



# CTAG

citizens' transportation advisory group

It matters how we get there

Meeting Summary  
October 9, 2018

## Attendees:

Terri Hansen	The Arc of Whatcom County
Izaak Post	Bellingham
Bob Hendricks	Bellingham / WTA Gold Card holder
Mathew Santos	Bellingham Technical College
Kathy Berg	Birch Bay
Bruce Prior	Blaine Public Works Advisory Committee
John McGarrity	Cornwall Park Neighborhood (Bellingham)
Terry Terry	Lummi Island
Mark Robbins	Pt. Roberts
Myron Wlaznak	Silver Beach
Hugh Conroy	WCOG staff
Jaymes McClain	WCOG staff
Bob Wilson	WCOG staff
Rick Nicholson	WTA staff
Maureen McCarthy	WTA staff
Mike Bozzo	WTA staff
Kay McMurren	WWU
Jillian Trinkaus	WWU / Columbia Neighborhood (Bellingham)

## Citizens' Transportation Advisory Group (CTAG)

### Initial Results from summer IMTC cross-border passenger vehicle survey

Jaymes McClain reviewed the 2018 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Survey. The International Mobility and Trade Corridor Program (IMTC) is a coalition of public, private, and non-government entities interested in improving cross-border trade and transportation through Whatcom County and the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. The Passenger Vehicle Survey is a data collection effort supported by the IMTC member agencies and managed by the Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) and the Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI) at Western Washington University (WWU).



In June and July of 2018, research assistants from WWU interviewed motorists road-side at British Columbia-Whatcom County border crossings. The data they collected include cross-border trip origins and destinations, trips purposes, and frequency and duration of travel.

Mr. McClain reviewed some of the data that was collected over the summer. Of all trips observed crossing south into Whatcom County, 78 percent were destined for locations in Whatcom County and 22 percent were destined for other locations.

Research crews will also collect data in February of 2019. A project report will follow.

## Policy Board update

Bob Wilson reported that the Council Board will be asked to approve a Professional Services Agreement with Wilson Engineering for the SR 547 Kendall trail. The project would then be able to start on preliminary engineering within a month.

*Update: The Professional Services Agreement was approved by the Council Board.*

## Human Services Transportation Plan & regional Consolidated Grant project proposals

Hugh Conroy informed the group that the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board will be considering the adoption of an update to the Human Services Transportation Plan [HSTP]. As part of the HSTP planning process, stakeholders in the region identify transit and services gaps for people who do not drive due to age, income, or disability. The HSTP was last updated in 2016. The HSTP includes a project list. Projects that adhere to the plan are eligible for WSDOT Consolidated Grants. The draft HSTP update is currently on the WCOG website.

The 2018 update brings awareness to the growing gaps in access to food, especially in rural areas of Whatcom County. One new plan component is emergency response coordination between school district bus departments and WTA for moving vulnerable populations. The plan also looks at the role of technology in helping vulnerable populations move in the county, especially how transportation network companies [TNC] like Uber and Lyft could fill gaps between other modes of transportation.

The project list contains four projects, which the stakeholder group has ranked. The number one ranked project is WCOG Mobility Management, which helps fund 7<sup>th</sup> Grade and senior transit education. The second ranked project, WTA Mobility Management, will help educate para-transit uses on the use of fixed-route bus services. The third project is Lummi Transit Operations and the fourth project is WTA's Improving Public Transportation in Rural Whatcom County.

*Update: The updated Human Services Transportation Plan was adopted by the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board.*



## **Update on Whatcom Transportation Study (regional household travel survey) underway**

Lethal Coe reviewed WCOG's Whatcom Regional Transportation Study, which is being managed by RSG. The purpose of the study is to understand the county's travel behavior. The last travel survey was conducted in 2008 and its data is still used for the regional travel demand model. However, since 2008, Whatcom County has grown by 20,000 people, Bellingham has been implementing complete transportation networks, there are more requirements for transportation projects to be ADA-compliant, and other changes have occurred over the past decade.

Over 40,000 survey invitation mail-outs were sent to households around Whatcom County (about half of the county). The goal is to have at least 1,000 complete household travel surveys. The survey is mostly smartphone-based. So far there are nearly 3,000 recruits and 735 completed surveys. Of those currently conducting the survey, 74 percent are using the smartphone-based rMove app while others are using a paper-based survey or are calling-in their trips. Once all completed surveys are submitted and the database organized, a final report will come out in April 2019.

Kathy Berg commented that students living in Birch Bay commute to schools in Blaine, and nearly half of them are on a reduced-price lunch program. She is interested in seeing demographic data and travel characteristics of the area in this survey.

## **Whatcom Transportation Authority Community Advisory Panel (WTA CAP)**

### **Review and discussion of WTA budget initiatives – *Shonda Shipman***

Shonda Shipman reviewed WTA's 2018 budget and initiatives for 2019. They are forecasting a \$1.1MM net loss for 2018 (capital expenditures and federal grants minus net capital expense). Ms. Shipman reviewed safety, technological, and environmental improvements to WTA operations in 2018. For 2019, Ms. Shipman detailed future budget themes, projections for Whatcom County demographics and monetary trends, revenue and expenditure expectations, outlook of wages and benefits at WTA, operating initiatives, and capital projects. The draft budget for 2019 will be presented to the WTA Board on October and will be up for approval in December after public commentary and other refinements.

Jillian Trinkaus asked if the \$1MM net loss in 2018 is it a concern. Shonda Shipman explained that they will be monitoring that figure over the course of the rest of the year.

Terry Terry asked if there is significant employee turnover occurring at WTA. Ms. Shipman explained that WTA has many older drivers retiring as well as some new trainees moving on to more lucrative employment. WTA is routinely training new drivers.



## **Review and discussion of proposed service changes for June 2019 – Rick Nicholson**

Rick Nicholson reviewed WTA's service plan proposal for June 2019. They are proposing a 3 percent increase in service next year. There will be three public meetings regarding the service changes.

Mr. Nicholson showed that while annual bus boardings have been declining as the economy has improved over the last couple of years, boardings have plateaued since WTA's strategic plan update in 2017. For next year's budget, one main priority of the WTA Board is addressing food deserts in the county and one main priority of staff is to maintain on-time performance. Route 4 (Hospital) is proposed to be changed to alleviate the food desert issue in the Birchwood neighborhood and Routes 533 (Yew St) and 525 (Electric) are proposed to be modified to fix low boardings. WTA is proposing reconfiguring the Blue Line routes to WWU to help solve on-time performance. They do not plan on renewing grant funding for the minimally-used east-west pilot route. Instead, they plan on creating a new east county route from Maple Falls to Lynden to try and address food desert issues in the area.

## **Update on project to expand Bellingham Station – Mike Bozzo**

Mike Bozzo updated the group on WTA's planned expansion of Bellingham Station. The station operates on "pulse" system – all buses come in and leave and roughly the same time. The preferred option for station expansion is building one more bus concourse along part of Railroad Ave while keeping some northbound parking. The preferred alternative design converts the remaining northbound parking on Railroad Ave to parallel parking spaces. The design will add public space areas, more sheltered bike parking, and charging for electric buses.

Maureen McCarthy said that the station building hours were just extended in September.

Jillian Trinkaus asked if there are plans to expand the number of bikes that can go on the bus. Currently, three can fit on the front rack of a bus. Rick Nicholson said that at the driver's discretion, sometimes bikes are allowed on the bus.