



# Washington State Transportation Commission

## Olympia Meeting Summary

July 20 & 21, 2021

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### Day 1: July 20, 2021

Chair Roy Jennings 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:

### Selection of 2021 Toll Rate Proposals for SR 99 Tunnel, Tacoma Narrows Bridge, and SR 520 Bridge - *ACTION*

#### Presenters:

- Carl See, Deputy Director, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Brent Baker, Senior Vice President & Managing Director, WSP USA
- Reema Griffith, Executive Director, Washington State Transportation Commission

Mr. See provided an overview of proposed toll rate increase options for the State Route (SR) 99 tunnel, the SR 520 bridge, and the Tacoma Narrows Bridge (TNB), to ensure financial requirements are met.

Toll rate proposals for the SR 99 tunnel are as follows:

- Option A: Uniform 15% increase on October 1, 2021 (FY 2022)
- Option B: Uniform \$0.25 increase on October 1, 2021 (FY 2022)

Mr. Baker provided an update on the SR 99 tunnel, noting that the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and the Office of the State Treasurer (OST) have confirmed the viability of both options through FY 2025. Both options assume a planned 3% toll rate increase on July 1, 2022, with additional toll rate increases likely to be needed starting in FY 2026.

Toll rate proposals for the SR 520 bridge are as follows:

- Option 1: Tailored increase by time period averaging 15% on July 1, 2023 (FY 2024)
- Option 2: Uniform 15% increase on July 1, 2023 (FY 2024)

Mr. Baker provided an update on the SR 520 bridge, noting that a full analytical process for both options has been conducted. OST continues to work to confirm the financial sufficiency of net toll revenues across the forecast horizon for the options, and WSDOT will continue to monitor traffic and revenue performance to assess the viability of lower toll rate increase options.

Toll rate proposal for the TNB is as follows:

- Uniform 25 cent increase on October 1, 2021 (FY 2022)

Mr. See provided an overview of the Commission's TNB Sufficient Minimum Balance (SMB) policy. The SMB policy objective is to maintain a three-month rolling fund balance average above \$10 million, which the account is currently not meeting. Under the proposed toll rate increase, SMB policy compliance will be regained by August 2022 for the remainder of the 2021-2023 biennium.

The proposed toll rate increase also supports legislative intent to cap on-going loans for the TNB at \$85 million with repayment beginning in FY 2031 following repayment of debt service and deferred sales tax.

Ms. Griffith provided an overview of results from the online public input forum. 26,276 people participated, providing 37,122 total responses. There was slightly more support for Option 2 for the SR 520 bridge, and Option A for the SR 99 tunnel. Comments were mixed for all three facilities.

The proposals will be released for further public review and comment ahead of the Commission's public hearing and action on August 24, 2021.

**Presentation:**

[Online Public Input-Overview](#)

[Toll Rate Setting-Updates](#)

For more detail on agenda item 2, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:03:22, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:**

Commissioner Batra moved adoption of proposed Option 1 as the Commission's formal CR-102 toll rate proposal for the SR 520 bridge, which further public comment will be sought.

Commissioner Litt seconded the motion. The motion was approved, 7-0.

Commissioner Litt moved adoption of the proposed Option A as the Commission's formal CR-102 toll rate proposal for the SR 99 tunnel, which further public comment will be sought.

Commissioner Restucci seconded the motion. The motion was approved, 7-0.

Commissioner Litt moved adoption of the proposed 25 cent toll rate increase as the Commission's formal CR-102 toll rate proposal for the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, which further public comment will be sought. Commissioner Batra seconded the motion. The motion was approved, 7-0.

**Follow-Up:** File the CR 102s with the selected options.

### **Agenda Item 3:** **2020 Global Traffic Scorecard**

#### **Presenters:**

- Bob Pishue, Transportation Analyst, INRIX
- Ted Trepanier, Senior Director, Public Sector Services, INRIX

The panel briefed the Commission on the 2020 INRIX Global Traffic Scorecard, which ranked and analyzed traffic congestion in over 1,000 cities worldwide. Across the board, traffic congestion decreased in 2020. The more dense or congested a city was prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the greater the decline in congestion. Less congestion resulted in fewer collisions; however, fatalities remained steady, and in some cities increased. It is believed that an increase in average peak speeds contributed to this.

Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) has slowly been recovering, with rural areas recovering more quickly than urban areas. AM peak VMT has recovered more slowly than PM peak VMT, while off peak and weekend travel has remained strong. Transit ridership, on the other hand, has not recovered. It is believed that transit ridership will return once the demand for downtown trips returns. Traffic volumes and congestion is expected to fully return in one to two years. Increased teleworking will promote peak-spreading, and thus traffic patterns are expected to differ from pre-COVID patterns.

#### **Presentation:**

[2020 INRIX Global Traffic Scorecard](#)

For more detail on agenda item 3, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:23:27, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

### **Agenda Item 4:** **Creating an Aerial Highway for Drones**

#### **Presenters:**

- Robert Hodgman, Transportation Planning Specialist 5, Aviation Division, Washington State Department of Transportation
- Robin Toth, Director, Washington's Aerospace Sector, Washington State Department of Commerce
- Michael Healander, CEO, Airspace Link

Mr. Hodgman briefed the Commission on the aviation transformation that is underway. WSDOT and the Department of Commerce have partnered for many years to ensure Washington state remains a leader in aviation and aerospace. Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), or "drones", have been around for decades, and have slowly grown in commercial use. The Federal Aviation

Administration (FAA) has implemented several policies to integrate drone operations safely and fully into our nation's airspace.

Ms. Toth briefed the Commission on Washington's Unmanned Systems Industry Council (USIC). Originally launched in 2016, USIC has worked to commercialize the UAS sector in Washington state, collaborate between participating stakeholders, and communicate on issues within the industry.

Mr. Healander briefed the Commission on Airspace Link, which works with the FAA, states, and local governments to help create the rules and regulations needed to help manage and safely integrate drones into our national airspace and communities. A shared UAS infrastructure is necessary to support all types of drone use cases. With sufficient funding, a shared UAS infrastructure would generate an estimated \$3.6 million per year in government revenues for a population of 1 million.

**Presentations:**

[Creating an Aerial Highway for Drones](#)

[Airspace Link-Digital Infrastructure for Drone Operations](#)

For more detail on agenda item 4, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:49:57, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

**Agenda Item 5:**

**ITS America's 2021 Policy Blueprint**

**Presenter:**

- Shailen Bhatt, President & CEO, ITS America

Mr. Bhatt briefed the Commission on the Intelligent Transportation Society of America's (ITS America) policy blueprint for a safer, greener, and smarter transportation system. In 2020, national motor vehicle fatalities increased by 8%. In 2019, transportation accounted for 29% of all greenhouse gas emissions nationwide, the largest of any sector. Mr. Bhatt emphasized the value of data and existing technologies to help create a safer, greener, and smarter transportation system.

**Presentation:**

[ITS America](#)

For more detail on agenda item 5, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:44:23, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

## **Agenda Item 6:**

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

#### **Presenters:**

- Carl See, Deputy Director, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Gabor Debreczeni, Economic Analysis and Forecasting Manager, WSP USA
- Auden Kaehler, Assistant Vice President, WSP USA
- Rob Fellows, Toll Policy and Planning, Manager, Tolling Division, Washington State Department of Transportation
- Brice Montgomery, Special Assistant, Economic Services Administration, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)

The panel updated the Commission on the key findings and recommendations of the I-405 / SR 167 Express Toll Lane (ETL) Low-Income Tolling Study. The study was limited in its scope to assessing the feasibility of low-income toll discounts on the I-405 / SR 167 ETLs, and to identifying the likely benefits and impacts of specific implementation options.

The two discount options selected by the Commission in January 2021 for detailed quantitative analysis were:

- Providing a monthly toll credit equal to the toll usage of the average ETL customer, assessed at \$50 per month
- Providing ten (10) free ETL trips per month

Recommendations presented for Commission approval were broken out into two categories: recommended program components and recommended next steps for advancing further program assessment.

#### Recommended Program Components:

**Recommendation 1:** Advance the two selected program options as preferred options for further assessment

**Recommendation 2:** Use Existing Programs & Enhance Access.

#### Recommended Next Steps for Advancing Further Program Assessment:

**Recommendation 3:** Set project timeline that supports informed program selection and cost-effective implementation

**Recommendation 4:** Develop a concept of operations.

**Recommendation 5:** Engage potential program participants to inform the program design process

**Recommendation 6:** Implement a low-income program as a pilot initially, to test and gain further learnings

**Recommendation 7:** Assess costs and benefits of expanding to full tolling system (all facilities)

Mr. Fellows and Mr. Montgomery expressed their agencies support for the presented recommendations and study process.

**Presentation:**

[I-405/SR 167 Express Toll Lane Low-Income Tolling Study-Findings and Recommendations](#)

For more detail on agenda item 6, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 03:22:46, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:**

Commissioner Litt moved adoption of the recommendations presented here today, for inclusion in the final Low-Income Tolling Study report to be submitted to the Legislature by the end of August. Commissioner Batra seconded the motion. The motion was approved, 7-0.

Commissioner Batra move that the Chair and Vice-Chair be authorized to finalize the Low-Income Tolling Study Report for submittal to the Legislature by the end of August. Commissioner Restucci seconded the motion. The motion was approved, 7-0.

**Follow-Up:** Finalize and submit the report.

**Agenda Item 7:**

**Ferry Riders' Opinion Group: 2021 Winter Performance Survey Results**

**Presenters:**

- Chelsea Benning, Director, Design and Analysis, Pacific Market Research
- Bill Young, CEO, Research Assurance

Ms. Benning and Mr. Young presented results from the Ferry Riders' Opinion Group (FROG) 2021 Winter Performance Survey. The survey was conducted from March 26, 2021, through April 19, 2021, regarding respondents' personal experience riding Washington State Ferries from January through March 2021. The survey focused on four different areas: changes in ridership patterns; ridership experiences; satisfaction levels and areas of opportunities; and the usage of public transit and reactions and willingness to pay an increased capital surcharge. On average, riders said they would be willing to pay up to \$0.91 for a capital surcharge dedicated to new ferries.

**Presentation:**

[2021 WSF Winter Performance Survey](#)

For more detail on agenda item 7, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 04:22:14, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

## **Agenda Item 8:**

### **Update: State Transportation Revenue Forecast**

#### **Presenters:**

- Ed Barry, Director, Toll Division, Washington State Department of Transportation
- Ray Deardorf, Senior Planning Manager, Washington State Ferries, Washington State Department of Transportation

Mr. Barry briefed the Commission on the latest traffic and revenue performance for Washington State's tolled facilities. From March through May 2021, toll transactions and revenues for all facilities exceeded the forecasted amount by 14.8%. June 2021 transactions and revenue exceeded the forecasted amounts by 19% and 11.8%, respectively. However, toll revenues for March 2020 through June 2021 are still below the pre-COVID forecast by 41%, or \$127.7 million. The Tacoma Narrows Bridge continues to have the fastest recovery among tolled facilities, while the SR 99 tunnel has had the slowest recovery.

Mr. Deardorf provided an update on current Washington State Ferries (WSF) services. Restoration of reduced services remains subject to vessel availability, crewing availability, ridership, and budget. Mr. Deardorf also briefed the Commission on the June 2021 Ridership and Fare Revenue Forecasts. Ridership has been gradually returning; however, passenger and vehicle ridership are still below pre-COVID levels by about 28% and 12%, respectively. March through June 2021 ridership and revenues both greatly exceeded the March 2020 forecasted amounts. The June 2021 Forecast estimates \$394.32 million in revenues for the 2021-2023 biennium. Revenues are expected to return to 2019 levels in FY 2023, and ridership is expected to return to 2019 levels in FY 2026.

#### **Presentation:**

[Transportation Revenue Forecast-Toll Facilities](#)  
[WSF - June 2021 Ridership and Fare Revenue Forecasts](#)

For more detail on agenda item 8, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 05:09:55, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

Chair Roy Jennings reminded the Commission that the meeting will continue Wednesday, July 21, 2021, and recessed the meeting.

## **DAY 2: July 21, 2021**

Chair Roy Jennings 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 00:02:58, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

### **Agenda Item 11: Efforts and Programs to Address Homeless Encampments Located on WSDOT Right of Way**

#### **Presenters:**

- Jim Baumgart, Senior Policy Advisor, Governor's Office
- Greg Selstead, Assistant State Maintenance Engineer, Washington State Department of Transportation
- Carl Schroeder, Deputy Government Relations Director, Association of Washington Cities
- Allyson Griffith, Assistant Director, Neighborhood and Community Services, City of Tacoma
- Keith Stahley, Assistant City Manager, City of Olympia

The panel briefed the Commission on efforts underway by the Governor's office, WSDOT, and cities, aimed at addressing the rise of unsheltered living and encampments on public property and homelessness across Washington State. Since 2005, Washington State's population has increased 24%, while housing stock has increased only 21%, highlighting the need for more affordable housing. Annual statewide homeless encampment cleanup costs have grown from \$200,000 in 2008 to \$1.2 million in 2018. Mitigating homelessness requires an intergovernmental approach with clear expectations.

#### **Presentation:**

[Homeless Encampments - Governor's Office](#)  
[Homeless Encampments - WSDOT](#)

For more detail on agenda item 11, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:21:30, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

## **Agenda Item 12:**

### **Expanding the I-405/SR 167 Express Toll Lane System: Update on Planned Projects and Financing Approaches**

#### **Presenters:**

- Lisa Hodgson, I-405/SR 167 Program Administrator, Washington State Department of Transportation
- Ed Barry, Director, Toll Division
- Jason Richter, Deputy Treasurer, Washington State Office of the State Treasurer

The panel briefed the Commission on the I-405/SR 167 Corridor Program, which looks to deliver a comprehensive strategy for system-wide benefits. In 2019, the Legislature passed Substitute Senate Bill (SSB) 5825, which officially combined I-405 and SR 167 into one corridor and identified the opportunity to bond toll revenue. Analysis performed by the Office of the State Treasurer (OST) in December 2020 identified a funding gap of \$360 million - \$400 million. Prioritizing projects that result in the largest increase to toll revenues would increase the ability to provide pay-go funding for more of the program.

In 2021, the Legislature passed two provisos under SSB 5165:

- Sec. 306: To explore phasing and funding alternatives for SR 522 to SR 527, due to the Legislature by September 15, 2021
- Sec. 209: To submit a bond proceeds corridor plan for the entire I-405/SR 167 corridor, due to the Legislature by January 1, 2022

Planned phased delivery options include separating local improvements at the SR 527 interchange, geographical phases, directional phases, and advancing the fish passage portion of the project as funds are built for the larger portions. Alternative funding sources currently include state, federal, and local grants, loans, sales tax deferrals, and possible changes to WSTC toll policies.

The WSDOT will continue its work on both legislatively directed studies, and will provide a final report of its findings by September 12, 2021 for SR 522 – SR 527, and will provide a final report of its findings on the I-45/SR 167 work by January 1, 2022.

#### **Presentation:**

[I-405/SR 167 ETL Expansion](#)

For more detail on agenda item 12, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:37:02, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

### **Agenda Item 13:**

#### **Passenger Rail**

**Presenters:**

- Charles Hamilton, Co-Executive Director, All Aboard Washington
- Patrick Carnahan, Co-Executive Director, All Aboard Washington
- Gary Wirt, Vice President, All Aboard Washington
- Abe Zumwalt, Director, All Aboard Washington
- Luis Moscoso, Government Affairs Director, All Aboard Washington

The panel briefed the Commission on the need for a passenger rail service through central and eastern Washington cities over Stampede Pass. Since 2001, two feasibility studies and one ridership assessment study have been conducted, which found the service to be physically, technically, and operationally feasible with considerable interest. For a Spokane-Seattle twice daily round trip service, the most recent July 2020 feasibility study estimated costs to be \$140 million for infrastructure improvements and \$280 million for equipment.

The panel put forth the following requests to the Commission:

- Recommend that a Cost-Benefit Analysis and Economic Analysis be performed to evaluate restoration of passenger rail service via Stampede Pass
- Establish a Passenger Rail Opinion Group
- Name the Tacoma Amtrak station at Freighthouse Square in honor of those who lost their lives in the Amtrak accident at DuPont in 2017

**Presentation:**

[Reviving a Rail Revolution](#)

For more detail on agenda item 13, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:00:01, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None

**Follow-Up:** Chair Jennings requested Secretary Millar to provide the Commission with a briefing at the October meeting on WSDOT's perspective of what was presented.

### **Agenda Item 14:**

#### **Commission Business**

- Commissioner Reflections and Recommendations
- June Meeting Summary
- Commission's 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
- Facility Naming Preparations
  - Ferry Vessel
  - State Route 532 (Stanwood)

- Review Possible 2022 Supplemental Budget Requests - ***ACTION***
- 2021 Meeting In-person/Virtual Plans - ***ACTION***
- Review Possible 2022 Meeting Locations

### **Commissioner Reflections and Recommendations**

- Commissioners expressed the difficulty of raising toll rates at a time like this with impacts on drivers who use the facilities, but it was something that had to be done.
- Transportation plays a key role in the issue of homelessness, and the Commission needs to be a part of that conversation.

### **June 2021 Meeting Summaries**

The details on Link Transit’s volunteer driver program were added to the June meeting summary. No other changes were made.

### **Commission’s 70th Anniversary**

Ms. Griffith showed the Commission a number of draft 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary logos for their selection. The Commission selected option 1.

### **Facility Naming Preparations**

Ms. Griffith informed the Commission of a request from Washington State Ferries to name a new vessel, reviewed the Ferry Naming Policy and Process, and presented a proposed schedule. Construction on the new vessel was scheduled to start in December 2021, so the Commission was to name the vessel in October. However, Commission staff was recently informed that construction will not start until July 2022. Given the extended timeline, the schedule for the naming process will be modified.

Ms. Griffith informed the Commission of an inquiry from the North County Regional Fire Authority, in Stanwood, regarding their interest in naming a short segment of SR 532 in Stanwood, the “9/11 Memorial Highway.” The sponsors are working to put together their proposal packet and are conducting further public outreach to ensure adequate notice has been given to the general public.

### **Review of Possible 2022 Supplemental Budget Requests**

Ms. Griffith provided an overview of 2022 supplemental budget requests being developed for the Commission: funding for the *Washington Transportation Plan* update and the unexpected move of the Commission office.

### **2021 Meeting In-person/Virtual Plans**

Commissioners discussed continuing virtual meetings or resuming in-person meetings. It was decided the Commission would continue to meet virtually through December 2021, noting the plan for the Commission to also meet virtually January – March of each year going forward.

### **Review Possible 2022 Meeting Locations**

Ms. Jones discussed proposed meeting dates and locations for the 2022 Commission meetings. The Commission tentatively agreed to the proposed meeting schedule. Commissioners asked staff to explore a Small City Summit for both Eastern and Western Washington. The Commission will adopt the 2022 meeting schedule and locations at a future meeting.

**Action:**

Commissioner Batra moved to delegate authority on the Commission's 2022 budget requests to the Chair and Vice Chair. Commissioner Litt seconded the motion. The motion was approved, 6-0-1 excused.

Commissioner Litt moved that the Commission continue to meet virtually through December 31, 2021. Commissioner Batra seconded the motion. The motion was approved, 6-0-1 excused.

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

For more detail on agenda item 14, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:44:09, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Next meeting: Ferry Fare Rate Hearing - August 10, 2021**