



# Meeting Summary

## Regional Transportation Technical Advisory Group [TTAG]

Thursday, January 26, 2017 10:00 – 12:00

Whatcom Council of Governments

314 E Champion St, Bellingham, WA

### Attendees:

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Jaymes McClain | Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG]                 |
| Rollin Harper  | Everson, Nooksack, Sumas                              |
| Hugh Conroy    | WCOG  |
| John Shambaugh | Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT] |
| Lethal Coe     | WCOG  |
| Chris Comeau   | City of Bellingham Public Works                       |
| Sylvia Goodwin | Port of Bellingham                                    |
| Mary Anderson  | WCOG  |
| Rick Nicholson | Whatcom Transportation Authority [WTA]                |
| Matt Jensen    | Lummi Nation  |
| Keri Cleary    | Nooksack Tribe  |
| Bill Bullock   | City of Blaine  |
| Dough Burghart | Whatcom County  |
| Jim Karcher    | Whatcom County  |

### Current Event Updates

Lethal Coe reminded the group that the next Whatcom Transportation Policy Board [WTPB] meeting is March 8<sup>th</sup>. He asked that jurisdictions give him notice by February 15<sup>th</sup> for amendment requests to the Whatcom Council of Government’s [WCOG] Transportation Improvement Program [TIP].

Mary Anderson informed the group that WCOG will be applying for a grant from the Washington Traffic Safety Commission [WTSC] to fund several pedestrian-related projects, one of which would be a pedestrian safety workshop for planners and engineers. She said that they are thinking of having the National Association of City Transportation Officials [NACTO] lead the workshop. Ms. Anderson asked TTAG members what topics they would be interested in learning more about through the workshop. Chris Comeau said that the City of Bellingham would have interest in protected intersections and



pedestrian visibility. Bill Bullock said that the City of Blaine would be interested in Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA] Transition Plan development. Other jurisdictions also expressed interest in ADA Transitions Plan development.

John Shambaugh announced that the Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT] is having a Corridor Sketch Initiative [CSI] workshop on Monday, which will revolve around identifying mobility issues on state corridors. He said that he will report back to TTAG topics of interest from the workshop. Mr. Shambaugh also told the group that WSDOT is finishing up the Bakerview Rd interchange justification report [IJR]. They have received over 300 comments from the IJR support team, mostly from WSDOT headquarters in Olympia. He hopes to officially submit the IJR to headquarters by the end of January. Headquarters will have a public comment period, after which the IJR will then go on the Federal Highway Administration [FHWA].

Rick Nicholson said that the Whatcom Transportation Authority [WTA] will be expanding its bus service by 9 percent on March 19<sup>th</sup> following WTA's strategic plan update. Much of the service expansion is evening and Sunday service to rural areas. Mr. Nicholson said that they are finishing up the business side of the strategic plan, which looks at finances 6 years out.

Keri Cleary announced that the Nooksack Tribe's sliding scale driver's education program starts February 6<sup>th</sup>.

Bill Bulluck updated the group on the city of Blaine's Hughes Ave project. They received \$500k from the Transportation Improvement Board [TIB] to expand the project further. The project is going to be phased, with phase 1 being improvements to Hughes Ave occurring to the west of I-5 and phase two being improvements on the east side. Construction is projected for 2018, Mr. Bullock said.

Chris Comeau said that the Bellingham comprehensive plan has been appealed, which they expected, and will go before the Growth Management hearings board. He announced that Bellingham is also receiving \$500k from TIB for the Board's Complete Streets program, which will be applied to the Mahogany Ave project. Mahogany Ave will be a new connection between Northwest Dr and Pacific Highway on the north side of the new Costco. Crews will overlay W Holly St from Railroad Ave to Bay St this spring and bring it up to ADA standards. W Maplewood Ave from Northwest Ave to Alderwood Ave is being rechannelized to add bike lanes and a sidewalk on the east side. The James St-Woodstock Way intersection is being realigned starting in February. The intersection of Mill Ave and 12<sup>th</sup> St in Fairhaven will be improved while an adjacent multi-use building is being constructed. Granary Ave and Laurel Ave on the new waterfront development will start construction this year. Mr. Comeau also said that the city is completing many transportation benefit district [TBD] projects like a rechannelization of Barkley Blvd, adding bike lanes on Woburn St from Alabama St to Lakeway Dr and Orleans St from Alabama St to Barkely Blvd, and other intersection improvements around town.



Rollin Harper told that group that WSDOT recently looked at the SR 9-SR 544 intersection in Nooksack for possible improvement. Nooksack also finished a TIB-funded sidewalk project. In Everson, the Kirsch Dr project design is finished, and nearly all of the required right-of-way [ROW] has been gathered. The city is trying to go to construction with Lincoln St project phases 1 and 2 this summer, as design is done. Engineers are still doing design work on a sidewalk project on SR 544. Mr. Harper also commented on the recent freezing and thawing of roads in Everson, saying that an estimated \$500k in damages has occurred in a 10-hour period.

Jim Karcher also said that county roads sustained some damage from freezing and thawing, but he said that he cannot yet speak to the severity of the damage or cost of repairs. The Potter Rd bridge project received a bronze award from the American Council of Engineering Companies, Mr. Karcher said. The county will be putting in a motion-activated bicycle warning system on bridge 172 on Marine Dr in February. Sylvia Goodwyn added that the Port of Bellingham is working with the city of Bellingham and the Whatcom Parks and Recreation Foundation in organizing a bike ride event on June 3<sup>rd</sup> to find safe route options around the Marine Dr bridge, which is a known hazard for bicyclists. Jim Karcher explained that the county will improve the intersection of Lake Terrell Rd and Unick Rd with a flashing 4-way beacon. The county's Lakeway Dr crosswalk project is finished. The Jordan Creek/Slater Rd project (where a culvert was failing last year) is going to construction this summer. There will be a couple of bridge replacements, including bridge 249 on Roberts Rd, bridge 50 on Bertrand Creek, and bridge 107 on Samish Way. The county is looking at going to construction in September for their Birch Bay berm project – 11 parcels are still needed to complete the ROW phase, and the county is getting a signoff from the tribes because the area around project site is of cultural importance.

## Certification review status update

Hugh Conroy let the group know that he expects the transportation element certification reviews to be done in February. WCOG has found that each jurisdiction's transportation elements are consistent with state and regional plans. In the meeting packet he included a draft memo for the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board [WTPB] that will recommend they move to approve RTPO certification of the Whatcom region jurisdictions' transportation elements.

## Whatcom Mobility 2040 updates

### Draft sections posted for review

Hugh Conroy said that he added *Pipelines* as an element of the regionally significant system [RSS], explaining that they convey goods that would otherwise have to be transported by other modes. There was brief discussion about the appropriateness of identifying pipeline as part of the transportation system. John Shambaugh said that WSDOT also recognizes pipelines as a mode in its transportation planning.



## 2040 Project List

Jaymes McClain informed the group that an early draft of the regional plan's fiscally constrained project list is posted on the WCOG website. The structure of the document and the formatting will be edited and more fields may be added, but the project costs and years will remain the same unless jurisdictions find any inaccuracies with how their respective projects are represented. Mr. McClain said that the projects generally fit into two buckets – completion in the first 10 years (2017 to 2027) and completion in the outer years (2028-2040). He explained that some mid-range projects were pushed into the outer years to maintain a fiscally responsible projection of cumulative project costs in the first 10 years.

Lethal Coe explained that the 2013 model network was updated with two Bellingham projects to create the base 2016 network. Looking ahead with the model, Mr. Coe said that WCOG is thinking of conducting a household travel survey to better inform model demographics, possibly in 2018. The last household travel survey for the Whatcom region was in 2008 with 750 people responding.

## Review of draft STBG project-funding application form

### Review of evaluation criteria and feedback since last draft

Chris Comeau pointed out that under the Certifications section, the requirement that a project be listed on the lead agency's current six-year TIP has been removed. He suggested keeping the requirement that a project is either on a TIP or able to be easily added, arguing that a project being on a TIP attests to the jurisdiction's seriousness about advancing that project. The requirement could filter prospective projects to only those that are of high priority, where a jurisdiction would have already spent time and effort in planning/preparing the project.

After discussion, the group agreed to keep the TIP requirement in the Certifications section.

Hugh Conroy also pointed out that a new requirement under the Certification section specifies a jurisdiction must notify WCOG by April 1<sup>st</sup> of the year the project-phase is proposed to start if it cannot obligate funds by August 1<sup>st</sup>. From the draft, "this will allow time for the Policy Board to consider other options for meeting the region's annual obligation target."

Mr. Conroy posited a change to the points structure of the scoring criterion *Multimodal Transportation*. Preservation of existing facilities is already its own criterion, and under *Multimodal Transportation* it is currently a scoring guideline category alongside filling gaps or creating new segments in a system facility. There was discussion in the group regarding what preservation entails and the appropriateness of it within the multimodal criterion. Bill Bullock suggested replacing "preservation" with language alluding to improving or enhancing existing facilities.

There was discussion on the *Increases System Performance* criterion. Chris Comeau explained that the city of Bellingham does not limit itself to using the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices [MUTCD]



for intersection performance. They also use other standards for intersections that are also geared to other modes of travel than automobiles. There were some suggestions for adding another bullet in the scoring guidelines for meeting local standards. Hugh Conroy suggested that this discussion continue at the next TTAG meeting.

## **Capturing long-range transit strategies in the regional plan – General discussion**

Hugh Conroy said that for the Whatcom Mobility 2040 regional plan update, WCOG wants to get a better sense of long-range transit planning, farther out than WTA's 6-year strategic plan. Rick Nicholson explained that WTA doesn't look farther than 6 years due to variables being too uncertain for transit, such as available revenue and changing board decisions.

Mr. Conroy talked about transit being cited in local comprehensive plan transportation elements and said he hopes to have a discussion on regionally shared goals regarding transit that can inform the transit section of the regional plan update.

## **Meeting adjourned 12:15PM**