



TTAG October 27, 2016 Meeting Summary

Attendees:

Jaymes McClain	Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG]
Gary Davis	Whatcom County
Rollin Harper	Everson, Nooksack, Sumas
Joe Rutan	Whatcom County
Hugh Conroy	WCOG
Bill Bullock	City of Blaine
John Shambaugh	Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT]
Becky Kelly	Whatcom Transportation Authority [WTA]
Kevin Renz	City of Ferndale
Matt Jensen	Lummi Nation
Mehrdad Moini	WSDOT

Current Event Updates

Joe Rutan said that Whatcom County’s Saar Creek project is complete and will be opening next week.

John Shambaugh of the Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT] told the group that the Bakerview Rd/I-5 interchange justification report [IJR] open house meeting last week was a success. Attendees showed a lot of enthusiasm for the reconstruction on the interchange. Mr. Shambaugh said he will compile the comments from the meeting.

Becky Kelly announced that the Whatcom Transportation Authority [WTA] Board approved of the WTA service expansion plan today. The expansion of services will begin in March 2017. There will be a \$1.6MM increase per year in service expenditures, she said, as WTA will be spending down some of its undesignated reserves.

Rollin Harper gave updates for Nooksack and Everson. The city of Nooksack has a small sidewalk project under construction, funded through the Transportation Improvement Board [TIB]. Everson officials have a meeting tomorrow with a property owner who is dedicating property for the city to use as right-of-way [ROW] for their Lincoln St phase 2 project (funded through the Surface Transportation Program [STP] and TIB) and ROW for their Kirsch Dr project (funded through TIB). The city of Everson is still working on environmental components of the Lincoln St phase 1 project, he said, and they have a Safe Routes to School application out for a segment of SR 544. Mr. Harper added that Nooksack will not be submitting an appeal to Whatcom County regarding urban growth areas [UGAs].

Kevin Rentz reported that Ferndale’s Washington St project is just about done. He said that the city is getting into design phases for projects for next year.



Matt Jensen said that Lummi Nation just finished their Kwina Sidewalk project. Their bus wash facility project is completed and nearly open. They are also moving forward with the Gooseberry Point pedestrian project, he said.

Mehrdad Moini gave some updates for WSDOT. He said that Washington State received applications from 12 jurisdictions for its complete streets program – 3 of the jurisdictions are in the northwest region, one of them being Bellingham. He said that the Bellingham project is ranked as number one in WSDOT's recommendation. Mr. Moini also said that Safe Routes to Schools project prioritization is still shuffling around, but the Nooksack project is still in the top tier and they will know more next week. WSDOT recently received new Disadvantaged Business Enterprise [DBE] requirements, and Mr. Moini said that the updated Local Agency Guidelines [LAG] will be ready before November. Jurisdictions are now required to submit DBE progress reports monthly rather than quarterly.

Hugh Conroy recounted some updates given at the latest International Mobility and Trade Corridor program [IMTC] meeting. Canada Border Services Agency [CBSA] is developing a plan for a major overhaul of their facilities at the Pacific Highway border crossing. They are looking at realigning the northbound approach to their commercial facility, working with Blaine and WSDOT. Mr. Conroy also said that the BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure [BC MoTI] has new funding for improvements to BC Highways 13 and 11 (that connect to SR 539 and SR 9, respectively). They will be developing a better connection to the Lynden-Aldergrove border crossing, and there are talks about possibly adding a NEXUS lane southbound.

Bill Bullock of the city of Blaine said that one of CBSA's proposals is to realign the northbound Pacific Highway border crossing bus approach so that it is separate from passenger and truck traffic. A realignment would utilize Blaine's right-of-way [ROW] at 14th St. He also said that negotiations with the duty free vendor at Pacific Highway would need to happen as proposals suggest that some of their property would be used. On updates regarding Blaine, Mr. Bullock said that they are at 30 percent design on their Hughes Ave project, and the wetlands mitigation process has begun. They are planning for construction in 2017, but the project may be split into phases. Some of the improvements on Hughes Ave will incur BNSF railroad ROW, so they will submit the necessary documents to the railroad company, Mr. Bullock added.

Gary Davis said that Whatcom County's comprehensive plan received two appeals concerning Bellingham UGAs. One has already been resolved and the other will have a hearing early next year. Bellingham's comprehensive plan has not yet been adopted, so they could still have an appeal of their own as well.



Follow up on September TTAG meeting items

a) WCOG Council Board's unfunded priority project list advanced

Hugh Conroy said that 9 projects were submitted to the Council Board's unfunded priority project list. The projects were reviewed and the board wanted to prioritize the top 3 projects, which are the West Horton Rd extension, the I-5 exit 274 interchange design and construction, and the Lincoln Creek transportation center improvements. Whatcom County's Slater Rd-Jordan Creek project is going forward as an emergency funding request due to the imminent threat of culvert failure.

b) Federal funds obligation targets: Policy Board's approval of one-year extension

Mr. Conroy reported that WCOG's member jurisdictions missed the federal funds obligation target by \$2MM. The Whatcom Transportation Policy Board has agreed to a one-year extension. The near \$2MM shortfall will be added to the obligation target for next year.

Regional/Metropolitan Transportation Plan update (Whatcom Mobility 2040)

a) Early draft components available for review

Hugh Conroy reminded the group that draft elements of WCOG's regional transportation plan update (Whatcom Mobility 2040) are on WCOG's website. A table of the draft regional goals is attached in the meeting's packet. The goals are ranked by the number of jurisdictions that identify the goal in their comprehensive plan transportation elements. Mr. Conroy developed a table for relating the prioritized goals with corresponding state and federal policy goals.

b) Initial work on compilation of regional projects

Jaymes McClain has been compiling projects from each jurisdiction for inclusion in the Whatcom Mobility 2040 fiscally constrained project list. He has created draft project lists for each jurisdiction, which Mr. McClain said he will email out with requests to edit and comment on the draft lists.

Lethal Coe has been working on jurisdiction finances, using WSDOT as a source for historical revenues and expenditures.

From looking at draft project lists for the regional plan update, several jurisdictions have outlined citywide maintenance and rehabilitation costs for their entire road network. Roads that are federally classified as arterials (principle or minor) meet the requirements for being on the plan's regionally significant system [RSS], so Mr. Conroy asked if it would be reasonable for jurisdictions to estimate a cost breakout for the maintenance/rehabilitation of arterials only in order to better align with regional system scope.



Joe Rutan noted that it would be extra work to break out a cost estimate of maintaining arterials versus all other roads, but doing this now would make it easier to conduct similar breakouts for future plan updates.

2017 STBG call for projects: Continued review of project submittal form, evaluation criteria, and scoring

Hugh Conroy reviewed the latest draft of the Surface Transportation Block Grant program [STBG] application form. The available STBG and Transportation Alternatives [TA] funding is currently a projection estimated from past trends, he noted. The funding appears to be less this time because it is a 2 year (2021-2022) allocation instead of 3 years like last time.

Rollin Harper suggested not numbering the headers for each section as it confuses with the numbering of the evaluation criteria. He asked that the signature and chief executive officer sections under *General Information* be clarified.

Hugh Conroy forwarded a suggestion from Chris Comeau that *Modal Split* come with more of an explanation for the percentage breakouts. Joe Rutan advocated for not quantifying the modal split by how much of the project funding would go towards each transportation mode. There was discussion on using professional judgement to estimate the percentage of benefit to each transportation mode for that project. Mr. Conroy also suggested that split by modal benefit could be connected to system performance outcomes. He added that he can add a definition for the section that will also clarify that the section is informational and is not one of the scoring criteria.

Hugh Conroy noted that the bullet referring to intelligent transportation systems [ITS] is simply a for WCOG to use to track ITS projects and does factor into the scoring criteria.

Rollin Harper suggested that under *Financial Summary*, "STP Regional" be changed to "STBG Request".

Hugh Conroy told the group that the *Evaluation Criteria* are ordered similarly to the regional goals - by frequency of mention in jurisdictions' comprehensive plans. He explained that in this draft, he added a weight to those top criteria that are identified as regional goals, with more frequently mentioned goals getting a higher weight. This is an initial effort to move towards performance measures and performance-based planning, Mr. Conroy said.

Joe Rutan said that goal frequency and weighting are skewed towards urban comprehensive plans, whereas the county accounts for half of the population in the region. The most dangerous road areas in terms of fatalities, he said, are in the county. John Shambaugh recommend an exercise on weighting for further discussion.



Hugh Conroy reviewed the first evaluation criterion, *Safety*. The 5 bullets under the suggested scoring guidelines come from the MAP-21 and FAST Act federal authorizations. As currently outlined, the collision data would be calculated as a rolling 5-year average, and data can be gathered from the WSDOT collision portal. Mr. Conroy said that WCOG will look at getting raw data from WSDOT and develop a GIS layer of the rolling 5-year averages of collision data that local jurisdictions can use for reference.

Joe Rutan voiced concern of the WSDOT collision portal, saying that the data depends on the reporting rate of jurisdictions and that there is usually lag-time in reporting. He added that only incidents reported to the Washington State Patrol are available in the portal.

Hugh Conroy said that the Federal Highway Administration's [FHWA] Model Inventory of Roadway Elements [MIRE] database includes fundamental elements of safety deficiency, which could be something to consider in the future for the *Safety* criterion.

There was general discussion on the evaluation criterion *Multimodal Transportation*, including the relevance of gap elimination in this criterion and whether or not the points should add up to 10. Matt Jensen suggested that each scoring guideline be 1 point with an *other* guideline descriptor worth more points to be awarded based on professional judgement.

For the *Increase system performance* criterion, Hugh Conroy suggested that FHWA's National Performance Management Research Data Set [NPMRDS] data could be used to evaluate a project's impact here. There was general agreement on renaming this criterion *Efficiency, Effectiveness, and System Sustainability* to better connect it with the regional goal of the same name. Joe Rutan noted that Volume over Capacity [V/C] calculations do not work with intersections. There was discussion on finding a new way to assess intersection performance, with Bill Bullock suggesting using the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices [MUTCD] evaluate intersections. Rollin Harper pointed out that smaller jurisdictions have different Level of Service [LOS] expectations that larger ones, where an LOS of C or D in a smaller city may generate the same relative concern to an LOS of E or F in a larger city.

Hugh Conroy added an *Environmental quality* criterion for this draft since it is one of the most frequently identified goals in jurisdictions' transportation elements. John Shambaugh noted that it could be a lot of work to quantitatively evaluate a project's environmental impacts. For a scoring guideline, Bill Bullock suggested sustainability in the construction of the project, such as use of recycled materials. There was discussion on prioritizing points for projects that have an environmental improvement as the main project goal, such as fish passage or storm water improvements.

Hugh Conroy pointed out that the scoring guidelines for *Improve regional connections* were not changed in this draft. In response to a suggestion from Rollin Harper, Mr. Conroy said that they can review the corridor maps that were shown at a previous meeting that illustrated transportation corridors important to intra-regional connectivity.



For the *Preservation* criterion, Hugh Conroy asked members if they would agree with adding *Maintenance* to the title or as a scoring guideline. Joe Rutan noted that maintenance is different from preservation and that federal programs do not fund maintenance. Rollin Harper broached the subject of preservation of state routes through the construction or improvement of an alternative, parallel route. John Shambaugh suggested that “preservation” parallel roads could be a scoring guideline.

Bill Bullock suggested adding more scoring guidelines to the *Freight* criterion. Rollin Harper expressed interest in having scoring possibilities for local freight routes that may not be designated as a Freight and Goods Transportation System [FGTS] route, but may have regional significance. He referred to heavy haul roads in Sumas that are built to Canadian freight specifications and are used by border-crossing freight. There was discussion on scoring a non FGTS-designated freight road similarly to its tonnage-equivalent FGTS classification.

TTAG members discussed the *Economic development* criterion and the ubiquity of economic benefits when any improvement is made to the transportation network. Joe Rutan commented that projects could have direct impacts on economic activity, arguing that improving pedestrian access along the Birch Bay waterfront directly benefits the tourist-oriented businesses there. There was some desire to review other regions’ handling of economic benefits from transportation improvements.

The eleventh criterion of the draft is *Local benefit*. Members discussed making this evaluation criterion as objective as possible by having scoring guidelines such as the effects on average daily traffic, pedestrian volumes, and other descriptions that don't duplicate the previous criteria categories. There was also discussion on the appropriateness of having *Local benefit* be a scoring opportunity on an application form that focuses more on regional benefits.

Meeting adjourned 12:15