



TTAG March 24, 2016 Meeting Summary

Attendees:

Jaymes McClain	Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG]
Sylvia Goodwin	Port of Bellingham
Lethal Coe	WCOG
Gary Davis	Whatcom County
Rollin Harper	Everson, Nooksack, Sumas
Joe Rutan	Whatcom County
Chris Comeau	City of Bellingham
Bob Wilson	WCOG
Hugh Conroy	WCOG
Bill Bullock	City of Blaine
Ron Cubellis	WCOG
Tom Stacey	Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT]
Mark Sandal	City of Lynden

Current Event Updates

Bob Wilson reported that the state senate passed a supplemental transportation budget. The exit 274 project in Blaine was completely defunded, he said, with \$40MM going to the Guide Meridian improvements and \$5MM going to a project in Ferndale to build a Thornton St overpass over the rail line. The \$3MM funding for a Guide Meridian pedestrian overpass was also removed, with funds going to the Thornton St project, Mr. Wilson said.

Mark Sandal said that the City of Lynden is hoping to obligate money for their River Rd extension project by June or July.

Joe Rutan updated the group on some of the emergency repairs the county has been making. Rutsatz Rd off of Highway 9 near Deming has been eroded by the Nooksack River. Legoe Bay Rd on Lummi Island was damaged in the recent wind storm. Birch Bay fared okay, Mr. Rutan said. A culvert under Slater Rd at Jordan Creek has begun to fail and they are doing emergency repairs. He also said that the Birch Bay berm project design is completed and they are now buying property and getting permits. They are hoping to construct this summer. He continued that the 10 mile creek bridge preliminary engineering is beginning this year.

Rollin Harper said that the City of Nooksack is starting design work on a sidewalk project funded by the Transportation Improvement Board [TIB]. In Everson there are three road projects happening in downtown, he said: Kirsh Dr, Lincoln St phases 1 and 2, and a south Everson sidewalk project being



funded through the Transportation Alternatives Program [TAP]. The Kirsh Dr project is going to construction this year, Mr. Harper said. He continued that they will probably obligate additional design money and right-of-way money for Lincoln St project phases 1 and 2 this year, with construction for that project anticipated in 2017.

Gary Davis said that the Whatcom County comprehensive plan transportation chapter went to the county council recently for its first run-through. They have a month to look it over and suggest edits. On April 19th they will have another meeting regarding the chapter.

Bill Bullock updated the group that the City of Blaine is rolling with the Hughes Ave design. They have hired TranTech to design the project. They also have a TIB project on Mitchell Ave slated to go to construction this summer. The preliminary engineering of the Boblett St re-channelization project probably won't happen until next year, he said.

Chris Comeau announced that the City of Bellingham comprehensive plan transportation element has gone through three sessions with the transportation commission and then recently was brought to the planning commission. There will be a public hearing in May and then the plan will go on to the city council. A citywide bicycle wayfinding project is currently happening, he said, that will help give guidance to bicyclists around the city. Yesterday they kicked off their Lakeway Dr bikeway study project, which will look at the feasibility of putting bicycle facilities on Lakeway Dr. The Woodstock Way-James St intersection will presumably be constructed this year, Mr. Comeau said, at the end of summer or the beginning of fall. The right of way acquisition on Mahogany Ave is in process. The Orchard St underpass project is approaching 100 percent design, and now they are waiting for Connecting Washington funding to become available, Mr. Comeau said. The project is still slated for 2018 construction.

Tom Stacey said that Elizabeth Sjostrom is coordinating the review of comprehensive plans for the Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT]. He updated the group on the Bakerview Rd interchange project, which is receiving \$10MM in Connecting Washington funding. They have five alternative scenarios now and are doing some preliminary engineering and analysis to narrow them down. If there's an access break to I-5, he said, then they will complete an interchange justification report [IJR] for that. The project is slated for construction in 2019 or 2020.

Lethal Coe announced that he needs any Transportation Improvement Program [TIP] amendments by April 20th for the May 11th Whatcom Transportation Policy Board [WTPB] meeting.

Hugh Conroy told the group that the comprehensive plan transportation element certification process was adopted by the WTPB. He also said that he just submitted WCOG's draft Unified Planning Work Program [UPWP] to WSDOT for review. Mr. Conroy will be sending out the time of the UPWP review meeting, occurring May 9th. WCOG employees have new phone numbers, he added, but the old WCOG office number will still work.



Sylvia Goodwin said that the Port of Bellingham is already updating its airport master plan due to passenger volume being down 16 percent from their current plan's projections. The Federal Aviation Administration [FAA] will not provide funding for capital projects if traffic is too far below projections, she said. Ms. Goodwin added that the new plan may affect projected vehicle traffic in the Bakerview Rd interchange area, so they may have to do a traffic study. Canada, she said, is changing its tax structure to make flying from there more favorable, which could have an impact on Bellingham airport. She also said that roads down near the waterfront development may be open by 2017, with the first building possibly opening in the spring of 2017.

Bob Wilson said that Senator Kevin Ranker is watching over the Kendall trail appropriation in the state senate.

Bill Bullock said that the City of Blaine's interpretive sign project, funded through the Surface Transportation Program [STP], has been completed and was closed out last week.

APWA construction materials specifications update

Hugh Conroy said that he received a call yesterday from the American Public Works Association [APWA] Washington chapter regarding local agency general special provisions [GSPs]. The GSPs are on the WSDOT website. They are gathering feedback, Mr. Conroy said.

Where jurisdictions meet

Hugh Conroy explained that he wanted to open up discussions on where comprehensive plan transportation elements do or could specifically address facilities and services that link adjacent jurisdictions.

Chris Comeau agreed that TTAG is the place to discuss this from a regional, MPO standpoint. He gave an example of the City of Bellingham working with Ferndale, Whatcom County, and WSDOT through the comprehensive plan update.

Joe Rutan said that the north Bellingham/south Ferndale area is good example of a multi-jurisdiction "meetup" area. Chris Comeau identified the W Horton Rd corridor, where the new connection goes through the city, the city's UGA, and then the county to the north. Hugh Conroy suggested the Marine Dr corridor as a similar multi-jurisdictional area.

Joe Rutan described some jurisdictional overlays the county has with UGAs. He said the biggest overlay is with Lummi Nation, and then there are unincorporated UGAs like Birch Bay and Columbia Valley that have similar issues to other overlay areas. Mr. Rutan recommended starting the discussion with a focus on city UGAs.



Joe Rutan said that in the Blaine area there is a gap between the City of Blaine’s jurisdiction boundaries where the county maintains the roadway. The road goes from urban specification to county specification, and back to urban, which he said is a problem. Bill Bullock agreed and said that this is the main conflict area for Blaine in terms of cross-jurisdictional transportation corridors. Mr. Rutan continued that the Aldrich Rd area in north Bellingham is a similar case.

Hugh Conroy suggested that the group can continue this discussion of the management of transportation systems as the regional plan gets updated.

Chris Comeau said that in the City of Bellingham’s comprehensive plan they tried to provide clarity on level-of-service [LOS] discrepancies between the city and neighboring jurisdictions. He concluded that more discussion is needed, not only about the issues but the expectations as well.

Gary Davis asked if it would be worth it to have a policy in the county’s transportation element regarding coordinated strategies for interjurisdictional corridors. He said he can draft something for review.

Defining the Regionally Significant System (RSS)

Hugh Conroy handed out a draft description of the regionally significant system (attached). The main goal is to consider, for WCOG’s 2017 M/RTP update – a more specific definition of our region’s transportation system that includes facility types, services, and programs for all modes, not just our roads. The current plan discusses a wide array of modes and services is less clear about what it defines as the regional system that the plan is focused on.

WCOG will continue work on a draft RSS definition including some suggestions regarding existing terms (such as “sub-regional industries,” “activity centers,” etc.) and bring it back to the TTAG for a recommendation to the WTPB.

Compiling projects for the regional TIP

Lethal Coe showed the group a table of the projects from the current 2012 regional plan. He will add the new projects to the old list, he said, and he is looking for input from jurisdictions about the projects. Mr. Coe said he will send out the projects list for the 2017 plan.

Draft financial forecast for 2017 M/RTP update

Lethal Coe also showed local revenue and expenditure trajectories for the region.

Mr. Coe said he has been working with Kasi Reeves at WSDOT’s budgeting office to develop growth rates and a cost-construction index for expenditures. He presented financial tables. Mr. Coe said that he



is planning on breaking out the local expenditures by construction and preservation/maintenance/operations.

FAST Act Freight programs

Hugh Conroy said that in the new federal five-year transportation authorization act (the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, or FAST Act), there are two freight provisions. He said that states and MPOs are eligible for the discretionary grant portion of these programs. Mr. Conroy showed a map of the national highway freight network, and, in Whatcom County, that includes SR 539 up to SR 546, SR 546 east to SR 9, SR 9 from SR 546 to the international border crossing, SR 543, and Interstate 5. He reviewed the eligible applicants and projects as detailed in a WSDOT PowerPoint explaining the new FAST Act freight provisions.

Mr. Conroy said that he will email out the WSDOT presentation that has the finer details of the provisions.

Meeting Adjourned 12:00 PM

Whatcom Council of Governments – First DRAFT of updates to the M/RTP definition of the Regionally Significant System (RSS) – for March 24 2016 TTAG

Introduction

An important parameter around our regional transportation planning efforts is our definition of the system we're planning for. To this end, WCOG's current M/RTP (2012) defines a "regionally significant road system" (pg. 49). The regionally significant roads are by far the biggest facility asset in our system but our regional transportation plan, like our region's *local* transportation plans and *state's* plans, is multimodal and inclusive of operations and transportation demand strategies. Thus, as we develop the framework for a 2017 M/RTP update (*Whatcom Mobility 2040*) we are initiating a discussion about developing a more complete RSS definition.

The 2012 M/RTP text - Excerpt, pg. 49:

To help identify which projects will have the greatest benefit, a regionally significant road system has been identified to show which facilities will be impacted the most by future development.

Criteria used to determine the regionally significant road system were developed by the TTAC and CTAG in 2010. The criteria are consistent with the state's regional transportation planning program standards. They include:

1. All state routes.
2. Surface routes serving facilities and projects of regional significance and connecting to the regional routes or facilities.
3. Routes serving major activity centers.
4. Public transportation routes connecting cities and major activity centers with other regional routes.
5. Intermodal facilities and the routes connecting them to other regional routes or facilities.
6. Streets and roads classified as arterials under the Federal Highway Administration system of functional classifications.
7. Washington State Freight and Goods Transportation System routes rated T-3 & T-4.
8. Other streets and roads which support sub-regional industries.

Goals of an RSS update

- Establish the RSS as a parameter around the scope of our MPO/RTPO work program, not only as criteria for the M/RTP project list.
- Include all regionally significant modes, system-management strategies, and facilities.
- Include regionally significant facilities even if they are "externally" owned (e.g. BNSF Railway tracks and rail carriers, U.S. and Canadian border ports-of-entry, Alaska ferry, etc.)
- Improve definitions or corresponding lists for terms like *facilities or regional significance, major activity centers*, etc.

A first **DRAFT** updated RSS description (*new is blue*)

Roads

1. All state roads
2. Roads serving intermodal facilities and facilities of regional significance.
3. Roads serving major activity centers.
4. Roads classified as arterials per the Federal Highway Administration functional classification system.
5. Washington State Freight and Goods Transportation System routes rated T-3 & T-4.
6. Roads that support sub-regional industries (combine with activity centers / employment / production)

Bicycle & pedestrian

7. Bike routes and bike & pedestrian trails serving regional connections or intermodal facilities.

Rail

8. Rail roads (tracks and related facilities).
9. Passenger rail stations.
10. Freight rail carrier services (BNSF, CN, other?)

Marine

11. Alaska Marine Highway.
12. Public ferry boats and auto & passenger terminals.
13. Marine cargo terminals and services.

Transit

14. All public transit services.
 - a. WTA (and partners on intercounty services)
 - b. Lummi Transit
 - c. Private scheduled route operators (Greyhound, Bolt Bus, Bellair Airporter, Quik, etc.)
 - d. Amtrak Cascades intercity rail service
 - e. School district -- buses

Other facilities

15. Intermodal
 - a. Bellingham International Airport
 - b. Ferry terminals
 - c. Rail stations
 - d. Bus stations (WTA & stations used and or operated by private transit companies e.g. BellAir Airporter, Greyhound, Bolt Bus, QuikShuttle).
 - e. Park and rides
 - f. Freight truck parking? Intermodal-transfer yards?
16. U.S. and Canadian federal border inspection stations.
17. Parking facilities that serve regional trips or goods-movement
 - a. Employment centers

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- b. Institutional centers (schools, hospitals)
- c. Retail and services
- d. Intermodal (rail, ferry, transit, park and rides, etc.)

Programs

- 18. Safety
- 19. Transportation demand management
 - a. Whatcom Smart Trips
 - b. Washington State's Commute Trip Reduction program
- 20. System management and operations programs and strategies (including intelligent transportation systems – ITS)
- 21. Transportation system planning (UPWP)
 - a. MPO/RTPO planning
 - b. IMTC Program – cross-border regional planning.
 - c. North Sound Connecting Communities (NSCC) Program planning.