



# Washington State Transportation Commission

## Meeting Summary

May 15 & 16, 2024

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### May 15, 2024

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

### Agenda Item 2: Statewide Transportation Safety Update

#### Presenters:

- Jim Restucci, Vice-Chair, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Shelly Baldwin, Director, Washington Traffic Safety Commission
- Max Roberts, Senior Research Associate, Washington Traffic Safety Commission
- John Milton, Director, Transportation Safety and Systems Analysis Division, Washington State Department of Transportation

This panel of speakers shared updates on work underway as the state responds to a historic rate of increase in the number of traffic fatalities since 2019. The Washington Traffic Safety Commission (WTSC) and Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) are partnering on the update of the Washington Strategic Highway Safety Plan, which identifies strategies for reducing the number of traffic deaths and serious injuries, including implementation of the “Safe System Approach” and the use of infrastructure design to decrease road users’ exposure to factors linked to severe crashes. An overview was given of the WTSC’s catalog of data dashboards, which allow users to interact with a wide range of data collected on roadway fatalities from the last decade. Also included in the dashboard are the results of the WTSC’s annual statewide traffic safety survey, which asks about road user behaviors.

**Presentations:** [Washington Traffic Safety Commission Statewide Safety Survey](#)  
[WSDOT – Speed Management](#)

For more detail on agenda item 2, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:02:35, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None

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

### **Agenda Item 3:**

#### **HEAL Act Implementation – WSDOT Update**

**Presenter:**

- Ahmer Nizam, Director, Environmental Services, Washington State Department of Transportation

Environmental justice, or the awareness that pollution-generating facilities have historically been located in proximity to communities of color, has been incorporated into federal law since the 1990s. Those requirements have applied to WSDOT projects subject to the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA. Washington state’s Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act was enacted in 2021 and establishes environmental justice requirements in state law. It applies to seven state agencies, including WSDOT. The HEAL Act requires environmental justice assessments for individual programs and grants over \$15 million, new grant or loan programs, agency request legislation, and budget and funding decisions for the covered agencies. An overview of current environmental justice assessments underway and possible considerations for funding decisions was provided.

**Presentation:** [HEAL Act Implementation](#)

For more detail on agenda item 3, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:26:20, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

### **Agenda Item 4:**

#### **Update on Ultra-High-Speed Rail Efforts**

**Presenter:**

- Ron Pate, Cascadia High Speed Rail and I-5 Program Administrator, Washington State Department of Transportation

The Cascadia High-Speed Rail study is integrated with the Interstate 5 Master Plan as the region prepares for significant population growth that will require investment across all modes of transportation over the next 30 years. The study of high-speed rail was initiated in 2016, and in December 2023, a \$500,000 Corridor Identification and Development grant was awarded by the Federal Railroad Administration. The grant will be used to develop a statement of work that includes the scope, schedule and budget for service development planning. With Federal Railroad Administration approval, WSDOT would then advance to the next step and work with its partners in Oregon and British Columbia to craft a high-speed rail service development plan. I-5 corridor planning efforts include a work plan due to the Legislature on Dec. 1, 2024, along with the I-5 Seattle Ramp Reconfiguration Study Report.

**Presentation:** [Cascadia High-Speed Rail Update](#)

For more detail on agenda item 4, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:49:23, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

## **Agenda Item 5: Advanced Technology Final Report**

### **Presenters:**

- Craig Baxter, Project Manager, CDM Smith
- Todd Hammond, Project Technical Leader, CDM Smith

The Advanced Technology Study, led by the Washington State Transportation Commission at the direction of the Legislature, assessed how different technologies on the market could increase safety and compliance of high-occupancy vehicle lanes, express toll lanes, toll facilities, and construction zones. The study also included a legal review. Four vendors initially met the study's desired objectives and capabilities. The final report, due to the Legislature by June 30, 2024, will recommend a six-month pilot to test potential impacts, public acceptance, ease of use, and accuracy of one or more vendors.

**Presentation:** [Advanced Technology Final Report](#)

For more detail on agenda item 5, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:08:42, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** Commissioner Nicole Grant moved to delegate approval of the final report of the Advanced Technology Study to the Chair and the Vice-chair; Commissioner Roy Jennings seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-0, with Commissioner JC Baldwin excused.

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

## **Agenda Item 6: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Transportation**

### **Presenter:**

- Jennifer Holmes, Global Cities, Transportation & Infrastructure Lead, Accenture

Jennifer Holmes shared an overview of generative AI and provided examples of artificial intelligence tools and the content they can create. Core building blocks for creating a generative AI strategy were shared, and they include formulating policy that helps further innovation while combating bias and other adverse qualities of AI. Generative AI tools have applicability in addressing road congestion, prioritizing transportation projects, preventing crashes, emergency management, contracting, infrastructure planning and road maintenance.

**Presentation:** [Setting Policy for AI in Transportation](#)

For more detail on agenda item 6, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:40:16, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None

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

## **Agenda Item 7: Performance Update on Washington's Tolled Facilities**

### **Presenter:**

- Ed Barry, Director, Toll Division, Washington State Department of Transportation

An update on toll transactions and revenue for all the state's toll facilities from January to March 2024 showed performance that closely matched financial forecasts. There were 15.5 million toll transactions across all facilities during the period, which was 4.1 percent above the February 2024 forecast. Total revenue across all facilities was \$50.8 million, which was 2.4 percent above the forecast. Transactions and revenue for each of the state's five toll facilities during the quarter were shared.

### **Presentation:** [Toll Facilities T & R Update](#)

For more detail on agenda item 7, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 03:16:17, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

## **Agenda Item 8: Puget Sound Gateway Program**

### **Presenters:**

- Daniel Babuca, Puget Sound Gateway Deputy Program Administrator, Washington State Department of Transportation
- Ed Barry, Director, Toll Division, Washington State Department of Transportation
- Brent Baker, Senior Vice President and Managing Director, WSP USA

Construction of the \$2.68 billion Puget Sound Gateway program continues, with the first stages of the completion projects for State Routes 509 and 167 open to traffic. Construction and procurement of contracts continues for the remaining segments. Toll collection is expected to begin on the first segment of SR 509 in late 2025, with other segments coming online through 2029. The next step in the tolling process is undertaking an investment-grade Level 3 Traffic and Revenue study to analyze toll rates and policies to determine whether they will meet the corridor's funding needs (\$180 million from tolls, with authorization by the Legislature for toll bonding funding as high as \$340 million). Tolling scenarios recommended for further analysis compare charging per axle vs. charging the same rate for all vehicles; a 50 percent discount for low-income users who live in proximity to SR 509 vs. no low-income discount; and raising toll rates 2.15 percent every year starting in 2030.

### **Presentation:** [Puget Sound Gateway Program](#)

For more detail on agenda item 8, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 03:26:42, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** Commissioner Shiv Batra moved to advance four scenarios for analysis for the Level 3 Traffic and Revenue Study; Vice-Chair Restucci seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0 with Commissioners Baldwin and Grant excused.

**Follow-Up:** Results of the Level 3 Traffic and Revenue study are expected in October.

## **Agenda Item 9:**

### **I-405/SR 167 Express Toll Lanes Phase 2 Rate-Setting Preparations**

#### **Presenters:**

- Carl See, Deputy Director, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Ed Barry, Director, Toll Division, Washington State Department of Transportation
- Liz Horta, Transportation Consultant, Stantec
- Auden Kaehler, Vice President, WSP USA

An overview of the results of Phase 1 rate-setting for the I-405 express toll lanes (ETL) and the State Route 167 high-occupancy (HOT) lanes was presented. Results from the first month (March 2024) show improvements in ETL speeds; general-purpose lane speeds staying steady; and corridor throughput improving. The percentage of trips costing above \$6 remained roughly the same between September 2023 and March 2024. Financial analysis of four scenarios for a Level 3 Traffic and Revenue study for Phase 2 of rate-setting are in development, with rates expected to be set ahead of the opening of new lanes of I-405 from Bellevue to Lynnwood. The scenarios will compare minimum/maximum rates of \$1/\$15 and \$1/\$18 and weekend tolling with HOV requiring two riders. All four scenarios assume HOV with three or more riders during peak periods for the full corridor and an extension of peak hours further into mid-day. Revenue projections for each scenario were shared as well as projections for average weekday toll rates for peak and off-peak periods in 2030.

#### **Presentation:** [I-405 / SR 167 Phase 2 Rate Setting](#)

For more detail on agenda item 9, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 03:58:25, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None

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

## **Agenda Item 10:**

### **SR 520 Bridge – Selection of Toll Rate Proposal**

#### **Presenters:**

- Carl See, Deputy Director, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Ed Barry, Director, Toll Division, Washington State Department of Transportation
- Jason Richter, Deputy Treasurer, Washington State Office of the State Treasurer
- Aaron Halbert, Financial Analyst, Washington State Transportation Commission

The Commission moved forward two options for adjusting toll rates on the State Route 520 Bridge in March to respond to traffic and revenue forecasts that show future net revenues will not cover the cost of the system. Option A is a uniform 10 percent increase, and Option B is a tailored 10 percent increase; both are rounded to the nearest nickel. Option B also reduces the number of rate variations throughout the day and week. Jason Richter outlined the financial analysis on both options under consideration and shared that both are projected to meet the financial needs and bond requirements of the facility. Aaron Halbert shared the results of a two-week public input survey on the two options, with more than 22,500 total survey engagements. Fifty-three percent were opposed to Option A, with nearly 32 percent in support. Nearly 55 percent were opposed to Option B, with 33 percent in support.

**Presentations:** [SR 520 Sufficiency Analysis](#)  
[SR 520 Bridge Toll Rate Setting](#)

For more detail on agenda item 10, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 04:33:35, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** Commissioner Shiv Batra moved to forward Option B as the Commission’s proposal for rate adjustment for public comment; Commissioner Jennings seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-0 with Commissioner Baldwin excused.

**Follow-Up:** A final public hearing, held virtually, is scheduled for July 10 at 9 a.m.

## **Agenda Item 11: Approaches to Streamlining the Tolling Process**

**Presenter:**

- Aaron Halbert, Financial Analyst, Washington State Transportation Commission

Aaron Halbert gave background on the Commission’s Tolling Streamlining Study, which is due to the Legislature on July 31, 2024. When setting rates, the Commission follows regulations laid out in the Administrative Procedures Act (APA), which adds cost and time to the process of setting or adjusting toll rates. The study looks at ways to streamline rate-setting to ensure rates and policies can be set in a timely and efficient matter while also ensuring adequate time for public engagement. An overview of two possible approaches was shared:

- Implement changes to the toll-rate setting process within the existing APA structure. This approach could expand the use of expedited rulemaking to include adjusting toll rates and policies and enable toll adjustments to take effect immediately upon the final rulemaking paperwork. This approach would reduce the process for setting toll rates from a minimum of 81 days to 45.
- Create a new toll-rate setting process outside of the APA structure. This approach would establish a new structure of setting toll rates by removing the rate tables and/or toll policies from the WAC and instead incorporate them on the WSTC webpage. This approach would allow adjustments to take effect immediately upon adoption, reducing the process from a minimum of 81 days to as little as 30 days.

The Commission will take action in June on which approach or approaches to advance as its recommendation in the final report to the Legislature.

**Presentation:** [Toll Rate Setting Process Streamlining Study](#)

For more detail on agenda item 11, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 05:16:01, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

## **Agenda Item 12:**

### **Update on Columbia River I-5 Bridge Replacement Program & Bi-State Tolling Efforts**

**Presenters:**

- Frank Green, Assistant Program Administrator, Interstate Bridge Replacement Program
- Brent Baker, Senior Vice President and Managing Director, WSP USA
- Ed Barry, Director, Toll Division, Washington State Department of Transportation
- Carl See, Deputy Director, Washington State Transportation Commission

Frank Green gave an overview of ongoing planning and design work on the new Interstate 5 Bridge over the Columbia River and efforts to complete the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement, which is anticipated to be published later this year. The process of securing federal grants is still underway. The current timeline calls for construction activities to begin in late 2025-early 2026. The responsibility of collecting tolls on the bridge has shifted from the Oregon Department of Transportation to WSDOT following a pause in efforts to launch a toll program in Oregon. Brent Baker shared work on the analysis of traffic and revenue on the current bridge that will assist the I-5 Bi-State Tolling Subcommittee and the Washington and Oregon Transportation Commissions in setting toll rates and policies on the bridge. Pre-completion tolling is expected to begin in 2026. Carl See explained that the Bi-State Tolling Subcommittee will remain in place after initial toll rates are set and will closely assess performance as well as toll rates and policies with the opening of the new bridge in the early 2030s.

**Presentation:** [Interstate Bridge Replacement Program](#)

For more detail on agenda item 12, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 05:53:00, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None.

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

Chair Debbie Young reminded the Commission that the meeting will continue Thursday, May 16, 2024, and recessed the meeting.

## **DAY 2: May 16, 2024**

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

### **Agenda Item 14: Commission Business**

- April Meeting Summary
- 2024 Commission Officers – ***ACTION***
- West Coast Commission Meeting Update
- Review Draft 2025 Commission Meeting Schedule
- December 2024 Meeting Location
- Review possible 2024 Annual Report content
- Staff Subcommittee Update

#### **Presenters:**

- Reema Griffith, Executive Director, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Paula Reeves, Senior Policy Analyst, Washington State Transportation Commission

The Tri-State Commission meeting with the Washington, California, and Oregon transportation commissions will take place in Fresno, California, on Sept. 11-12, and Reema Griffith gave an overview of topics under development.

Commissioners discussed the proposed 2025 Commission meeting schedule, providing input on the four cities selected for local visits.

Support was expressed for a virtual meeting in December. The meeting was previously planned as an in-person meeting in Olympia.

Paula Reeves shared themes that have emerged in 2024 for policy recommendations for the Commission's Annual Report.

Commission staff will present details about the work on the Washington Transportation Plan and the Route Jurisdiction Study with the Legislature's Joint Transportation Committee in June and October respectively.

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

For more detail on agenda item 14, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:02:00, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** Commissioners approved the April meeting summary for posting and distribution.

Commissioner Grant moved that Chair Young and Vice-Chair Restucci hold their respective offices for another year, through June 30, 2025; Commissioner Fukai seconded the motion. The motion was passed by acclamation.

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



## **Agenda Item 15: 2024 FROG (Ferry Riders Opinion Group) Winter Survey on WSF Performance**

### **Presenter:**

- Chelsea Benning, Chief Research Officer, Olympic Research and Strategy

Chelsea Benning shared the results of the 2024 Ferry Riders Opinion Group (FROG) Winter Performance survey of Washington State Ferries (WSF), conducted from March 26 to April 16, 2024. Data covering route ridership, trip purpose, ticket type purchased, and overall satisfaction with service was presented. Overall satisfaction with WSF service was at 54 percent, which was down from 58 percent in 2023 but up from 39 percent in 2022. New questions this year sought to quantify the extent to which riders were riding less or not at all because of service constraints, and whether riders preferred schedule certainty or maximizing the number of sailings in light of those service constraints. Overall, close to half of those surveyed said they rode WSF less frequently because of service constraints, and a similar percentage said they preferred schedule certainty over sailing frequency.

### **Presentation:** [FROG Winter Survey – 2024](#)

For more detail on agenda item 15, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:31:19, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None

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

## **Agenda Item 16: Electric Vehicle Incentive Program**

### **Presenter:**

- Steven Hershkowitz, Transportation Electrification Policy Lead, Energy Policy Office, Washington State Department of Commerce

Steven Hershkowitz gave an overview of the new rebate program announced by the Department of Commerce to expand access to electric vehicles across the state. A total of \$50 million has been appropriated to the Department of Commerce for the 2023-2025 biennium for incentives, and \$45 million will be available for point-of-sale rebates at the time of purchase or lease of battery electric vehicles for those making 300 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (\$93,600 for a family of four). The rebates make the monthly lease payments for several popular EV models less than \$100 per month. The program is expected to increase the used vehicle inventory in the state, driving prices down for all used EV purchasers. As many as 8,750 rebates are expected to be issued, with a larger number of sales vs. leases predicted.

### **Presentation:** [Electric Vehicle Incentive Program](#)

For more detail on agenda item 16, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:22:20, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None

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

## **Agenda Item 17: WSDOT Clean Transportation Update**

### **Presenters:**

- Jonathan Olds, Senior Policy Specialist, Environmental Services Office, Washington State Department of Transportation
- Celeste Gilman, Strategic Policy Administrator, Washington State Department of Transportation

Jonathan Olds and Celeste Gilman gave an update on WSDOT programs aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions produced by transportation. The two methods of achieving the reduction are improving transportation efficiency as well as decarbonization. While decarbonization is great for reducing emissions at the tailpipe, transportation efficiency, including reducing vehicle miles traveled, has co-benefits that include congestion reduction, improving safety, improving mobility, and protecting habitat. Several programs at the state and local level aim to reduce vehicle miles traveled, and areas of focus include improving truck parking and curb space availability, land use, transit, active transportation, and demand management. An overview of state funding supporting active transportation, transit, zero-emission transit fleets, and zero-emission vehicle infrastructure was provided.

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

For more detail on agenda item 17, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:02:53, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None

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

## **Agenda Item 18: WSDOT Secretary's Report**

### **Presenter:**

- Mike Gribner, Deputy Secretary, Washington State Department of Transportation

WSDOT is coming into its busiest time of year for delivery of construction projects. Work is also underway to assess budget needs and share those with the Legislature and the governor ahead of the 2025 legislative session. As the state's transportation system ages and a backlog of maintenance projects continues to grow, failure of roads and other infrastructure requires emergency repairs, leading to a bigger drain on resources. The department is tuned into the uptick in roadway fatalities again for 2023 and is working on doing its part to help shape a different outcome. There is a significant effort underway to issue the request for proposals this spring for the construction of new hybrid-electric ferries.

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

For more detail on agenda item 18, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:30:28, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None

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

## **Agenda Item 19: Public Comment**

**John Worthington, Sequim** – Mr. Worthington is concerned about land use, the implementation of “Complete Streets,” structures such as roundabouts, and fish passage construction projects when it comes to accommodating the needs of freight.

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

For more detail on agenda item 19, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:34:46, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None

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

## **Agenda Item 20: Commission Business**

### **Presenters:**

Commissioners shared the following reflections and recommendations from the meeting:

- Improving safety for roadway users, equity in transportation projects, and the application of generative AI in transportation should be explored further as policy recommendations for the Commission’s Annual Report.
- The data shared in the FROG survey results was robust. Similarly, hearing about the data collected on roadway injuries and fatalities and learning how speed is a crucial factor in the outcome of crashes is an important aspect of the safety discussion.
- It’s encouraging to see a strategy (more enforcement in the short-term and changes to transportation systems in the long-term) to address the challenges our state faces in roadway safety.
- The presentations on programs to reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions provide hope in the fight against climate change. Learning about the electric vehicle incentive program and efforts to make EVs more accessible was exciting.
- The update on the Cascadia high-speed rail project was informative, and it’s positive to see progress on that front.
- It’s good to see the outcome of the Advanced Technology Study and present those recommendations to the Legislature.
- Though it’s a challenge to understand all the implications of artificial intelligence, it’s important to learn more and move the conversation forward.

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

For more detail on agenda item 20, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:39:43, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

**Action:** None

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

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

The next meeting will be held in Cheney, WA, on June 26 & 27, 2024.