

Whatcom Transportation Policy Board
DRAFT Minutes
October 14, 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); **Nooksack:** Dave Finet; **Whatcom County:** Jessica Rienstra, **WSDOT:** Melissa Ambler;
Ex-officio -- Whatcom Public Utilities District No. 1: Eddy Ury.

Staff Lethal Coe, Hugh Conroy (Secretary), Ron Cubellis, Melissa Fanucci

Others Les Reardanz (WTA), Ed, Jen Everett, Cecile Malik, Erin Ellig, WSDOT: Jason Beloso, Kathryn Murdoch, Ben Tripousis

A. **Call to Order**

Hugh Conroy determined that there was a quorum, and Chair Korthuis called the meeting to order at 3:32 p.m.

B. **Public Comment**

None

C. **Approval of the minutes** (Meeting of July 8, 2026)

Motion: Mr. Finet moved, seconded by Mr. Hansen, to approve the minutes of the meeting of July 8, 2026. **Motion passed** with none opposed.

D. **Old Business**

Nones

E. **Public hearing: Amendment #5 (26-10) of WCOG's 2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

Mr. Coe reviewed the requested amendments.

Chair Korthuis opened the public hearing at 3:34. No members of the public being present, the public hearing was closed at 3:35.

Motion: Mr. Hansen moved, seconded by Ms. Lund, to approve Amendment #4 (26-10). **Motion passed** with none opposed.

E. **Public hearing: Considering Adoption of the WCOG 2027 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

Mr. Coe reviewed the requested amendments.

Chair Korthuis opened the public hearing at 3:45. No members of the public being present, the public hearing was closed at 3:45.

Discussion: Mr. Scanlon asked if there were truly no Whatcom County projects listed in the TIP. Mr. Coe, assuring the board that there were several Whatcom County projects on the TIP project list, determined that one page of the project-table was unintentionally left out of the meeting packet. The board agreed to have Mr. Coe read the "missing" projects into the record before making a motion on adoption. Mr. Coe listed the following projects for the record:

For Whatcom County – Marine Drive II, Birch Bay Lynden Rd./Kickerville Rd Intersection Safety Improvements, Jackson Rd./Terrell Creek Bridge No. 81 Replacement, Martin Rd./Anderson Creek Bridge No. 248 Replacement.

For WSDOT – SR 542/Glacier Creek Bridge CED – Replace Bridge; Asphalt/Chip Seal Preservation; SR 539/Telegraph Rd. to Westerly Road – ADA Compliance; SR 542/Unnamed

to Mitchell & High Creeks – Fish Passage; I-5, SR 9, SR 539 & SR 543 Cascade Gateway Advanced Border Information Systems; I-5 Slater Rd & Northwest Drive – Intersection Improvements; and SR 548 Dakota Creek Bridge Painting.

Motion: Ms. Lund moved, seconded by Mr. Hansen, to adopt the WCOG 2027 Transportation Improvement Program as presented and including the projects read into the record. **Motion passed** with none opposed.

F. **Updates to WCOG’s Obligation Authority (OA) Policy.**

Mr. Coe reviewed the memo – explaining the continuously increasing motivation to be strategic in regional programming of federal transportation funding to ensure federal and state deadlines are met and WCOG avoids loss of future funding – a state-imposed penalty if the OA target is missed for two consecutive (targets for using awarded federal funding within the federal fiscal years it was awarded for).

The proposed OA Policy changes more clearly explain a WCOG goal of meeting the OA target early (by June 30) in order to qualify to apply for redistributed funding (funding taken from other states for failure to meet federal deadlines). The basic deadline to meet the annual target is the first week of September.

In order to increase the probability of using the targeted amount of OA, WCOG will also aim to identify a list of contingency projects – various categories of projects that are already using or plan to use federal funding and could, with board-approval, use more of WCOG’s federal funding sub-allocations if the originally identified projects run into unexpected delays

Motion: Ms. Lund moved, seconded by Mr. Finet, to approve the revisions to the WCOG Obligation Management Process as presented. **Motion passed** with none opposed.

G. **Consideration of Certification of Local Governments’ Updated Comprehensive Plan Transportation Elements.**

Mr. Coe reviewed the memo – WCOG’s responsibility, as a regional transportation planning organization (RTPO) to certify local transportation elements as required by WA’s Growth Management Act (GMA); WCOG’s adopted certification check-list process and the fact that all eight local comprehensive plans have gotten at least to the final-draft stage (five already having been adopted). All transportation elements have been evaluated by staff for conformity with GMA and consistency with the regional/metropolitan transportation plan (R/MTP).

Motion: Ms. Reinstra moved, seconded by Ms. Lund, that the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board certify that the transportation elements of all the Whatcom region jurisdictions conform with the state Growth Management Act (GMA) requirements and are consistent with the Whatcom regional transportation plan. Policies for the Whatcom region are consistent with the Whatcom regional transportation plan. **Motion passed** with none opposed.

H. **Cascadia High-Speed Rail (HSR) & I-5 Master Plan Update & Discussion**

WSDOT’s Cascadia Program Administrator, Ben Tripousis and Rail, Freight & Ports Strategic Planning Manager Jason Beloso presented on the continuing work on HSR, I-5 master planning, and the Amtrak Cascades passenger rail service. Follow-up questions were about time and cost estimates for HSR. Mr. Tripousis noted that those types of estimates are expected to be done with completion of the service development plan – which will identify more of the route and service options that will affect cost and schedule. The WSDOT team noted the recent opening of an on-line survey and encouraged feedback there as well as sharing of the survey with others. The I-5 master planning program has also identified six “goal categories” and MPOs along the corridor will continue to be engaged in refining more specific goals under each category as well as the relative prioritization of goal-categories for future project selection and ranking.

I. **Obligation Status Update**

Mr. Coe reviewed the status of projects, confirming that WCOG did not meet its obligation target this year and so will also have a bigger target to meet next year to avoid sanctions. Illustrating the strategies discussed previously as part of the OA policy updates, Mr. Coe reviewed several projects that could be brought into the mix to use a sufficient amount of federal funding to at least meet the target and possibly document that by June 30.

J. **Director's Report**

Public Feedback Summary: Mr. Conroy reminded the Policy Board that WCOG is almost finished with the final draft of an updated Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP). Public engagement for the HSTP has resulted in letters from Recreation Northwest, Walk & Roll Bellingham, and the Blaine Birch Bay Parks and Recreation District 2. All of the letters recommend that the HSTP add a goal of developing a regional, active transportation network with a central purpose being to improve biking and walking connections between rural community centers. The HSTP advisory committee has discussed this feedback and agreed to respond by adding language that clarifies that the currently-drafted HSTP goals apply to all modes of transportation – including biking and walking. Addition of a separate goal for overall development of an active-transportation network was acknowledged to be already well supported in WCOG's regional/metropolitan transportation plan (R/MTP) and part of the R/MTP's system performance measurement reporting.

Multimodal Level of Service: Mr. Conroy explained that another responsibility of RTPOs is to develop level-of-service standards, in cooperation with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), for its region's state highways that are not designated as highways of state-wide significance (referred to as non-HSS state routes). With the recent state-law change to multimodal level of service (MLoS) and WCOG's regional plan update deadline of June 2027, WCOG is starting the discussion with WSDOT about developing an MLoS standard for our non-HSS state routes. This will likely include new definitions of land-use contexts, various facility standards for non-vehicle modes e.g. sidewalks, bike lanes, bus-stop accessibility, ADA standards, etc. This discussion will continue to involve the Transportation Technical Advisory Group.

I. Mr. Korthuis adjourned the meeting at 4:52.

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Hugh Conroy
Secretary

Approved on January 20, 2027