



# Washington State Transportation Commission

## Tolling Work Session Summary

June 15, 2021

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### **Day 1: June 15, 2021**

Chair Jerry Litt opened the meeting at 10:00 am with introductions by commission members and staff, an overview of the agenda, and virtual meeting protocols.

### **Agenda Item 2:**

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

##### **Presenter:**

- Carl See, Deputy Director, Washington State Transportation Commission

Mr. See gave an update on the status of the I-405/SR 167 Express Toll Lanes Low-Income Tolling Program Study and the next steps for finalizing the report. The deadline for the report has been extended to August 27, 2021.

**Presentation:** None

For more detail on agenda item 2, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:03:33, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

**Follow-Up:** None at this time.

### **Agenda Item 3:**

#### **Washington State Ferry Fare Rate Proposal - *ACTION***

##### **Presenters:**

- Ray Deardorf, Senior Planning Manager, Washington State Ferries, Washington State Department of Transportation
- Jim Corenman, Member, Ferry Advisory Committee on Tariffs (FAC-T) and Chair, San Juan County FAC
- Reema Griffith, Executive Director, Washington State Transportation Commission

Mr. Deardorf briefed the Commission on Washington State Ferries (WSF) ferry fare alternatives and public outreach. The 2021-23 Biennium Transportation Budget has \$9.2 million in additional operating revenue that will need to be generated with a general fare increase. WSF presented the public with two fare increase alternatives for their consideration:

		Fare Increase		Comments
		1 <sup>st</sup> year	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	
<b>Alternative 1</b>	Timing	October	October	Baseline scenario to meet legislative requirements
	Passengers	2.5%	2.5%	
	Vehicles	2.5%	2.5%	
<b>Alternative 2</b>	Timing	October	October	October/October Fare Changes. No passenger fare increase in first year. Vehicle fare increased 3.1% in first year. Second year increases held to 2.5%.
	Passengers	0.0%	2.5%	
	Vehicles	3.1%	2.5%	

Mr. Deardorf also reviewed with the Commission the proposed change in definition of “vanpool” reducing the number of people being carried from five to three and that the minimum paid for all passengers in the van shall be no less than two times the applicable passenger fare, reduced from no less than four times the amount. Mr. Deardorf also asked the Commission to correct a mistake from a past rulemaking when the school group discount language was not properly removed.

Mr. Deardorf briefed the Commission on the voting results from two community public outreach meetings and one Ferry Advisory Committee meeting. In all three meetings, Alternative 1 was most preferred.

Mr. Deardorf informed the Commission that based on agency goals, WSF prefers Alternative 2.

Mr. Corenman, a member of the FAC-T, briefed the Commission on the FAC-T’s deliberations on the proposed ferry fare increase and their discussion about the need for a dedicated capital funding program to maintain the fleet. The majority preference of the FAC-T was for Alternative 1.

Ms. Griffith provided an overview of the public input gathered through the Commission’s online ferry fare public comment forum, from May 28<sup>th</sup> through June 10<sup>th</sup>. Over 1,000 people participated, including nearly 700 written comments. There was greatest support for Alternative 1 and strongest opposition for Alternative 2. Opinions about the change in “vanpool” definition was fairly evenly split for, against, and no opinion.

**Presentation:**

[2021/22 Ferry Fares Alternatives and Outreach](#)

[Ferry Advisory Committee on Tariffs](#)  
[Online Forum Results](#)

For more detail on agenda item 3, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:06:25, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** Commissioner Young moved that the Commission advance Alternative 1 for further public comment in the next phase of the rulemaking process. Commissioner Jennings seconded the motion. The vote was approved, 7-0.

**Follow-Up:** File the CR 102 with Alternative 1.

## **Agenda Item 4:**

### **Update: 2021 Toll Rate Setting Preparations**

#### **Presenters:**

- Carl See, Deputy Director, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Brent Baker, Senior Vice President & Managing Director, WSP USA
- Randy Boss, Co-Chair, Tacoma Narrows Bridge Citizen Advisory Committee

Mr. See provided an overview regarding toll rate increases on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge and the State Route (SR) 99 tunnel, as well as future toll rate adjustments on the SR 520 bridge to ensure financial requirements are met, per bond covenants.

Mr. Baker provided an overview of two options for toll rate increases for the SR 99 tunnel, to take effect October 1, 2021: Option A is a uniform 15% increases and Option B is a uniform increase of \$0.25. Option A would raise toll rates from a range of \$1.00 to \$2.25 to \$1.15 to \$2.60 for two axle vehicles with a *Good to Go!* pass. Option B would raise toll rates from a range of \$1.00 to \$2.25 to \$1.25 to \$2.50.

Mr. Baker provided an overview of two options for toll rate increases for the SR 520 bridge, to take effect July 1, 2023: Option 1 is a tailored increase, by time, that averages to about 15% overall and Option 2 is a uniform 15% toll increase. Option 1 would result in a maximum toll rate of \$4.50 during the week for two axle vehicles with a *Good to Go!* pass. The maximum toll rate for Option 2 would be \$4.95 during the week.

For the SR 520 bridge, the rate increase is deferred until July 1, 2023, due to the Legislature's appropriation of about \$50 million in the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in the 2021-23 biennium for operations and maintenance. Action must be taken this year to demonstrate that net toll revenues will be sufficient to meet all forecast horizon financial obligations for the facility. WSDOT will continue to monitor traffic and revenue performance and share with WSTC for further analysis prior to the planned increase.

For both the SR 99 tunnel and the SR 520 bridge, WSDOT and Office of the State Treasurer are currently confirming the viability of these options through fiscal year 2025. This analysis is expected to be completed in mid-July.

Mr. See reviewed the proposed toll rate increase of \$0.25 for the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, effective on October 1, 2021. The \$0.25 rate increase would be applied to all three collection

methods: *Good To Go!* pass, cash tolls, and pay by mail. The proposed rate increase is based on funding needs following approval of the 2021-23 biennium transportation budget. The budget includes a loan of \$30.3 million for the biennium with repayment in fiscal years 2031-32 and a subsidy of \$15.7 million of ARPA funds.

Mr. Boss, on behalf of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge (TNB) Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC), provided comment on the proposed toll increase. The CAC opposes any further toll increase.

**Presentation:**

[Toll Rate Setting-Update](#)

For more detail on agenda item 4, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 001:11:18, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** There was consensus of the Commission that options discussed for the SR 99 tunnel, SR 520 bridge, and Tacoma Narrows Bridge be put forward for public comment.

**Follow-Up:** None at this time.

Chair Jerry Litt reminded the Commission that the Wenatchee Valley meeting will start at 1:00 pm, Tuesday, June 15, 2021, and adjourned the meeting.