



Washington State Transportation Commission

Clarkston Meeting Summary

June 22 & 23, 2022

June 22, 2022

Chair Roy Jennings opened the meeting at 12:45 pm with introductions by commission members and staff, an overview of the agenda, and meeting protocols.

NOTE: This meeting was not conducted via Zoom and therefore does not have a video recording that can be posted on the TVW website, as is the case for past Commission meetings. Because of this, the meeting summary does not contain links to the online meeting video.

Agenda Item 2:

Ferry Fuel Surcharge – *ACTION*

Presenter:

- Aaron Halbert, Fiscal Analyst, Washington State Transportation Commission

Current Washington State administrative rules establish a methodology for calculating and automatically implementing a fuel surcharge when ferry fuel costs exceed a preestablished level. Given current fuel price increases, without immediate modifications to this rule, the fuel surcharge would be triggered in the near future. A proposal for emergency rule making was presented to replace the automatic trigger mechanism for implementing the surcharge, with a required review and approval process by the Commission before it could be implemented by Washington State Ferries. The emergency rule making process will be followed by a more formal rule making process to make the changes permanent.

The Commission took action to make the needed changes to the rule via emergency rule making.

Presentation:

[Ferry Fuel Surcharge Overview](#)

Action: Commissioner Young made a motion to move forward with emergency rulemaking related to the Washington State Ferries Fuel Surcharge. Commissioner Restucci seconded the motion. The Commission voted 4-0 to approve the motion.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 3:

Mayor's Welcome

Presenter:

- Monika Lawrence, Mayor, City of Clarkston

Mayor Lawrence welcomed the Commission to Clarkston and provided an introduction to the City of Clarkston.

Presentation: There was no associated presentation.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

**Agenda Item 4:
Transportation 101**

Presenters:

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

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

Presentation:

[Transportation 101](#)

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

**Agenda Item 5:
Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) South Central
Regional Overview**

Presenter:

- Troy Suing, Assistant Regional Administrator, South Central Region, Washington State Department of Transportation

An overview of WSDOT's South Central Region was provided, including a review of recent successful projects, planned projects, maintenance, and preservation challenges in the surrounding area. Over 43% (or 1,327 highway lane miles) of the South Central Region roads are due for rehabilitation but the WSDOT region has funding to address only 99 miles in 2022. Several facilities were highlighted because of their need for preservation work, including the SR 127 Central Ferry Bridge and the Lewiston and Clarkston Bridge. The South Central Region maintenance team is also facing challenges associated with an aging office facility, vandalism, and people living in the WSDOT right of way. The region is rethinking outdated models of transportation infrastructure to now emphasize resiliency, flexibility, and adaptability. For example, electric vehicle charging stations are being installed throughout the region.

Presentation:

South Central Region

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 6:

Lewis-Clark Valley Transportation Issues: The Big Picture

Presenter:

- Shannon Grow, Director, Lewis-Clark Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

The Lewis-Clark Valley region has widely varying transportation needs that include significant rural and urban priorities. The MPO's transportation program focuses on safety, preservation, freight movement, river crossings and multi-jurisdictional coordination of projects. In 2023 and 2024 each of the bridges that tie Clarkston to Lewiston are scheduled to receive some updates (e.g., painting, rebuilding, installation of a roundabout). Such work will likely create disruptions for commuters and community residents who traverse the bridges. These limited access points already create congestion and planning for any maintenance and preservation work requires close coordination with both Washington and Idaho sides of the river. The Lewis-Clark Valley MPO is one of a small number of cross-border MPOs in the country and plays a vital role in facilitating that coordination.

The Census Bureau has modified the way they calculate Urbanized Areas. Their new approach could impact Lewis-Clark Valley MPO's federal designation which would have significant implications for federal transportation and transit funding. The Lewis-Clark Valley has been involved in on-going discussions with the federal delegation to address concerns. Final publication of urbanized areas has been delayed several times and is now expected by the end of 2022.

Presentation:

[Lewis-Clark Valley - MPO](#)

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 7:

Public Transportation and Active Transportation Planning

Presenter:

- Shannon Grow, Director, Lewis-Clark Valley MPO

Public transportation is a critical service in the Lewis-Clark Valley. The Asotin Public Transportation Benefit Area (PTBA) has been in place since 2003 and provides service to the City of Clarkston and to downtown Lewiston where riders can connect to Lewiston Transit and the Nez Perce Tribe's Appaloosa Express service.

The PTBA collects taxes and fares to fund services. In addition to fixed route services, The Asotin PTBA also provides vanpool services to riders with longer commutes. They have implemented the Youth Under 18 Ride Free policy and also offer other targeted benefits, such as veterans ride free in November and college students ride free in August and September to introduce them to the service.

The PTBA is experiencing significant challenges. Boardings have been down due to the pandemic but are starting to rebuild. As with many public transit agencies, they are experiencing a driver shortage. When they do find candidates, it is difficult to retain them after they have been trained.

The policy shift to electric vehicles is progressing more quickly than can be achieved in the current environment. The cost and availability of electric vehicles and the associated infrastructure is difficult to absorb. In addition, the cost of maintenance and availability of qualified maintenance technicians also makes it difficult for the organization to move as quickly as policy makers would like. While these issues are not technically insurmountable and they are finding ways to move forward, the transition may take longer than desired.

An overview was given on the active transportation component of Clarkston's transportation system. Clarkston is fortunate to have seven miles of bike/pedestrian trail along the river. People can walk or ride from the City of Asotin up to Clarkston and connect to another 13 miles of trailway in Lewiston. However, there are limited connections to these facilities from roadways. The two cities, the Lewis-Clark Valley MPO, WSDOT and others are working together to improve connections that currently present safety concerns. The Greenbelt Trail in Clarkston is owned by the federal Army Corps of Engineers, an organization that can be difficult to engage to address local concerns.

Presentation:

[Asotin County Public Transportation](#)
[Lewis - Clark Valley MPO - Active Transportation](#)

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 8:

City of Clarkston Transportation Issues, Challenges, and Successes

Presenter:

- Kevin Poole, Public Works Director, City of Clarkston

An overview was given of City of Clarkston's transportation needs and successes. The city is fortunate to have a supportive Mayor and City Council and strong regional planning partnerships with the MPO, Asotin County and WSDOT. Three current key projects were reviewed:

- The Bridge Street/Diagonal Street/2nd Street/Intersection. The city is planning to install a roundabout at this five-way intersection to address safety issues. This intersection has the highest accident rate in the city.
- 13th Street Roundabouts. A series of roundabouts are being installed to improve traffic flow and improve safety.
- 2nd Street Overlay. This project is addressing ADA accessibility concerns and drainage issues.

The city also discussed several Safe Routes to Schools projects and planned roadway improvements (5th Street/Diagonal intersection and Highland Ave/SR 129 Intersection.)

Presentation:

[City of Clarkston](#)

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 9:

City of Asotin Transportation Issues, Challenges, and Successes

Presenter:

- Dwayne Paris, Mayor, City of Asotin

An overview was given on City of Asotin's transportation challenges and successes. Several major safety issues and projects were discussed. The city is identifying approaches to improve intersections that currently have reduced or obstructed visibility of pedestrians and other vehicle traffic. The city is also concerned about sidewalks and bike/pedestrian trails that have limited access, are currently not ADA compliant, and/or have insufficient separation between pedestrians and vehicle traffic. Addressing these concerns often means having to collaborate with multiple partners both to define the solution and determine an appropriate funding strategy. In fact, much of their road system is owned by other entities (e.g., Asotin County, WSDOT and the Corps of Engineers.) Working with the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) can be challenging. To make any changes to Corps facilities requires a project, planning (including tribal cultural and educational studies) and approval by the Corps.

The City of Asotin has also had a number of successes. They have built very strong working relationships with their peer transportation organizations. With their partners, they have recently been able to successfully complete many secondary road and stormwater upgrades.

Presentation:

[City of Asotin](#)

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 10:

Transportation and the Regional Economy

Presenters:

- Kristin Kemak, Executive Director, Lewis-Clark Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Scott Corbitt, Executive Director, Valley Vision

An overview was given of the role transportation plays in supporting business and growing the economy of the area. The region provides 10% of the world's grain. It ships out of the local ports and is barged to the mouth of the Columbia, facilitated by the existing system of dams and locks. If these are removed, the area's economy will be drastically altered.

Today, the region's economic base is quite stable. Major employers are resilient in a recession (e.g., paper manufacturing, firearms and ammunition, agricultural products.) The top 10 manufacturers in the region continue to grow faster than the national average. That stability plays a vital role in drawing in other businesses.

Transportation in and out of the area are not interstates, which can present a barrier to some businesses. Rail could be improved, and highway weight restrictions need to be increased to support heavier loads. The region is fortunate to have air service, direct to Salt Lake City and Denver.

The Chamber is working to improve community leadership and professionalism through a leadership development program. They have graduated just under 200 individuals who are out making a difference in their communities.

Presentation: There was no associated presentation.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Chair Roy Jennings reminded the Commission that the meeting will continue Thursday, June 23, 2022, and recessed the meeting at 5:00 pm.

DAY 2: June 23, 2022

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

Agenda Item 12:

Asotin County Transportation Issues, Challenges, and Successes

Presenter:

- Charles Eaton, Public Works Director, Asotin County

An overview was given on Asotin County's transportation successes and challenges of maintaining a diverse transportation system in one of Washington's smallest counties. Asotin relies on two primary revenue sources, property tax and gas tax. The percentage of revenue coming to the city from the gas tax has significantly declined due to the pandemic, reducing from 57% to 50%. Overall revenue has reduced by 8-10% and to date the County has had to reduce staff size by three FTEs. This reduction, coupled with rising construction costs, is prompting the county to reprioritize needs and develop new strategies for addressing key issues.

The County reviewed a number of key construction and pavement maintenance projects have recently been completed including rehabilitation projects, maintenance activities (chip seal, asphalt patching, and crack seals), and Americans with Disabilities Act improvements. The county has a number of projects planned for 2022 through 2027. Construction estimates are being adjusted as bids are coming in higher than estimated.

Being located on the Snake River also brings some challenges. The environmental review processes can be significant. Planning for one project has been under way for eight years because of the environmental planning requirements. Now they are trying to build to a construction estimate that is eight years old.

In addition to deteriorating pavement in the face of declining revenues, the county is also struggling to hire and retain a qualified workforce. To ensure they target their investments to the highest priorities, they are implementing a strong pavement preservation focus (which requires tradeoffs of

other priorities), sharing resources with key transportation partners, and stepping up their succession planning. More flexible and sustainable funding would be helpful. The Oregon Funding Exchange program is a good example of providing smaller jurisdictions with flexible funds.

Presentation:

[Asotin County](#)

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 13:

Nez Perce Transportation Issues, challenges, and Successes

Presenter:

- Mary Beth Frank Clark, Transportation Director, Nez Perce Tribe

An overview was given of the Nez Perce Tribe and their transportation program. The annual tribal transportation program is approximately \$550,000 for program operation and road maintenance. Tribal roads include not only Nez Perce roads, but also include city, county, and Bureau of Indian Affairs-owned roads, requiring a significant amount of coordination. In order to receive funding, the small Nez Perce Planning group must prepare and maintain a wide array of plans including a Safety Plan, the Long Range Transportation Plan, Tribal Transportation Improvement Plan, a National Tribal Transportation Facilities Inventory, and others.

The Nez Perce Tribe's priority project is the Aht'Wy Interchange at Highway 95 and US 12. This has been identified as the most dangerous section of highway in Idaho and has been in the planning phase for 15 years. Planning for this project has been challenging because costs have continued to escalate as planning progressed, and the Tribe has had to find additional funds to be considered "construction ready." The tribe secured the necessary funding, but Federal Highways Administration were not sufficiently prepared to approve the project promptly. As their approval delayed, costs continued to escalate forcing the Tribe to find additional funding once again.

In addition to road maintenance, the tribe also operates the Nez Perce Transit (NPT) Appaloosa Express Rural Transit program. This service drives over 360,000 miles annually and covers three main routes – Lewiston Valley, Orofino, and Kooskia. The program is struggling to hire and retain drivers.

The relationship between the Tribe and WSDOT is continuing to strengthen. The WSDOT Tribal Liaison provides wonderful communication about issues and opportunities.

Presentation:

[Nez Perce Tribe](#)

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 14:

Palouse Region Rural Transportation: System Details, Issues, Challenges, and Successes

Presenter:

- Mark Storey, County Engineer, Whitman County

An overview of the Whitman County road system, strategies, and successes was provided, followed by a discussion of possible new/improved approaches to county road management in the near future.

The Whitman County transportation system is huge. They maintain 1,900 center lane miles, 250 water crossings (wood and concrete bridges), and approximately 8,000 culverts (with a life span of 40 to 50 years). All roads become freight corridors for at least four weeks a year because of the agricultural industry. Equipment is becoming heavier and taxing the aging infrastructure.

Bridge maintenance is a significant effort for the county. 100 of 250 bridges are wooden and not built to sustain the increasingly heavy agricultural equipment. It is difficult to find funding for bridge replacement, so much of this work is funded by the county. The remaining bridges are concrete and built to last for 100 years but are not built to accommodate the current amount of usage and size of vehicles.

Transportation improvements are funded through a mix of revenues, roughly 50% gas tax and 50% property taxes. Other funding available for local roads is limited and are not generally well suited to rural areas. The exception is funding through the County Road Administration Board's preservation funding which is highly flexible and can be used anywhere in the system. In the current environment, the county is having difficulty keeping up with inflation. As the state contemplates moving away from reliance on the gas tax toward a road usage charge, it will be important to prioritize parity for local roads.

As with so many other agencies, the county is struggling to maintain its transportation workforce. Attracting and retaining staff at county wage rate is challenging, and they are experiencing a fair amount of turnover. Availability and affordability of materials is also an ongoing challenge.

Presentation:

[Palouse Region Rural County Roads](#)

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 15:

Port of Clarkston Issues, Challenges, and Successes

Presenter:

- Wanda Keefer, Port Manager, Port of Clarkston

An overview the transportation-related port opportunities and issues was provided. The Port of Clarkston is focused on creating, retaining, and growing family wage jobs in Clarkston and the region. Much of their effort is focused on finding land that can be developed and made available for growing industrial and business purposes. Making land attractive to business requires infrastructure and other business necessities such as high-speed internet. As an example, the Port has worked with WSDOT to use the state highway right of way to lay cable that enables high speed internet. They also work with a variety of local agencies to ensure business transportation needs are met by locating and improving transportation corridors that move products to market.

The port is also installing electric vehicle charging stations to help ease business' transition to zero-emission transportation. They are working with Avista Utilities to provide fast charging stations but have only met approximately 50% of the need to date.

Much of the area's local economic development depends on its proximity to the Snake River. The port's marine facilities provide docks for the area's cruise industry, and the region boasts one of the largest concentration of boat building facilities. If a decision is made in the future to breach the dams on the Snake River, there would need to be a major investment in improving the freight corridors to the west to replace the barging that the agricultural industry currently rely on. And some impacts simply could not be mitigated and some industry (e.g., the cruise industry) would be lost.

Presentation:

[Port of Clarkston](#)

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 16:

Recreation-Related Transportation and the Economy

Presenters:

- Wanda Keefer, Moderator, Port Manager, Port of Clarkston
- Beth Larson, Operations Manager, Port of Clarkston
- Michelle Peters, President and CEO, Visit Lewis Clark Valley Visitors Bureau
- Mike Issacs, Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport

The panel gave an overview on the role the Snake River plays in the economics of this region. Outdoor recreation and cruise ships are central to the Clarkston economy and the Lewiston Airport also plays a critical role in supporting local tourism.

Tourism and water-based recreation is a major industry in this area, making up nearly 5% of the total payroll in the county. The impacts of the cruise industry in the Lewis Clark Valley reach beyond the dollars spent by passengers, crew, and cruise lines. Businesses catering to the industry employ local residents, in addition to making local purchases in support of their operations. This industry is projected to continue to grow. In 2022, a total of 28,208 passengers are projected. This number is expected to increase to 37,529 in 2023. In addition to cruising, passenger trips up into Hell's Canyon reached over 30,000 in 2021.

Clarkston and Lewiston share a 26-mile national trail system, owned by the Army Corps of Engineers. If the dams are breached, the Corps will leave the area and it will fall to the local communities to maintain this vital trail system. There is a risk that existing boating facilities and the trail system would fail to survive.

The Lewiston Nez Perce County Airport serves as the regional airport for 143,000 citizens. The availability of a regional airport is crucial to many businesses that choose to locate in this area. It is currently served by two major airlines, Delta and United, with daily flights to Salt Lake City and Denver. Nearly one third of cruise line passengers arrive or depart through this airport. Bi-state coordination and cooperation between Clarkston and Lewiston is critical to this key service.

Presentation:

[Lewis - Clark Valley - Visitors Bureau](#)
[Lewiston - Nez Perce Airport](#)

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 17: Public Comment

David Seward, a resident of Clarkston, expressed concern about Diagonal Street and asked to connect with someone from the City about plans to address safety issues.

Presentation: There was no associated presentation.

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 18: Commission Business

Commissioner Reflections and Reports

- The boat tour on the Snake River provided an opportunity to view transportation facilities from a unique perspective.
- The Army Corps of Engineers plays a major role in the area. They should be asked to participate the next time the Commission is meeting in this area.
- Working across state lines presents unique challenges. The Commission should consider a bi-state meeting with the Idaho Transportation Commission.
- If funders require that an agency's project be "shovel ready," the funding agency needs to also be prepared to act promptly when presented with a shovel-ready project.
- It is incredibly valuable for the Commission to hear first-hand from communities about the challenges and successes they have. We too are concerned about rural communities, and we are pushing for policies on their behalf. Each community has very specific and unique needs. We will continue to look for ways to advocate for Washington's small and rural communities.
- It is clear that workforce issues are huge in today's environment.
- We did not realize how big the cruise industry is in this region. Also, it is intriguing to hear about the boat building industry.
- It is impressive that Clarkston and Lewiston can work cooperatively and also compete for industry.

May Meeting Summary – No modification or adjustments were made to the May meeting summary. The summary can be considered final and published.

Election of 2022-2023 Commission Officers

- Jim Restucci nominated Roy Jennings to serve a second term as Commission Chair. This nomination was approved with a vote of 4-0. (Commissioners Litt, Serebrin, and Batra were absent.)
- Roy Jennings nominated Debbie Young to serve a second term as Commission Vice Chair. This nomination was approved with a vote of 4-0. (Commissioners Litt, Serebrin, and Batra were absent.)

Presentation: There was no associated presentation.

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Chair Jennings adjourned the meeting at 12:30 pm.

The next meeting will be held virtually on July 19 & 20, 2022.