



# CTAG

citizens' transportation advisory group

It matters how we get there

Meeting Summary  
July 11, 2017

## Attendees:

Mary Anderson	Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG]
Terry Terry	Lummi Island
Jaymes McClain	WCOG
Bruce Prior	Blaine Public Works Advisory Committee
Kathy Berg	Birch Bay
Bob Hendricks	Bellingham / WTA Gold Card holder
Carol Berry	Western Washington University [WWU] / Sehome Neighborhood
Vern Yadon	Kendall Chapel
Izaac Post	Happay Valley Neighborhood
Hugh Conroy	WCOG
Terrie Hansen	The Arc of Whatcom County
Carole MacDonald	Mt Baker Chamber of Commerce
Stoney Bird	York Neighborhood
Jillian Trinkaus	WWU / Columbia Neighborhood
Myron Wlaznak	Silver Beach Neighborhood
Josh Nylander	Whatcom Transportation Authority [WTA]
Maureen McCarthy	WTA
Becky Kelly	WTA

## Mobility Management Grant Update – Mary Anderson

### 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Bus Pass recap

Mary Anderson updated the group on the 7<sup>th</sup> grade bus pass program administered by Whatcom Smart Trips and the Whatcom Transportation Authority [WTA]. The program allows all 7th graders in participating Whatcom County schools to get a bus pass and be educated on how to use the transit system in Whatcom County by Smart Trips staff. Ms. Anderson said that they just completed year two of the program.

At the end of last year, Whatcom Smart Trips and WTA brainstormed ways to improve participation for the 2016-17 school year. Their strategy included 30 minutes of transit trip planning education in the classroom, 30 minutes of education from a bus driver outside at an actual bus, posters in classrooms and



around school as reminders of the program, county-wide contests for prizes, and coupons for local businesses. They also created a brochure for students that outlined some destinations of interest and the routes that would take them there as well as a subway-style map to simplify the bus routes around the county.

Ms. Anderson presented the participation results from 2017 and compared them to the previous year's program. Nearly 300 more students participated in 2017 with the same rate of participation (38 percent of 7<sup>th</sup> graders). In 2017 they saw twice the amount of boardings as in 2016 from the students and a higher average number of boardings per bus pass.

Terry Terry commented that in other schools, class credit was given in government studies for participation in such programs.

Ms. Anderson said that Shuksan Middle School students generated the most transit boardings - more than twice as many as the next school. The largest number of boardings by an individual student was 339 from Whatcom Middle School, which made up 41 percent of all boardings at that school.

Because Shuksan Middle School had the most boardings, they were awarded with having a banner of their school's accomplishment displayed on the side of a WTA bus. The banner will be displayed for the summer. At Shuksan, 6 students made up 62 percent of all trips. It is also the only school located on a WTA GO line (the Green line).

Ms. Anderson explained that they are trying to create a culture of 7<sup>th</sup> grader participation in the program, where outgoing students can share their experiences with incoming 7<sup>th</sup> graders. They are hoping the program continues to gain popularity through word of mouth between teenagers as well as parents.

Mary Anderson played a video made by Vista Middle School that reviewed the classroom and bus education that 7<sup>th</sup> graders received from Whatcom Smart Trips and WTA.

## **Policy Board Update – *Hugh Conroy***

Hugh Conroy updated the group on the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board agenda for their meeting tomorrow. He will be presenting to the board the recommendations from the technical transportation advisory group [TTAG] for which transportation projects should receive funding from the Federal Highway Administration's [FHWA] Surface Transportation Block Grant [STBG] and Transportation Alternatives [TA] programs. Jurisdictions in the region presented their project proposals at the May TTAG meeting. TTAG members then scored the projects, and the scores and subsequent rankings for funding were reviewed at the June TTAG meeting. These rankings are the official recommendation of TTAG to the Policy Board regarding the awarding of STBG and TA funding.

The STBG funding is broken out into Urban and Rural categories. Mr. Conroy reported that the city of Bellingham's Telegraph Rd multimodal improvements project scored the highest in Urban. Whatcom County's East Smith Rd/Hannegan Rd intersection improvement scored the highest in Rural. The Lummi



Nation Kwina Rd/Lummi Shore Dr/Marine Dr roundabout project is not recommended for funding because of the small pot of money available for rural projects. The city of Blaine's Boblett St channelization project is recommended, as is Whatcom County's Marine Dr improvements (though there is not enough money available for full funding). The Ferndale and Lynden projects did not score high enough for funding recommendations.

For the Transportation Alternatives program, \$365k of funding is recommended for the city of Everson's SR 544 sidewalk improvements project. Whatcom County's Birch Bay Dr HAWK pedestrian signal did not score high enough for a funding recommendation, mainly due to concerns that the signal was excessive for the kind of roadway it would span.

Also on the agenda, Mr. Conroy said that the Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT] will be giving a presentation on Phase 2 of the Washington Transportation Plan [WTP]. Phase 1 was policy oriented (outlining the state's policy goals), and phase 2 will be implementation of the policy goals and outlining the state's Freight System Plan. They are in the process of gathering feedback from Metropolitan Planning Organizations [MPO] like the Whatcom Council of Governments [WCog]. There will also be discussion on WSDOT's Corridor Sketch Initiative and the Policy Board will consider an amendment to the Transportation Improvement Program [TIP], Mr. Conroy said.

## Whatcom Transportation Authority Community Advisory Panel

### March 2017 Service Expansion: early ridership results

Becky Kelly presented to the group some of the preliminary ridership results from WTA's March service expansion. Of the routes that saw their evening and Sunday service expanded, the 512 to Sudden Valley so far is outperforming its 2016 average boardings per hour.

Route 105 was changed to route 5, bypassing Western Washington University [WWU] and connecting downtown with Fairhaven by way of Lincoln St, 32<sup>nd</sup> St, and Old Fairhaven Pkwy. They are seeing 17 boardings per hour on average. Carol Berry said she has heard that the route 105 removal from campus has affected some employees and students negatively.

Route 24 Cordata has seen 50 percent more boardings in May of 2017 than in May of 2016, and it now connects to Walmart on the Guide Meridian. Boardings for route 75 Blaine/Birch Bay has increased 25 percent in that same time.

### New service, coming September 2017: Route 65 and added trips on Route 80X

Becky Kelly outlined improvements to service that WTA is proposing for September 2017. As an identified need in WTA's recently completed strategic plan update, a North County Connector is being proposed that will connect Nooksack, Everson, Lynden, Birch Bay Square, and Ferndale without needing to link to a Bellingham station. Proposed as route 65, this two-year pilot will be a weekday only route with flex services in specific areas. The route is being largely funded by a grant from WSDOT.



A new route in Bellingham connecting the York neighborhood with the Lincoln Creek Park and Ride and WWU is being proposed, which would have hourly service on weekdays when WWU is in session.

On 32<sup>nd</sup> St in Bellingham, additional trips are being proposed for route 11 to WWU, and hourly service is being extended between 1:30 pm and 4:30 pm when WWU is in session. Carol Berry noted that it is difficult for employees traveling home by bus to transfer between routes now that some routes that previously went through WWU are broken up.

Saturday routes are being modified to better connect to the Cordata Station to reach the first morning Bolt Bus. These routes are the 190 Downtown, 15 Cordata/WCC, and 24 Cordata.

Route 331 Downtown will be starting 1 hour earlier at 1 pm. There is no change to 331 Cordata.

Ms. Kelly also outlined some changes proposed for the 80X route between Bellingham and Mt. Vernon. Skagit Transit recently received a grant to add service to their 80X and 90X (Mt. Vernon to Everett) routes, including adding Sunday services. WTA will change their 80X route times to match up with Skagit Transit's 90X changes. On Sunday, WTA will operate the last 80X roundtrip.

### Grant application for “low or no” emissions buses

Maureen McCarthy informed the group that WTA applied for a grant through the FHWA Federal Transit Administration's [FTA] bus facilities program for “low or no” emissions buses. They hope to hear back about funding in September for leasing electric buses. Ms. McCarthy explained that they have already had demos of electric buses traveling up the hills in Bellingham. WTA would purchase the necessary charging stations, she added.

### Discussion of Community Advisory Panel charter

Maureen McCarthy presented a draft charter for the WTA Community Advisory Panel [CAP]. There was discussion at previous meetings about the possibility of creating bylaws for CAP. Ms. McCarthy had brought the issue to her colleagues at other transit and transportation authorities with similar advisory groups, and the consensus recommendation was that a charter fit the group better than a set of bylaws. The draft charter outlines the purpose of the CAP, its composition, its meeting times and locations, and guidelines for meetings.

Stoney Bird said that there were previous discussions about having students (high school and college) participate in the CAP. There was general discussion regarding broadening the diversity of the group, such as including more people of color and individuals of different cultural backgrounds who live in Whatcom County. The group acknowledged the difficulty in encouraging individuals to participate in CAP. Bob Hendricks suggested organizing a “WTA Day” in Whatcom County, an event that would let communities know about the WTA services in their area and how they can participate in planning efforts, such as through CAP.

Ms. McCarthy asked the group whether term limits should be included in the charter. Currently there are no term limits for members of the CAP. Terri Hansen suggested that term limits could be a positive,



opening the possibility for bringing in new people with different perspectives. There was discussion that term limits, where current members could be removed off the CAP after a set amount of time, may not be necessary. Jaymes McClain reminded the group that meetings are public, and non-official members can still attend all meetings. The group also acknowledged the current manageable size of CAP participation, allowing for easy dialogue. Mary Anderson noted that even though CTAG still has vacant community member positions, the table at the WCOG conference room is almost always full at every CTAG meeting.

There are currently only 5 meetings planned per year for CAP, synced with the CTAG meeting schedule. CTAG usually meets the day before a Whatcom Transportation Policy Board meeting. Stoney Bird asked if it would be useful to push back meetings so that there is more time before Policy Board meetings to better consider recommendations to the Board. Kathy Berg and Mary Anderson noted that they get the agenda for the Policy Board meetings beforehand, and if there are items of interest they add CTAG agenda items when appropriate.

There was general interest in adding a 6<sup>th</sup> floating meeting to CAP (and CTAG as well), where out of the box agenda items like bus tours can take place.

Josh Nylander suggested removing the specificity of a meeting location in the charter. Bruce Pryor asked that parking be taken into account when setting meeting locations.

Maureen McCarthy said she will create the CAP agenda with additions and suggestions from members. She will coordinate the agenda with Mary Anderson and the CTAG agenda.

## Other Items

Terri Hansen informed WTA that the bus stop pad at Safeway on Sunset Dr does not provide a big enough turning radius for her electric assist chair.

Carol Berry suggested a system where community members can easily share info to WTA about system issues.

## Additions to next agenda

Stoney Bird requested that the WTA financial model be showcased at an upcoming meeting.

**The WTA facility tour was postponed due to time limits. It will be rescheduled for a later meeting.**

**The next meeting currently scheduled is October 10, 2017.**