



# Washington State Transportation Commission

## Ocean Shores Meeting Summary

November 16 & 17, 2021

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### **DAY 1: November 16, 2021**

Chair Roy Jennings opened the meeting at 1:00 pm with introductions by commission members and staff, an overview of the agenda, and virtual meeting protocols.

#### **Agenda Item 2: Mayor's Welcome**

##### **Presenter:**

- Jon Martin, Mayor Pro Temp, City of Ocean Shores
- Honoring the Late Crystal Dingler, Former Mayor, City of Ocean Shores

Mayor Pro Temp Martin welcomed the Commission to Ocean Shores.

**Presentation:** There was no associated presentation.

For more detail on agenda item 2, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:03:45, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None

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

#### **Agenda Item 3: Transportation 101**

##### **Presenters:**

- Reema Griffith, Executive Director, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Carl See, Deputy Director, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Tamara Jones, Senior Policy Analyst, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Aaron Halbert, Financial Analyst, Washington State Transportation Commission

Commission staff provided an overview on the fiscal and policy framework of the statewide transportation system.

**Presentation:**

[Transportation 101](#)

For more detail on agenda item 3, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:07:05, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

**Agenda Item 4:**

**Washington State Department of Transportation Regional Overview**

**Presenter:**

- John Wynands, Regional Administrator, Olympic Region, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)

The Commission received an overview on WSDOT’s Olympic Region, including planned and active projects, as well as maintenance and preservation challenges in Ocean Shores and the surrounding area. There are currently 62 bridges in the region that are over 80-years old, highlighting the need for maintenance and preservation investments to support the area and create a state of good repair.

**Presentation:**

[Olympic Region - Update](#)

For more detail on agenda item 4, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:35:56, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

**Agenda Item 5:**

**Southwest Regional Transportation Issues: The Big Picture**

**Presenter:**

- Bill Fashing, Executive Director, Southwest Washington RTPO

Mr. Fashing briefed the Commission on some of the transportation challenges facing the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SWRTPO) area, as well as some opportunities and successes that have been achieved. The SWRTPO covers five counties: Grays Harbor, Cowlitz, Lewis, Pacific, and Wahkiakum. With no major economic center, planning for and prioritizing the area’s needs has been difficult. The recently completed 2022-2025 Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) identified 113 projects in the SWRTPO area, which in total are estimated cost about \$597 million in local, state, and federal funds. Included are 34 bridge preservation projects, 28 environmental (fish passage) projects, and 26 safety projects.

**Presentation:**

[Cowlitz-Wahkiakum COG](#)

For more detail on agenda item 5, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:20:13, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

**Agenda Item 6:**

**Public Transit Issues, Challenges, and Successes**

**Presenter:**

- Ken Mehin, Director, Grays Harbor Transportation Authority

Mr. Mehin provided an overview of some of Grays Harbor Transportation Authority's (GHTA) current issues, challenges, and successes. In response to COVID-19, GHTA has reduced services, installed barriers, suspended fare collection, and enhanced sanitation efforts for their fleet and facilities. As a result, GHTA's operating costs have increased by about 10%. Staffing challenges have hindered GHTA's ability to return their weekend service. Moving forward, GHTA plans to return their weekend service starting January 3, 2022, and remain fare free until December 31, 2022. As well, GHTA hopes to utilize grant funding to electrify their system by as early as 2026.

**Presentation:**

[Grays Harbor Transportation Authority](#)

For more detail on agenda item 6, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:52:55, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None

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

**Agenda Item 7:**

**Grays Harbor County Transportation Issues, Challenges, and Successes**

**Presenter:**

- Rob Wilson, County Engineer, Grays Harbor

Mr. Wilson presented on some of the transportation issues and challenges facing Grays Harbor County, including deteriorating bridges, maintenance and preservation of county roads, and fish passage barriers. The county has 81 bridges that include timber elements, making them susceptible to rotting. As a result, it costs the county about \$150,000 annually for bridge inspections alone. The county also spends about \$10 million a year on road maintenance and \$3 million a year on pavement preservation. As well, the county has over 300 fish passage barriers which can cost anywhere from \$300 thousand to \$400 thousand per site to correct.

**Presentation:**

[Grays Harbor County](#)

For more detail on agenda item 7, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:14:03, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

**Agenda Item 8:**

**City of Ocean Shores Transportation Issues, Challenges, and Successes**

**Presenter:**

- Nick Bird, Director, Public Works, City of Ocean Shores

Mr. Bird provided a brief history of the City of Ocean Shores, an overview of the city's maintenance efforts over the years, and the challenges related to the urban vs. rural city definition under the Small City Program. RCW 47.26.115 defines small cities and towns as those with a population of less than 5,000. Ocean Shores has a current population of 6,995, and as a result, Ocean Shores must compete with larger cities for Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) grant funding opportunities. As well, certain projects such as chip seal are not eligible for funding. Mr. Bird cautioned that as Washington State continues to grow, formally small, but growing cities will face this issue unless changes are made to current grant funding programs for cities.

**Presentation:**

[City of Ocean Shores](#)

For more detail on agenda item 8, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:36:24, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

**Agenda Item 9:**

**Connecting Transportation and the Economy**

**Presenter:**

- Lynette Buffington, CEO, Greater Grays Harbor, Inc

Ms. Buffington briefed the Commission on the growth in population and tourism in Ocean Shores and the associated impacts on the local economy. Since 2010, the city's population has grown by about 20%. As well, lodging tax revenues grew by 2.2% in 2020, and about 65% in 2021. These growth trends have impacted the demand for workforce and housing, and has resulted in increased traffic volumes, vehicular conflicts, and the demand for multi-modal transportation options.

**Presentation:**

[Greater Grays Harbor](#)

For more detail on agenda item 9, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 03:15:17, 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, November 17, 2021, and recessed the meeting.

## **DAY 2: November 17, 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 11:**

#### **Port of Grays Harbor Issues, Challenges, and Successes**

##### **Presenter:**

- Gary Nelson, Executive Director, Port of Grays Harbor

The Commission heard about the Port of Grays Harbor's capacity, freight traffic, and efforts to improve access into and out of the port. The Port of Grays Harbor is the west coast's leading exporter of soy meal, which is a protein supplement produced from the residue left after soy oil extraction. As the demand for soy oil increases, the port anticipates a 100% growth in soy meal in the next 4-5 years. As such, improvements to the port's infrastructure are needed to meet storage needs. Roughly 80% of the port's total revenues are generated from their marine terminals, which rely greatly on the surrounding rail system. The City of Aberdeen's US 12 Highway-Rail Separation Project will greatly improve the flow of freight trains and vehicles, for which the port has provided \$200 thousand for preliminary design work.

##### **Presentation:**

[Port of Grays Harbor](#)

For more detail on agenda item 11, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:03:06, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

### **Agenda Item 12:**

#### **Quinault Indian Nation Transportation Issues, Challenges, and Successes**

##### **Presenter:**

- Julie Burnett, Community Services Director, Quinault Indian Nation

Ms. Burnett briefed the Commission on some of the transportation issues facing the Quinault Indian Nation (QIN). The QIN has not had their own public transportation system since 2017, when their "Rez Racer" route was discontinued due to a lack of ridership. Grays Harbor Transportation Authority however, provides limited bus routes to Taholah twice a day. There are over 250 miles of roads within the QIN reservation boundaries, for which the QIN receives funding through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Roads Program to maintain. Heavy rains and flooding have significantly impacted the QIN's roads, which has resulted in several emergency road closures throughout recent years.

##### **Presentation:**

[Quinault Indian Nation](#)

For more detail on agenda item 12, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:33:07, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

### **Agenda Item 13:**

#### **State Route 109 and State Route 115 Issues and Challenges**

**Presenters:**

- Hannah Cleverly, Deputy Director, Emergency Management, Grays Harbor
- Nick Bird, Director, Public Works, City of Ocean Shores
- Julie Burnett, Community Services Director, Quinault Indian Nation
- Troy Cowan, Assistant Region Administrator for Maintenance and Operations, Olympic Region, Washington State Department of Transportation

The Commission heard about the issues and challenges facing SR 109 and SR 115, which are the main highways in and out of Ocean Shores and the surrounding communities. Roughly 60% of Grays Harbor County residents live within the inundation zone of a potential tsunami. If an evacuation were needed, there would be significant back up and congestion on the highways. Understanding the difficulties that are associated with expanding capacity on SR 115 and SR 109, Grays Harbor Emergency Management has been working with local, tribal, and state partners to mitigate the effects of a potential evacuation. In addition, landslides and mudslides have resulted in closures to the highways in recent years. The Quinault Indian Nation has been working with WSDOT on a preliminary review and analysis for a potential realignment of SR 109.

**Presentations:**

[Grays Harbor Emergency Management](#)  
[Quinault Indian Nation SR109 - Threats and Concerns](#)

For more detail on agenda item 13, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:43:20, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

### **Agenda Item 14:**

#### **US 12 Highway-Rail Separation Project**

**Presenters:**

- Rick Sangder, Director, Public Works, City of Aberdeen
- Debra Seeman, Consultant Team Project, Manager, David Evans and Associates

The Commission was briefed on the City of Aberdeen's US 12 Highway-Rail Separation Project, which will add a roundabout and overcrossing on US 12 to relieve congestion, increase mobility,

improve safety and non-motorized access, and also improve freight movement to and from the Port of Grays Harbor. In 2018, work was completed which included a cost estimate, public outreach, and a planning summary report. So far, \$1.4 million in funding has been secured for preliminary design work through WSDOT, the City of Aberdeen, the Port of Grays Harbor, and Grays Harbor County. Additionally, \$2.08 million in Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant funds was awarded in November 2021 for design/permitting work. An additional \$48.3 million remains needed for right of way acquisition and construction costs, which the City of Aberdeen hopes to secure through state and federal programs.

**Presentation:**

[City of Aberdeen - US 12](#)

For more detail on agenda item 14, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:37:32, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None

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

**Agenda Item 15:**

**Regional Trail Update**

**Presenter:**

- Vicki Cummings, Executive Director, Grays Harbor Council of Governments

The Commission heard about Grays Harbor Council of Government's (COG) regional trails planning effort. There are over 50 formally identified trails in Grays Harbor County which make up roughly 140 miles. Grays Harbor COG's long-term goal is to connect Aberdeen to Montesano with interconnected trails. To make this a reality, Grays Harbor COG needs additional staff to oversee the project.

**Presentation:**

[Regional Trails-Update](#)

For more detail on agenda item 15, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:19:47, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None

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

## **Agenda Item 16: Public Comment**

Ms. Susan Conniry offered two suggestions to the Commission: (1) construct reader boards on highways near Olympia which would alert drivers of backups in the Ocean Shores area. And (2) designate SR 109 as a “safety corridor”, where drivers are encouraged to keep their lights on at all times.

Mr. Donald Williams emphasized the importance of addressing the culvert on SR 115 as it comes into Ocean Shores. Known as the “Oyhut Ditch”, the issue has resulted in severe flooding in recent years. As well, Mr. Williams suggested adding passing lanes on SR 109 between Hogan’s Corner to help address capacity restraints.

Ms. Gina Rawlings also emphasized the importance of addressing the culvert on SR 115 as it comes into Ocean Shores. Ms. Rawlings requested that the culvert be replaced with a larger-sized culvert with regular maintenance. Ms. Rawlings also identified a stop sign in Ocean Shores which is regularly dismissed, leading to congestion issues.

**Presentation:** There was no associated presentation.

For more detail on agenda item 16, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:29:10, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None

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

## **Agenda Item 17: Commission Business**

- Reflections and Recommendations
- October Meeting Summary
- Naming Request for the “Tacoma Dome Station” - *Public Notice*
- Update - Annual Report Development
- Update - Tolling Report Development

### Reflections and Recommendations

- Consider applying what we heard on redundancy, resiliency, and climate change issues into annual report
- Good to see collaborations continuing. Needs of roads are not going away.
- Recommend that we include in the tolling report the notion that, for future toll facilities under consideration as part of the assessment process, the state should first determine if tolling is the best tool to use for a given corridor given the problem that is trying to be solved.
- Appreciated hearing about challenges surrounding the Cascadia subduction zone event.
- Struck by the vibrancy of the community in spite of challenges.
- Funding issues of small cities vs large cities is a continued issue in need of a solution.

### October Meeting Summary

There were no revisions requested for the October meeting summary.

### Naming Request for the “Tacoma Dome Station” - Public Notice - *Public Notice*

Ms. Griffith provided notice of a request from WSDOT to officially designate the new Amtrak Cascades Station in Tacoma the “Tacoma Dome Station”. WSDOT will provide a presentation during the December Commission meeting, and a notice will be posted on the Commission’s website for public information.

### Update - Annual Report Development

Ms. Jones and Ms. Griffith updated the Commission on the development of the 2021 Annual Report. The cover design is being finalized. There will be a final work session on the report during the December Commission meeting, and an electronic version of the report will be shared with legislators once session begins in 2022.

### Update - Tolling Report Development

Mr. See provided an update on the development of the 2022 Tolling Report. Cover options will be shared ahead of the December Commission meeting. Additional recommendations that were suggested during the October Commission meeting surrounding additional tolling options are currently being drafted, to which Mr. See provided three alternatives for identifying in the report. Additional discussion surrounded the extension of the I-405/SR-167 corridor and the associated tolling considerations. Ms. Griffith suggested Commission staff work with WSDOT to provide a briefing to the full Commission at the January meeting regarding how WSDOT envisions toll operations and the corridor segments interplaying and what that means for the end-user of the system.

**Presentation:** There was no associated presentation.

For more detail on agenda item 17, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:40:06, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None

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

**Next meeting:** December 14 & 15, 2021