



Washington State Transportation Commission

Vancouver Local Meeting Summary June 15, 2016

COMMISSION BUSINESS

Chairman Anne Haley called the meeting to order at 9:00 am. The Commissioners and staff each introduced themselves.

Action: *Commissioner Litt moved and Commissioner Jennings seconded the motion approving the May 17, 2016 meeting summary. The motion was approved unanimously.*

TRANSPORTATION 101

Staff presented the Transportation 101 overview.

[Transportation 101](#)

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time

VANCOUVER TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

Vancouver Councilman Jack Burkman welcomed the Commission to Vancouver. He described how the Vancouver area is growing and noted some of the employers moving to the city. About 20% of the Portland metropolitan region's population lives in Vancouver.

Vancouver City Manager Eric Holmes discussed transportation challenges and successes:

- 192nd Corridor, which includes the former SEH site, with 180 acres of developable land, and the 400-acre Columbia Tech Center. HP, Peace Health, and Banfield Pet Hospitals are located there.
- 4th Plain Corridor, aka International Corridor: economically challenged, with lots of small businesses.
- In 2007, the City adopted a City Center vision plan for 130 square blocks. It expects 4500 new residential units. A \$60 million public infrastructure investment hopes to leverage over \$1 billion in private development.
- How to resolve freight traffic to and from the port and industrial area with west side residential traffic.

- In December 2015, the City passed a local street funding package. It is a pay as you go package that does not include debt. It does include shifting money that had been used for debt payments to additional new pay-go improvements.
 - about 49% maintenance and preservation
 - 37% for arterial upgrades
 - 14% for mobility and safety improvements

The new revenue sources include a business license surcharge to reduce the impacts of utility tax and license fees on residents.

Councilman Burkman said that freight rail is problematic in two ways:

- All the projected bulk shipment/unit train projects will soon exceed main line capacity. There are grade-crossing safety concerns between truck and train traffic.
- Commodity specific concerns. Vancouver City Council has opposed oil terminal due to safety concerns.

Councilman Burkman also noted that the entire metropolitan area is a very large urban area. Metro Vancouver is sometimes described as the second largest city in Oregon.

Oregon's lack of sales tax drives a lot of retail just across the river. Between 2011 to 2015 traffic from North of Vancouver to downtown Portland increased by 230%. From SR 500 to I-84, there is currently no improvement plan. Mr. Holmes said that the single largest barrier to regional prosperity is I-5. Access to the Portland Airport also is becoming problematic.

Councilman Burkman said that long-term an additional river crossing is needed, in part for freight to get from SR 14 to I-84 for interstate traffic. But, he stressed that improving the I-5 crossing must occur first.

[City of Vancouver](#)

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time

COUNTY TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

Chairman Marc Boldt indicated that Clark County is seeing 1% growth currently, but likely will see growth reach 2 – 2.5% growth levels. Clark County is attracting more residents – and seniors – due to Oregon's tight urban growth boundaries and lack of income tax. He noted that 60,000 people from Clark County cross the I-5 bridge daily for work. To locate more jobs in Clark County, the county zoned 680 acres for industrial land along the Chelatchie Prairie Railroad.

Mr. Boldt, a former legislator, also emphasized that state transportation money provides an incentive to finding local money to match.

Heath Henderson, Clark County Public Works Director, spoke about partnerships, including the multi-jurisdictional success on the \$133 million Salmon Creek Interchange project, which involved federal and state grants, a loan from the Public Works Trust Fund, funding from WSU, Legacy Medical, impact fees, and utility partnerships. Other Clark County Public Works initiatives include:

- Maintenance and preservation
- 107 bridges, including bridges within small cities
- ADA/sidewalks
- Major safety projects
- Signal optimization

Mr. Henderson commented that the easy projects have been built. He cited several challenges:

- The county road fund is facing a structural deficit.
- Environmental mitigation and permitting can take up 30-50% of project costs.
- Declining state and federal funding.
- Rising construction costs – the economic boom stresses contractors.
- Declining return on investment.

Clark County uses road fund revenue for traffic enforcement.

Clark County has an equipment sharing agreement with neighboring cities and counties. Sometimes engineering or construction services are shared. The county does all the bridge inspection for its cities; it sometimes provides painting and striping.

Clark County's concurrency program has evolved from time-based to volume to capacity. It allocates capital expenditures as follows:

- 41% Urban Road Projects
- 36% Preservation
- 7% Safety
- 6% Bridge repair/rehab
- 6% Sidewalks/ADA
- 3% Rural Road Improvement

[Clark County Public Works](#)

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

Anne McEnery-Ogle, Chair, C-Tran Board and Jeff Hamm, Executive Director, C-Tran briefed the Commission on public transportation in Clark County. C-Tran has an operating budget of \$58.5 million and operating expenses of \$50.1 million. C-Tran has no debt. It collects 7/10 of a percent sales tax within its boundaries. Fare box recovery is 22-24%.

Vancouver has a poor connection to Amtrak service because its station is in a railroad switching yard. Train passengers must walk about ¼ mile to get a bus.

Successes and innovation at C-Tran include:

- Hop Fastpass, providing easy transfers between C-Tran and e-fare partners TriMet and Portland Streetcar
- Adding 198 parking spaces at Fisher's Landing Transit Center
- The \$53 million VINE BRT Line is about 60% complete. Funding includes \$38.4 million from Federal Transit Administration Small Starts, \$7.4 in C-Tran funds, a \$3 million Regional Mobility Grant and \$4 million in Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) federal funds.
- C-Tran is relocating and improving a major transit center at Vancouver Mall, including a covered walkway to the mall entrance.

Challenges include:

- C-Tran has had to add additional buses and drivers to maintain schedules. About 60% of its fleet is beyond useful life, as defined by the Federal Transit Administration.
- Traffic congestion. There was an HOV Lane on I-5 South, but it was removed in 2005. Looking at bus on shoulder opportunities.
- Loss of state funding. In 2005, C-Tran shrank its boundaries following I-695, from countywide to urban area and small cities.
- Ridership on Portland Express service is stable, but ridership overall is down.
- Paratransit is growing at 4-6 %. It accounts for 23% percent of the budget. It's great that we can provide the service, but it is an economic challenge.

Mr. Hamm noted that eight of the 34 C-Tran routes are commuter routes across the Columbia River. 12% of the ridership crosses the river.

WSU's decision to locate on the fringe of the urban area has made it difficult to serve.

[C-Tran 2016](#)

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time

PORT TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

Katy Brooks, Director of Economic Development, Port of Vancouver told the Commission the Port generates \$2.9 billion in economic activity. Its maritime operations include 800 acres handling diverse products and 600 acres for future development. The Port has grown, even through the recession, thanks to the Columbia River channel deepening project, and the West Vancouver freight access. The West Vancouver access will be complete by the end of 2017.

The Port has attracted a new grain terminal, increased Subaru operations, and eliminated delays on the north-south mainline.

Industrial Operations include over 50 private businesses involving manufacturing, distribution, food production, recycling, trans-load facilities, and more.

The Port of Vancouver also is redeveloping 10 of 13 acres into a new commercial waterfront area called Terminal 1. A public-private partnership, the Port will own the land and lease to a hotel and Farmer's market. The development will also include mixed use commercial and residential development, water access, and many transportation options.

The three Clark County ports have an inter-local agreement to maximize jobs generation and each ports unique connection to the transportation network.

- The Port of Ridgefield has Miller's Landing, a former mill site of 41 acres, that provides new public waterfront next to downtown Ridgefield and builds on the existing destination recreation area. A new overpass road to Miller's landing will close the 4th and 5th most dangerous crossings between Eugene and Seattle.
- David Ripp, Executive Director, Port of Camas-Washougal, reported that the Port of Camas-Washougal owns and operates an airport and a marina. The Washougal Waterfront Park will add a trail that connects to other trails, including a connection to the National Wildlife Refuge.
- SR 14 safety improvements include planning work on two roundabouts connecting to the Port of Camas-Washougal. Construction probable begins in 2018 – 19. Cost of roundabouts is about \$12 million, one-tenth of the cost of flyovers.

Scott Hughes, Port of Ridgefield Commissioner, suggests looking at a Public-Private Partnership for a new Columbia River bridge.

Ports

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

Matt Ransom, Executive Director of the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council, reported on strategic transportation issues for Skamania and Klickitat Counties:

- Bridges
- SR 14 trucks (OR weight tax diversion)
- Safety
- Coordination with Columbia River Gorge stakeholders
- Delivery of Connecting Washington projects

For Clark County:

- Interstate bridges
- Transit system enhancements
- Urban arterial upgrades vs. maintenance
- Technology investments

- Delivery Connecting Washington projects
- Growth

Clark County is growing rapidly. From 2011 – 2015, population is up 6%, employment is up 4%, sales tax revenue is up 43%, and interstate bridge volume is up 8% and bridge delay are up 6%.

Connecting Washington projects in Clark County total \$28 million. From the 20-year RTC Plan:

- Regional system improvement needs are \$1.779 billion
- Local system improvements needs are \$911 million
- Maintenance and preservation needs are \$4.877 billion

Clark County doesn't have great data on corridor capacity for moving people.

[Issues, Challenges, Successes](#)
[2015 Congestion Management Process Summary Report](#)

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time

TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES IN THE BI-STATE REGION

Jack Burkman, Chair of the RTC Board talked about the mutual interests and differences on the two sides of the river. The Bi-State Coordinating Committee began in 1999, with WSDOT, ODOT, Cities of Portland and Vancouver, Clark and Multnomah Counties, one small city from both Clark and Multnomah Counties, Tri-Met, C-Tran, Port of Vancouver and Port of Portland, and the Metro Government. Freight movement affects the whole region.

Shirley Craddick, a member of the Metro Council and RTC Board member from Oregon, reported that Oregon is leading the nation in migration. Congestion in, near and around the I-5 corridor is the biggest challenge in the region. Ms. Craddick provided written comments indicating that compromise will be necessary to build a new bridge.

A solution must incorporate improvements to all forms of travel: automobiles, trucks, transit, bikes, and pedestrians. Finding a solution requires recognition of two different cultures – an auto-based land use pattern in Clark County needing access to jobs in Oregon via a car, and a Portland land use pattern that is transit-supportive, walkable, bike able and already choked with too much traffic.

Ms. Craddick added that both Portland and the Puget Sound Region have turned their attention to other needs. She would like to see the two states' transportation commissions' begin discussions on the challenge of the cross-river corridor, recognizing that both state legislatures, governors, and congressional delegations must participate.

Mike Bomar, President of the Columbia River EDC, is also on the Executive Committee of Greater Portland Inc. He commented that the loss of container business at the Port of Portland is creating challenges for Clark County business. Transit is an increasing priority for the workforce. Rob Bernardi, President and COO of Kokusai Semiconductor and a member of the Southwest WA High Tech Council, represents about 4000 high tech people working in semi-conductor industry. Kokusai, a subsidiary of Hitachi, moved to Vancouver to reduce employee commute time. Transportation/Infrastructure is one of four priority areas for the tech industry, specifically I-5 bridge replacement. Mr. Bernardi recommends the two Governors ask the two state Transportation Commissions jointly develop a solution to the I-5 bridge issue.

John McDonagh, CEO/President of the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce, emphasized the importance of predictability and certainty for transportation.

Commissioner Batra suggested looking at the Columbia River as an asset, not a divide. Perhaps at least for emergency response, water transportation should be explored.

[Columbia River Economic Development Council](#)
[Southwest Washington HTC Overview](#)

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVES IN SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON

Ron Onslow, Mayor of Ridgefield, pointed out that prior to construction of the second I-5 bridge, the 1917 bridge had two lanes in each direction. The 20 cent toll paid in the 1950s is equivalent to a \$2 toll today. The biggest complaint of Ridgefield businesses is the I-5 bridge congestion.

Ridgefield's I-5 overpass and the industry it brought includes 2000 jobs. The city population is only 7000, but growing. The city also needs overpasses North and South of the interchange.

Steve Stuart, Ridgefield City Manager, suggested VMT can be reduced by building better communities.

- There is diminishing support from the state for GMA services. Small cities need help to do it right.
- Cities need better partnerships with the state on transportation projects. The link between local and state was severed with loss of Public Works Trust Funds.

Pete Capell, City Administrator, City of Camas, said that Camas had 5000 people and a mill in 1982 when the I-205 bridge opened. Its population is now over 20,000. Camas has a thriving, vibrant downtown that has helped to attract businesses, new residents, and visitors.

David Scott, Washougal City Manager, explained that Washougal needs a second crossing over the BNSF line. Safety and access improvements to the SR 14 corridor are important for the Port of Camas-Washougal and the Washougal Town Center.

Scott Sawyer, Public Works Director for the City of Battle Ground, said that maintenance and preservation is a big challenge. The Battle Ground Transportation Benefit District is generating \$203,000 per year, through a \$20 license fee. It uses the revenue for preservation and safety projects, and ADA compliance. It also provides a match for other funds, such as a \$430,000 Transportation Improvement Board grant.

Connecting Washington funds will help relieve congestion in Battle Ground with added lanes and signalization.

[City of Camas](#)
[City of Battle Ground](#)

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time

TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES IN HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Theresa Cross, Clark County Public Health, talked about local efforts to create a healthier built environment. The *Growing Healthier* Plan includes recommendations to:

- Maximize the use of healthy and sustainable transportation modes through transportation and land use policies
- Build neighborhoods that support active transportation
- Enhance the safety and comfort of active transportation
- Ensure equal access to active transportation options

A complete street is:

- For everyone
- Designed and operated to enable safe access for all users: pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities

A Complete Street does not mean:

- Cyclists or pedestrians on highways
- Freight traffic on country roads
- Sidewalks where they don't belong

A list of 44 safe streets projects includes 7 separated, multi-use paths, 18 bike “sharrow” projects, 4 transit projects, and 15 sidewalk projects. Current projects include:

- Analysis of bike-pedestrian collision data for Vancouver
- *Fourth Plain Forward*, an initiative to improve the portion of East Fourth Plain Boulevard known as Vancouver’s ‘international business district.’ Part of the program includes improving pedestrian safety and access.

Future work looks to:

- More public-private partnerships
- Transportation systems that connect users to the community

- Reduced disparities in areas where low-income residents live
- More roads with increased multi-use transportation
- Data to inform where to focus efforts
- Technology that helps move more cars more efficiently
- Built-in safety mechanisms for all road users
- Public Health partnerships to help improve safe, active transportation

Although Clark County is auto centric, it is not unique. The City of Vancouver is working on being more walkable and we look at ways to get people out of their cars for active recreation. Juanita Rogers, Chair of the Clark Communities Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, said that her committee reviews plan's and make recommendations to public works regarding design improvements for bicyclists and pedestrians. Clark County adopted a Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan in 2010. Its goals include developing a bicycle and pedestrian network, jurisdictional coordination, and active transportation planning.

Ms. Rogers pointed out that Camas and Washougal has 20 miles of trails connecting Lacamas Lake and the Steigerwald National Wildlife Refuge.

Alishia Topper, City of Vancouver Councilmember and Community Partnership with Vancouver Public Schools, talked about the Safe Routes to Schools program. Today, just 13% of kids walk or bike to school. The Vancouver City Council plans to adopt a Complete Streets Policy in 2016.

A \$1.2 million grant will add sidewalks in Vancouver's NW neighborhood, which has the fewest sidewalks in the city. Bike safety is part of the physical education program in Vancouver Public Schools.

Scott Sawyer, Public Works Director for the City of Battle Ground, emphasized that complete streets are for everyone. The paradigm intends to make streets safer for all users. As a bedroom community, his city's focus is recreational bicycling within the community, rather than biking to work. Smart Growth America ranked Battle Ground as the 10th best Complete Streets in the nation.

Battle Ground has bike paths on many arterials. The Chelatchie Prairie RR offers an opportunity for a Rails with Trails project. It will connect North to the State Park and South to Vancouver.

[Clark County Public Health](#)
[Transportation Alternatives in Healthy Communities](#)
[City of Vancouver Public Schools](#)
[City of Battle Ground - Complete Streets](#)

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time

STATE TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

Bart Treece, WSDOT Communications, reported that the regional transportation budget is \$150 to \$200 million. WSDOT is wrapping up three big Nickel/TPA projects this summer:

- SR 502 widening
- I-205/Mill Plain Interchange
- I-5/Mellen Street in Centralia

New maintenance demands include 33 acres of new landscape and 30,000 feet of new ditch. Statewide WSDOT has a \$90 million maintenance backlog. Reduced emphasis on mowing, sweeping, litter control. HB 2012 directs that half the savings from practical design are intended to go for preservation and maintenance, beginning in 2024.

[WSDOT - State Challenges & Successes](#)

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time

COMMENTS

Senator Rivers said that a group of legislators are working on the I-5 crossing issue right now. They are looking at

- a transit component that people from Washington can get behind;
- more than a one-minute commute gain;
- more equal balance between the states on funding responsibility.

Representative Liz Pike asked the Commission to help lead the charge for more bridges connecting Clark County and Portland.

Ron Wagner, an Emergency Physician, commented on the difficulty of merging from SR 14 onto I-5 southbound. He suggests electronic messaging north of the river to slow traffic, merge Portland traffic to the left lanes, and allow for a better merge onto I-5. He also suggests a west side 6-lane limited access route to improve transportation. He recommends strengthening and converting the existing bridge for local access between Vancouver and Hayden Island.

Ed Barnes, a former Transportation Commissioner, noted that the 2016 Connecting Washington is not benefitting southwest Washington. He asked the Commission to advocate for a new bridge.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 pm.

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

ANNE E. HALEY, Chairman

JOE TORTORELLI, Vice-Chairman

SHIV BATRA, Member

HESTER SEREBRIN, Member

ROY JENNINGS, Member

DEBBIE YOUNG, Member

JERRY LITT, Member

ATTEST:

REEMA GRIFFITH, Executive Director

DATE OF APPROVAL