



# Washington State Transportation Commission

## Ellensburg Meeting Summary

April 18 & 19, 2023

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### April 18, 2023

Chair Roy Jennings opened the meeting at 1 p.m. with introductions by Commission members and staff, an overview of the agenda, and meeting protocols.

### Agenda Item 2: Mayor's Welcome

#### Presenter:

- Nancy Lillquist, Mayor, City of Ellensburg

Mayor Nancy Lillquist provided a brief history of Ellensburg through a transportation lens, highlighting decisions that have shaped the city, a natural crossroads, since its origins as a Che-lo-han gathering place for coastal and Plains tribes. European settlers established a fur-trading post, and the Snoqualmie Pass Wagon Road was developed. The Northern Pacific Railway was established, becoming the preferred mode of travel, and was eventually joined by the Milwaukee Railway, which cut through what is now Central Washington University. The first automobile traveled over the wagon road in 1905 and eventually, enthusiasm for the state and federal highway system emerged, with the wagon road over Snoqualmie Pass turning into an interstate. Today, old railbeds for the old Milwaukee Railway in proximity to campus are being turned into bike and walking paths, symbolizing the evolution of transportation from trails to railroads, to highways, transit, multimodal connections and more.

#### Presentation: [Mayor Welcome](#)

For more detail on agenda item 2, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:05:37, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None

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

## **Agenda Item 3: Transportation Update**

### **Presenter:**

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

The Washington State Transportation Commission staff provided an overview of the Commission's role, with Paula Reeves explaining that the Commission provides an open public forum on transportation issues, sets ferry fares and toll rates, oversees the state's long-range transportation plan, and manages special transportation studies and projects. The Commission will begin work on the Washington Transportation Plan this year and wrap up in December 2025, reflecting stakeholders' needs and visions. Carl See explained the state's transportation and revenue sources and highway funding for the current biennium. Reema Griffith discussed work the Commission has been doing on future road funding as proceeds from the gas tax diminish with vehicles' increasing fuel efficiency, emphasizing a Road Usage Charge as a replacement funding source. Aaron Halbert shared background on the role of tolling and ferry fares, such as in providing revenues for transportation improvement and traffic management.

**Presentation:** [Transportation Update](#).

For more detail on agenda item 3, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:14:46, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

## **Agenda Item 4: Quad County Regional Transportation Issues: The Big Picture**

### **Presenter:**

- Josh Frederickson, Chair, Quad-Co RTPO and Kittitas County Engineer

Josh Frederickson shared background on the Quad-Co Regional Transportation Planning Organization, which covers 33 cities and four counties (Adams, Grant, Kittitas and Lincoln). The lead agency role rotates among the counties every two years. Fifty percent of Quad-Co's funding is allocated to planning projects for member agencies, allowing them to use those plans to leverage grant money for construction projects that align with regional transportation goals. Projects highlighted included Ritzville's Smittys Boulevard and pathways in Davenport and Reardon.

Quad-Co's STEER I-90 Coalition, which was formed with Kittitas County, is made up of regional and state representatives and residents to strategize and study ways to improve safety on I-90 between Cle Elum and Easton, including the possibility of widening I-90 (a project estimated to cost \$900 million). Increased recreational activities and residential growth in the area have led to congestion, resulting in traffic diverting onto county roads

not built to handle the speed and weight of highway traffic. Economic impacts as a result of the effect on freight mobility are also a concern. Also on I-90, the Snoqualmie Pass Comprehensive Safety Plan has received a federal grant (USDOT's Safe Streets for All) to look at multimodal safety for trucks, pedestrians, emergency vehicle and snowplows on Snoqualmie Pass at SR 906 and I-90.

**Presentation:** [QUADCO RTPO](#)

For more detail on agenda item 4, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:37:31, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

## **Agenda Item 5:**

### **City of Ellensburg: Transportation Challenges and Successes**

**Presenter:**

- Ryan Lyyski, Public Works Director, City of Ellensburg
- Derek Mayo, Engineering Services Manager, City of Ellensburg
- Heidi Behrends Cerniway, City Manager, City of Ellensburg
- Betsy Dunbar, Transit Manager, City of Ellensburg

Ryan Lyyski discussed the unique position the City of Ellensburg holds by owning and operating the sewer, stormwater, electric, natural gas, and telecommunications utilities as well as local transit service. Ellensburg was an early adopter of "Complete Streets" and has a well-developed ordinance it uses to ensure accommodation of all modes and types of system users. Derek Mayo highlighted Complete Street projects completed and under construction, paid for by a range of sources, including Traffic Impact Fees, Distressed County Sales/Use Tax grants, and Transportation Improvement Board grants.

Heidi Behrends Cerniway discussed the importance of project grants to help leverage public funding for projects, which have been hampered by pandemic-related supply chain challenges, escalating costs and regulatory issues. She discussed the unique geographical position and the city's proximity to a seaport to make two trips a day moving locally produced goods. Betsy Dunbar discussed the city-operated transit service, Central Transit, which is funded by a voter-approved sales tax. The city contracts with HopeSource to provide fare-free transit services including fixed route, paratransit, and medical transportation services through important partnerships with Central Washington University, business, and medical care providers. Central Transit and the city are working to develop plans for zero-emissions vehicles and other Climate Commitment Act opportunities.

**Presentation:** [City of Ellensburg](#)

[Central Transit](#)

For more detail on agenda item 5, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:18:37, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

## **Agenda Item 6: Economic Development in Kittitas County**

### **Presenter:**

- Donald Meseck, Regional Economist, Washington Department of Employment Security
- Commissioner Cory Wright, Kittitas County Commission
- Steve DuPont, Government Relations Director, Central Washington University
- Brenda DeVore, Executive Director, Ellensburg Downtown Association

Donald Meseck gave the Kittitas County economic update, sharing information from three datasets on employment, wages, and firms. From 2011-2021, total covered employment rose 12.6 percent; but it dropped 4.3 percent in 2020 and advanced by 2.8 percent in 2021, still not recovering to pre-pandemic levels. The nonfarm job market has rebounded in 2022, surpassing the state's growth pace but not yet reaching the county's pre-pandemic average. Rising unemployment is a concerning trend but may be a result of more workers entering the job market. Construction, retail trade, agriculture and local government accounted for approximately 89.7 percent of the 1,703 jobs added countywide from 2011-2021. Nearly 40 percent (38.3 percent) of the \$294.1 million growth in payroll in Kittitas County from 2011-2021 was in construction or local government.

Commissioner Cory Wright shared that Kittitas County is one of the fastest-growing counties in the country, with the population growing from 24,877 in 1990 to more than 47,000 in 2020. A total of 578 public road miles is maintained through the county road fund, to include many bridges over irrigation canals. One of the challenges the county faces is growth constraint, with 75 percent of the land classified as public land. Growth in residents and tourism to the area and the county's position on the primary statewide freight mobility route has led to congestion challenges on state and county roads, and the county is taking a lead role in the STEER I-90 Coalition.

Steve DuPont shared a summary of the Central Washington University Aviation program in the context of economic development. CWU offers the only Bachelor of Science in aviation in Washington state, training students for careers in commercial aviation. The program maintains 17 aircraft.

Brenda DeVore discussed Ellensburg Downtown Association's Main Street program and the work it is doing to increase visibility and attract businesses and new patrons to the community. It distributes grants to boost businesses, works on signage and kiosks, collaborates with the Chamber of Commerce and other partners, publishes an events calendar, and more.

**Presentation:** [Kittitas County Economic Update](#)

[Kittitas County Today](#)

[Central Washington University Aviation Program](#)

[Downtown Ellensburg](#)

For more detail on agenda item 6, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:51:42, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None

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

## **Agenda Item 7:**

### **Accessibility Services in Ellensburg and Kittitas County**

**Presenter:**

- Madelyn Carlson, Chief Executive Officer, People for People
- Mayra Colazo, Executive Director, Central Washington Disability Resources

Madelyn Carlson discussed People for People, which operates nine offices throughout the region with 174 employees, and its efforts to coordinate and broker transportation and other services throughout the region. It is a WorkSource operator and connects with other employment and training services. It operates the area 2-1-1 phone assistance as well as other non-emergency medical transportation services. It also operates Meals on Wheels and other food provision services. People for People was able to pivot in the way services were provided during the pandemic, which was positive. But retirements, inflation, and fleet age has been challenging post-pandemic.

Mayra Colazo discussed the mission of Central Washington Disability Resources, which is a federally funded, peer-driven, non-residential center that provides resources to people living with disabilities in Kittitas, Grant, Chelan and Douglas counties. Nearly all staff members are people living with disabilities. All services are free with no medical documentation required. Independent skills training is offered, including one-on-one transportation training where counselors teach clients how to board the bus, ride to specific destinations and get off. A recent grant will allow the agency to provide accessible ramps to clients' homes as well as other modifications to help them live more independently.

**Presentation:** [People for People](#)

[Central Washington Disability Resources](#)

For more detail on agenda item 7, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 03:03:29, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

## **Agenda Item 8: Hood River Bridge Traffic and Revenue Study**

### **Presenter:**

- Carl See, Deputy Director, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Timothy J. Boesch, AICP PMP, Principal Senior Manager, CDM Smith

Carl See gave an overview of the Hood River Bridge Traffic & Revenue study and the latest step in the process: to approve the final two tolling scenarios for analysis that will be incorporated into the final report of the study to the Legislature. The report will support future funding decisions for the proposed bridge replacement (estimated to cost \$520 million) and inform a potential investment grade traffic and revenue study. The bridge is owned and operated by the Port of Hood River, and a Bi-State Working Group is overseeing the bridge replacement program. The final analysis will reflect their plans and feedback, particularly regarding toll rate increases.

The final two tolling scenarios include a funding range of \$75-\$125 million; a \$2 differential applied between transponder and pay-by-mail rates for one scenario and an escalation on pay-by-mail rates to another; and a toll-rate increase upon bridge opening in FY2031 with periodic escalation starting in FY 2036. Timothy Boesch discussed work to refine the final scenarios and presented options for additional analysis, including a frequent-user discount and a low-income discount for households making \$25,000 or less.

### **Presentation:** [Hood River Bridge T&R Study Update](#)

For more detail on agenda item 8, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 03:36:17, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** Commissioner Shiv Batra made a motion to approve the two final tolling scenarios and sensitivity tests; Commissioner Jerry Litt seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-0, with Commissioner Kelly Fukai excused.

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

Chair Roy Jennings reminded the Commission that the meeting will continue Wednesday, April 19, 2023, and recessed the meeting.

## **DAY 2: April 19, 2023**

Chair Roy Jennings opened the meeting at 9 a.m. with introductions by Commission members and staff, an overview of the agenda, and meeting protocols.

### **Agenda Item 10: Commission Business**

- March Meeting Summary
- Update on Commission Officer Nominations

#### **Presenter:**

- Commissioner Jerry Litt, Grant County, Officer Nominations

Commissioners had no changes to the March meeting summary.

Commissioner Jerry Litt provided an update on officer elections, with the two-person nominating committee (Commissioners Litt and Jennings) putting forth the nominations of Commissioner Debbie Young for Chair and Commissioner Jim Restucci for Vice Chair. Commissioner Litt suggested holding elections at the May meeting. New officers will take over July 1.

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

For more detail on agenda item 11, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:03:17, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

### **Agenda Item 11: Tribal Transportation Challenges and Successes**

#### **Presenter:**

- Portia Shields, Engineering, Yakama Nation
- HollyAnna Littlebull, Traffic and Safety Coordinator, Yakama Nation

HollyAnna Littlebull discussed transportation challenges facing the Yakama Nation. She said the needs of Highway 97, which runs north-south through the Yakima Nation and intersects with I-82, include addressing fish barriers and adding variable message signs to help avoid accidents, congestion, and other delays. She described the reversion rights associated with surplus property along roads and rail in the area that are both codified and included in the Yakama Nation Treaty of 1855. She said that the Yakama prioritize the Pasco-to-Toppenish connection and bringing rail back to the valley.

The Yakama Nation is also concerned with 6 p-phenylenediamine levels and the impacts on human health as well as the health of fisheries and environmental health. The tribe is calling for studies on both the Yakima and Columbia Rivers. She reminded the

Commission that Yakama Nation treaty rights to travel and trade permit tribal member travel without toll or fees. She discussed the work of the Tribal Traffic Safety Committee, made up transportation partners in the region and beyond. The committee has assisted the tribe with improving the highest-risk intersections on the reservation, Highway 97 and McDonald Road improvements as well as planning and project development for the Jones Road roundabout on Highway 97. She also highlighted the importance of the Heritage Connectivity Trail to the Yakama. Efforts are now focused on completing Phase 3. The Yakama Nation is working on interpretive themes and ways to communicate the stories along the trail.

**Presentation:** [Yakama Nation](#)

For more detail on agenda item 12, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:06:04, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

**Agenda Item 12:**  
**Quad County Region: Feature Cities**

**Presenter:**

- Mayor Richard Hink Jr., City of Kittitas
- Christa Stream, City Administrator, City of Kittitas
- Allison Williams, City Manager, Moses Lake

Mayor Richard Hink discussed the challenges the city faces because of its proximity to I-90, where backed-up traffic often diverts drivers onto city streets as they try to “skip the line” at Exit 115. The lack of city infrastructure at the city’s off-ramp to the interstate makes it difficult to provide the services for passenger and freight traffic, and designated truck routes do not exist for truck traffic detouring through the city, meaning residential streets and alleys carry heavier traffic and loads than they were designed for.

Christa Stream discussed city and school district partnerships to ensure safety education, especially for youth, encouraging residents to be aware of their surroundings with increasing traffic through the city. Directional signage is another priority of the community, to ensure freight carriers are not using neighborhood roads and streets. Electric vehicle charging is another priority for Kittitas to avoid sending drivers back to Ellensburg to charge their vehicles.

Allison Williams discussed the challenges Moses Lake faces from being served by three WSDOT region offices. The city is growing at 3 percent annually, experiencing both a high rate of population and housing growth and becoming a mid-sized city in the next 10 years. The city is experiencing growth in technology industries in the area as a result of aerospace development at the airport and battery technology developments on the Wheeler Corridor. Immediate transportation needs include the Mae Valley Interchange, Broadway Corridor (Highway 171/Historic Route 10), and the Wheeler Corridor/Road O Interchange.



**Presentation:** [City of Kittitas](#)

[City of Moses Lake](#)

For more detail on agenda item 13, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:18:35, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

### **Agenda Item 13:**

#### **Washington State Department of Transportation Regional Overview**

**Presenter:**

- Troy Suing, South Central Region Assistant Administrator, Program Management, Washington State Department of Transportation
- Brian White, South Central Region Assistant Administrator, Development, Washington State Department of Transportation

Troy Suing provided an overview of the region, which covers over 3,127 lane miles from I-90 in the North Bend area to the Idaho border. Half of the region’s lane miles are due for rehabilitation, and 73 lane miles will be addressed in 2023. The region includes four Regional Transportation Planning Organizations – the Yakima Valley Council of Governments, Walla Walla Council of Governments, Lewis and Clark, and Quad-Co.

Brian White discussed the construction projects in the region, highlighting the I-90 wildlife crossing, I-90 Snoqualmie Pass East Phase 3, I-90 Rocky Run Scour Repair, South Cle Elum Road Bridge Deck Rehabilitation, the Vantage Bridge Deck Rehabilitation, and lastly described the roundabouts planned for US 97. The South Central Region supports the Yakama Nation’s priorities for completing the Heritage Connectivity Trail. It also prioritizes several multijurisdictional Complete Streets projects in the region, including Cle Elem’s Railroad Avenue Extension. It also supports Kittitas County’s efforts to improve State Route 906.

**Presentation:** [WSDOT Regional Overview](#)

For more detail on agenda item 15, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:43:38, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None

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

### **Agenda Item 14:**

#### **Yakima Air Terminal Development**

**Presenter:**

- Major Janice Deccio, City of Yakima
- Councilwoman Patricia Byers, City of Yakima

- Robert Hodgman, Airport Director, Yakima Air Terminal/McAllister Field

Mayor Janice Deccio discussed the Yakima Air Terminal in the context of a statewide need to expand travel capacity, saying that the city provides easy access, substantial existing infrastructure, and community support for a larger airport. Patricia Byers said finding a new site to add air capacity, as the state's Commercial Aviation Coordinating Committee was tasked with, in the Puget Sound region is going to be challenging. She encouraged looking to eastern Washington and Yakima for a solution, citing Yakima County's need for an economic infusion of high-paying jobs.

Robert Hodgman presented the background justification for expansion of the Yakima Air Terminal, highlighting the rail and highway transportation connectivity, strong regional and statewide partnerships, and electrification of aviation allowing a travel range (290 miles) that makes Yakima attractive and well-positioned for regional connections. Air travel in the electrification era will drive terminal designs that support a high volume of small aircraft with short loading/unloading times, requiring a design that optimizes aircraft ground taxi flow. On-site electricity storage will be needed to support high charging demand. Sea-Tac Airport and Paine Field Airport will reach full capacity in a decade, allowing the time needed for the development of EV aircraft and to make improvements to the Yakima terminal.

**Presentation:** [Yakima Air Terminal Airport Expansion](#)

For more detail on agenda item 14, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:41:05, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None

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

**Agenda Item 15:  
Public Comment**

No public comment was provided.

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

For more detail on agenda item 16, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:22:362 on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None

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

**Agenda Item 16:  
Commission Business**

**Reflections and Recommendations:**

Commissioners shared highlights from the meeting:

- Work zone safety is critical in the South Central Region and statewide.

- The Kittitas city administrator’s comments about pedestrian safety and priority for safety in the community was important, and the pedestrian fatality data provided was devastating. The ideas about addressing the disturbing trends of increasing traffic fatalities are a priority.
- The City of Ellensburg provided an excellent tour, and their solutions are forward-thinking.
- The economic development in the Ellensburg area and the region is encouraging and important for the Commission to consider in planning.
- The Yakama Nation’s comments and needs were important to hear, and the challenges it faces in securing tolling exemptions for tribal members was important and something the Commission reached out to partners to address immediately. There is a lot more coordination with the tribal nation than in the past, and more is needed.
- The Yakima Air Terminal expansion and high-speed rail are complementary and should continue to develop and expand. We need to begin this work now.
- Hearing from Central Washington University about its aviation degree program that is the only one of its kind in Washington was outstanding.
- The discussion from all the communities – Kittitas, Ellensburg, Moses Lake, the county – about what it is like to live along the I-90 corridor and the challenges they are facing was important.
- Learning about the flooding in Ellensburg and how the city is adapting was interesting and very forward-thinking.

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

For more detail on agenda item 17, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:23:33, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None

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

**Chair Jennings adjourned the meeting at 12 p.m.**

The next meeting will be held in person and virtually in Olympia on May 16 & 17, 2023.