



Meeting Summary

Regional Transportation Technical Advisory Group [TTAG]

Thursday, April 27, 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
Sylvia Goodwin	Port of Bellingham
Ravyn Whitewolf	City of Blaine
Bob Wilson	WCOG
Chris Comeau	City of Bellingham Public Works
John Shambaugh	Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT]
Joe Rutan	Whatcom County Public Works
Rick Nicholson	Whatcom Transportation Authority [WTA]
Keri Cleary	Nooksack Tribe

Current Event Updates

Bob Wilson informed the group that the Washington State legislature regular session ended Sunday, and legislators are now in special session. The transportation budget was passed, which sets aside \$12.1MM for the city of Blaine’s I-5 exit 274 interchange reconfiguration project and \$350K for the Slater Rd- Jordan Creek bridge replacement. Mr. Wilson said that the capital budget and operating budget still need to be passed. There will be \$5MM set aside in the capital budget for the Jordan Creek bridge, and at this time the Kendall-Columbia Valley trail is not in the budget, Mr. Wilson said, but there is still time to potentially add it.

Lethal Coe reminded the group that the next Whatcom Transportation Policy Board meeting is May 10th. After that they will meet July 12th, and Mr. Coe asked that if jurisdictions have any amendments to the Transportation Improvement Program [TIP] to give him notification by June 21st. He also reported that the city of Bellingham’s Woodstock Way project has been obligated. The region has now obligated 11 percent of its obligation target for the year.



Joe Rutan of Whatcom County Public Works explained that crews are already underway working on the Slater Rd-Jordan Creek bridge. The road will be closed through the end of the year and into 2018. He also informed the group of damage caused by a dump truck and trailer to the railing and a water main on the Breckenridge Rd bridge over Sumas River last week. They should have it fixed by next week, he said. The Birch Bay berm project is still in the right-of-way acquisition phase, but Mr. Rutan expects the project to be out to bid this fall. Chip seal has started in the northwest county, he added. Mr. Rutan also said that the manager of Whatcom County's Engineering Services, located in the Northwest Annex, has retired, and they are advertising for that and another engineering position.

John Shambaugh reported that there was recently a meeting at Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT] headquarters regarding the Bakerview Rd interchange justification report [IJR]. They made some minor edits and will get the IJR plan off to the Federal Highway Administration [FHWA] in a week. Design for the Bakerview Rd interchange starts in July with construction in fall.

Sylvia Goodwin said that All American Marine has moved their current boat project from Fairhaven to the Bellingham waterfront, where their new facility on Roeder Ave is now operational. Itek Energy will also be moving to a new location in Bellingham soon. Ms. Goodwin reported that the Port of Bellingham is trying to start budgeting for next year – they are looking at Marine Dr improvements in Blaine and a trail around the Bellingham Airport. They will try and apply for a Recreation and Conservation Office [RCO] grant for the trail. She said that the port is also potentially looking at rail crossing quiet zones for the at-grade crossings by the Alaska Ferry Terminal in Fairhaven. The port will help fund 25 percent of a new economic development position, with another 25 percent coming from the city of Bellingham and 50 percent coming from Whatcom County. Enplanements at Bellingham Airport continue to decline, Ms. Goodwin said, and they will be finishing up the airport master plan by the end of the year.

Rick Nicholson told the group that the Whatcom Transportation Authority [WTA] board passed their strategic plan update, and the plan will be on WTA website tomorrow. He also said that WTA was recently notified of a grant award for rural transit service in the northern county, connecting those communities without having to first go through Bellingham. This will be a 2-year pilot program, but if it is successful, they may keep the route on, Mr. Nicholson said. Skagit Transit also recently was awarded funding – they will be increasing their county-connector services between Bellingham and Everett. WTA is reviewing its vanpool program right now, which has been declining for 4 years. They are working with Western Washington University [WWU] on negotiating the next 5 years of the WWU universal bus pass and improvements to the Lincoln Creek park and ride. WWU is committed to paving the park and ride regardless of help from the legislature or grants. Chris Comeau added that WWU needs to upgrade the storm water facilities at the Lincoln Creek park and ride before the city will allow them to pave it.

Ravyn Whitewolf said that they are seeing new development being constructed in Blaine – out by Semiahmoo and off of Peace Portal Dr on the west side of the railroad tracks. She reported that Blaine held a value engineering meeting for the Hughes Ave project last week, where they identified over



\$100k in savings for the project. She is hoping that there is enough funding to extend pedestrian facilities across the Hughes Ave bridge over I-5. The \$12.1MM from the legislature will be enough money to construct the southbound offramp of exit 274 and possibly start other parts of interchange.

Chris Comeau reported that the city of Bellingham has prepared its draft 6-year TIP, which will be published for viewing on Tuesday. The TIP has to be adopted in June. The James St-Woodstock Way intersection realignment will be starting in June, and the intersection will not be closed during construction. The 12th St-Mill Ave sidewalk project is also beginning in June. The W Maplewood Ave corridor improvement is beginning late June or early July, after school is on break. The city's Mahogany Ave project is beginning this fall and will go through winter. The city also has a dozen bicycle and pedestrian projects occurring throughout summer. The W Holly St construction will be wrapping up next month, Mr. Comeau said.

Rollin Harper informed the group that in Nooksack, WSDOT is adding a stop sign on S Pass Rd and W Columbia St (SR 544) coming out of Everson as part of a one year pilot to test the stop-control at the SR 544/SR 9 intersections. In Everson, the city is going to construction in May for its Kirsch Dr project, which is Transportation Improvement Board funded (TIB) funded. They are also hoping to go to construction on their Lincoln St phase 2 project this year, Mr. Harper reported.

Hugh Conroy said that WCOG's unified planning work program [UPWP] is up for review by the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board at their May 10th meeting. The 2017 UPWP describes all transportation planning activities anticipated within the next two years and indicates which of those activities will receive federal funding. Mr. Conroy said that he added an unfunded needs section to the UPWP that includes projects of interest to WCOG, such as a household travel survey and capturing traffic counts at external locations (external to WCOG's metropolitan planning area). The Policy Board will also look to approve WCOG's regional transportation plan update at the May 10th meeting. On May 2nd and 3rd, the Transportation Border Working Group [TBWG] is hosting their annual plenary meeting in Bellingham at Western Washington University. Washington State Governor Jay Inslee's transportation policy advisor Charles Knutson and Washington State Secretary of Transportation Roger Millar will both be speaking at the event. There will be a port tour on the second day, where a charter bus will take meeting attendees to Canada Border Services Agency's [CBSA] new Aldergrove port-of-entry, to the Pacific Highway ports-of-entry, and to the US Customs and Border Protection [US CBP] rail Vehicle and Cargo Inspection System [VACIS] south of Blaine. Mr. Conroy also reported that pedestrian plans are in development for the Pacific Highway and Peace Arch-Douglas ports-of-entry. Signage near a pedestrian path under the I-5 overpass that leads to the US CBP facilities in Blaine will be removed, opening up pedestrian pathing northbound (previously only southbound).

Update: Adoption of the regional transportation plan will be an action item at a special Policy Board meeting in June.



WSDOT Corridor Sketch Initiative - draft Whatcom Mobility Profiles for selected regional corridors

John Shambaugh gave a presentation on the status of WSDOT's Corridor Sketch Initiative in the Mount Baker area. The initiative is currently focusing on Mobility (one of six statewide policy goals). Phase one of the initiative started a couple years ago, where mobility corridors were identified and data was collected on transportation issues within corridors. Phase 2 started in January, when the M³ team was established (M³ standing for Multiagency, Multidisciplinary, and Multimodal). They have heard consistent feedback regarding concerns with preservation, Mr. Shambaugh said. The WCOG travel demand model was used in identifying mobility challenges in each corridor.

At their first workshop, the M³ team looked at contributing factors to mobility challenges, both reoccurring and non-reoccurring. They used this information to come up with four strategy themes: Operations, Demand Management, Policy Change, and Strategic Capacity Improvements.

Mr. Shambaugh asked that jurisdictions look over the corridor profiles, which were emailed out and handed out at the meeting. The profiles describe the challenges in each corridor and apply the four strategy themes to meet those challenges. WSDOT is looking to gather all feedback by May 5th or shortly thereafter.

Regional plan update - *Whatcom Mobility 2040*

Open Houses

WCOG staff set up a tent at the Bellingham Farmer's Market on Saturday, April 22nd, as part of the outreach they are conducting for the Whatcom Mobility 2040 regional transportation plan update. They had posters on easels that detailed some forecasts in the plan, the role of WCOG as a metropolitan/regional transportation planning organization, and ways to get involved in the transportation planning process. Staff also handed out transportation related fortune cookies and asked that community members mark which regional transportation goal they find most important to them (out of the seven main goals identified in the plan).

Staff will also be doing outreach in Kendall, Lynden, and Blaine. These events will be more traditional open houses, where posters will be setup in an accessible space and staff will be on hand to answer questions.

Plan Website and maps

Hugh Conroy said that WCOG is looking to finish the regional transportation plan draft by May 5th. All plan content is on the website, whatcommobility.org. Mr. Conroy said that their goal for this update was to have an interactive plan that is more appealing to community members than a hard-copy or PDF document. For instance, there are interactive map sections where users can select different



transportation data to display around the Whatcom County region. Hard-copy sections are attached in the website as well. A PDF of the compiled plan will be created and a link will be send out to TTAG members.

2020 Census - Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA): Discussion of how our region might engage with this federal program aimed at ensuring a complete and geographically accurate list of living quarters addresses

Hugh Conroy said that he added a provision in the UPWP about WCOG potentially leading an effort to work on the Local Update of Census Addresses [LUCA] for the 2020 Census. This would mostly be a preliminary dwelling analysis before official census counters go out into the field.

Lethal Coe explained that Rick Campbell at the U.S. Census Bureau contacted WCOG regarding LUCA. He would like to provide an overview presentation sometime May or June for the Whatcom region.

Continued discussion of regional transportation data needs and opportunities

Timing and scope of a regional household travel survey

Lethal Coe said that he would like to conduct a regional household travel survey as early as 2018. There are about 92,000 housing units in Whatcom County, and he said he would like to get about 1,000 participants for the survey. Mr. Coe said that this may cost about \$200 per person participating in the survey. With 1 percent of households being the ideal capture, Mr. Coe estimates total costs between \$250K-\$300k, which would include providing incentives for underrepresented populations to participate in the survey.

The last household travel survey was conducted in 2008. Mr. Coe said that trip activity seems to be on the rise, and he would like to keep the travel demand model refreshed with current travel characteristics.

Applications of newer data sources (e.g. cell phone probe segment speeds, O-D)

Hugh Conroy noted that conducting a household travel survey by phone is outdated. There are issues with using any one technology, as this will bring in a specific demographic that may not best represent the entire region.

There was discussion on technologies used to conduct outreach for the survey and to participate in the survey. Chris Comeau suggested that WCOG create a pros and cons document of strategies for getting people to participate in the travel survey, detailing some of the prevailing technologies and case studies.



Upcoming discussions with SCOG and WSDOT about interest in regional O-D data collection

Hugh Conroy said that he recently attended a meeting with representatives from WSDOT and the Skagit Council of Governments [SCOG] regarding the need for better freight and passenger vehicle travel data at external stations (entry/exit points to WCOG and SCOG's respective planning areas). Mr. Conroy created a matrix of current challenges with external stations, the data that could be collected to meet those challenges, and the tools that could be used to collect the data. Tools include: video (capturing license plates), Bluetooth, WIFI, cell phone probe data, fleet management probe data, vehicle intercept, and mailed surveys.

There is potential for the Washington State Patrol to help with freight intercept.