



# Meeting Summary

## Regional Transportation Technical Advisory Group [TTAG]

Thursday, March 22, 2018 10:00 – 12:00

Whatcom Council of Governments  
314 E Champion St, Bellingham, WA

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### Attendees:

Rollin Harper	Everson, Nooksack, Sumas
Jaymes McClain	Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG]
Hugh Conroy	WCOG
Chris Comeau	City of Bellingham Public Works
John Shambaugh	Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT]
Joe Rutan	Whatcom County Public Works
Ravyn Whitewolf	City of Blaine
Kirk Vinish	Lummi Nation
Rick Nicholson	Whatcom Transportation Authority [WTA]
Ron Cubellis	WCOG

### Member Updates

Joe Rutan reported that Whatcom County started bridge projects on Roberts Rd and Hannegan Rd. Traffic on Hannegan Rd will be detoured while the project is underway.

Rick Nicholson reported that the Whatcom Transportation Authority [WTA] is reviewing electric buses. Protera, an electric bus manufacturer, has demo models that can be used for pilot testing. They are rated to go 240 miles on a full charge, however a case study in Anchorage, AK showed that cold weather significantly reduces the range. WTA is discussing options for charging, as effectiveness in cold weather is a concern.

Chris Comeau reported that the new roads in the Bellingham waterfront development, Granary and Laurel, are in construction. Mahogany Ave is also beginning construction starting on the eastern end. The City of Bellingham is gearing up for a Lakeway Dr-Lincoln St project, where pedestrian crossing lights will be replaced with High-Intensity Activated crossWalk [HAWK] beacon signals. The Cordatta Pkwy-Stewart Rd roundabout will begin construction starting this summer.

Ravyn Whitewolf reported that the City of Blaine is in the final process of getting its Hughes Ave project approved for construction. They are hoping to go to bid next month. The city has selected a consultant

for the Boblett St channelization, and they are meeting with the Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT] next week regarding the design.

Hugh Conroy said that he attended a meeting at the University of Washington [UW] focused on freight. There were discussions on e-commerce and its effect on freight. Local industry gave their perspectives on the issue.

John Shambaugh commented on the Bakerview Rd interchange justification report [IJR], saying that they are in the design phase.

Rollin Harper reported that the City of Everson's Lincoln St project phases I and II are out to bid.

## **STBG and TA project statuses and estimation for 2018 obligations**

Hugh Conroy presented the Surface Transportation Block Grant program [STBG] and Transportation Alternatives program [TA] financial tables for the WCOG region. The region has already met and exceeded its 2018 obligation target by obligating over \$4.5MM for federal fiscal year [FFY] 2018. Because of this, those projects seeking to obligate before the end of FFY 2018 will need to use the Advanced Construction [AC] process. Using AC, the project agency fronts the federal funding amount (what would be obligated if there were authority), gets the okay from the Federal Highway Administration [FHWA] to begin construction, and then is reimbursed later when more obligation authority becomes available (beginning of the next federal fiscal year of sometimes sooner).

## **External Surveys**

Hugh Conroy announced that WCOG will be contracting with StreetLight Data to acquire probe data to create an external trip matrix for Whatcom County. The data will include the routes of vehicles entering and exiting Whatcom County, which will be useful to inform traveler characteristics in WCOG's travel demand model. The geographic coverage of the data will only include Whatcom County. The resulting trip matrix will apportion trips with an origin or destination outside of Whatcom County to a transportation analysis zone [TAZ] of trip-ends in the county and corresponding routes into or out of the county.

The probe data capture will be paired with tube counters laid across external station roadways. The tubes will collect volume data and classification breakouts. IDAX Data Solutions is being contracted for the traffic counts.

Hugh Conroy explained that initially WCOG had expected to use license plate capture technology for the project, but the probe data method is much less expensive and potentially much more informative. The probe data will also be useful for applications outside of the travel demand model.

## **StreetLight Data subscription and traffic counts**

The probe data that StreetLight Data will capture will be a sample of all vehicles moving through external stations. Data will be pulled monthly for the year. There were initial concerns with cross-border

probe data capture, such as: trips being marked “ended” when vehicles wait at the border; cellphones changing network carriers near the border; and trucks turning off their engines (and in-vehicle devices) at border inspection, resetting the device serial numbers that are necessary for linking trip waypoints.

Hugh Conroy explained that geo-fences will be established at routes intersecting with Whatcom County’s borders to capture the necessary sample. They will be able to tell where vehicles are going within Whatcom County, however they are not tracking where vehicles begin or end outside of the county.

## **IMTC Passenger Vehicle Survey**

Hugh Conroy reported that the 2018 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Intercept Survey is being planned for this summer. The U.S. Federal Highway Administration [FHWA] has committed \$66k to the project, with match funding being provided by the B.C. Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure [BC MoTI], the Border Policy Research Institute [BPRI], the Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG], and possibly others. The project will be jointly performed by WCOG and BPRI. Data collection will begin in early July.

The surveying consists of interviews of cross-border travelers as they wait in a border line-up or just after they finish inspection. Travelers are asked about their trip origin and destination, their trip purpose, how often they travel, and other border-related questions. A project report will follow after the field surveys and the data will be made available to all interested agencies.

Chris Comeau expressed interest in the modeling outputs from the survey data’s integration with WCOG’s travel demand model.

Ravyn Whitewolf expressed interest in a line of questioning regarding transportation mode choice, such as asking travelers’ opinion on using an Amtrak stop in Blaine.

The origin-destination survey data will be compared to the StreetLight Data probe data.

## **Additional Item – Household Travel Survey**

A TTAG sub-group interviewed two consultant candidates, RSG and Westat, to complete the 2018 Whatcom County Household Travel Survey. The group selected RSG, which has completed similar projects recently in the Puget Sound area. RSG uses a smart-phone-based trip tracking app as their main data collection tool. Hugh Conroy explained that they will try to avail the app to board members and TTAG and CTAG members for them to get a sense of the survey methodology.

Rollin Harper suggested that outreach materials could be associated with utility bills to help legitimize the project.

Chris Comeau suggested creating a public service announcement on the local BTV 10 TV channel.