



TTAG December 1, 2016 Meeting Summary

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
Chad Schulhauser	City of Bellingham Public Works
Sylvia Goodwin	Port of Bellingham

Current Event Updates

Jon Shambaugh said that on December 2nd, members of the Bakerview Rd interchange justification report [IJR] support team will get a draft of the final report emailed to them. There will be a short comment period because the Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT] headquarters is looking for a quick turnaround, he said. WSDOT will have 2 weeks for review before it goes off to the Federal Highway Administration [FHWA]. The IJR process has taken 18 months thus far, Mr. Shambaugh said. The final report will propose a single alternative, but they will still have the records for all alternatives discussed in the process.

Sylvia Goodwin reported that Bellingham Airport continues to decline in passengers. The Port of Bellingham is subsidizing the airport at about \$1MM a year. She said the decline in air travelers is partly due to the relative weakness of the Canadian dollar in the US. They are not seeing as many Canadians coming down – Canadians used to make up 60 percent of the airport’s customers. Ms. Goodwin said that there has been no progress on plans for the proposed bicycle-pedestrian trail around the airport. The sections that would be along I-5 and along a port of Airport Dr would be in the flight path, making trail construction there very unlikely. However, the port may try to apply for a Recreation and Conservation Office [RCO] grant to fund segments of the trail that could work. She also reported that Itek Energy, currently located off Irongate Rd, is moving 125 jobs to the waterfront. A new facility for All American Marine is being built on the waterfront off of Roeder Ave, moving them out of Fairhaven. Progress is being made on the old Granary building, Ms. Goodwin said. They have permits pending for 2 commercial spaces.

Rollin Harper informed the group that Nooksack finished up its W Madison St sidewalk project. The Everson and Lincoln St phases 1 and 2 projects are continuing. Everson has a project in the top tier for a



Safe Routes to Schools grant, but Mr. Harper said he doesn't know where that stands at the moment. Kirsch Dr and Lincoln St phases 1 and 2 are supposed to go to construction in 2017.

Chad Shulhauser said that the city of Bellingham is still waiting on WSDOT headquarters for the Mahogany Ave right-of-way [ROW]. They expect to obligate funds for the Mahogany Ave project next week, he said. Mahogany Ave and Laurel St would go to construction in April.

Chris Comeau told the group that Bellingham's comprehensive plan was adopted by the Bellingham city council. He also said that there will be construction this spring, including the resurfacing of Holly St from Railroad Ave to Bay St. Mr. Shulhauser said that they will do it lane by lane rather than detour the entire route. They plan on paving in April. The Holly St resurfacing would be similar to the work recently done on Champion St. Mr. Comeau added that 2017 and 2018 will be big construction years for the city.

Hugh Conroy updated the group on the regional transportation planning organization [RTPO] certification process, where WCOG reviews the transportation elements of jurisdictions' comprehensive plans and certifies that they are consistent with the regional transportation plan [RTP]. He said that he has read each draft transportation element. Actual certification by the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board [WTPB] will be done when all Growth Management Act [GMA] jurisdictions have adopted their plan updates. In the meantime, if jurisdictions need a memo indicating certifications status and WCOG staff findings, that can be provided.

Mr. Conroy said that he attended the U.S.-Canada Transportation Border Working Group [TBWG] meeting in October. One of the recurring topics at TBWG is the preclearance agreement between US and Canada which would expand from current air-travel preclearance to all modes of travel and trade. A pending ratification of the newly expanded agreement framework would potentially allow U.S. and Canadian inspectors to conduct inspections in the other country at designated facilities when mutually desired by both countries. An example of a regional implication, Mr. Conroy said, is that the city of Blaine and US Customs and Border Protection [CBP] are interested in how this could create options for the rail Vehicle and Cargo Inspection System [VACIS]. Could the facility be moved north of the border instead of south of Blaine?

Reviewing discussion at the last International Mobility and Trade Corridor program [IMTC] meeting, Mr. Conroy noted that CBP is now offering I-94 applications online, where individuals can also pay the associated fee. An I-94 form is required for landed immigrant residents of Canada and other visitors. Typically, land-border crossers need to enter a CBP inspection lobby, fill-out a hard-copy I-94 form, and pay the fee. There are ideas at CBP about setting up a separate facility in the Peace Arch area to process I-94s in an attempt to lessen the amount of people that otherwise must enter a main inspection lobby.

The next TBWG meeting will be held in Bellingham at Western Washington University [WWU]. Mr. Conroy suggested that TTAG members think about border-related issues to highlight from this area.



Hugh Conroy also gave an update on the FAST lane freight grant program, saying that the federal government had issued call for projects last month. He reminded the group that the grant has very specific eligibility requirements. Lummi Nation is reviewing a possible application to freight related improvements at Slater Rd.

Follow up on October TTAG meeting items:

Brief update on drafting of the 2017 STBG (We'll wait until January to again go through the draft in detail.)

Hugh Conroy said that he will email out a revised draft of the Surface Transportation Block Grant [STBG] application form. He has yet to hear back from WSDOT about the request he submitted for collision data in Whatcom County. WCOG would like to roll 5 years of collision data into one GIS layer for jurisdictions to possibly use as a tool for their STBG projects.

From a suggestion from last meeting, Mr. Conroy said that they will look at the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices [MUTCD] to possibly use as a tool for intersection performance measuring.

Items from November 14 MPO/WSDOT coordinating committee meeting.

Federal funds obligation targets: Draft state policy.

In line with the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board's approval a 1-year grace period for Surface Transportation Program [STP] funding obligation, Mr. Conroy reported that, as expected, WSDOT has drafted an obligation authority [OA] policy revision that corresponds with that grace period. Because sanctions for missed obligation targets are still a relatively new thing, Mr. Conroy said that the group may want to think about drafting a policy for a scenario where the WCOG MPO region receives an additional funding amount due to other MPO regions missing their obligation targets.

WSDOT would like to give WTP-updates to regional technical committees. (winter 2017).

John Shambaugh said that either Cathy Murray or Richard Warren would most likely lead these overview sessions of the Washington Transportation Plan [WTP] in winter of 2017. With regards to the corridor sketch initiative, Mr. Shambaugh said that WSDOT will be looking at assembling steering committees in January and working on mobility strategies.



Joint Transportation Committee [JTC] is looking at ways to start public dialog about the road usage charging pilot and future of the gas tax and would like to come talk to regions.

Hugh Conroy said that at the October meeting of the IMTC core group, Reema Griffith of the Washington State Transportation Commission gave a presentation on the state's strategy to possibly transition away from the gas tax and instead implement a pay-per-mile system for motorized vehicles using public roads in Washington State. They are conducting a pilot to test different mileage tracking systems. Notes from that presentation can be read in the [IMTC meeting summary](#).

Regional/Metropolitan Transportation Plan update (Whatcom Mobility 2040)

Continued review of financial analysis

Overview of draft forecast

Lethal Coe reviewed the draft table of forecasted revenues and expenditures for the Whatcom Mobility 2040 plan. The draft is attached in the meeting packet. For this iteration of the forecast, Mr. Coe said that he is taking a more conservative approach to estimating revenues and expenditures. The last regional plan update forecast (forecasting out to 2032) was more optimistic about future revenue. This time he wants to present a more realistic look out to 2040, even if there is projected to be more expenditures than revenues.

The draft document will be posted in the next several weeks.

Distinguishing maintenance, preservation, and improvements in reporting

Lethal Coe reviewed financial reports that jurisdictions send to WSDOT annually. He commented on the fact that none of the jurisdictions in Whatcom County separately report spending on *Preservation*. For the financial section of the regional plan, Mr. Coe said that *Preservation* could be combined with other categories, like *Maintenance* and *Operations*.

There was discussion on what kind of work qualifies as "preservation." Hugh Conroy suggested that *Preservation* be lumped with *Construction*. This would negate having to tease out a percentage of *Construction* that would make up the unreported preservation work. Chris Comeau agreed that preservation work fits best in a construction category.

With regards to jurisdictions' financial sources, Chris Comeau said that the city of Bellingham's Transportation Benefit District [TBD] sunsets in 2020. There is nothing planned beyond that right now as far as TBDs go.



Financial strategies to balance revenues and expenditures

Hugh Conroy said that showcasing the discrepancy in expenditures and revenues gives the Policy Board and jurisdictions a signal about the financial sufficiency of current financial sources and context for exploring alternatives for the future. He reminded the group that even though the 20-year forecast may not balance with all identified future expenditures, the region's transportation finances will be reviewed again in 5 years with the next regional plan update.

Project list compilation – ongoing.

Jaymes McClain is compiling project descriptions from jurisdictions and drafting the fiscally constrained project list that will be in the appendix of the regional plan. He said that most jurisdictions have reviewed the draft lists of the projects that he sent them, but there are still a few stragglers. He hopes to have a draft of the list ready by the next TTAG meeting in the new year.

Performance measures and targets – a closer look at federally proposed data sources and methods. – The National Performance Management Research Data Set (NPMRDS)

Hugh Conroy explained that to get ahead on complying with performance measurement standards slowly being rolled out of the MAP-21 and FAST Act federal authorizations, WCOG has been looking at the data source being used by FHWA – cellphone probe data assembled by the company HERE. The available HERE dataset is essentially aggregates of cellphone locations that are used to compute travel times within specific segments of roadways. For the Whatcom County region, those roadway segments include I-5, SR539 and SR 543, parts of a couple other states routes, and some arterials in Bellingham.

Mr. Conroy said that they downloaded a month's worth of HERE data, September 2016, to see if WCOG can organize the data internally to use as a tool for performance measurements. Jaymes McClain explained that the data was much too big to do any analysis on without first trimming the data down. He filtered out a weekday peak hour and organized the data into a GIS layer. The layer, shown on WCOG's interactive web map, describes the direction of travel, travel time, and length of the visualized road segment. There seems to be gaps in the dataset, Mr. McClain said, and any analysis done by WCOG would be limited because of the size of the raw data.

The meeting was adjourned at 12 PM