



Washington State Transportation Commission

Virtual Meeting Summary

January 14 & 15, 2025

January 14, 2025

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:

Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER)

Presenters:

- Bruce Agnew, Director, PNWER Regional Infrastructure Accelerator Program
- Betz Mayer, Assistant Director, PNWER Regional Infrastructure Accelerator Program

The PNWER Regional Infrastructure Accelerator is a program funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation. It connects multi-state transportation projects with innovative financing solutions, including public-private partnerships and federal funding mechanisms. Projects focus on easing supply chain disruptions, reducing transportation-related pollution and increasing economic and environmental justice. One of the program areas is high-performance rail. Work underway seeks to identify projects that enhance freight and passenger rail. An overview of Washington state rail and freight initiatives was presented.

Presentation: [PNWER Regional Infrastructure Accelerator](#)

For more detail on agenda item 2, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:02:56, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 3:

WSDOT Freight, Rail, and Ports Update

Presenters:

- Jason Biggs, Director, Rail, Freight, and Ports Division, Washington State Department of Transportation
- Tom Lang, Program Manager, PNWER Regional Infrastructure Accelerator Program

An overview of freight and passenger rail assets in Washington state was shared, along with recent investments that have been made in passenger and freight rail infrastructure with state and federal funding. Highlighted was investment in the short-line PCC system, which was taken over by WSDOT when the line was going to be abandoned and is of crucial importance to the transport of wheat from Eastern Washington farms to Pacific ports. On the passenger side, the state's Amtrak Cascades service saw record ridership in 2024 and will be promoted for cross-border travel during the 2026 FIFA World Cup games in Seattle and Vancouver, BC. Partners are working on cross-border collaboration to improve Vancouver's Pacific Central train station ahead of the event and exploring adding more trains to transport spectators.

Presentations: [Washington's Rail Network](#)
[WSDOT Rail Update](#)

For more detail on agenda item 3, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:14:36, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 4: Green Farms to Green Ports – Strengthening Supply Chains

Presenters:

- Stephanie Bowman, Maritime Sector Lead, Washington State Department of Commerce
- Diahann Howard, Chief Executive Officer, Port of Benton
- Beth Swanson, Communications Director, Tri Cities Intermodal, LLC

Amid uncertainties on the federal level surrounding international trade, Stephanie Bowman said that Washington state and its ports can focus on their competitiveness by strategically investing in the supply chain and infrastructure to move freight more efficiently than other West Coast ports. Rail, which can move goods more efficiently and with fewer emissions than trucks, is a key tool. Tri Cities Intermodal LLC in Wallula is one example of a larger effort to create a logistics cluster in Eastern Washington that can facilitate the transfer of cargo via containers from Pacific ports to points east by rail while sending agricultural products back to ports for international distribution. Similarly, the Port of Benton is leveraging its advantage of being one of the few locations in Washington state and Oregon with rail lines serving both Class 1 rail lines — Union Pacific and BNSF. It is acquiring land to create a 450-acre intermodal facility that will serve as a transload hub, connecting shippers to the Northwest Seaport Alliance ports.

Presentations: [Port of Benton](#)
[Strengthening Green Supply Chains](#)

For more detail on agenda item 4, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:06:39, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 5: Emerging Issues and Opportunities in Freight Mobility

Presenters:

- Chris Eaves, Freight Program Lead, Seattle Department of Transportation
- Anne Goodchild, Professor, Civil & Environmental Engineering, and Founding Director of Urban Freight Lab, University of Washington

The Urban Freight Lab is a partnership between the University of Washington and industry to research solutions to urban freight mobility challenges, such as greenhouse gas emissions from freight, curbside delivery operations, and health effects of urban home delivery and ecommerce. SDOT collaborates closely with the lab as it works to provide a landscape for freight-dependent industries to grow. Data collected by the Urban Freight Lab has helped in policy development, including the study of freight- and bus-only lanes.

Presentation: [SDOT Freight Program](#)
[Urban Freight Lab](#)

For more detail on agenda item 5, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:04:53, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 6: Transportation Partners: A Look Ahead at 2025 Legislative Priorities

Presenters:

- Ashley Probart, Executive Director, Transportation Improvement Board
- Carl Schroeder, Director, Government Relations, Association of Washington Cities
- Chris Herman, Senior Director, Washington Public Ports Association
- Justin Leighton, Executive Director, Washington State Transit Association

Transportation partners are concerned about the forecasted decline in revenue from the state's gas tax and are advocating for the adoption of funding mechanisms that would serve as a reliable replacement, such as a road usage charge. For the Transportation Improvement Board, the forecasted decline in gas tax funds over upcoming biennia could reduce the program's funding capacity to award grants to cities by two to three urban arterial projects per year. Other legislative priorities for partners:

- The Washington State Transit Association supports the extension of a sales-tax exemption for the purchase of zero-emissions vehicles and infrastructure, which expires on June 30, 2025.
- The Association of Washington Cities is advocating for raising the 1 percent limit on property tax revenue growth and adopting funding streams that will help cities keep up with infrastructure needs, which could include a road usage charge, retail delivery fee, tire tax, or facilitating the adoption of Transportation Benefit Districts by city councils.

- The Washington Public Ports Association is supporting the rail modernization tax credit to incentivize rail infrastructure improvements, dedicated funding for port projects that have critical importance to the state's supply chains, and increasing funding for aviation revitalization and sustainable aviation grants.

Presentations: [Transportation Improvement Board Association of Washington Cities](#)

For more detail on agenda item 6, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:54:25, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 7: Governor's Transportation Budgets

Presenter:

- Erik Hansen, Senior Budget Assistant, Office of Financial Management

The November 2024 revenue forecast for the transportation budget shows a decrease of revenue in the 2023-2025 and 2025-2027 biennia, with the 10-year forecast showing a drop of \$2.2 billion. The forecasted decline in revenue comes as seven large-scale transportation capital projects have experienced cost increases in the range of \$1.3 billion. Gov. Inslee's proposed 2025-2027 transportation budget is \$14 billion with no new revenue assumed, including a \$12 million transfer from the Public Works Assistance fund. An overview of specific appropriations was shared.

Presentation: [Governor Inslee's Proposed Transportation Budget](#)

For more detail on agenda item 7, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 04:02:29, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 8: Tacoma Narrows Bridge Loan Update

Presenter:

- Aaron Halbert, Financial Analyst, Washington State Transportation Commission

An overview of the 2025 Tacoma Narrows Bridge Loan Update was shared. In 2023, the Legislature appropriated a \$6.6 million loan to the Tacoma Narrows Bridge Account for the 2023-2025 biennium. No additional funds are needed to meet financial requirements for this biennium for the bridge. The loan need for the 2025-2027 biennium is projected to be approximately \$4.4 million. The total loan need for the life of the program through Fiscal Year 2030 is \$84.3 million, within the intended loan cap of \$85 million. Repayment of loans is expected to end in FY 2032 rather than FY 2033.

Presentation: [Tacoma Narrows Bridge Loan Update](#)

For more detail on agenda item 8, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 04:09:44, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 9:

Public Input Survey Results – I-405 / SR 167 Express Toll Lanes

Presenter:

- Carl See, Deputy Director, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Aaron Halbert, Financial Analyst, Washington State Transportation Commission

The Commission began its public engagement on rate-setting on the I-405 / SR 167 corridor in late 2024 with an online open house hosted by WSDOT (between Aug. 19 and Oct. 11) and an online survey hosted by the Commission between Nov. 18 and Dec. 13. Feedback during both engagement efforts was shared. Strong opposition to the proposed changes to the maximum toll rate, the addition of weekend tolling, and carpool changes was shared both in the online open house and the survey. The online survey included additional questions about usage patterns and demographic background, and results were similar for those classified as frequent users of the facility and other respondents as well as those classified as low-income (with a household income under \$75,000). Public engagement will continue as the Commission proceeds on its rate-setting schedule through 2025.

Presentation: [I-405 / SR 167 Public Input Survey](#)

For more detail on agenda item 9, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 04:28:26, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 10:

Gray Notebook

Presenter:

- Sreenath Gangula, Assistant Director, Performance Measurement, Transportation Safety and System Analysis, Washington State Department of Transportation

The history and evolution of WSDOT’s Gray Notebook was shared. In its 20-year history, the document has moved from a print publication to an online dashboard with data that is leveraged for a broad range of reporting and planning. The site is organized by the state’s transportation policy goals. The use of the online platform (Tableau) allows the Gray Notebook Team to utilize a broader range of data points in sharing performance metrics. The data informs several reports and outreach efforts, such as WSDOT’s Strategic Plan,

Attainment Report, Summary of Public Transportation, and more. The Gray Notebook can be found at <https://wsdot.wa.gov/about/accountability/gray-notebook>.

Presentation: [WSDOT Gray Notebook](#)

For more detail on agenda item 10, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 04:53:54, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Chair Debbie Young reminded the Commission that the meeting will continue Wednesday, January 15, 2025, and recessed the meeting.

DAY 2: January 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 12: Public Comment

Tara Wilson, Sumner – Ms. Wilson is concerned about the proposal to raise the occupancy requirements for the I-405/SR 167 express toll lanes. Her adult disabled daughter relies on ride share to attend medical appointments and schooling in Bellevue, and raising the HOV requirements to three riders to travel free in the toll lanes will be cost prohibitive and threaten the continuation of her schooling and therapies.

Sharon Nasset, Portland, Oregon – Commented on the lack of supportive testimony for constructing a new I-5 Bridge over the Columbia River during the Joint Meeting of the Washington and Oregon Transportation Commissions in October 2024.

Presentation: There was no associated presentation.

For more detail on agenda item 12, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:01:54, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 13: Commission Business

- December Meeting Summary
- Legislative Session Kickoff

Presenter:

- Paula Reeves, Senior Policy Analyst

Key dates for the 2025 Washington State Legislature were shared. The Commission received a rundown of transportation bills filed so far deemed of interest or that align with recommendations shared in the Annual Report.

Presentation: There was no associated presentation.

For more detail on agenda item 13, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:15:58, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

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

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 14: Maximizing the Use of State Highway Right of Way

Presenters:

- Mark Gaines, State Design Engineer, Development Division, Washington State Department of Transportation
- Juli Hartwig, State Landscape Architect, Development Division, Washington State Department of Transportation

An update was shared on a legislative proviso that funded a WSDOT study of using the highway right of way to accommodate clean energy and connectivity projects, maximize carbon sequestration, and develop habitat for pollinators, butterflies and bees. WSDOT partnered with The Ray, a nonprofit working to reduce transportation's impact on the environment, to perform an assessment on highway rights of way suitable for solar installation. The project identified sites statewide and assigned a suitability rating. Work to perform a detailed GIS assessment of sites is on pause. The proviso also allowed for the development of the I-5 Scatter Creek Rest Area Research Lab, a demonstration lab for pollinator habitat and carbon sequestration opportunities. Work on prepping and planting the facility took place in October 2024. WSDOT will monitor the lab and document results for future right-of-way projects.

Presentation: [Use of State Highway Right of Way](#)

For more detail on agenda item 14, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:28:12, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 15: Update on Bicycle Highway Action Plan

Presenter:

- Celeste Gilman, Strategic Policy Administrator, Active Transportation Division, Washington State Department of Transportation

A report on progress on a legislative proviso to develop the preliminary phase of an action plan for the establishment of cycle highways was given. Cycle highways have been defined as a network of facilities that allow for bicycle, micromobility and other forms of active travel. Washington state has more than 1,600 miles of existing facilities considered to be shared-use, though many do not meet ADA requirements or guidance for shared-use path design. There are many planned trails and trail systems in various stages of development. The draft cycle highways action plan lays out three recommendations: 1) establishment of a cycle highways program with a dedicated team 2) completion of the cycle highways action plan that would identify a statewide network, estimate costs, and collaborate in efforts to win federal grants, and 3) deliver pilot projects. A draft proviso of the report will

be shared through an online open house in January 2025, and the final publication of the Phase 1 proviso report will be delivered to the Legislature by June 2025.

Presentation: [Cycle Highways Action Plan](#)

For more detail on agenda item 15, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:01:52, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 16:
WSDOT Secretary's Report – Critical Funding Needs

Presenter:

- Roger Millar, Secretary, Washington State Department of Transportation

Washington state's economic and employment growth has outpaced the average U.S. growth over the last 24 years. Lawmakers have responded to that growth by creating earmarked lists of specific improvement projects, with a smaller investment of funds into maintenance, safety, and preservation work. The state is behind on preserving pavement, bridges, its ferry fleet, truck and equipment fleet, and facilities. This has led to slower response during winter storms and emergencies, delayed repairs on guardrails and roads, less resilient systems, increased costs in maintaining outdated equipment, safety concerns, and legal liabilities. Critical funding needs for the system include investments in staffing, operations and maintenance, safety, preservation, fish passage and ferries. A new paradigm for funding the state's transportation system should prioritize preservation, operations, and maintenance. The remainder of the funds should be devoted to safety and efficiency programs first, and then to capacity expansion projects. Work needs to continue to integrate land use and transportation decision making to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT), improve active transportation and public transportation, and increase access and mobility.

Presentation: [Investing in a Resilient Transportation System](#)

For more detail on agenda item 16, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:33:00, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 17:
Commission Business

Commissioners shared the following reflections and recommendations from the meeting:

- The rail projects presented in the PNWER presentation show how we can take legacy systems that are underutilized and come up with new business models that leverage them in a way that promotes safety and better outcomes for our climate.

- It's exciting to see how WSDOT has been able to collaborate with our partners at The Ray to optimize our highway system in different ways. The speed with which the projects were undertaken following the legislative proviso was impressive.
- Cities' and counties' concerns on how transportation is funded are important questions as the legislative session kicks off.
- Appreciated Secretary Millar's nod toward tolling to get more out of the transportation system we have and solving the challenges our transportation system faces.
- This meeting hammered home the importance of freight and the importance of keeping it moving in the state. The reliable and efficient movement of freight underpins so much of our quality of life.
- It was good to hear about the Gray Notebook and to see the availability of all the transportation data and indicators online.

Presentation: There was no associated presentation.

For more detail on agenda item 17, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:09:30, 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 virtually on February 19 & 20, 2025, in Olympia.