioner Jennings reported on workshops the tolling team had in May, June and November to address whether exemptions, toll fees and increments charged for different payment methods should be consistent between facilities.

Pay By Plate fee:

Currently prepaid *Good To Go!* customers who do not use a toll transponder pass pay a 25 cent fee, which WSDOT refers to as Pay by Plate. In general we've tried to make sure that Pay By Plate fees are sufficient to cover revenue we can't collect when a customer's license plate can't be read. We reviewed the most recent information from WSDOT on cost of collection and leakage by payment method and **determined that no change is needed to the current 25 cent Pay By Plate fee.**

Short Term Account discount:

Currently there is a discount provided to customers who don't have *Good To Go!* accounts but who contact us to provide their payment information ahead of or just after they pay a toll. These Short Term Account customers are given a 50 cent discount off the Pay By Mail price because WSDOT doesn't have to send them a bill. We considered changing this from a discount from the Pay By Mail rate into a fee on top of the lower *Good To Go!* rate, but were told this would require an expensive software change. Instead **we're recommending that the discount for this payment method be eliminated to reduce complexity in our payment structure.**

Pay By Mail increment:

We reviewed how large the increment should be between the *Good To Go!* and Pay By Mail rates. Over the summer of 2014 we recommended transitioning to a consistent \$2 increment for all toll facilities, but to defer action on this for SR 520 until the 2016 rate-setting process. That is the current increment for both TNB and for the express toll lanes on I-405, while the current increment on SR 520 is between \$1.65 and \$1.70. Again, we reviewed the department's cost of collection and leakage information, but also want to create an effective incentive to use *Good To*

Go! account and pass to achieve the lowest cost to the customer and the state. **We recommend making the Pay By Mail increment \$2 for SR 520 consistent with other facilities.**

SR 520 carpool exemptions:

The state's financial plan and the EIS for SR 520 both assumed that 3+ carpools would be exempt from tolls at the point when the bridge construction was complete. This was considered a conservative financial assumption. With the new state revenue package, construction will continue to connect the new SR 520 bridge to I-5. For the next several years, there will continue to be construction activity. In addition, the cost to enforce carpool exemptions would be substantial and there is risk of toll losses from drivers who declare themselves as carpools without the required number of passengers to avoid the toll. These costs and losses had not previously been fully reflected in the financial plan.

Considering these costs and risks, and that project construction will now continue for the next several years, **we recommend taking no action modifying current exemptions in 2016, as recommended by the Toll Division.** This would leave current exemptions for transit buses and vanpools in place, but would not expand exemptions to include carpools. We are interested in working with transit agencies over the coming year to determine if current exemptions should continue for transit into the future, once construction is complete.

[SR 520 Traffic and Revenue Study Update](#)
[SR 16 Tacoma Narrows Bridge Rate Setting](#)
[I-405 Express Toll Rates Tolling Update](#)

Action/Follow-Up: Work toward a Draft CR-102 for SR 520 tolls at the February meeting.

TACOMA NARROWS BRIDGE FINANCIAL PLAN

Rob Fellows, Toll Division Policy and Planning Manager, reported that no rate setting action is required to implement toll rate increase planned for July 1, 2016 (FY2017). Deferring of sales tax by the Legislature in 2015 will smooth out future toll rate increases. The projected revenue is likely adequate revenues to maintain the Sufficient Minimum Balance.

Joel Emery, Toll Division Director of Finance and Program Management, reported that photo-tolling transactions are higher than expected and *Good-to-Go!* transactions are lower than expected. Increased common facility distribution costs are forecast due to delayed SR 99 tolling (fewer facilities and transactions to distribute fixed costs).

WSDOT staff will go into detail on the financial plan at the TNB Citizens' Advisory Committee meeting that evening.

[SR 16 Tacoma Narrows Bridge Rate Setting](#)
[Draft Financial Plan](#)

Action/Follow-Up: Continue to monitor TNB traffic and revenue. Staff will attend TNB CAC meetings.

I-405 EXPRESS TOLL LANES UPDATE

Patty Rubstello, Assistant Secretary, Toll Division, provided an update on I-405 Express Toll Lanes. The goal for outreach was to reach out to more people than the 520 project – that goal was met. There was a large spike in Customer Service Center calls with implementation – many were people trying to clarify

how the ETL works. Flex Pass distribution was double what was anticipated.

WSDOT is analyzing the new traffic patterns and spikes in ETL rates, noting changes for NB/SB and General Purpose/ETL lanes and making short-term fixes to improve traffic flow, such as adjusting the dynamic pricing algorithm, reconfiguring access points, and working with local jurisdictions on signal timing improvements and transit access. WSDOT also is planning a survey of ETL uses.

In addition to some areas of traffic diversion on local roads (Bothell & Woodinville in particular), Park & Ride lots are reportedly filling up faster and transit use is up. WSDOT reported that the ETLs are moving more people than they were as HOV lanes. Over 60% of people in the ETL lanes are paying the tolls.

[I-405 Express Toll Lanes Tolling Update](#)

Action/Follow-Up: Continue to monitor.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Roger Millar, Deputy Secretary, WSDOT, reported that the Department is still working through implementation of Practical Solutions – working through projects to identify best methods, working on design-build requirements, and working with local agencies on implementation issues (and learning from them as well). It is also training traffic and engineering staff. The approach has been implemented with the ferry system.

WSDOT has broadened its approach from practical design and least cost planning to practical solutions. Now it is working on lifecycle practical solutions to understand how to make improvements in asset management and is also working to ensure consideration of transportation costs with land use planning. The priority for the Legislature is Connecting WA projects, but WSDOT is looking to apply Practical Solutions elsewhere because of its value potential. In January, WSDOT will use an Open House format to consider a 6 year plan for building the Connecting WA projects.

Storms are causing trouble this December for roadways. And, the M/V Wenatchee is out of service until further notice – it hit an underwater obstacle. Commissioner Haley asked if this problem creates an opportunity to work better with transit. Mr. Millar said that it is difficult to ask the transit agencies to gear up for these problems, but discussions are on-going. WSDOT also is looking at improving transit access at ferry terminals on the east side of the Sound.

Mr. Millar also commented briefly on the impacts of the FAST Act. Design flexibility and Complete Streets being the law of land are positives; flexibility to use TIFIA for transit is positive; increased funding for ferries and transit is positive. Overall, the primary concern is how the bill is funded – a lot of smoke and mirrors. Commissioner Tortorelli noted that Senator Cantwell championed additional focus on freight mobility. Mr. Millar agreed that also is good.

WSDOT has no legislative initiative for the upcoming session

COMMISSION BUSINESS

Secretary Lynn Peterson, WSDOT, met with the Commissioners and discussed tolling, the FAST Act, and design requirements for the North Spokane Corridor.

Staff and Commissioners discussed cover options for the 2015 Annual Report.

RETHINKING INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

Rhys Roth, Director, Center for Sustainable Infrastructure, The Evergreen State College, briefed the Commission on the mission of the Center. While the infrastructure workforce is graying, higher education can build a pipeline of local talent for the future.

There are two distinct tracks for new transportation infrastructure investment:

1. Rethink for new vehicle technologies and ownership patterns
 - EVs dominant in 2040?
 - Ownership shrinks as car share/on-demand services rise
2. Support accessibility and convenience of car-free options
 - New investment discipline is truly multi-modal
 - Smart apps make car-free options hyper-convenient

Public decisions for sustainable transportation infrastructure will:

- Redirect new transportation spending to support clean vehicles, smart tech, and ‘complete streets’.
- Channel growth into underutilized urban land to build mixed-use, mixed-income, walkable and transit-oriented neighborhoods.

Mr. Roth conceded there is little emphasis on sustainable infrastructure for freight and transportation of food and other essentials.

How do autonomous cars shape the future? How do they mix with non-autonomous vehicles? Some freeways have dedicated truck lanes. FHWA is looking at developing rules for platooning connected trucks that can move as a group.

- Oregon DOT is using MOSAIC to adapt least-cost planning from the electric sector to the transportation sector.
- Water and transportation infrastructure agencies are working together in Spokane and Portland

A Future of Washington Infrastructure Group is meeting to develop a statewide infrastructure strategy. Participants include state agencies, cities and counties. The Center will be digging deeper into transportation 2040 beginning in late 2016.

[Rethinking Our Infrastructure Investment Strategies](#)

Action/Follow-Up: Commissioners suggested that WSDOT be invited to participate.

2015 CORRIDOR CAPACITY REPORT

Daniela Bremmer, Director, Strategic Assessment, WSDOT, explained that the 2015 *Corridor Capacity Report* (CCR) was created:

- To help inform WSDOT policy makers, planners and engineers as they examine the multimodal capacity opportunities for state highways
- To support WSDOT’s Practical Solutions and performance-based planning initiatives
- To apprise the Legislature, stakeholders, educational and research institutions, the media, and the public about highway system conditions and how we can work together to reduce congestion

Highlights:

- Although statewide traffic congestion has been on an upward trajectory for the past five years, 2014 annual congestion remained 8% below the 2007 pre-recession levels

- Vehicle hours of delay increased 4.6% between 2012 and 2014, mirroring the growth in the state's economy
- Transit ridership on urban commute corridors during daily peak periods increased 7.8%
- Transit provided the capacity equivalent of five additional SOV lanes to meet the demand on certain stretches of I-5
- Passengers traveled more miles on Amtrak Cascades trips in 2014 compared to 2012, but ridership declined by 3.4%, indicating longer trips
- Ferries ridership increased 4% between 2012 and 2014, while trip reliability and on-time performance declined slightly

Amtrak capacity and utilization is included in the 2015 Corridor Capacity Report. Amtrak performance measures include:

- Passenger miles traveled
- On-time performance
- Capacity/utilization
- Ridership

The Report also measured lane capacity savings due to transit.

[2015 Corridor Capacity Report](#)

Action/Follow-Up: None.

TARGET ZERO IMPLEMENTATION

Staci Hoff, Research Director, Washington State Traffic Safety Commission (WTSC), provided an overview of distracted driving research. In 2013, Harborview observed 7900 drivers at controlled intersections in 6 large counties.

Results:

- Nearly 1 in 10 drivers (9.2%) were using cell phones or texting behind the wheel
- Nearly half of distracted drivers were texting or manipulating a wireless communication device

Type of distraction observed:

- texting 47%
- talking on cellphone (phone to ear) 38%
- talking on cellphone (hands free) 10%

Distracted Driving Law:

Current

- prohibits hold phone to ear
- allows use while stopped
- prohibits texting; allows surfing, emailing, etc

Proposed

- requires any use is hands-free
- applies while driving
- prohibits manually entering data

Jennifer Cook, Senior Manager, AAA of Washington, shared research on distracted driving from the AAA Foundation. It defines distracted driving as any activity that diverts a person's attention away from the primary task of driving. Distractions can be visual, manual or cognitive.

A cognitive distraction study was done by Dr. David Strayer at the University of Utah. He evaluated mental distraction levels by task and by on-board system. Mental distractions can last up to 27 seconds after the activity.

Insurance Institute for Highway Safety will be reporting distraction rating info by vehicle along with crash test ratings.

A study to determine the causes of teen driver crashes evaluated the last 6 seconds from 1,691 videos of crashes involving drivers 16-19 years in non-fatal/injury collisions. Key findings include:

- Distracted driving is significantly underreported. 58% of crashes involved distraction, as compared to a previous 14% estimate by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).
- Major distractions consist of passengers (15%), cell phones (12%), and something else in the vehicle (10%)

Ms. Hoff also reported on recent research she has done with WTSC colleagues on marijuana and driving. Marijuana has always been the dominant drug in fatal crashes, but alcohol remains the highest impairment factor in crashes.

Crashes involving only alcohol are declining. All drugs are on the increase, not only THC. Alcohol is predominant as a impairment factor weekends and nighttime. Marijuana is more prevalent as a factor during daytime hours. The research trend shows that more people are driving shortly after (within three hours) using marijuana.

In Washington, 60% of drivers involved in fatal crashes are tested for drugs and alcohol. We know that impairment can linger long after THC is metabolized.

[AAA Washington
Distraction Involvement in Fatal Crashes](#)

Action/Follow-Up: Commissioner Jennings moved, seconded by Commissioner Tortorelli that the Commission support distracted driving legislation, including an exemption for transit operators. The motion passed unanimously.

WSDOT REQUEST FOR NAMING THE NEXT OLYMPIC CLASS FERRY

Brian Mannion, Communications Manager, WSF, WSDOT, briefed the Commission on the construction timeline for next 144-car ferry. WSF would like to have a name in mid-March 2016.

[Olympic-Class Ferries](#)

Action/Follow-Up: Commissioners decided to rely on the previous finalists as names to choose from. Proponents of the names Cowlitz, Suquamish, and Sammamish will be invited to the January meeting to make presentations.

Chairman Haley also asked that the keel laying ceremony be scheduled on a date that Commissioners can attend.

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

ANNE E. HALEY, Chairman

JOE TORTORELLI, Vice-Chairman

RITA BROGAN, Member

VACANT

ROY JENNINGS, Member

VACANT

JERRY LITT, Member

ATTEST:

REEMA GRIFFITH, Executive Director

DATE OF APPROVAL