



TTAG September 22, 2016 Meeting Summary

Attendees:

Jaymes McClain	Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG]
Lethal Coe	WCOG
Rollin Harper	Everson, Nooksack, Sumas
Joe Rutan	Whatcom County
Chris Comeau	City of Bellingham
Hugh Conroy	WCOG
Bill Bullock	City of Blaine
Ron Cubellis	WCOG
John Shambaugh	Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT]
Becky Kelly	Whatcom Transportation Authority [WTA]
Kevin Renz	City of Ferndale
Matt Jensen	Lummi Nation
Keri Cleary	Nooksack Tribe
Bob Wilson	WCOG
Doug Burghart	Whatcom County
Mehrdad Moini	WSDOT

Current Event Updates

Susan Horst of Whatcom Smart Trips informed the group that Charles Marohn of Strong Towns will be coming to Bellingham on October 20th to give several presentations on the financial health of American cities. Mr. Marohn is a former planner from Minnesota. He started a blog on the financial aspects of city planning, which grew into a member organization call Strong Towns. Mr. Marohn will be participating in multiple events on October 20th, speaking at three different locations in Bellingham – City Hall, Western Washington University [WWU], and the Leopold Crystal Ball Room. Ms. Horst said that Bellingham Public Works Director Ted Carlson will also be speaking at WWU.

Mary Anderson gave an update on the Kendall Rd trail project, which aims to construct a bicycle-pedestrian path to parallel SR 547 (Kendall Rd) through Columbia Valley and Kendall. The Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG] received funding from the state legislature to conduct preliminary engineering for the project. A coalition of Whatcom County, WCOG, the Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT], and local citizens chose Wilson Engineering for the project’s preliminary engineering, Ms. Anderson said. Chris Comeau suggested the project be coordinated with the Mt. Baker Foothills Welcome Center project happening near the SR 547-SR 542 roundabout. John Schambaugh said that the trail will connect up to the existing sidewalk network at Kendall Elementary School, near the roundabout.



Mary Anderson also told the group that WSDOT is currently having a call for consolidated grants. Projects meeting criteria in WCOG's Human Services Transportation plan are eligible for the grant funding. Those that would like to apply will give a presentation to a stakeholder group on October 4th, with applications due October 14th, Ms. Anderson said.

John Schambaugh said that there is a support team meeting on September 28th for the Bakerview Road interchange justification report [IJR]. They are looking to have a briefing with the Bellingham transportation commission on October 11th and an open house on October 25th. The venue is to be determined.

Joe Rutan said that Whatcom County is pouring the deck on the bridge at Saar Creek on South Pass Rd. The bridge is close to opening. Doug Burghart said that roadway safety improvements are being constructed, which include signs, shoulders, and rumble strips. The Potter Rd bridge project is also finishing up. With regards to the Birch Bay berm project, as soon as the right-of-way is taken care of, they will move to construction immediately.

Matt Jensen gave an update on Lummi Nation projects, saying that the Kwina Sidewalk project is about two-thirds complete. Their bus shelter project was just submitted to Whatcom County for review, after which they will do a request for proposal [RFP]. There are 9 shelters in total, which they hope to get done by the end of January. Mr. Jensen added that they have submitted the Gooseberry pedestrian project to the state for review.

Kevin Renz said that the city of Ferndale is wrapping up its Washington St project, and they are doing their first paving today. The project should be complete by the beginning of October, he said.

Becky Kelly announced that the Whatcom Transportation Authority [WTA] is having a public hearing on October 4th regarding service expansion proposals for 2017. The hearing will be at 6 PM at the Bellingham Public Library, central branch.

Mehrdad Moini, the Local Programs Engineer for WSDOT's Northwest Region, met this past week with Bellingham, Everson, and Lummi Nation regarding some of their projects. WSDOT has received applications for Transportation Improvement Board [TIB] complete streets program from 14 agencies, with Bellingham being the only one in Whatcom County to have submitted. On October 14th, WSDOT headquarters selects their top 10 projects and moves them on to TIB. Mr. Moini also said that Bellingham's Mahogany Ave arterial project is currently pending a State Transportation Improvement Program [STIP] amendment in order to get the NEPA approved so that right-of-way [ROW] funds can be obligated. Whatcom County's Roberts Rd and Anderson Creek bridge projects are also pending a STIP amendment due to a cost increase.

Chris Comeau gave an update for city of Bellingham. This year was relatively light in terms of construction, but next year there will be more construction activity, he said. They are hoping to get their



comprehensive plan update adopted by November. Bellingham has been conducting a bikeway study on Lakeway Dr from Woburn St to Holly St to determine the feasibility of a bikeway. They had an open house regarding the study last week. Mr. Comeau also said that the city is conducting a similar Samish Way corridor study. Coming out of the Bakerview Rd IJR, the city is looking to do an intersection safety study at Northwest Dr and W Bakerview Rd. By the end of 2016, there will be bicycle wayfinding signage on Northwest Ave and the Illinois St route across the freeway. All future Bellingham capital projects will have bicycle wayfinding signage, as well as some existing routes that they will be retrofitting, Mr. Comeau said. With regards to the October 20th Strong Towns events, the American Planning Association [APA] Northwest section will be guiding a walking tour of N State St, discussing the city of Bellingham's planned improvements of the corridor. Mr. Comeau also said that the James St-Woodstock Way intersection reconstruction will begin in January, Holly St from Railroad Ave to Bay St will be resurfaced in March and April, and W Maplewood Ave from Northwest Ave to Alderwood Ave will be reconstructed as a safe-routes-to-school project.

Rollin Harper reported that the city of Nooksack just started construction for the TIB-funded W Madison St project. They had a meeting in August with WSDOT about the SR 9-SR 544 intersection, where there are significant backups during heavy traffic. WSDOT is conducting a study, and there could be stop control adjustments, Mr. Harper said. In Everson, the Lincoln St phase 1 and phase 2 projects are going forward. It is possible that design and ROW will be completed in the next couple months with both phases going to construction in 2017, he said. One of the segments of the Everson SR 544 sidewalk project is a top-tier safe-routes-to-school project.

Lethal Coe said that the draft of the 2017 WCOG Transportation Improvement Program [TIP] will be open to public comment at the beginning of October. On October 12th there will be a public hearing at the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board meeting.

Bill Bullock reported that the city of Blaine just completed their Mitchell Ave project, which was TIB-funded. The project fixed the settling I-5 bridge. They are at 30 percent design of the Hughes Ave project. Mr. Bullock also said that the city has an application for TIB for another \$500k to bring that project from phase 2 to Blaine's city limits. They are still focused on developing an at-grade solution to the I-5 exit 274 interchange, where they hope that a connection can be made to Odell St, which parallels I-5.

Mehrdad Moini added that WSDOT is offering a class for administering A&E on October 25th. Individuals have by October 13th to apply. The class is \$350 for 9 hours of class in-house at WSDOT.



Federal funds obligation targets – state and local response to adopted policies

Discussion and consideration of a recommendation from TTAG to the WCOG Policy Board regarding projects that will miss their obligation deadline

Ron Cubellis reminded the group that WCOG receives an obligation target from WSDOT every year. The deadline for meeting the target is September 30th, but group will be about \$2MM short of the target, Mr. Cubellis said. This is the first time that this metropolitan planning organization [MPO] hasn't met its target, but there are other MPOs that are also not meeting their targets. Washington State as a whole will meet its target, thanks in part to Puget Sound Regional Council [PSRC] obligating beyond its target. Coming out of a state coordinating MPO meeting, it sounds like MPOs will get a pass this year regarding being short of obligation targets, Mr. Cubellis said. However, the \$2MM that WCOG is short this year will be added to the obligation target next year.

After discussion, Rollin Harper made a motion to recommend to the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board [WTPB] that projects that will miss their obligation deadline but are making substantial progress not have their funds reallocated. Chris Comeau seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

Ron Cubellis said that if obligation happens to exceed the target amount set by WSDOT, the target amount is lessened in the next round.

TTAG discussion of projects to include on a 2017 unfunded priority project list. (This item is added to the agenda at the request of the WCOG Council Board.)

Bob Wilson explained that the Council Board, not the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board, will be approving this unfunded priority project list for 2017. They are requesting that TTAG vet projects for this list before their special meeting on October 12th. The project list will then go to Olympia for the January legislative session. Mr. Wilson noted that transportation will likely receive little attention this session as there is currently a major focus on education issues.

Mr. Wilson requested that jurisdiction representatives describe what projects they would like to have in the unfunded priority project list.

Joe Rutan said that Whatcom County's W Horton Rd project from Aldrich Rd to Northwest Dr will go on the list, at a conservative ask of \$5MM for construction. He also included a culvert project on Slater Rd at Jordan Creek, where they need to build a 140 ft. bridge for about \$5.5MM, and an intersection improvement at W Smith Rd and Northwest Dr, which will likely be a roundabout for \$4MM.



Becky Kelly described WTA's need for an expansion at Bellingham Station, which is at capacity currently. They are asking for \$1.1MM for a second concourse. They are looking to expand their county-connector service between Bellingham and Mt. Vernon by adding an additional weekday trip and Sunday trip. This would be a \$480k per year ask, Ms. Kelly said (solely for WTA's portion of the route and not the Skagit Transit portion). At the Lincoln Creek park and ride they are also looking to make more improvements in coordination with Western Washington University [WWU], with a funding ask of \$4MM. This amount may be updated, Ms. Kelly noted.

Chris Comeau said that the W Horton Rd extension project is the city of Bellingham's number one unfunded priority, but they don't have a cost estimate currently. Hugh Conroy suggested that they can modify the form for the unfunded priority project list and separate the ask amount from the total project cost so that the asking amount is not confused for the whole project cost. Mr. Comeau continued that coming out of the interchange justification report [IJR], option 2 for interchange improvements to the Bakerview Rd would be about \$6-9MM. Also appropriate for the list is the James St-Bakerview Rd roundabout project, which would be about \$3.5MM.

Bill Bullock described the exit 274 interchange improvement the city of Blaine has been planning. They have determined an at-grade alternative that could be constructed for \$5-6MM.

Bob Wilson explained that the next step is to get information about the projects from each jurisdiction. WCOG will put together a list of projects, with each project showcase containing the location of the project, a brief description, and the ask amount. Mr. Wilson requested that jurisdictions give their projects to WCOG in the order that they want them prioritized.

Compilation to-date of jurisdictions' projects for Whatcom Mobility 2040 (2017 R/MTP update)

Jaymes McClain is compiling projects from each jurisdiction in WCOG's metropolitan planning area for inclusion in the regional transportation plan update (Whatcom Mobility 2040) fiscally constrained long-range project list. The project list will include projects estimated to go to construction as late as the year 2040. Mr. McClain said that he has over 300 projects compiled currently, though he still needs long-range project lists from some jurisdictions, whom he will contact.

Projects will be added to the 2040 projects list based on criteria that will be outlined in the plan itself. WCOG staff will make an initial effort of selecting projects that meet the regional criteria and then give this draft list to TTAG for review, Mr. McClain said.



Discussion of criteria for listing projects in the 2017 update to the R/MTP

Hugh Conroy reviewed the draft regional transportation system goals of the Whatcom Mobility 2040 plan update, which are based on each jurisdiction's individual goals from current comprehensive plans. There are 7 goals that jurisdictions have similarly listed in their plans. From most frequent to least frequent these include:

1. Safety
2. A multimodal transportation system
3. Efficiency, effectiveness, and system sustainability
4. Environmental quality
5. Access and convenience
6. Maintenance and preservation
7. Freight transportation

Chris Comeau noted that Economic Development as a goal is missing. Mr. Conroy explained that only a few jurisdictions explicitly adopt that as a goal, so it was not included on this draft list.

Hugh Conroy also went through the draft for the regional project list criteria. As currently drafted, to be included in the 2040 project list, projects would need to show a relationship to the regional goals, a benefit to the region, be on the regionally significant system [RSS], and be fiscally viable. The draft sections of the plan are on WCOG's website. Mr. Conroy reminded the group that the definition of the RSS has been expanded to include more than roads – the RSS includes facilities for all modes, connections to regionally important destinations like schools and hospitals, and transportation programs within the region.

Jaymes McClain said that he is gathering the starting date of projects rather than the completion date, which was used in the last regional plan update. He is specifically looking for the year of the beginning of the construction phase, he said. There was discussion that not all projects will have a construction phase. Joe Rutan suggested using the "start to advertise" date for projects to indicate when they begin.

STPG 2016 call for projects: schedule, initial discussion about modifications to proposal form and criteria (carry over topic from last meeting)

The draft STBG project application form is attached in the meeting packet. Hugh Conroy pointed out changes from the last application, which are highlighted in yellow. The available funding ask will be from two years allocation this time, Mr. Conroy said, from 2021 to 2022. There was discussion about the language for when to indicate obligation.



Mr. Conroy showed that the evaluation criteria are now ordered similarly to the regional goals. There was discussion on “economic development” being listed as a criterion. Last time, this criterion was hard to define and score without being subjective, some members thought.

The group agreed to look at the draft, send along feedback, and continue review at the next TTAG meeting.

Meeting adjourned 12:00 PM