



Meeting Summary

Regional Transportation Technical Advisory Group [TTAG]

Thursday, May 23, 2019 10:00 – 12:00

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

Attendees:

Chad Schulhauser	Bellingham Public Works (City of)
Chris Comeau	Bellingham Public Works (City of)
Ravyn Whitewolf	Blaine (City of)
Rollin Harper	Everson, Nooksack, & Sumas (Cities of)
Kevin Rentz	Ferndale (City of)
Mark Sandal	Lynden (City of)
Stephen Banham	Lynden (City of)
John Shambaugh	Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
Hugh Conroy	Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG)
Jaymes McClain	Whatcom Council of Governments
Lethal Coe	Whatcom Council of Governments
Ron Cubellis	Whatcom Council of Governments
Jim Karcher	Whatcom County Public Works
Mike Donahue	Whatcom County Traffic Engineering

Member updates

Jim Karcher: The Birch Bay berm project right-of-way (ROW) phase and permits are done. Whatcom County will look to do a call to bid in July and are hoping for construction in the fall. The County is also improving two northern-county bridges, one on Roberts Rd and one on Badger Rd. Crews are spot paving around the County starting in mid-June.

Chad Schulhauser: The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) will be paving Sunset Dr next month. Expect delays.

Chris Comeau: The City of Bellingham had a Transportation Improvements Program (TIP) meeting Monday night, detailing their 6-year TIP.

Mike Donahue: Whatcom County is working on an ADA transition plan.

Call for Projects extension for STBG Rural and TA Urban funds

Lethal Coe: There have been no applications for funding for the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Rural category and the Transportation Alternatives (TA) Urban category thus far. Those funds will be folded into the other categories if no project applications come in.

Deadline to submit is Monday, June 10th

Lethal Coe: The deadline for submitting project applications for STBG Rural and TA Urban has been extended to June 10th.

Rollin Harper: Suggestion that late project applications (those coming in after the stated deadline of May 9th) not be scored against the projects that met the application deadline with regards to the STBG “Anywhere” funds. The “Anywhere” funds would essentially be added to STBG Urban due to lack of STBG Rural project applications.

There was consensus that this suggestion was reasonable.

Hugh Conroy: Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) staff will make it clear to the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board that late project applications are being scored separately.

Scoresheets will be distributed Thursday, June 13th

Return scores by Thursday, June 20th

TTAG meeting to finalize scores on Thursday, June 27th

Presentations for STBG Urban and TA Rural projects.

These notes are in addition to the project presentations (i.e. information given that is not on presentation materials, as well as questions and answers).

STBG Urban projects

Whatcom – Birch Bay Lynden Rd & Blaine Rd Intersection Improvements

Jim Karcher: A roundabout or improved intersection is being considered for this intersection. A request for qualifications (RFQ) has been put out by Whatcom County. Contractor suggestions for the type of improvement will be considered.

Steve Bahnam: How did County come about the \$4MM project estimate?

Jim Karcher: The E Smith Rd-Hannegan Rd intersection project provided a comparable example of costs.

Lynden – West Main St and Berthusen Roundabout

Mark Sandal: W Main St is a primary access road to Lynden from the western County. The project is at 60 percent design. The intersecting roads have posted speed limits of 35 mph.

Lynden Door and Preferred Freezer Services are large industries located on Main St just east of the intersection.

When WSDOT improves SR 539, this route would be the preferred alternative route.

Ravyn Whitewolf: Does the cost estimate take into consideration previously awarded federal funding?

Mark Sandal: The City of Lynden is requesting STBG Urban funds purely for construction.

Jim Karcher: Freight that is using Main St, don't they go to SR 539?

Mark Sandal: Freight trucks want to get to I-5 and take different routes to get there.

Ravyn Whitewolf: Who owns what?

Mark Sandal: The north side of Berthusan Rd is owned by Whatcom County and the rest of intersecting roads are owned by the City of Lynden.

Ferndale – Thornton St Project, Vista Dr to Malloy Ave

Kevin Rentz: There is \$21.5MM dedicated for the Thornton St overpass project. There is full funding for ROW for the Thornton Rd overpass project.

Mark Sandal: How does access to this funding fit into the project timeline?

Kevin Rentz: The timing of the funding will line up with the project. If funding is awarded, the City of Ferndale can wait to build later than sooner, though sooner is preferred.

Rollin Harper: This project application is for funding for construction only?

Kevin Rentz: Yes.

Jim Karcher: Is BNSF Railway Company involved?

Kevin Rentz: There is no railroad crossing currently in the area. The overpass will be over the railroad tracks. BNSF costs are not included in this project estimate.

Blaine – Bell Rd (SR 548) and Peace Portal Ln Improvements

Ravyn Whitewolf: The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) vehicle and cargo inspection system (VACIS) is located just south of the City of Blaine and causes trains to slow down or stop, causing congestion at railroad crossings. The Bell Rd-Peace Portal Dr intersection is affected the most. This project is for improved channelization – extending and improving turn lanes to allow Peace Portal Dr traffic that is not turning to bypass congestion.

The design phase is near complete.

This route is Semiahmoo residents' access to the Blaine central business district (CBD).

Steve Banham: How will this project mesh with other scheduled work in the area?

Ravyn Whitewolf: The adjacent project is a grade separation over the railway. WSDOT has updated its concurrence letter and supports this channelization.

Kevin Rentz: The VACIS stops trains going both northbound and southbound?

Ravyn Whitewolf: Yes.

Jim Karcher: How are Emergency Medical Services (EMS) affected now?

Ravyn Whitewolf: If EMS is stuck on one side, they must find an alternative route. If they need to go straight on Peace Portal Dr, they drive around the congestion.

Bellingham – James-Bakerview Intersection Safety Improvements

Chris Comeau: Design is complete for the project. The City of Bellingham is beginning ROW. The funding request is for construction.

Steve Bahnam: Are transportation impact fees (TIF) being used?

Chris Comeau: Yes, TIF money are a portion of the local contribution. The City of Bellingham has a new TIF system that accounts for other modes of trips, not just cars.

Kevin Rentz: What is the King Mountain neighborhood residential mix?

Chris Comeau: There are both single-family and multi-family residences in the neighborhood.

Ravyn Whitewolf: Is it anticipated that ROW is needed for all four legs of intersection?

Chris Comeau: Yes.

Ron Cubellis: Are there no north connections out of the King Mountain neighborhood?

Chris Comeau: James St is planned to eventually connect to Van Wyck Rd in the future.

TA Rural

Everson – SR 544 S. Everson Sidewalk Improvements

Rollin Harper: Three of the 14 properties in the project area already have dedications, which will save costs.

Existing funding will be applied to design, ROW, and the first phase of construction. The City of Everson will plan to apply to the Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) for funding when project is further along.

Ravyn Whitewolf: No application for STBG Rural funding for this project?

Rollin Harper: No, TA Rural covers the rest of the costs for this project.

Rollin Harper: WSDOT is requiring the installment of a rectangular rapid flashing beacon at the end of the project area.