

WHATCOM TRANSPORTATION POLICY BOARD
MINUTES
JUNE 14, 2017

IN ATTENDANCE:

MEMBERS VOTING: Bob Bromley, Sumas (Chairman); Michael McAuley, Port of Bellingham (1st Vice-Chairman); Kelli Linville, Bellingham; Terry Bornemann, Bellingham; Harry Robinson, Blaine; Timothy Ballew, Lummi Nation; Scott Korthuis, Lynden; Tom Jones, Nooksack; Jay Drye, WSDOT; Paul Greenough, WTA.

GUESTS Stoney Bird, Bellingham resident; Tim Johnson, Cascadia Weekly; Preston Schiller, Bellingham resident; Pete Stark, WTA; Kirk Vinish, Lummi Nation.

STAFF Bob Wilson (Secretary), Ron Cubellis, Hugh Conroy, Lethal Coe, Mary Anderson.

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Bromley called the meeting to order at 3:34 p.m. with a quorum present.

B. PUBLIC COMMENT

None of the members of the public present chose to offer comments.

C. AGENDA APPROVAL

MOTION: Mr. Drye moved, Mr. Robinson seconded, to amend the agenda by removing item F.1, “Resolution No. 2017-01, Reaffirming the Whatcom Region’s Support for Reconstruction of the Interstate 5 Exit 274 Interchange.”

Mr. Drye explained that there are currently discussions underway among the Governor’s Office, WSDOT and others concerning this project, with the goal of facilitating stakeholder collaboration to develop a “practical solution” that will address the deficiencies of the current interchange. For that reason, Mr. Drye asked for the Board’s patience until this process is complete.

MOTION PASSED

D. MINUTES

MOTION: Mr. Korthuis moved, Mr. Bornemann seconded, to approve the minutes of the meeting of May 10, 2017.

MOTION PASSED

E. OLD BUSINESS

No old business was discussed.

F. NEW BUSINESS

F.2 Request for Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program Funding to Update the Regional Travel Demand Model

Mr. Conroy explained the need to overhaul the regional travel demand model in advance of the next updates to the regional long-range transportation plan and the transportation elements of local comprehensive plans. The cost is \$295,000, which includes conducting a household travel survey, acquiring socio-demographic data, and calibrating and validating the model. WCOG is requesting \$255,175 – the federal and state share (86.5 percent) of the total project cost – from the region’s allocation of STBG funds. Mr. Wilson added that such an allocation would also contribute to meeting the region’s “obligation target,” which, if not met, would likely result in the loss of certain unobligated federal funds to other regions of the state.

MOTION: Mr. Korthuis moved, Ms. Linville seconded, to approve an allocation of \$255,175 of regional STBG funds for completion of a household travel survey and other near-term activities to update the regional travel demand model.

MOTION PASSED

G. PUBLIC HEARINGS

G.1 Amendment to the 2017 WCOG Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Mr. Coe described proposed TIP Amendment No. 1706:

1. Add WCOG project *IMTC Performance Measures Improvements* to develop border-related performance measures that will apply to operational improvements at regional border crossings. The project will use \$80,000 or another amount awarded from the Federal Highway Administration’s Strategic Highway Research Program II implementation program.
2. Add WCOG project *Regional Transportation Model Update* to update the regional travel demand model used to develop regional and local transportation planning forecasts. Project includes a household travel survey, base year socio-demographic data, and calibration and validation of the model. The total cost of the project is \$295,000, with the STBG Program providing \$255,175.

PUBLIC HEARING OPENED AT 4:08 P.M.

None of the members of the public present chose to offer comments.

MOTION: Mr. Korthuis moved, Mr. Bornemann seconded, to close the public hearing.

MOTION PASSED

PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED AT 4:08 P.M.

MOTION: Mr. Robinson moved, Mr. Korthuis seconded, to approve Amendment No. 1706 to the Whatcom Council of Governments' 2017 Transportation Improvement Program.

MOTION PASSED

G.2 Adopt Whatcom Mobility 2040

Mr. Conroy briefly described the plan and the process WCOG staff undertook in developing it.

PUBLIC HEARING OPENED AT 4:13 P.M.

Preston Schiller, a resident of Bellingham, described his background, which includes 30 years of advocacy, research, writing and teaching in the area of sustainable transportation. He offered the following comments, which he provided to the staff in hard copy:

- 2040 HUUUGE [sic] report shows GREAT work by BEAUTIFUL Whatcom COG staff!
- Vehicle miles of travel (VMT), vehicle hours of travel and vehicle trips all increase biggily [sic] (as does population); SAD, VERY SAD! PATHETIC! NEED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT!
- Neither Build nor No-Build capacity expansion changes travel time of VMT: IS THIS FAKE NEWS? IF NOT, BETTER NOT WASTE MONEY ON EXPANSION!
- Walking and bicycling only keep pace with population growth and transit falls behind: PITIFUL. NEED TO SPEND THE CAPACITY EXPANSION MONEY ON MAKING WALKING, BICYCLING AND TRANSIT GREAT AGAIN!
- Need to develop another option for discussion: a BEAUTIFUL scenario for a future with better land use and reduced dependency on private motor vehicles. Then work backwards from that to the present through policy and planning. Need to decouple the growth of driving and fossil fuel consumption from economic and population growth. Others have done it: you can do it.

Stoney Bird, a retired corporate lawyer and resident of Bellingham, described his background in transportation, which has included membership on the Citizens' Advisory Committee of Skagit Transit, the Citizens' Advisory Panel for WTA, and the Steering Committee for the update of WTA's Strategic Plan. He offered the following comments:

- What is missing in the plan is the thing that counts the most in transportation planning – global warming – which is a catastrophe that is charging at us. The primary source of global warming is transportation, although animal agriculture may contribute just as much to the problem.
- He shared some observations from a book about global warming entitled *Don't Even Think About It*, which he said draws on research from the World Bank, the International Energy Association and the U.S. Department of Defense. The book states that a worldwide average temperature increase of four degrees is likely, although in places like North Africa, the Middle East and the continental United States, the temperature increase could be as high as six degrees, leading to:
 - Heatwaves of a magnitude not seen in 5-million years
 - A 60-80 percent reduction in the production of certain crops, resulting in mass starvation
 - Extinctions, and
 - Average sea level rise of 30 feet.
- He would like the major driver of the plan to be the need to address global warming, with measures adopted to reduce the amount of emissions – not merely a reduction in their rate of growth – by an appropriate percentage that would allow our society to continue, which the plan as presented will not facilitate.

MOTION: Mr. Korthuis moved, Mr. Bornemann seconded, to close the public hearing.

MOTION PASSED

PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED AT 4:23 P.M.

Ms. Linville asked the staff if the plan addresses global warming, and Mr. Wilson responded that the reduction of greenhouse gases is specifically cited in the description of the plan's "Environmental quality" goal. Ms. Linville then stated that she would accept the recommendation of her staff to vote to adopt the plan, but she encouraged Mr. Wilson to ensure that subsequent updates include a statement of the need to mitigate global warming.

MOTION: Mr. Korthuis moved, Mr. Bornemann seconded, to adopt Whatcom Mobility 2040, as presented, as the updated regional and metropolitan long-range transportation plan for the Whatcom Planning Area.

MOTION PASSED

H. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Conroy informed the Board that WCOG received seven STBG funding proposals for Federal Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021 totaling \$7.5-million, far exceeding the \$4.5-million available for those two fiscal years. There were also two Transportation

Alternatives funding requests totaling \$645,000; the amount of funding available in that program is \$570,000. The Transportation Technical Advisory Group is currently scoring projects based on the recently adopted evaluation criteria and, at their June 22nd meeting, will confirm their scores and develop a project funding recommendation to forward to the Policy Board for consideration at its meeting on July 12th.

I. BOARD OPEN FORUM

- Mr. Drye informed the Board that WSDOT is currently working on clearing Mt. Baker Highway to Artist Point.
- Mr. Wilson informed the Board that, earlier in the week, he had sent a letter to the Federal Transit Administration in support of WTA's funding request for three electric buses and charging stations. He added that he would e-mail the members a copy of that letter.

J. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:37 p.m.

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY: _____

Michael McAuley
First Vice Chairman

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY: _____

Robert H. Wilson, AICP
Secretary

Minutes approved July 12, 2017