

Whatcom Transportation Policy Board Minutes May 13, 2026

In Attendance (In-person or via Zoom)

Members *Voting:* **Bellingham:** Kim Lund; **Everson:** John Perry; **Ferndale:** Greg Hansen (2nd Vice Chair); **Lynden:** Scott Korthuis (Chair); **Nooksack:** Kevin Hester; **Sumas:** Bruce Bosch; **Whatcom County:** Jon Scanlon; **WSDOT:** Justin Resnick; **Whatcom Transportation Authority:** Michael Lilliquist (1st Vice Chair).
Ex-officio -- Whatcom Public Utilities District No. 1: Atul Deshmane.

Staff Lethal Coe, Hugh Conroy (Secretary), Melissa Fanucci.

Others McBride & Benge Public Affairs: Riley Benge; WWU photographer: River Martinez.

A. **Call to Order**

Hugh Conroy determined that there was a quorum, and Chair Korthuis called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

B. **Public Comment**

None

C. **Approval of the minutes**

Motion: Mr. Sidhu moved, seconded by Mr. Lilliquist, to approve the minutes of the meetings of March 11, 2026. **Motion passed** with none opposed.

D. **Old Business**

Nones

E. **Obligation Status Update & Consideration of Request to Allocate Federal Funds to Improve 2026 Obligation Delivery**

Mr. Coe reviewed the memo in the packet and the suggested motion to approve allocation to a modified list of projects.

On the broader issue of regional projects looking for support, Mr. Sidhu cited recent requests he has received from the City of Blaine to support their applications for funding the design phase of the Bell Rd. railroad grade separation / bridge. Mr. Sidhu asked if WCOG had received similar inquiries and asked what kind of support WCOG could also offer for this project. Mr. Conroy asked for clarification as to whether WCOG support would be for a specific funding source (e.g. County EDI funds, direct sub-allocation of federal STBG funds). Mr. Sidhu clarified that he envisioned endorsement but had no specific financial assurance. Chair Korthuis indicated agreement with signing a letter from WCOG supporting advancement of the project but not indicating that WCOG would direct funding to the project [at this time]. There was consensus around this conclusion.

Pertaining to one of the proposed funding recipients, Mr. Scanlon asked for a brief overview of the Pine St. project in Bellingham. Ms. Lund described the project, its growing importance relative to development of the Salish Landing park (underway) and roadway safety alongside upcoming shipping terminal facility expansion.

Mr. Scanlon asked if BNSF Railway was putting any funding into the project. Ms. Lund said that BNSF agreed to sell some land to Bellingham so that the city could do slope work required for the project.

Motion: Mr. Sidhu moved, seconded by Ms. Lund, to approve the allocation of regional Surface Transportation Block Grant & Carbon Reduction Program funds as presented. **Motion passed** with none opposed.

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F. **Public hearing: Amendment #3 (26-05) of WCOG's 2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

Mr. Coe reviewed the requested amendments.

Chair Korthuis opened the public hearing at 3:39. No members of the public being present, the public hearing was closed at 3:39.

Discussion: Mr. Sidhu asked for clarification on projects at Northwest & Slater.

Mr. Deshmane asked for clarification on WTA's bus replacements.

Motion: Mr. Sidhu moved, seconded by Mr. Hester, to approve Amendment #3 (26-05). **Motion passed** with none opposed.

G. **2027 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)**

Mr. Coe reviewed the memo and the draft UPWP in the packet – pointing out the recent review process with WSDOT, FHWA, and FTA; and the relatively small number of changes from the WCOG's current UPWP.

Mr. Scanlon asked about work on the Language Access Plan and if that was a federal requirement. Ms. Fanucci explained that WSDOT requires it under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which applies to any agency receiving federal funding. Mr. Scanlon noted that other counties have received grant funding to conduct language-access work noting Skagit County who is just under the non-English speaking household threshold for Spanish (5%). Ms. Fanucci clarified that Whatcom County exceeds the 5% threshold for Spanish.

Ms. Lund noted that the City of Bellingham has recently completed updating language access activities and would be happy to connect WCOG with staff that can share lessons learned.

Motion: Mr. Scanlon moved, seconded by Mr. Sidhu, to approve the State Fiscal Year 2027 Unified Planning Work Program for the Whatcom Metropolitan Planning Area as presented. **Motion passed** with none opposed.

H. **Director's Report**

Mr. Conroy noted the addition to the packet of a public feedback summary – communications and meetings with community stakeholders since the last WCOG Transportation Policy Board meeting. Mr. Conroy intends to make this a standing part of reports to the Policy Board going forward – especially as a way to better connect the discussion of WCOG's Community Transportation Advisory Group (CTAG) with the Policy Board which created CTAG to provide facilitated input.

Other updates included:

- Melissa Fanucci is wrapping up a large amount of public engagement for WCOG's Human Services Transportation Plan update (e.g. attending the East Whatcom Health Fair on Saturday)
- Smart Trips recently completed this year's 7th Grade Bus Travel Training program with almost all Whatcom County middle schools.
- WCOG is in the early stages of shifting the regional travel demand model from a long-standing trip-based model to a more robust activity-based model. WCOG will be doing this with our same model vendor, Caliper Corp. It is expected that an activity-based model will better reflect multiple modes (transit, active transportation) and better complement growing focus on metrics like vehicle-miles-traveled (VMT) and related greenhouse gas emission measures and targets.

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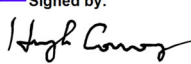
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- Hugh Conroy and Melissa Fanucci attended the U.S.-Canada Transportation Border Working Group meeting in Detroit, MI – with attendees from border states and provinces and US FHWA and Transport Canada, US Customs and Border Protection, and Canada Border Services Agency.
 - Mr. Conroy noted presentations from staff working on high-speed rail from Toronto, ON to Montreal, QB. This initiative is still in public outreach and design phases but farther along than high speed rail initiatives on the Cascadia Corridor. More info on this project is at AltoTrain.ca
 - Transport Canada presented on the status of that agency’s involvement with finalization of Canda-U.S. pre-clearance operations – one location being pre-clearance for the Amtrak Cascades at Pacific Central Station in Vancouver, BC. Transport Canada will be giving a version of this presentation at WCOG’s May 18 IMTC meeting in Bellingham.
 - May 12 Quarterly meeting of WSDOT and WA metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs)
 - Included a presentation from WSDOT Assistant Secretary for Regions, Todd Trepanier. Mr. Conroy expects to receive the slides from that presentation soon and will forward to the WCOG Policy Board. The presentation seemed to cover a lot of issues that the Policy Board has had questions about over the last few years and would possibly be informative for upcoming discussions and/or requests for future agenda items involving WSDOT.
 - Mr. Conroy was contacted by the Washington State Transportation Commission (WSTC). They are looking ahead to holding a “remote” meeting in Bellingham in 2027. The commission typically dedicates a portion of these two-day meetings to tour regional projects. Mr. Conroy will update as any planning comes together.
 - WCOG is holding an IMTC Assembly meeting in Bellingham next week (May 18). Mr. Conroy also reviewed WCOG’s continued tracking the continued decline of cross-border travel by British Columbia residents.

Mr. Scanlon also noted that some local governments are using Strava location data to better understand bicycle travel patterns, routes, etc.

I. Mr. Korthuis adjourned the meeting at 4:17.

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Signed by:

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Hugh Conroy
Secretary

Approved on July 8, 2026