

Whatcom Transportation Policy Board
DRAFT Minutes
July 8, 2026

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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); **Sumas:** Bruce Bosch; **Whatcom County:** Jessica Rienstra, Satpal Sidhu; **WSDOT:** Melissa Ambler, Justin Resnick; **Whatcom Transportation Authority:** Michael Lilliquist (1st Vice Chair).
Ex-officio -- Whatcom Public Utilities District No. 1: Eddy Ury.

Staff Lethal Coe, Hugh Conroy (Secretary), Ron Cubellis.

Others McBride & Benge Public Affairs: Riley Benge; Public: Ed.

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. Hansen, to approve the minutes of the meetings of May 13, 2026. **Motion passed** with none opposed.

D. **Old Business**

Nones

E. **Public hearing: Amendment #4 (26-07) of WCOG's 2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

Mr. Coe reviewed the requested amendments.

Chair Korthuis opened the public hearing at 3:33. No members of the public being present, the public hearing was closed at 3:34.

Discussion: Mr. Sidhu gave an update on the County's project at Birch Bay-Lynden Rd. Property acquisition took longer than expected but has now been resolved. Work will likely start next year.

Motion: Mr. Hansen moved, seconded by Ms. Lund, to approve Amendment #4 (26-07). **Motion passed** with none opposed.

F. **Certification of Whatcom County County-wide Planning Policies**

Mr. Coe reviewed the memo in the packet and the decision to request RTPD certification of the county-wide policy updates before considering certification of all local-government comprehensive-plan transportation elements. Previously, the plan was to consider certification of everything together but ongoing comprehensive plan development has prompted partners to request certification of the county-wide policies sooner.

Motion: Mr. Hansen moved, seconded by Ms. Lund, to certify that the updated Countywide Planning Policies for the Whatcom region are consistent with the Whatcom regional transportation plan.

Motion passed with none opposed.

G. **Obligation Status Update**

Mr. Coe provided an updated overview of regional STBG, TA and CRP funded projects planned for obligation by the September FFY deadline/close. Currently the region is on track to exceed the

delivery target with the news that the City of Bellingham is obligating their project's right-of-way phase, with some remaining concerns and monitoring over a couple of projects. Mr. Coe continued that WCOG is awaiting news on the redistribution opportunity and may now be eligible to submit for redistributed funds should they become available.

Mr. Sidhu notified the board that Whatcom County's project that is currently preparing for obligation may have further right-of-way issues that they hope will be resolved soon.

H. **Director's Report**

Public Feedback Summary: Referring to summary data included in the meeting packet, Mr. Conroy reviewed feedback received to-date in response to WCOG's online open house for the regional transportation plan update.

Mr. Korthuis asked if there had been outreach on social media. Mr. Conroy listed the partner websites and news outlets that have published the invitation and link. The online open house will be active for several more months and staff will continue to promote engagement through additional channels including social media.

Other items:

- Riley Benge of McBride & Benge Public Affairs reviewed State of Washington budget forecasts which show significant reductions in revenue.
The Road Usage Charge (RUC) bill is expected to be reintroduced in the next session.
There is significant attention being paid to a jobs bill that, in part, relates to transportation jobs.
The effort to repeal the "millionaire's tax", if successful, would significantly affect future budget scenarios.
- Mr. Coe reviewed the currently expected schedule for WCOG's next call-for-projects to be funded from the Surface Transportation Block Grant program (STBG).
- Mr. Conroy noted early reviews of the BUILD Act – a 5-yr transportation reauthorization bill introduced in the U.S. House.
Mr. Conroy also noted a significant proposed rule-making (change) for federal regulations under the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The changes would flow down to many federal agencies (including FHWA and FTA) and could affect how federal funding agreements works for various sources that WCOG uses.
- Mr. Conroy reminded that WSDOT's I-5 Corridor Project (I-5 master planning and high-speed rail) will be presenting and seeking feedback at WCOG's October 14 Policy Board meeting.

H. **Board Open Forum**

Ms. Ambler noted that, for those interested, WSDOT will be set up at Civic Field in Bellingham on Saturday to distribute pieces of the "Bellingham Rock" that WSDOT needed to break apart and remove from its location near I-5.

I. Mr. Korthuis adjourned the meeting at 4:03.

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Hugh Conroy
Secretary

Approved on October 14, 2026