



Washington State Transportation Commission

Olympia Meeting Summary
May 18 & 19, 2021

Day 1: May 18, 2021

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

Agenda Item 2:

Road Usage Charge (RUC) Forward Drive Project Update

Presenters:

- Travis Dunn, Partner, Milestone Solutions, LLP
- Henry Yates, Principal, Yates Consulting
- Allegra Calder, Principal, BERK Consulting
- Sherrie Hsu, Senior Associate, BERK Consulting
- Zubair Ghafoor, Principal, CDM Smith

The panel gave an update on the latest activities of the Forward Drive research project, to further assess a road usage charge (RUC), as directed by the Legislature. An update was given on two areas of the project: 1. the status and next steps of the equity analysis effort assessing impacts RUC may have on underserved communities; and 2. the status and next steps of the financial modeling work which aims to measure the long-term sustainability of RUC as a revenue source, considering the impacts various economic factors and markets may have on long-term revenue generation.

Mr. Dunn provided an overview of the seven tasks of the Forward Drive project: 1. New mobility and RUC financial modeling; 2. Equity analysis; 3. Enhanced mileage reporting methods “RUC innovation”; 4. Administrative cost reduction “scrum”; 5. Detailed pilot phase-in plan; 6. RUC prototype “sub-test”; and 7. RUC roadmap. Tasks one through four are occurring concurrently, which started in quarter three of 2020 and will conclude by the end of 2021. Tasks five through seven will happen consecutively, with some overlap. Task five will start during quarter three of 2021. Task seven concludes during the third quarter of 2023.

Mr. Ghafoor briefed the Commission on how the financial model has been updated to capture the impacts of COVID-19, the emergence of electric vehicles on VMT, and autonomous and shared vehicles. Mr. Ghafoor also briefed the Commission on the major defining factors, process of developing, and list of possible scenarios for various potential futures. The enhancements to the financial model improve overall structure, updatability, and ease of use, making the computation process more user-friendly.

Mr. Yates briefed the Commission on the RUC equity analysis being conducted, including work already completed, participating organizations, initial reactions, criteria for engagement, and the next steps.

Presentation:

[Road Usage Charge-Update](#)

For more detail on agenda item 2, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:04:16, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 3:

Autonomous Vehicle Work Group Update

Presenter:

- Scott Shogan, Vice President, WSP

Mr. Shogan gave an update on the Autonomous Vehicle (AV) Work Group, who is charged with developing recommended policies and regulations to support the safe operation of AVs on public roadways in the state. He provided an overview of the AV Work Group's 2021 work plan and an AV testing in five states. The Commission discussed areas they would like to see the Work Group place focus on over the remaining three years they have to complete their work. The areas of priority that were identified by the Commission are: enable and encourage testing of the technology; advance public awareness, communication, and understanding of the technology; focus on early and near-term technologies; and, at a minimum, keep up with other states on testing and deployment.

Presentation:

[Autonomous Vehicle Work Group-Update](#)

For more detail on agenda item 3, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:57:31, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 4:

I-405 & SR 167 Express Toll Lanes Traffic & Revenue Update

Presenter:

- Ed Barry, Director, Toll Division, Washington State Department of Transportation

Mr. Barry briefed the Commission on the traffic and revenue for the I-405 Express Toll Lanes and State Route (SR) 167 High-Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes, as of December 2020. Both facilities are recovering from a significant decrease in traffic and revenue related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The I-405 ETLs have recovered to about 50% below pre-COVID levels. The SR 167 HOT lanes have recovered to approximately 20% below pre-COVID levels. Both I-405 ETLs and SR 167 HOT lanes continue to maintain speeds greater than the general-purpose lanes and have also maintained average speeds greater than 45 mph for more than 90 percent of the time during peak periods this quarter. It is still too early to determine the effect the drop in revenue will have on new investments in the corridor.

Presentation:

[I-405 / SR 167 Express Toll Lanes Traffic Revenue-Update](#)

For more detail on agenda item 4, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 03:00:00, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 5:

I-405/SR 167 Express Toll Lane Low-Income Tolling Study Update

Presenters:

- Gabor Debreczeni, Economic Analysis and Forecasting Manager, WSP USA
- Auden Kaehler, Assistant Vice President, WSP USA

Mr. Debreczeni and Mr. Kaehler gave an overview of findings and preliminary recommendations from the I-405/SR 167 Express Toll Lanes (ETL) Low-Income Tolling Study which is exploring the potential of a low-income tolling program for the corridor. This included an overview on the analysis of two options selected for further assessment in the study and a discussion of the draft report and recommendations with the Commission.

The draft recommendations include requesting the Legislature to authorize and fund steps toward creating a low-income tolling program on the I-405 / SR 167 ETL Corridor; both discount toll program options (Toll credit equal to the toll paid by the average ETL user and 10 free ETL trips per month) be advanced for further assessment; implementation should include elements to support a cost effective, accessible, and informed low-income toll discount program.

Presentation:

[I-405/SR 167 Low Income Tolling Study](#)

For more detail on agenda item 5, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 03:17:03, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 6:

2021 Washington State Ferries (WSF) Fare Setting Process

Presenter:

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

Mr. Deardorf gave an overview on revenue and policy objectives established by the Legislature and shared information on the kinds of policy issues that may be proposed by Washington State Ferries (WSF) and Ferry Advisory Committee (FAC) for the 2021-23 fare setting cycle.

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-23 Transportation Budget has \$9.2 million in additional operating revenue that will need to be generated with a general fare increase. WSF prepared three alternatives for ferry fare increases that achieve the revenue target established by the Legislature. Fare options were developed to achieve the revenue target set by the Legislature. WSF recommended, and the Commission agreed, to not advance Alternative 3 (below) for further consideration and public input. The Commission will gather public input on Alternative 1 & 2 below through June 10, to inform their final fare proposal to be determined at the June 15 Commission meeting.

		Fare Increase		Biennial Fare Revenue Generated		
		1 st year	2 nd year	Operating	Surcharge	Total
Alternative 1	Timing	October	October			
	Passengers	2.5%	2.5%	\$376.63M	\$14.33M	\$390.95M
	Vehicles	2.5%	2.5%			
Alternative 2	Timing	October	October			
	Passengers	0.0%	2.5%	\$376.78M	\$14.34M	\$391.12M
	Vehicles	3.1%	2.5%			
Alternative 3	Timing	October	May			
	Passengers	0.0%	2.5%	\$377.45M	\$14.34M	\$391.78M
	Vehicles	2.5%	2.5%			

Presentation:

[2021-23-WSF Fare Setting Development Process](#)

For more detail on agenda item 6, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 04:58:00, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: The Commission will select its fare proposal from either Alternative 1 or 2, at its June 15 meeting.

Agenda Item 7:

SR 99 Tunnel Traffic & Revenue Performance Update

Presenter:

- Tyler Patterson, Systems Manager, Toll Division, Washington State Department of Transportation

Mr. Patterson briefed the Commission on the traffic and revenue performance of the SR 99 tunnel which includes the impact of COVID-19 Pandemic and closing of the West Seattle Bridge. Operationally, the first year of tolling on the SR 99 tunnel went smoothly. Traffic volumes are slowly returning to pre-pandemic averages on I-5 and city streets, while SR 99 tunnel volumes are recovering at a slower pace.

Presentation:

[SR 99 Tunnel Traffic Revenue Performance-Update](#)

For more detail on agenda item 7, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 05:39:19, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 8:

Toll Rate Setting Preparations

Presenter:

- Carl See, Deputy Director, Washington State Transportation Commission

Mr. See gave an overview on the financial requirements and next steps in preparing for a toll rate increase on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge (TNB), with an effective date of October 1, 2021.

Current and Proposed TNB Toll Rates

	<i>Good to Go</i> Pass	Cash Tolls	Pay by Mail
Current Toll Rate	\$5.00	\$6.00	\$7.00
Proposed Toll Rate	\$5.25	\$6.25	\$6.25

Commission staff and partners will continue to assess TNB financial information in support of the proposed rate setting, including impacts on future TNB loan projections, consider input provided by the TNB Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), and will present proposed rate setting options to the Commission on June 15th for selection of option(s) for further public input.

Mr. See informed the Commission that there is no new information, since the May 11th Commission meeting, related to the SR 99 tunnel and the SR 520 bridge toll rate update. Further analysis is being conducted and will be discussed at the June 15th Commission meeting.

Presentation:

[SR 16 Tacoma Narrows Bridge](#)

For more detail on agenda item 8, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 05:54:59, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: The Commission will begin gathering public input in late June and will issue its toll rate proposals at its July meeting.

Chair Jerry Litt reminded the Commission that the meeting will continue Wednesday, May 19, 2021, and recessed the meeting.

DAY 2: April 21, 2021

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

Agenda Item 10: Secretary's Report

Presenter:

- 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 10, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:03:10, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

*Please note the first 2 minutes of TVW Meeting recording will only be audio before video feed starts.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 11: Integrating Equity into Transportation Decision-Making

Presenter:

- Talia Jacobson, Senior Planner, Toole Design

Ms. Jacobson gave an overview on ways to address equity in transportation policies, plans, and projects and addressing process equity, outcome equity, and existing data sources that can be used to understand current conditions.

The Commission discussed the intersection of equity and the Commission's work, most directly with statewide policy plans and tolling and how the work can be approached with the application of an equity lens. The Commission has the opportunity to influence transportation plans across the state, via the Washington Transportation Plan, to raise the visibility of equity as an integrated part of transportation.

Presentation:

[Equity in Transportation](#)

For more detail on agenda item 11, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:23:36, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 12:

Highway Naming Proposal to Designate SR 165 “The Glacier Highway”

Presenters:

- Phil Fortunato, Senator, Washington State (31st Legislative District)
- Jeff Sellers, Mayor, Town of Wilkeson
- Reema Griffith, Executive Director, Washington State Transportation Commission

Ms. Griffith briefed the Commission on a request in the 2021-2023 Transportation Budget that the Commission name SR 165 “The Glacier Highway” to commemorate the significance of glaciers to the state of Washington. Mayor Sellers briefed the Commission on the history of the request and related history of the town of Wilkeson and clarified the request is to name SR 165 be named “The Carbon Glacier Highway” to clearly commemorate the significance of specifically the Carbon Glacier to the history of the area. Senator Fortunato provided some legislative background perspective.

Chair Litt read Resolution 742. Commissioner Jennings moved adoption of Resolution 742. Commissioner Restucci seconded the motion. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 7-0.

Presentation: There was no associated presentation.

[Resolution No. 742](#)

For more detail on agenda item 12, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:24:42, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: Approved Resolution 742.

Follow-Up: WSTC staff will notify WSDOT of the naming action for signage placement.

Agenda Item 13:

Commission Business

Reflections and Recommendations

- Chair and Vice-Chair of the AV Executive Committee are working to make sure the Committee continues to move forward on meaningful work and having the Commission's guidance to take to the Committee next week is very much appreciated.
- The Yakima Valley Conference of Governments and Yakima County Transportation Policy Board are moving toward adding a permanent seat for a State Transportation Commissioner on their respective boards.

April Meeting Summary

There were no revisions requested for the April meeting summary.

Meeting Planning

The Commission discussed if, when, and how to resume meeting in-person. The Commission decided to continue meeting virtually indefinitely and will discuss again at the July meeting.

Preparing for the election of the 2021 Commission Officers

The Commission discussed a new process for nominating and selecting its officers, streamlining the process if there are no competitive interests. Because there was no competition identified this time, the Commission Chair took nominations and the body elected Commissioner Jennings as Chair and Commissioner Young as Vice-Chair, with terms starting July 1, 2021.

Action: The Commission elected its new officers effective July 1, 2021.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

For more detail on agenda item 13, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:48:45, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Next meeting: June 15 & 16, 2021