



Regional Transportation Technical Advisory Group [TTAG] Meeting

Thursday, March 25, 2021 10:00 – 12:00

Virtual* Meeting Summary

**Due to social distancing recommendations during the COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting was held virtually.*

Attendees:

Chad Schulhauser	Bellingham Public Works (City of)
Chris Comeau	Bellingham Public Works (City of)
Rollin Harper	Everson, Nooksack, Sumas (Cities of)
Kevin Ranz	Ferndale (City of)
Donovan Sather	Nooksack Tribe
John Shambaugh	Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
Mehrdad Moini	WSDOT
Bob Wilson	Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG)
Hugh Conroy	WCOG
Lethal Coe	WCOG
Jaymes McClain	WCOG
Ron Cubellis	WCOG
Matt Aamot	Whatcom County Planning
Doug Ranny	Whatcom County Public Works
Jim Karcher	Whatcom County Public Works
Tim Wilder	Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA)

Member updates

Tim Wilder: The Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA) received its first of two electric buses on Monday. They will do testing and training before it goes into service. The buses are funded through the Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA) Low or No Emission (Low-No) program.

WTA is returning to pre-pandemic regular service on June 13. They will begin fare collection on July 1, and riders under 18 years old will ride free through WTA’s Youth Ride Free initiative. Summer service changes include adding a new route, Route 29, through Cordata, increasing service through Lynden, and starting the on-demand bus service in Lynden, called Lynden Hop.

Doug Ranny: The Whatcom County Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) transition plan is out for public comment. The plan will be introduced to the Whatcom County Council in April and a hearing will be held in May.

Kevin Ranz: The City of Ferndale is working on its Thornton St Overpass project. Crews will move to bridge construction after the earth has sufficiently settled, with is going quicker than anticipated. They are hoping for project completion in 2023.

Donovan Sather: Nooksack Tribe is embarking on a master planning session for a proposed health clinic on a property across from the old Nooksack casino, next to Deming Library. They are in discussions with the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) regarding access options to Mt Baker Hwy.

In May a marijuana dispensary will be constructed in the Marketplace Center next to gas station.

Tim Wilder: The clinic would attract transit riders who would need to cross the street – have there been discussions of street crossings? WTA could alter the bus route in that area to accommodate.

Donovan Sather: Yes, early design discussions include pedestrian routing.

Chris Comeau: The City of Bellingham's 2021 Transportation Report on Annual Mobility (TRAM) was recently completed. It is updated annually in advance of the City's 6-year transportation improvement program (TIP).

The City of Bellingham and the Bellingham Police Department coordinated on a grant application for a public safety campaign, which will be similar to the City's Travel with Care campaign launched in 2017.

Chad Shulhauser: The City of Bellingham's Orchard St Underpass project is progressing. Improvements to the N State St-Ellis St bridge will begin May 1. Drivers should expect detours around the bridge.

John Schambaugh: WSDOT is continuing with fish passage projects around Whatcom County. They are also working with the Forest Service to clear a road slide near Artist Point.

Jim Karcher: Whatcom County is finishing up its Birch Bay berm project in a month with a yearlong establishment period thereafter. Birch Bay Lynden paver, Rathbone to Lynden City. E Hemmi Rd, mitigating flooding this summer. Truck Rd fish passage project this summer. Gooseberry Point painting project. Small area paving for bridge approaches. Swift Creek improvements are active. Stormwater projects (Harborview, Silver Beach, Leward Way). Abbot Levy improvements. Lake Samish bridge replace, E Hannegan roundabout, Birch Lynden something.

Matt Aamot: City County planner group with work on city county interlocal agreement, which will expire next year.

Ron Cubellis: CORISA funding notices should have been emailed out. No sure how much will be coming to this region. Could be similar to ARA(?). Does not sound like projects have to be shovel ready in 90 days like previously.

Mehrdad Moini: WSDOT waiting on details of CORISA. Hearing much could be transit project related.

Rollin Harper: Could projects be turned aside from CA for small cities.

Hugh Conroy: MPO UPWP update due to WSDOT soon. Will bring to Policy Board for adoption in May. Will review draft document with partner stakeholders on May 14 at 2pm.

Public engagement survey will go out in the next couple weeks. Financial Working Group recently met, working on regional financial document(?). Received about \$8K from regional reallocation of monies, needs to be used this biennium so WCOG is planning on using it in beginning a Freight Survey project. Summary level state-of-good repair tracking, in the beginning stages.

Recommendation to the April 7th WCOG policy board meeting the following mitigation strategies to prevent loss of under-delivered project obligations for 2021 FFY. The following actions have been identified to obligate necessary funds by July 31:

- Allocate \$1 million of de-obligation funds from West Horton Road Extension – Phase 2 to Marine Drive Reconstruction
- Swap \$71,921 of Highway Infrastructure Program (HIP) funds for STBG funds between East Smith and Hannagan Road Intersection Improvements to Blair Dr Improvements
- Allocate STBG funds (amount to be solidified by meeting) to the following active projects: West Horton Rd Phase 1 and Birch Bay Dr. and Pedestrian Facility

Lethal Coe: Group had previously agreed to move de-obligated \$1M to Marine Drive project.

Looking to be short \$1.7M for regional deadline. Backfill Birch Bay berm (\$1.1M) and W Horton Rd Ph1 (\$600K) projects to fill gap. Have projects waiting in the wings.

Funding for WCOG data project being put in the UPWP and spreading it over future years.

TTAG votes to proceed as currently planned.

Update schedule for the call for projects:

Open call for projects	8-Apr
Applications due	13-May
TTAG Presentations (virtual?)	27-May
Jurisdiction scores due	17-Jun
TTAG review/recommend scores to Policy Board	24-Jun
Policy Board finalization of project selection	14-Jul

Lethal Coe: Call for projects updated since Policy Board meeting was moved to April 7. Call opens the day after.

WCOG 2045 transportation plan – outreach questionnaire beta-test results and launch strategy

Hugh Conroy: <Rolling through survey outputs – word clouds, goal-ranking chart, map output, age group/demographic charting.>

Postcards can be printed and mailed out next week, waiting on one last proof-read of Spanish language additions.

Random sample of addresses in the region, plus targeted low income and minority areas. Not a scientific sample though, so all are welcome to take it.

Tim Wilder: Have used social and health agencies to get work out before, that could be good strategy.

Preliminary findings from IMTC research on COVID impacts on regional cross-border freight flow

Hugh Conroy: Tracking commodity values across the US Canada border through Cascade Gateway throughout pandemic. The truck volumes were initially impacted by border restrictions, but have slowly regained normal levels. Wood products has been rising in pandemic. Interesting observations with commodities being carried by relatively few trucks but make up a considerable amount of total commodity value, like Machinery/Electric, Animal/Animal Projects, Service*.

*Service is US vehicles (used cars) coming from Canada, some is US origin products being returned from Canada.

Next TTAG meeting Thursday, April 22