



Meeting Summary

Regional Transportation Technical Advisory Group [TTAG]

Thursday, February 23, 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
Lethal Coe	WCOG
Chris Comeau	City of Bellingham Public Works
Sylvia Goodwin	Port of Bellingham
Rick Nicholson	Whatcom Transportation Authority [WTA]
Matt Jensen	Lummi Nation
Bill Bullock	City of Blaine
Jim Karcher	Whatcom County
Bob Wilson	WCOG
Ron Cubellis	WCOG
Chad Schulhauser	City of Bellingham Public Works

Current Event Updates

Rick Nicholson reminded the group that the Whatcom Transportation Authority’s [WTA] rollout of service changes following their strategic plan update will occur March 19th. They are working with Western Washington University [WWU] to continue the universal bus pass program, he said. WTA is also beginning talks with the city of Bellingham about scenarios for increasing the capacity of the Bellingham bus station. All gates at the station are used twice per hour, and the station is at capacity currently. This improvement would be in 2019 or beyond.

Matt Jensen said that Lummi Transit has had to go out for re-bid for transit shelters. Mr. Jensen also announced that he will be leaving the Lummi Nation, taking a position with the Coquille Tribe in Coos Bay, Oregon.



Chad Schulhauser of the city of Bellingham said that the W Holly St is currently under construction as part of an overlay/ADA improvements project, to be completed by May. There is also a water main project happening downtown near W Holly St, W Chestnut St, and E St. All businesses in the vicinity are open, he said. That project is slated to be done in mid-April.

Chris Comeau informed the group that he met with the Bellingham Transportation Commission last week regarding removing parking on Orleans St (Alabama St to Barkley Blvd) and Woburn St (Alabama St to Iowa St) to install bicycle lanes. They are looking at intersection improvements at Woburn St-Fraser St, Kentucky St-Woburn St, and Orleans St-Illinois St.

Rollin Harper said that Everson and Nooksack have set up a meeting with the Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT] to discuss the intersection of SR 544 and SR 9, where there are issues with backups. The city of Everson's Kirsch Dr project went out to bid yesterday, Mr. Harper said. The project will connect up to the Lincoln St phase 2 project. The Lincoln St phase 1 and 2 projects are at 90 percent design, and the city is aiming for obligation and construction in 2017. Flashing beacons will be installed as part of an SR 544 sidewalk project in Everson.

Jim Karcher of Whatcom County told the group that the Marine Dr bicycle warning system is being installed right now. They also installed a flashing four-way stop beacon at Lake Terrell Rd-Unick Rd due to accidents occurring there near the refinery. The county is out to bid for their Slater Rd-Jordan Creek bridge project. The county roadway safety project is winding down, he said, and they are looking for a window to put in pavement markers for centerlines and paint striping. Regarding the Birch Bay berm project, the county has acquired over half of the necessary parcels, and they are working with Lummi, Nooksack, and other tribes for cultural testing under pavement areas. Mr. Karcher said that they hope to go to construction on the berm project starting in September 2017. He also mentioned that some of the project engineers at the county having gone to training in Tacoma for bicycle facilities on repaving projects.

Lethal Coe reminded the group that the upcoming Whatcom Transportation Policy Board meeting is March 8th. The next meeting after is May 10th, and Mr. Coe said that he would like notifications regarding a possible TIP amendment by April 19th.

Jaymes McClain informed the group that the International Mobility and Corridor Trade program [IMTC] Border Freight Operations study report was recently released. The study focuses on observations of freight movements through the Cascade Gateway land-border commercial ports-of-entry. The report reviews the data collection efforts that occurred in the summers of 2015 and 2016 and gives high level analyses of several of the data fields, such as commercial vehicle border weight times, vehicle types, commodity information, and origin-destination information. A separate dangerous goods technical memo is currently being be written.



Bob Wilson reported on his recent visit to the legislature in Olympia. Regarding the Slater Rd-Jordan Creek project, he said he has received mixed signals on funding a solution to the failing culvert, but Representative Luanne Van Werven is keeping interest alive. He noted that two transportation projects from the Whatcom region look promising: the Kendall/Columbia Valley trail and the I-5 exit 274 interchange, which Senator Doug Erickson has shown interest in. There are several projects Mr. Wilson explained that there appears to be little interest in trying to fund this session, including the W Horton Rd extension and the Lincoln Creek transportation center.

Sylvia Goodwin of the Port of Bellingham said that the solar panel manufacturing company itek Energy is opening their new location at the end of Cornwall Ave in June. The All American Marine building, being constructed off of Roeder Ave, will be operational in the next couple of weeks. Improvements to the old Granary building are continuing, and the roads through the waterfront development will be constructed in 2017 and 2018. Ms. Goodwin also informed the group that on National Trail Day on June 3rd, there will be a bicycle ride along the back of the airport (the Sea to Ski route) and along the Lockwood property to see if the parcel provides a viable alternative bicycle route to Marine Dr.

2017 Obligation Targets: Update on current assessment of our region meeting its federal-funding obligation target and discussion of possible consequences and strategies if our region falls short

Lethal Coe explained that the obligation target for the Whatcom region is about \$5MM, with an obligation target date of July 31, 2017. Because of the shortfall from the last obligation period, the target for this period is now the third highest in the state.

Lethal Coe scrolled through a table of transportation projects in the region that are slated to have phases obligated before the July deadline.

Bill Bullock said that the city of Blaine could obligate a couple hundred thousand dollars this year for their Boblett St project. The permitting for the Hughes Ave project will be done around the end of summer, and the project could go to construction in January, he said.

Chad Schulhauser commented on the city of Bellingham's Orchard Dr project. The city used local funds for right-of-way [ROW] acquisition, but he explained that if the city can be reimbursed of those funds with federal funds, then they could obligate \$600k immediately. Ron Cubellis recommended talking to the WSDOT Local Programs Office regarding the ability to swap those funds.

Ron Cubellis suggested moving federal funds from one of Bellingham's outer-year projects, like the W Horton Rd extension project, to replace local funds being used in the near-term Mahogany Ave project. Those extra federal funds could then be obligated before July 31st, significantly helping the region meet its \$5MM obligation target.



Chad Schulhauser said that the \$1MM of federal funding awarded to the second phase of the W Horton Rd extension could be obligated this April for preliminary engineering if the project is handed over to Bellingham from Whatcom County pending the completion of an interlocal agreement [ILA].

Continued review of STBG project proposal form: Review of updates based on discussion at the last meeting and continued consideration of criteria as needed

Hugh Conroy told the group he added dates for the Surface Transportation Block Grant [STBG] and Transportation Alternatives [TA] project selection schedule to the first page of the draft STBG application form.

Chris Comeau pointed out that applications to the Transportation Improvement Board [TIB] are due in August. He explained that it would be beneficial if STBG/TA funds were awarded sooner than October so that they could strengthen TIB applications. A special Policy Board meeting in August for project funding approvals would allow jurisdictions to use the WCOG award letters to support TIB applications. There was consensus agreement on reworking the STBG/TA schedule to account for TIB application deadlines.

Post-meeting update: the 2017 STBG/TA schedule will be moved up so that project selection finalization can occur at the Policy Board's regularly scheduled meeting on July 12th, eliminating the need for a special August meeting.

Hugh Conroy led the group through changes made to the application form based on last meeting's discussions. Regarding the first scoring criteria, *Safety*, Mr. Conroy said that WCOG is still waiting on a request for crash data from WSDOT. If WCOG can get GIS layers or geographic coordinates of crash data for the last 5 years, staff at WCOG can run queries for jurisdictions on data that pertains to the projects they are presenting.

Under scoring criteria three, *Increases System Performance*, Mr. Conroy explained that for scoring guidelines for projects that would improve intersections, he added language that allows jurisdictions to use their own adopted criteria for assessing improvements to intersections. It was suggested that jurisdictions reference the underlying design guides that inform their adopted criteria when presenting a case for an intersection improvement.

Rick Nicholson asked for clarification on transit improvement scoring guidelines for scoring criteria three, *Increases System Performance*. Hugh Conroy said that another guideline can be added for transit specifically.

Rollin Harper suggested that under scoring criteria seven, *Mobility for Freight*, there be included guidelines for roadways that see a certain tonnage of freight but are not yet identified by the Freight Goods Transportation System [FGTS]. These roadways should be scored similar to their tonnage-equivalent FGTS categories, he suggested. There was consensus agreement.



Rick Nicholson suggested that under scoring criteria eleven, *Local Community Benefit*, there be added guidelines for benefits to the lower income population. There was consensus agreement on this but also on broadening an added guideline to the same population categories focused on in WCOG's human services transportation plan – members of the local community who are unable to drive due to age, income, or disability.

Hugh Conroy explained that the first seven scoring criteria are weighted based on the recognized importance of the regional transportation goals that they respectively reference. The regional transportation goals are compiled from the goals identified in each jurisdiction's transportation element, ranked by importance from most frequently identified to least. The group agreed to use weighted criteria for the 2017 STBG application form.

Chris Comeau motioned to recommend to the Policy Board the adoption of the STBG application form with the discussed edits. Rollin Harper seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Hugh Conroy explained the TA form is similar to the Transportation Alternatives Program [TAP] form from the last call for projects, but with the same edits given to the non-scoring criteria sections of the STBG form.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:15PM