



Washington State Transportation Commission

Olympia Meeting Summary
October 20 & 21, 2020

Chair Jerry Litt opened the meeting at 9:00 am with introductions by Commissioners and staff, an overview of the agenda, and virtual meeting protocols.

Autonomous Vehicle Workgroup Update **Scott Shogan, Vice President, WSP USA**

Mr. Shogan provided an update of Autonomous Vehicle (AV) Workgroup activities in 2020. While there were challenges resulting from impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Workgroup took advantage of the opportunity to refocus, re-evaluate workgroup priorities, road map, and provide discrete direction to subcommittees.

The Executive Committee has adopted the Cooperative Automated Transportation (CAT) policy goals as a framework for action. The Workgroup conducted a polling exercise to identify priorities and direction for the future work plan.

Commissioners stated that they are looking forward to seeing all recommendations and that the work so far is great. There was a brief discussion about the status of Arizona's AV work - as shared ride services have launched and in Arizona, without a safety operator in the vehicle.

[Autonomous Vehicle Workgroup Update](#)

For more detail on agenda item 2, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:04:31, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Washington State Department of Transportation's Highway System Plan Update

Kerri Woehler, Director, Multimodal Planning, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)

Karena Houser, Statewide Planning Manager, WSDOT

Ms. Woehler and Ms. Houser provided an overview WSDOT's approach to the Highway System Plan (HSP). The HSP serves as the basis for the six-year capital highway program and WSDOT's two-year budget request to the State Legislature. The HSP is WSDOT's blueprint for preserving, maintaining, improving, and operating our state highway system and implements the Washington Transportation Plan (WTP)

WSDOT is approaching the HSP differently than how we have in the past, to inform, investment in our transportation system, to provide safe, reliable, cost effective transportation options for all users.

What are we planning for? Uncertain revenue, social equity, challenges for revenue for the transportation system, changing technology, state of good repair, resilience, growth, social equity, and safety. The HSP gives us an opportunity to reflect a modern approach in our planning.

The HSP will be developed through four tasks and will include community engagement; being led by a Steering Committee:

- Task 1: Discovery and Needs
- Task 2: Develop Element Reports
- Task 3: Scenario Analysis
- Task 4: Main HSP Document

The WTP is the policy plan. The HSP is an implementation plan at the program level, so in a very broad terms the HSP will consider what levels of revenue we might expect over a 20-year period. The HSP is based on the 10-year financial revenue forecast, developed by WSDOT, and extended out for another 10 years. WSDOT is not looking at more types of revenue but looking more broadly. Last reviewed in 1995, this work includes WSDOT examining the level of service standards.

Commissioners expressed appreciation that the HSP is focusing on outcomes and is linking performance to policy goals.

Chair Litt reminded WSDOT that the Commission was very engaged with the RTPOs and MPOs when developing the Washington Transportation Plan. This connection is important and the Commission hears frequently that regions do not feel included and heard by WSDOT. He is hopeful that WSDOT will make the right connections and include all that should be involved.

[Highway System Plan](#)

For more detail on agenda item 3, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:42:22, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

I-405 / SR 167 Express Toll Lane Low-Income Tolling Study
Carl See, Deputy Director, Washington State Transportation Commission
Gabor Debreczeni, Economic Analysis and Forecasting Manager, WSP USA

Mr. See introduced the I-405/SR 167 Express Toll Lane Low-Income Tolling Study (Study) and provided an overview of the background, milestones, and work to date.

Mr. Debreczeni updated the Commission on the proposed criteria for selection of low-income toll program options for further study and provided an overview of a survey that will be conducted in November of low-income drivers who use the corridor. Once the feedback process is complete, the project team will return to the Commission with concrete potential program options and discount elements.

Mr. Debreczeni spoke to possible eligibility criteria that have been considered and that the leading contender was that the program use eligibility for DSHS Economic Services Assistance criteria. This would allow the program to “piggyback” on an existing state system, saving start-up costs. It is unclear as to how many users would qualify using this criterion. Estimates are in the 10-20% range.

Mr. Debreczeni reminded the Commission that at this time, we do not know what the program will look like a discount that is a percentage or a fixed rate. That is what will be decided in the next few months. There are some policy decisions that need to be made before we know what this looks like moving forward. In early November, there will be a survey conducted of low-income drivers of the toll corridor, so that we can gather input from end users.

Commissioners provided some guidance and requested more information before making decisions on moving forward.

For more detail on agenda item 4, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:22:33, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: The project team will present possible options for discussion at the November Commission meeting. The Commission will make selections by the January meeting.

Secretary's Report

Keith Metcalf, Deputy Secretary, WSDOT

Mr. Metcalf provided an overview on WSDOT's "Get back to work plan" for construction. Overall, the rate of COVID infections for construction workers and WSDOT employees are 17% to 20% less than the general population. Statewide traffic volumes, toll revenue, and ferry, transit, and rail ridership are all still down, compared to the same time last year.

WSDOT will remain in telework status through June 2021. WSDOT is examining consolidating a couple of facilities in Seattle and post-pandemic will maintain a level of telework.

For more detail on agenda item 5, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:32:26, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

State Transportation Revenue Forecast

Doug Vaughn, Chief Finance Officer, WSDOT

Ed Barry, Director, Toll Division, WSDOT

Ray Deardorf, Senior Planning Manager, Washington State Ferries Division, WSDOT

WSDOT staff provided an overview on State Transportation Revenue Forecast released on September 23, 2020. This was an update to the June Transportation Revenue Forecast; provided an overview of the forecast results, specifically addressing the forecasts for the tolling traffic volumes and revenue and ferry ridership volumes and revenues.

Mr. Vaughn stated that highway traffic volumes, use of toll facilities, ferries ridership, and passenger rail are all still decreased from 2019 levels. There has been some recovery from earlier in 2020, but overall, everything is still down. The State Supreme Court overturning Initiative 976 has helped the financial outlook, long-term.

It is difficult to project when revenues will recover to pre-COVID levels, due to the number of variables that must be considered. Population growth can be projected and incorporated as well as projections for fuel consumption and the vehicle licenses forecast for current vehicles and drivers but we have seen disruptive changes in car ownership, or usage tags that are not built into the forecast yet. Miles travel is expected to return to the baseline in approximately 2040.

Mr. Barry provided an overview of the Toll Facilities: September 2020 Traffic and Revenue forecast Summary. Traffic and revenue actuals from June to August exceeded June forecast by 10% and from March to August are below November forecast by 47%. Traffic volumes for all five toll facilities remain below the baseline. The Tacoma Narrows Bridge continues to have the fastest recovery, of the toll facilities. SR 520 recovery is slower than what was expected in June. Express toll lane facilities, while slowly recovering in traffic volumes, continue to have lower average toll rates than pre-COVID. With multiple alternative routes, the SR 99 tunnel continues to experience the slowest recovery among the toll facilities.

Mr. Deardorf provided an update on Washington State Ferries (WSF) ridership and fare revenues, the forecast development process, and the results of this forecast cycle.

As of the third week of October there is still no ferry service between Anacortes and Sidney, B.C. The San Juan Islands route is on the baseline winter schedule. The Fauntleroy/Vashon/Southworth and Seattle/Bremerton routes are on reduced services and other routes are running reduced late-night service. Restoration of services depends on vessel availability (deferred maintenance work is happening now), crewing availability, ridership, and budget.

Passenger (walk-on) ridership has experienced a more severe reduction than vehicle volumes and is returning at a slower rate. WSF has assumed a permanent loss of ridership of 15% passenger commuter ridership and 10% of vehicle commuter ridership through Fiscal Year 2022-23. These assumptions could change based on information over the next several months. However, WSF believes that it is unlikely that passenger riders will come back full strength.

The current WSF budget is based on having biennial revenues of \$407 million by June 30, 2021. It is currently projected that biennial revenues will be \$92 million below that. The revenue forecast will be updated again in November.

[Transportation Sept 2020 Revenue Forecast](#)

[Tolling Sept 2020 Forecast](#)

[WSF Sept 2020 Revenue Forecast](#)

For more detail on agenda item 6, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:39:35, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Tolling Facility Financial Updates

Jason Richter, Deputy Treasurer, Washington State Office of the State Treasurer (OST)
Carl See, Deputy Director, Washington State Transportation Commission

Mr. Richter provided financial updates on toll facilities, including financial model updates on the SR 520 Bridge and SR 99 Tunnel.

SR 520 revenues have been significantly impacted by COVID traffic patterns. OST has used money from stabilization accounts to offset the losses. Forecasting during COVID is extremely difficult. OST is projecting a budget shortfall of \$4-5 million per year over the next few years, absent a toll rate changes or funding support being provided.

The SR 99 Tunnel has also been greatly impacted by the pandemic. The pandemic hit shortly after the facility was fully operational. The SR 99 Tunnel is fundamentally different than the SR 520 Bridge in that it has been financed by gas tax bonds, rather than using toll revenues as the primary pledge. Toll revenues serve as a repayment mechanism to the Motor Vehicle Fund, similar to how the Tacoma Narrows Bridge is set up.

Due to pandemic impacts, for FY 2020, the SR 99 Tunnel is over \$5 million below expected revenues. FY 2021 has a projected deficit of \$14 million.

Mr. See reminded the Commission that when the initial toll structure for the SR 99 Tunnel was adopted it assumed 3% toll rate increases every three years (FY 2023) and repair and replacement costs would be assumed by the Legislature. Based on the realities of 2020, the Commission needs to reassess the plan for moving ahead.

Commissioners discussed the revenue shortfall we are seeing on toll facilities is not unique to Washington State, given the COVID pandemic, and inquired into assistance from the federal government or lessons learned from other states. Mr. Richter reminded the Commission that there may not be parity between facilities. Even in Washington, our toll facilities are experiencing very different impacts from the pandemic. There are many variables to consider: employment base, other transportation options, etc.

Mr. See provided an overview on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge (TNB) fund balance.

During the pandemic, the Sufficient Minimum Balance (SMB) policy has provided a buffer against the unexpected revenue losses during the pandemic. Traffic loss in Spring 2020 of up to 40-50% below expectation led to steep revenue declines initially. Traffic has shown strong improvement in alignment with regional highway use, though the overall gross revenue declines continue to be substantial.

SMB analysis continues, but account is now expected to be in compliance with the policy through April 2021. The fund balance is expected to remain positive through the current fiscal year (FY 2021). Deferral of some costs for FY 2021 has helped mitigate near-term revenue impacts from lower traffic levels but may stress the fund balance next biennium.

[SR 520 and SR 99 Toll Facilities Update](#)

For more detail on agenda item 7, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 03:27:08, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Road Usage Charge Update

Travis Dunn, Partner & Project Manager, Milestone Solutions, LLP

Jeff Doyle, Partner, Milestone Solutions, LLP

The Commission has started a new phase of research in its assessment of a Road Usage Charge (RUC) as a possible replacement to the gas tax, as directed by the Legislature. The project, referred to as “Forward Drive,” is fully funded by a grant through the Federal Highway Administration’s (FHWA) Surface Transportation System Funding Alternatives (STSFA). The project team was introduced and provided an overview of the work to take place over the next three years.

Chair Litt moved that Commissioner Fukai be appointed to the Road Usage Charge (RUC) Steering Committee, given the retirement of Commissioner Tortorelli, and Commissioner Jennings be appointed as the Steering Committee Chair. Commissioner Jennings seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Doyle provided an overview of *Forward Drive*. There are seven components or tasks: New mobility and RUC; equity analysis; updated mileage reporting methods; administrative cost reduction “scrum”; detailed phase-in; RUC prototype “sub-test”; RUC Roadmap. The project is expected to take about three years, starting in October 2020 and concluding in December 2023.

Commissioners discussed that the public is not well informed about RUC and there are a lot of misconceptions about it. There needs to be a focus on what the program will look like and data on the impacts. The general communication strategy is going to be very important going forward as the research continues and a real program is considered by the Legislature.

[Forward Drive](#)

For more detail on agenda item 8, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 04:23:32, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: Commissioner Fukai appointed to the RUC Steering Committee. Commissioner Jennings appointed as Chair of the Steering Committee.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Commission Business

Facility Naming Request

At the July 21st meeting, the Commission was briefed on the Puget Sound Gateway Program provided an update on funding for the SR 509 and SR 167 Extension Projects and sought Commission input on the proposed naming of the new facilities. The Commission committed to discussing the naming at the October meeting.

Commissioner Batra moved that the portion of State Route 167 where all lanes are tolled and the connection from I-5 to the Port of Tacoma where all lanes are tolled be designated as the State Route 167 Expressway, and that the portion of State Route 509 where all lanes are tolled be designated as the State Route 509 Expressway. Commissioner Jennings seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Adoption of September Meeting Summary

The Commission discussed the summary for the September meeting. No changes were requested. Commissioner Jennings moved adoption. Commissioner Batra seconded the motion. The summary was adopted unanimously.

Action: Meeting summary approved unanimously.

Follow-Up: Post on the WSTC web page.

2021 & 2022 WSTC Meeting Locations & Schedule

Commissioners reviewed a proposal for meeting dates and locations for 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission will meet virtually through June 2021. Commissioner Young moved approval of the proposed meeting schedule and locations, with flexibility to respond to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic. Commissioner Jennings seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Month	Date	Meeting	Location	Considerations	Platform
January	19 & 20	Regular	Olympia	Session	Virtual
February	16 & 17	Regular	Olympia	Session	Virtual
March	16 & 17	Regular	Olympia	Session	Virtual
April	20 & 21	Regular	Lakewood	Session	Virtual
May	18 & 19	Regular	Olympia		Virtual
June	15 & 16	Regular	Wenatchee		Virtual
July	20 & 21	Regular	Olympia		In-Person
August	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
September	1 & 2	Tri-State	Oregon		In-Person
September	21 & 22	Regular	Spokane		In-Person
October	19 & 20	Regular	Olympia		In-Person
November	16 & 17	Regular	Ocean Shores		In-Person
December	14 & 15	Regular	Olympia		In-Person

2020 Commission Reports

Annual Report

After discussion, the Commission chose “*Reinventing Our Transportation Future*” as the title for the 2020 Annual Report.

The report will include three big ideas: proactive plan for the emerging Cascadia Mega-Region; address growing rural Washington funding needs; and expand and invest in broadband deployment statewide. Commissioner Serebrin and staff will develop a recommendation on equity, to be considered for inclusion as a fourth big idea.

Staff is working with MPOs and RTPOs to include updates from each region in the annual report. This has not been included since 2016.

Tolling Report

Mr. See is developing the biennial Tolling Report. At this time, there are no recommendations related to specific facilities. Mr. See will provide another update at the December meeting.

Staff Reports

I-405/SR 167 Low-Income Tolling Study

The constructive feedback on the study is helpful. Staff will be scheduling time on the November meeting to discuss.

Ferry Riders Opinion Group

Currently, in the middle of a special COVID survey. This was expanded beyond the Ferry Riders Opinion Group (FROG). There was an open link that anyone could fill out even though they were not part of the FROG. The data will be analyzed separately.

For more detail on agenda item 9, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 05:26:06, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Chair Litt reminded the Commission that the meeting will continue Wednesday, October 21, 2020, and recessed the meeting.

October 21, 2020

Chair Litt opened the meeting at 9:00 am with introductions by Commissioners.

The Future of Transportation: Post-COVID

Shannon Peloquin, McKinsey & Company

Christine Gregoire, CEO, Challenge Seattle & Former Washington State Governor

Charlie Davis, Managing Director & Partner, Boston Consulting Group

Sohier Hall, President/CEO, Luum

Kevin Bopp, VP, Parking & Mobility, Bedrock Detroit

Mike Ennis, Government Affairs Director, Association of Washington Business

The presenters provided perspective on how COVID-19 has and will impact the future of transportation and provided insights into what public officials and decision makers should consider going forward.

Shannon Peloquin, McKinsey & Company

Ms. Peloquin briefed the Commission on McKinsey's recent article [*Re-Imagining infrastructure in the United States: How to build better*](#). Prior to the COVID pandemic, transportation infrastructure has continued to decline in the U.S. and backlog continue to grow. The pandemic has created additional revenue strains and shifted transportation patterns. Jurisdictions should think about new considerations and approaches for future transportation infrastructure investments.

Consideration could include re-evaluating capital investments, refocusing on evolving priorities, and improving operational resiliency. Given the situation, states should consider public-private-partnerships. Given the current conversation about equity in public policy making, a way to address racial inequities in customer experience could increase the effectiveness of public services in communities with the greatest needs.

Commissioners asked for Ms. Peloquin's recommendation with how to move forward while optimizing systems. Ms. Peloquin noted the importance of scenario-based planning. Also, user experience should be a component of planning. This approach helps keep the focus on the outcomes the system is striving for.

For more detail on agenda item 11, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:03:47, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

[Re-Imaging Infrastructure](#)

Christine Gregoire, CEO, Challenge Seattle & Former Washington State Governor

Charlie Davis, Managing Director & Partner, Boston Consulting Group

Governor Gregoire and Mr. Davis briefed the Commission on *Cascadia Vision 2050*, a proposal to proactively develop the Cascadia Innovation Corridor, that starts in Vancouver B.C, goes through the Puget Sound, and down to Portland, Oregon, and how this can serve as a global model for sustainable growth.

There are challenges associated with growth faced by mega-regions around the world. This growth presents challenges: lack of affordable housing, crippling traffic congestion, unacceptable greenhouse gas emissions. Challenge Seattle has defined a sustainable mega-region and explored how other mega-regions have traditionally responded to growth. This calls for a new vision developing hub cities that can help shape a sustainable mega-region. Protecting the health of our community and ending the current crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic are paramount. Challenges remain, and the responsibility rests with policy makers and community leaders to ensure Cascadia is ready to address them. Big solutions and quick action are necessary. Cascadia must rise to the challenge, embrace a new definition of success, and provide an example for the world of a sustainable mega-region.

Commissioners responded that we are going to have to do something different. The Commission understands implementation challenges and moving this forward. The Commission committed support of the proposal.

For more detail on agenda item 11, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:06:18, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

[Cascadia Innovation Corridor Vision](#)

Sohier Hall, President/CEO, Luum

Mr. Hall presented on redefining the commute. The pandemic has introduced significant shifts in how we “commute”, presenting an opportunity for policymakers to consider new approaches that promote changes in travel behavior, equitable mobility, and employer participation.

Mr. Hall discussed possible service options and approaches considering the essential workforce, hybrid workplaces, and flex-work environments, as cities work to create streets that are more people-centered and livable.

For more detail on agenda item 11, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:07:50, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

[Sustainable Mobility](#)

Kevin Bopp, VP of Parking & Mobility, Bedrock Detroit

Mr. Bopp gave an overview on how Bedrock is supporting the transformation of Detroit’s urban core into an engaging, active, and vibrant destination. He provided an employer perspective on how they have helped redefine the commute, utilizing travel incentives, disincentives, and policies to empower and encourage employee commute choices. As an employer, they recognize that to remain competitive they need to be strategic in how they demonstrate care for their team members and the communities that they work in. Well deployed data can inform programs that shape positive change. These systems and programs do require an investment; however, Bedrock Detroit sees a return on their investment within 2 years.

For more detail on agenda item 11, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:41:37, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Parking & Mobility

Mike Ennis, Government Affairs Director, Association Washington Business

Mr. Ennis provided an overview of the statewide business impacts & challenges resulting from COVID-19. In March, AWB, started a webinar series connecting employers to the latest update with state and federal officials, information on vaccines, federal loans, support for the agriculture industry. AWB staff reached out to all 7,000 of their members, to find out how the COVID response was impacting them and what things we could do to help them keep the doors open and pay bills. AWB created a COVID- 19 resource page for employers. AWB has been active in broader COVID response serving on Governor Inslee's Round Table, multi-state groups, etc.

For more detail on agenda item 11, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 03:10:51, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Commission Busines

Reflections and Recommendations

- Appreciated the Highway System Plan update. It is helpful to hear how WSDOT implements the Commission's policy plan.
- Appreciate the State Transportation Revenue forecast. Pleased to see the changes from previous forecasts. Hopeful that COVID-19 will not be as impactful on our transportation system as we originally thought.
- Cascadia Corridor 2020 - pleased to see people looking into the future. The presentation from Governor Gregoire was great.
- Pleased to see that our Post-COVID discussions include equity. It is important that equity is integrated into our work and think we need to put more emphasis on equity.
- Maybe we can make something out of this pandemic and look at thing differently from this platform.
- Glad that we have three Big Ideas for the Annual Report. Feel that it is very important that we distill our ideas into a few important points.
- While the State Transportation Revenue Forecast has improved, still concerned about the future funding outlook.
- Our commitment to look at how we deal with things coming out of COVID
- Returning to what was considered normal most likely will not happen
- The big picture of Cascadia Vision 2050 is on point. Hopefully, we can embrace that and work it through.

Commissioner Restucci moved to appoint Commissioner Restucci as the permanent Chair of the AV Steering Committee. He has been serving as the Interim Chair. Commissioner Jennings seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Commissioner Restucci moved to appoint Commissioner Batra to the RUC Executive Committee as the Vice Chair. Commissioner Jennings seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

For more detail on agenda item 12, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 03:37:41, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: Commissioner Shiv Bata was added to the RUC Executive Committee and appointed as Vice Chair.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Action: Commissioner Restucci was appointed to the AV Steering Committee as Chair.

Follow-Up: Inform Steering Committee in November 2020 meeting.

Next meeting: November 17 & 18, 2020

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

JERRY LITT, Chair

ROY JENNINGS, Vice-Chair

SHIV BATRA, Member

JAMES A. RESTUCCI, Member

HESTER SEREBRIN, Member

KELLY FUKAI, Member

DEBBIE YOUNG, Member

ATTEST:

REEMA GRIFFITH, Executive Director

DATE OF APPROVAL