



Washington State Transportation Commission

Olympia Meeting Summary
February 16 & 17, 2021

Day 1: February 16, 2021

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.

Agenda Item 2:

Oregon Road Usage Charge Program

Maureen Bock, Chief Innovation Officer, Oregon Department of Transportation

Ms. Bock gave an update on Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Road Usage Charge (RUC) program operations and where it is headed into the future.

In 2001, the Oregon Legislature created the Road User Fee Task Force to investigate options for generating sustainable funding for Oregon's transportation system. In 2013, ODOT started a RUC program that was fully operational for up to 5,000 vehicles. The program consists of a 1.5 cents per mile charge, fuel tax credit, mileage reporting choices, GPS is not required, is an open system, there are penalties for fraud, the program is administrated through a contract, steps to protect personally identifiable information. The program was modified in 2017 and 2019. The current legislature is exploring updating the RUC program.

Extensive public education and outreach with responses and feedback from ODOT has been embedded in the program, since 2014. Constant, consistent public involvement has been instrumental to the program development and deployment. The program is working with the tolling program so that the toll system largely mirrors the RUC system; administration, back office, and roadside equipment. The goal is for a single user account for RUC and tolls.

Presentation:

[ODOT RUC Update-OReGO](#)

For more detail on agenda item 2, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:04:05, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 3:

Tolling Preparations in Oregon

Lucinda Broussard, Toll Program Director, Oregon Department of Transportation

Ms. Broussard gave an overview of the Oregon Toll Program including purpose, timelines, next steps, and their equity framework. The Oregon Transportation Commission has been directed by Oregon Legislature to pursue and implement tolling on I-5 and I-205 in the Portland Metro Region to generate revenue for congestion relief projects and manage congestion.

Community engagement is a vital component of the program. The program had the goal of reaching people that are typically not part of the process. This was especially difficult during the COVID-19 Pandemic and the civil unrest experienced in 2020. Primary community engagement tools were online open houses, print and digital advertising, eNews and news releases, social media posts, presentations and briefings, and community engagement liaisons. Outreach was conducted in multiple languages. Most concerns raised were about the impact of tolling on personal finances, community health, and increasing options for transit and transportation.

Presentation:

[Oregon Toll Program](#)

For more detail on agenda item 3, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:47:03, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 4:

Columbia River I-5 Bridge Replacement Program

Greg Johnson, Program Administrator, Interstate Bridge Replacement

Mr. Johnson provided an update on the I-5 Interstate Bridge Replacement Program (IBR) and project, outreach efforts, and next steps.

The IBR is committed to centering equity in the processes and outcomes. The program will engage the community by elevating the voices of historically marginalized communities throughout our processes and ensure these communities may access the program's economic and transportation benefits. The Program is committed to not furthering continued harm to these communities.

The program timeline is building on work previously completed (2004 through 2014). IBR is currently in the planning and environmental review stage. Design is scheduled to happen in 2024, with construction to start in 2025. Problems that the project is considering are safety, impaired freight movement, congestion, seismic resiliency, inadequate bike and pedestrian paths, and limited public transportation.

A Conceptual Finance Plan was provided to the Transportation Committees and Governors in both states in December 2020. Preliminary cost estimates set forth a range broad enough to cover various bridge replacement and transit alternative scenarios. The plan identifies a total need of \$3.2 to \$4.8B. The program identified potential sources that similar programs have typically been competitive to receive and anticipates that these sources would fill a portion of the funding need, but result in a potential funding gap of between \$1.8B and \$2.4B.

The IBR has an extensive community engagement plan, combining live and virtual community briefing events to provide an opportunity to understand the program and provide feedback. This includes a commitment to transparency and accountability.

Presentation:

[Columbia River I-5 Bridge Replacement Program Update](#)

For more detail on agenda item 4, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:24:53, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 5:

Passenger-Only Ferry Study

Kelly McGourty, Director of Transportation Planning, Puget Sound Regional Council

Ms. McGourty gave an overview on the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) study to evaluate the demand for new Passenger-Only Ferry (POF) service to connect communities throughout the Puget Sound region, including Lake Washington and Lake Union.

Community engagement showed that there is generally public interest and enthusiasm for POF service. Reactions vary by community with a range from strong community support on one end of the spectrum, to seeing it as incompatible with community waterfront vision/uses on the other end of spectrum. Each potential route is unique and requires further community engagement to address key project-specific details such as terminal locations, modal connection needs, parking, etc.

The study took a stepped analysis approach. They started exploring forty-five routes. As they layered additional issues to examine, the number of routes explored was reduced. The report provided route definition for seven routes: Tacoma – Seattle, Bellingham – Friday Harbor, Whidbey – Everett, and four Lake Washington/Lake Union: Kenmore – UW, Kirkland – UW, Renton – UW, and Renton – South Lake Union.

The study includes next steps that could be taken by local jurisdictions, the state, and the federal government to further advance POF.

Presentation:

[Passenger-Only Ferry Study](#)

For more detail on agenda item 5, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:07:12, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 6:

Analyzing Electrification of Public Vehicle Fleets in Washington State

Dave Catterson, Coordinator, Joint Transportation Committee

Charles Satterfield, Senior Project Manager, Atlas Public Policy

Mr. Catterson and Mr. Satterfield gave an overview of the Joint Transportation Committee's (JTC) analysis of shifting public vehicle fleets in Washington from gas to electric.

The study was to provide Washington State with comprehensive, vehicle-specific electrification cost estimates both today and in the future, and to deliver actionable information on how to efficiently move forward with fleet electrification. The study focused on plug-in EV technology and the scope was limited to policies that can accelerate the pace of electrification.

The study concluded that the state should consider developing a roadmap to swiftly increase the share of EVs in public fleets between 2020 and 2035 to achieve billions in fleet cost savings. Saving estimates range from \$250 million to \$3.4 billion, depending on technological progress and timing of EV fleet purchases.

Presentation:

[Analyzing Electrification of Public Vehicle Fleets in Washington State](#)

For more detail on agenda item 6, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:42:44, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 7:

Washington State Ferry Fleet Electrification

Matt Von Ruden, Director, Vessel Engineering and Maintenance, Washington State Ferries, Washington State Department of Transportation

Mr. Von Ruden gave an overview on WSF's 2040 Long Range Plan to transition Washington State Ferries' (WSF) fleet to hybrid electric propulsion.

To meet carbon reduction goals for 2030 and 2040, both terminals and vessels must be electrified. Electrifying vessels includes converting current fleet and building new hybrid

vessels. WSF has funding currently for one new hybrid electric Olympic-class vessel. Charging would be done through rapid charging during the normal ferry loading/ unloading process. To allow vessels to be moved between routes, based on needs, the charging systems would be consistent among routes and vessels. Currently the update for the Olympic vessels is about 70% complete.

Presentation:

[Update on Ferry Fleet Electrification](#)

For more detail on agenda item 7, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 03:22:56, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 8:

Washington State Ferry Fare and Tariff Process

Ray Deardorf, Senior Planning Manager, Washington State Ferries, Washington State Department of Transportation

Mr. Deardorf gave an overview on Washington State Ferries (WSF) proposed 2021-23 fare setting and development process.

WSF expects to provide the Commission with a fare proposal as early as May, but no later than June. The timeline could be impacted by the legislature's schedule should session not end on time.

Presentation:

[2021-2022 Ferry Fare Development Process](#)

For more detail on agenda item 8, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 03:44:31, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: The Commission will initiate the ferry fare setting process.

Agenda Item 9:

Fish Barrier Corrections - Update

Tom Jameson, Fish Passage Division Manager, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Kim Mueller, Fish Passage Delivery Manager, Washington State Department of Transportation

Mr. Jameson and Ms. Mueller gave an overview on the Department of Fish & Wildlife (DFW) and Department of Transportation plans to work with local jurisdiction from around the state to remove and correct fish passage barriers.

Mr. Jameson gave an overview of the various fish passage programs within the state. DFW estimates that there are 18,000 – 20,000 fish passage obstructions across the state, which is much more expansive than the fish passage barriers covered under the injunction.

Washington has several distinct fish passage barrier remediation plans and programs operating simultaneously. Solely focusing on the injunction will not deliver the desired outcomes for salmon, steelhead, orca recovery, and important fisheries statewide. The Fish Barrier Removal Board (FBRB) was tasked by the legislature to develop a comprehensive plan that builds on the investments driven by the injunction, to deliver benefits to salmon and steelhead stocks that are listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), contribute to the protection and restoration of Southern Resident Orca, and limit the harvest of anadromous fish in the Pacific Salmon Treaty or North of Cape Falcon fishery negotiations.

Ms. Mueller provided an overview of WSDOT's fish passage barrier program. As of June 2020, WSDOT had corrected 73 barriers covered by the injunction, opening 329 miles of fish habitat. The program uses the design-build approach, which provides for more innovation, less staff resource, and lessons learned to be applied to other projects almost immediately.

Presentations:

[Fish Barrier Removal](#)

[Restoring Fish Passage](#)

For more detail on agenda item 9, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 04:09:49, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time

Chair Jerry Litt reminded the Commission that the meeting will continue Wednesday, February 17, 2021, and recessed the meeting.

DAY 2: February 17, 2021

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

Agenda Item 11:

Secretary's Report

Roger Millar, Secretary, Washington State Department of Transportation

Secretary Millar updated the Commission on the Washington State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT) activities.

Presentation: There was no associated presentation.

For more detail on agenda item 11, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:03:56, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 12:

Transportation Equity & Technology

Adam Cohen, Survey Researcher, University of California, Berkeley

Mr. Cohen gave an overview of current transportation technologies, services, and mobility options, incorporating the demographics of the users of these services, and considerations for expanding access to all.

Currently, in the United States public transit is running on reduced schedules, reduced routes, and reduced operating hours, with social distancing requirements and fare-free services or even suspended fares.

Mobility on Demand (MOD) and Shared Access Vehicles (SAV) may enhance accessibility for underserved communities, but they may also create or contribute to physical and digital inequities. The US Department of Transportation has created the Spatial, Temporal, Economic, Physiological, and Social (STEPS) Equity Framework intended to assess equity of new technologies beyond the traditional ideas of equity.

Labor should be considered in the context of workforce development programs that will aid in transitioning existing workforces into new roles and/or industries.

Presentation:

[Equity of Innovative and Emerging Transportation Services](#)

For more detail on agenda item 12, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:20:33, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 13:

Cascadia Ultra-High-Speed Ground Transportation Report

Ron Pate, Director, Rail, Freight, and Ports Division, Washington State Department of Transportation

Jason Beloso, Strategic Planning Manager, Rail, Freight, and Ports Division, Washington State Department of Transportation

Mr. Pate and Mr. Beloso gave an overview on WSDOT's study regarding "Ultra-High-Speed" Ground Transportation (UHS GT).

Since 2017, WSDOT has been exploring the use of UHS GT, that would connect Portland, OR, Seattle, WA, and Vancouver, BC with speeds reaching up to 250 mph using rail, maglev, or hyperloop. Since then, a feasibility study, an economic impact analysis, a business case study, and a framework for the future have been completed.

WSDOT's exploration included connections to existing trains, transit, and rideshare options and anticipates both public and private investments. The study has primarily focused on bullet train technologies, due to available data. The goal is to provide efficient and sustainable mobility, promote regional integration, and stimulate economic growth and innovation.

Traveling from Seattle to Vancouver, WA would take 3.5 hours utilizing current rail service. With UHS GT, this same trip would take less than an hour. Estimates indicate annual ridership could be between 1.7 and 3.1 million, with annual revenues between \$160 and \$250 million. The broader resulting economic growth could exceed \$355 billion, with 200,000 new jobs related to construction and ongoing operations. Additionally, the UHS GT system could avoid the release of estimated six million metric tons of CO₂ emissions.

WSDOT has evaluated nine possible routes with a multitude of considerations. There are three key areas for next steps to advance the project: the creation of a coordinating entity, developing governance for that entity, and establishing a development entity.

Presentation:

[Ultra-High-Speed Ground Transportation](#)

For more detail on agenda item 13, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:57:10, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 14:

Studded Tires Update

Kris Rietmann Abrudan, Communications Director, Washington State Department of Transportation

Jeff Uhlmeier, State Pavement Engineer, Washington State Department of Transportation

Ms. Abrudan and Mr. Uhlmeier gave an overview on studded tire damage and the results of a public information campaign in Spokane and Whatcom Counties, and shared current data on the damage caused to roadways from studded tire usage in Washington State.

Ms. Abrudan provided an overview of the public awareness campaign recently conducted by WSDOT, on the damage to Washington roads resulting from the use of studded tires. The campaign ran in Spokane and Whatcom Counties, during the winters of 2018-19 and 2019-20. There are clear differences in tire usage levels, opinions, and knowledge of winter tire options in the two counties.

Mr. Uhlmeier provided a history of the use of studded tires in Washington State, starting in 1969 when the legislature first allowed the use of studded tires. Over 35 years, three inches of pavement in some locations have been lost due to the use of studded tires. Studded tires cause damage on both concrete and asphalt roads and it is estimated that studded tires cause \$23 to \$33 million of damage per year to highways. This estimate does not include the costs of damage to city and county roads.

Presentation:

[Studded Tire Update](#)

For more detail on agenda item 14, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:26:08, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 15:

Commission Business

Commissioners, Staff, and Former Deputy Director Paul Parker

Reflections and Recommendations

- For the OReGO program, it was informative to see how they are considering the possible integration of various types of road pricing (RUC, tolling, etc.).
- Passenger-Only Ferries (POF) could not only move traffic from the roads but could also be part of the area's emergency response planning. We are in an earthquake zone and a significant earthquake could damage or collapse bridges in the area, severely limiting our ability to move around/over bodies of water.
- 30 years ago, we had an opportunity, as an area, to establish a mass transit system in King County and we did not do it. Today, we are facing congestion that we might not have, had we established that system. The forward thinking of Puget Sound Regional Council's POF study could really help the area's congestion.

- We should change how we frame the discussion about post-COVID-19 travel. Instead of asking “will transit recover,” we should be working towards the transportation system that we want.
- We keep talking about the backlog of maintenance and preservation, and studded tires add to this. It seems banning the use of studded tires could help reduce our maintenance budget shortfall and reduce added damage to roadways.
- Before we adopt new EV fleet requirements or mandate requirements for the public, we should test it thoroughly at the state public fleet level.
- We need to use the disruption of COVID-19 to look for opportunities to reshape our transportation systems. The POF study and the ultra-high-speed rail efforts take us in this direction.

December 2020 and January 2021 Meeting Summary

There were no revisions requested for the December and January meeting summary.

WSTC Operating Policies - *ACTION*

Mr. See and Mr. Parker reviewed the proposed changes in the Commission Operating Policies. The Commission adopted the Commission Operating Policies, as proposed.

Action:

Commissioner Jennings made a motion to adopt the WSTC Operating Policies, as presented. Commissioner Restucci seconded the motion. The motion was adopted 6 in favor; none against; 1 excused.

2021 Legislative Update

Ms. Jones provided an update on the 2021 Legislative Session.

Tri-State Meeting Planning

Ms. Griffith informed the Commission that the Oregon Commission, who is hosting this year, has proposed the tri-state meeting in 2021 be postponed until 2022 when the meeting can happen in person. Commissioners agreed to the request.

Subcommittee Reports

Chair Litt and Commission staff provided updates on the work of the Tolling Subcommittee, Ferry Subcommittee, and RUC Subcommittee.

For more detail on agenda item 15, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:59:05, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Next meeting: March 16 & 17, 2021