



It matters how we get there

Meeting Summary
January 17, 2017

Attendees:

Mary Anderson	Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG]
Vern Yadon	KCVCPA / Kendall Chapel
Terry Terry	Lummi Island
Hugh Conroy	WCOG
Maureen McCarthy	Whatcom Transportation Authority [WTA]
Bob Wilson	WCOG
Jaymes McClain	WCOG
Bob Hendricks	Bellingham / WTA Gold Card
Isaac Post	Happy Valley Neighborhood
Kathy Berg	Birch Bay
Mathew Santos	Bellingham Technical College / CAP
Stoney Bird	York Neighborhood / CAP
Rick Nicholson	WTA
Carole MacDonald	Mt Baker Chamber of Commerce
Chris Comeau	City of Bellingham Public Works
Carol Berry	Western Washington University [WWU] / Sehome Neighborhood
Jillian Trinkaus	WWU / Columbia Neighborhood
Arthur Reber	Point Roberts
John McGarrity	Cornwall Park Neighborhood
Mathew Santos	Bellingham Technical College
Myron Wlaznak	Silver Beach Neighborhood

Member Updates

Vern Yaden reported that he has turned over his position as chair for the Kendall-Columbia Valley Connectivity Plan Association [KCVCPA]. He gave an update on the progress of the trail planning project in the Kendall-Columbia Valley area. KCVCPA was awarded funds for preliminary engineering, and Wilson Engineering was selected as the contractor. Cost estimates for the trail’s construction are now much higher than originally anticipated, so the scope of the trail may have to be scaled back in order to attract funding for the trail’s construction. Neither Whatcom County nor the Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT] had signed on for project lead for the trail, but after a meeting between the agencies they have agreed to commit to work together on the project once it’s time to construct. The Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG], with project sponsor Representative Luanne Van Werven, will apply for design and engineering funds from the WA State Legislators.

Jillian Trinkaus introduced herself as a member of the Office of Sustainability at Western Washington University [WWU]. She will be attending CTAG in Carol Berry's stead for the next two meetings.

Carol Berry informed the group that Ms. Trinkaus has been working with WWU students on getting a grant for electric bikes, which could be checked out by both students and faculty for work and commuting purposes. They are still figuring out if it is feasible to keep such a program running after the initial grant funding runs out. Ms. Berry also said that the student U-pass, which has been around now for 10 years, is coming up for renewal soon.

In reference to the agenda item about free bus passes for Whatcom Community College [WCC] students, Kathy Berg asked if that would be a possibility for Bellingham Technical College [BTC]. Maureen McCarthy said that ideally the school would need to approach the Whatcom Transportation Authority [WTA] for such a request. The BTC campus is farther out than WCC with fewer bus routes currently serving it, and there would be a concern that students at BTC would not use the service enough to warrant a similar bus pass program.

Mary Anderson announced that WCOG will be hosting a mobility summit at Skagit Station on Tuesday, January 24th. Staff from human services agencies and transit agencies will discuss transportation concerns and solutions between Whatcom, Skagit, and Island counties.

Discussion: Pedestrian Safety Grant - Mary Anderson

Mary Anderson reported that WCOG will be applying for a grant from the Washington Traffic Safety Commission [WTSC]. The grant funding would go towards pedestrian-related projects. As road users, pedestrians are ranked as priority level 2 (on a scale of 1 to 3) in WTSC's Target Zero strategic plan, which means they factor into 10-30 percent of traffic fatalities and serious injuries.

The grant funding would be used to host a pedestrian-safety workshop for planners and engineers, to fund pedestrian-specific law enforcement activities (such as crosswalk stings), to promote pedestrian safety education, and to possibly fund giveaways such as lighted vests or cuffs.

Access to the funding would not occur until September 2017, Ms. Anderson said.

There was discussion on pedestrian safety strategies. Some members expressed concern that giveaway Hi-Viz/lighted vests would not be used by pedestrians. Stoney Bird suggested talking at a high school and gathering feedback on pedestrian visibility strategies from students.

USDOT Transportation Toolkit - Mary Anderson

Mary Anderson showed the group a video on the [Every Place Counts: Leadership Academy](#). The US Department of Transportation's [USDOT] Leadership Academy helps guide community members with limited experience in transportation planning through the decision-making process and provides them with information on how to be more involved.

Ms. Anderson also passed out the [Transportation Toolkit Quick Guide](#), which summarizes the information found in the extensive [Transportation Toolkit](#). The Toolkit could be a useful guide to CTAG members (and members of the public in general) regarding better connecting with the transportation

system decision-making process in their region as well as better understanding how the process works in a general sense.

Policy Board Update - *Hugh Conroy*

Hugh Conroy reported that there will be a couple amendment items for WCOG's Transportation Improvement Program [TIP] that will be decided on at the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board [WTPB] meeting. Per WCOG Senior Planner Lethal Coe, the January amendment items include:

1. Add new WSDOT project: **SR 542/Nooksack River to Mt Baker Gate – BST**. This project will rehabilitate SR 542 with bituminous surface treatment and minor safety work. The \$1.48 million project is funded through Western Federal Lands (WFL) funds. Construction will begin in 2017.
2. Add new WSDOT project: **SR 20/Rocky Creek to Granite Creek – BST**. This project will rehabilitate SR 20 with bituminous surface treatment and minor safety work. The \$4.62 million project is funded through Western Federal Lands (WFL) and Surface Transportation Program. Construction will begin in 2017.
3. Replace state Connecting Washington Account funds with federal Surface Transportation Program funds for WSDOT project: **SR 542/Dewey Rd Vic - Culvert Replacement**. In addition, obligated Preliminary Engineering phase has been removed. Construction will begin in 2018.
4. Add Right-of-way phase and remove Preliminary Engineering phase for Ferndale's **Thornton Street Overpass** project. The project is funded through Connecting Washington Account.
5. Add WTA project **Purchase Property**. WTA is seeking Federal Transit Administration funding for the project. The project will be funded through FTA 5307 for \$1.04 million.
6. Reduce funds for **Replace Vanpool Vans** project to purchase three vans instead of the currently programmed eight vans. The amount of FTA 5307 funds is reduced to \$96 thousand.

Update: All items of the January TIP amendment were approved.

There will also be a planning director report and an update on WCOG's regional transportation plan [RTP] update, called Whatcom Mobility 2040. Mr. Conroy said that the 20+ year financial forecast for the RTP shows a funding shortfall, which will create an interesting discussion regarding project funding going forward. WCOG is in the process of gathering crash data from WSDOT, which Mr. Conroy hopes can then be displayed on an interactive web map for the RTP. The plan's web map will also have detailed information on household and employment growth, traffic congestion in future scenarios, and other map layers such as the regionally significant road system.

Regarding the International Mobility and Trade Corridor program [IMTC], WCOG's border planning forum, Mr. Conroy said that may have found some additional funding for fiscal year 2018/2019 from WSDOT at \$100k per year.

Hugh Conroy also mentioned USDOT's new 30-year transportation planning framework, called [Beyond Traffic](#). The planning document identifies a dozen or so megaregions, which are "networks of urban clusters connected by economic and social relationships." Each megaregion has an Innovation Center, which is a university located in the heart of the region. Our region is the Cascadia region, with the University of Washington acting as the Innovation Center. Mr. Conroy said that it would be beneficial to include the greater Vancouver, BC area in the Cascadia megaregion, which currently it is not part of.

WTA - Community Advisory Panel

Update: Whatcom Community College "Universal Pass" program

Maureen McCarthy told the group of the new program that WTA is doing with Whatcom Community College. WCC student Orca cards can now be used as a universal pass for WTA routes, similar to the student ID cards at WWU. These Orca cards are simply student cards and are unaffiliated with the Seattle-area ORCA transit cards. Ms. McCarthy said that WTA tabled at WCC's campus and posted ads and posters in support of the new program.

Chris Comeau commented that because of the transient student population at WCC, it would be easy for WTA to change its messaging regarding the card without creating any confusion.

Carol Berry added that teachers can be made aware of the new program's potential, as now students can easily commute to town for field work.

Rick Nicholson said that in the first year of the contract with WCC, if there is demand that requires addition buses, WTA will assume those additional operating expenses. However, after the first year, WCC will assume that responsibility.

Sneak Preview: Draft Executive Summary for Strategic Plan

Rick Nicholson overviewed 10 key takeaways from the recent strategic planning process that WTA has been conducting.

1. Expand service by drawing down reserves.
2. Provide and expand service in an equitable way. Mr. Nicholson said that Skagit Transit was awarded a grant that they will use for Sunday service for the 80X route, which travels between Bellingham and Mt. Vernon.
3. Increase revenue and contain costs to allow for future service expansion.
4. Respond to emerging needs with a two-year planning cycle. This would be a more structured update to service with public meetings and actual planning processes.
5. Preserve capacity in order to add service every two years, to keep pace with population growth.
6. Preserve capacity for increasing fixed route service by containing paratransit costs. Mr. Nicholson said that 30 percent of WTA's funding goes to paratransit right now, and the population with disabilities (mainly elderly) is increasing. Per-ride, it is about a 10:1 cost ration of paratransit to fixed route.
7. Prepare for growth through improvements in capital, technology, and business processes. CTAG members commented on younger generations having certain technological expectations regarding accessing information about and using transit.
8. Work with community partners to enhance transit effectiveness, ridership, and revenue.
9. Advocate for transit at the local, state, and national level. Mr. Nicholson said that WTA's General Manager Pete Stark has been very vocal about this.
10. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The main strategy here, Mr. Nicholson said, is with the buses themselves. They are looking at reducing their footprint with electric buses. Prices are coming down for electric buses, but they are still pricey. Right now, WTA's buses are not offsetting the carbon

emissions from the trips they are saving by people taking transit. With electric bus technology, WTA is being conservative and won't be diving into new technology without proven examples in the industry, he said.

John McGarrity commented on east-west transportation across I-5 being a problem, with only so many access points to cross the freeway. He also inquired about WTA sharing vehicle inventory and maintenance duties with the school buses. Rick Nicholson explained that WTA buses have to be ADA accessible, and that rush hour for both services are around the same time.

Seeking Input: Promoting the new service, coming March 19, 2017

Maureen McCarthy proposed that the group think about ways to reach people in Whatcom County regarding the new service changes. There are those that may now not know that they now are within the vicinity of transit service, those that did not see their desired change of service take place at the outcome of the strategic planning process, and others in the region who may benefit from more dialogue regarding WTA's transit service in 2017.