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TTAG May 24, 2016 Meeting Summary

Attendees:

Jaymes McClain	Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG]
Lethal Coe	WCOG
Gary Davis	Whatcom County
Rollin Harper	Everson, Nooksack, Sumas
Joe Rutan	Whatcom County
Chris Comeau	City of Bellingham
Chad Schulhauser	City of Bellingham
Hugh Conroy	WCOG
Bill Bullock	City of Blaine
Ron Cubellis	WCOG
John Shambaugh	Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT]

Current Event Updates

Gary Davis told the group that Whatcom County's comprehensive plan transportation element will probably go through one more session with the county council. They anticipate that adoption of the plan will be in July.

John Shambaugh informed the group of an upcoming interchange justification report [IJR] support team meeting for the Bakerview Rd interchange. They will be narrowing down the alternatives to 2 or 3.

Lethal Coe reminded everyone to notify him of any transportation improvement program [TIP] amendment updates by June 22nd. The next Whatcom Transportation Policy Board meeting is June 30th.

Chris Comeau said that the city of Bellingham's comprehensive plan transportation element went through the transportation and planning commissions and will go through the city council in June. They are also anticipating a post-June adoption of the plan. Mr. Comeau added that the city's Lakeway Dr bikeway study is currently underway.

Chad Schulhauser reported that the bicycle boulevards for Nevada St, Illinois St, and Kentucky St will be going out to bid. They will also be implementing some turning restrictions on Illinois St.

Rollin Harper said that the comprehensive plans for Everson, Nooksack, and Sumas have been sent off to the state. Each jurisdiction is planning on adopting their respective plans by the June 30th deadline. There is construction on Kirsh Dr in Everson, Mr. Harper said, as part of a transportation improvement board [TIB] funded project.

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Hugh Conroy said he and Melissa Fanucci recently attended a Transportation Border Working Group [TBWG] meeting in Alexandria Bay, New York. Some of the topics included discussion on the preclearance agreement between the US and Canada and a new federal council in the US (called the border infrastructure prioritization council) that will prioritize port-of-entry improvements. The TBWG will be holding a regional border planning peer exchange in Bellingham next month, June 8th and 9th. The main topic will be border master planning, both in respect to the work the International Mobility and Trade Corridor program [IMTC] has done in the Cascade Gateway as well as efforts on the southern border to comprehensively plan across multiple government entities in the border environment. Mr. Conroy said they are anticipating attendees from both the northern and southern border, including Texas DOT and folks from the Buffalo-Niagara region. Starting June 20th, the WCOG and the Border Policy Research Institute [BPRI] will start their data collection effort for the IMTC Border Freight Operations study [BFO]. Student research assistants will observe and record commercial truck movements at both US Customs and Border Protection [US CBP] and Canada Border Services Agency [CBSA] facilities at Pacific Highway, Lynden-Aldergove, and Sumas-Huntingdon.

Review of obligation status for STP projects

Ron Cubellis reported that as a region, jurisdictions are $2MM behind in meeting the surface transportation program [STP] obligation target, with the deadline in July. Mr. Cubellis suggested that the city of Bellingham could rearrange funding for their waterfront development project, obligating the federal funding sooner and using local funds later in the process.

Regionally significant system: Brief review of revised section with input from April TTAG

The third draft of the regionally significant system [RSS] definition document is attached in the meeting packet. Hugh Conroy said that he edited the previous draft to include updates from the last meeting. He encouraged the group to look over the document and send him any further suggestions.

Regional perspective on level-of-service measurement

Hugh Conroy returned to the brief discussion at the last meeting which cited the example of the Slater Rd interchange, which is covered by four different jurisdictions' LOS standards. A basic question for the group is if this kind of a scenario is a problem.

Current LOS methods used in Whatcom County

Mr. Conroy showed a graphic of LOS methodologies by jurisdiction.

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Chris Comeau pointed out that most LOS standards look at vehicle traffic solely and look at peak hours rather than whole days. Bellingham departs from this, he said, and includes all modes. If regionally we are looking at more modes, then there needs to be a different methodology, he said.

Hugh Conroy said that in the regional transportation plan, LOS needs to be documented for roads of statewide significance.

Joe Rutan commented that per the Growth Management Act [GMA], the county should have separate LOS methods than the cities. Chris Comeau noted that county LOS breaks down in urban areas, where there needs to be more comprehensive methodology. In Bellingham, LOS methodology includes some performance measurement such as collision history and transit ridership and frequency. For non-motorized modes, their LOS looks at the completeness of the system as a major component of the methodology. Measuring volumes and congestion in a PM peak period is useful, Mr. Comeau said, but that only measures auto capacity in a small slice of the day. Mr. Comeau continued that Bellingham's LOS methodology is more "plan-based" to include all modes as well as account for land-use. He added that this methodology may not translate to the regional scale because of every jurisdiction's different goals.

Hugh Conroy said that in the regional plan, he will dedicate a paragraph or two to the understanding that LOS's are different within the region.

John Schambaugh suggested incorporating more modes in a regional methodology, but keeping it flexible enough for each jurisdiction's unique goals and characteristics to fit.

Current challenges

Rollin Harper explained that for small jurisdictions in the county, state highways are the main roads through town, and those LOS levels are at grade A or B.

Joe Rutan reiterated that an LOS tool would be different for the county than for cities. Having shoulders on county roads help immensely in terms of LOS, he said. There is different infrastructure in rural areas than in a city. Every road in the county is graded and reported to the County Road Administration Board [CRAB].

On the topic of LOS for transit, Gary Davis said that the county's comprehensive plan refers to Whatcom Transportation Authority's [WTA] plan for their transit component. Chris Comeau added that Bellingham does the same thing. Bellingham also provides on-time performance for WTA on arterials, he said. John Schambaugh commented that the consultant for WTA's strategic plan update does not have a performance measure for transit. Chris Comeau said that they use passenger per mile and ridership.

There was ongoing discussion.

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John Schambaugh said that it could be beneficial that for future transportation studies in the region, prior to the study, multiple jurisdictions could agree on appropriate LOS methodology for the specific project.

Hugh Conroy said that for the federally proposed performance measures coming out the MAP-21 transportation act, travel times are the main measure. These are proposed to be based on cellphone probe data collected through HERE Traffic.

John Schambaugh added that after it's adopted by the federal government and then the states, it will come to the MPO level. In the future there will be the ability for input.

Next steps
Hugh Conroy said that he will draft components of this discussion.

Next TTAG meeting
June 23rd is next TTAG meeting. The group will then discuss the information technology systems [ITS] component of the regional transportation plan, which is being led by Melissa Fanucci. Hugh Conroy said that he may hold off on drafting selection criteria for federal funding until the regional goals are discussed and drafted.