

It matters how we get there

Meeting Summary
March 24, 2010
Whatcom Council of Governments

CTAG Members

Kathy Berg, Chair
Dave Pros, Vice Chair
Glen Hallman
Chris Hatch

Carole Macdonald
Patrick Pollock
Larry Wickkiser

A.J. Garcia
Carol Berry

Technical Advisors

Ellen Barton
Gary Davis
John Hergesheimer

Jessica Lee
Maureen McCarthy
Chris Comeau

Administrative Support

Mary Anderson
Gordon Rogers

Start: 4:30

Stop: 6:30

In Attendance:

Members:

Kathy Berg
Dave Pros
Chris Hatch
Carol Berry

Administrative:

Gordon Rogers
Mary Anderson
Andres Gomez

Technical Advisory:

Gary Davis
Maureen McCarthy

Not in Attendance:

Members:

A.J. Garcia
Glen Hallman
Patrick Pollock
Larry Wickkiser
Carole Macdonald

Administrative:

Technical Advisory:

John Hergesheimer
Jessica Lee
Ellen Barton
Chris Comeau

I. Member Sharing

G. Davis: I have been working on the Rural Revisions in the County; we will be updating the Transportation element of our Comprehensive Plan around the same time the WCOG is doing their Whatcom Transportation Plan (WTP), so we will work closely with them.

K. Berg: Was the Birch Bay Community Plan adopted by the County?

G. Davis: I believe it was adopted not too long ago, I can look into that.

C. Hatch: Nothing to report.

D. Pros: I heard about an idea on how to help schools with their budget problems, let the school buses display ads on the sides.
Or, have the kids ride the WTA buses instead of school buses.

G. Rogers: Years ago CTAG talked about that as well as carrying non-students on school buses, R. Cowan from the Bellingham School District was a member. He considered it and researched it. There are many laws on who WTA and

school buses can carry; it is nearly impossible. There is more to it than you'd think. There are regulatory reasons to not do it.

C. Berry: It has happened elsewhere.

G. Rogers: Perhaps, but schools are not required to transport kids; every School District is a little different. There are issues having young kids on the same bus as adults.

C. Berry: I printed off a document signed March 15 by the USDOT; it is a policy statement that says "*The DOT policy is to incorporate safe and convenient walking and bicycling facilities into transportation projects. Every transportation agency, including DOT, has the responsibility to improve conditions and opportunities for walking and bicycling and to integrate walking and bicycling into their transportation systems. Because of the numerous individual and community benefits that walking and bicycling provide – including health, safety, environmental, transportation, and quality of life – transportation agencies are encouraged to go beyond minimum standards to provide safe and convenient facilities for these modes.*" It lists resources and action items. Some groups have made a public statement of support for this document, should CTAG do that?

K. Berg: It is like when we talked about complete streets.

M. McCarthy: I brought some documents that were shared with WTA's Board of Directors at our last meeting; they will give you some background information about the sales tax measure. They are not persuasive, just informative.

Handouts:

Graph which shows 4 funding scenarios

A report on WTA's reserve funds

Past cuts that were implemented in 2008 and 2009

There will be a vote on April 27, it could go either way.

M. Anderson: I have been working on preparations for bike month, which is May, and bike to work and school day, May 21. I have scheduled about 10 rodeos and assemblies at elementary schools across Whatcom County.

G. Rogers: I was invited to attend a National Complete Streets training in April, put on by national trainers. Ten people in Whatcom County were invited to attend.

K. Berg: I went to the community meeting on the roundabout at BP, there were a lot of BP people there, it didn't seem like it was going to be a problem. I think the construction starts in April or May.

II. Whatcom Transportation Plan - Who, Why, What & How

Plus web-site design preview - Gordon Rogers

G. Rogers: WCOG is a Coordinating Agency Established by State laws; it is the local MPO, Metropolitan Planning Organization and the RTPO, Regional Transportation Planning Organization. MPOs and RTPOs have similar but different functions; MPOs are authorized by federal law while RTPOs are identified within amended Growth Management Act, RCWs. An MPO has a population of at least 50,000 in the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA). The MPA in Whatcom County is Bellingham and Ferndale, and the unincorporated area between the two. If the MPA population is over 200,000 you become a Transportation Management Area (TMA).

The duties differ slightly between MPOs and RTPOs:

MPO

- Identify Policy Board
- Prepare Metropolitan Plan (MTP)
- Meet Minimum Plan Requirements as Identified in Current Federal Highways Act

RTPO

- Identify Policy Board
- Prepare Regional Plan (RTP)
- Meet Minimum Plan Requirements as Identified in GMA and by WSDOT

There is talk about raising the required population base from 50,000 to 100,000 because after the 2010 census 65 new MPOs may need to form, even though there is no extra money. It isn't known for certain what will happen with current MPOs who do not have a population of 100,000. There is much speculation; they may be grandfathered in, or they may be able to opt out.

In 2001 the two separate plans, MTP and RTP, were combined into one plan to eliminate redundancy. Every five years the plan must be updated. The MTP is fiscally constrained, while the RTP is not.

Details

- Reauthorization of Federal Highways Six year Acts typically occurs well after previous Act expires
- New rules for planning take even longer
- Last update was required in 2006, then again in July 2007 after new rules were published in February
- Current Act expired 9/30/2009
- New Act not expected until 2011 with associated rules likely not available until early 2012
- GMA requires RTP & Comp Plan transportation elements to be consistent
- WCOG MTP/RTP update is due 6/30/2012
- Comp Plan update deadlines may be extended

III. Whatcom Transportation Plan: Goals and Policies - Andy Gomez

A. Gomez: WCOG has to be consistent, identify Federal planning factors, work with State and Feds, County and Cities. Some of you have submitted your comments on the Goals and Policy that you were assigned last meeting. We will review comments from P. Pollock, C. Comeau and M. Anderson. When you are reviewing your goal and policies, you may want to think about the Federal and State planning factors and look at the cities plans. After you submit your comments I will review them to make sure there are no inconsistencies. We can't contradict the City and County Plans.

G. Rogers: The State requires the WTP and local comp plans to be consistent, there have been some minor glitches in the past, and when that happened we worked with local jurisdictions to fix the problems.

G. Davis: Is this plan what WCOG will do, or what the region will do?

A. Gomez: We can't dictate what you will do in your jurisdiction.

G. Rogers: We are a small MPO, we don't have very much authority, TMA's have more authority.

G. Davis: That might be a good distinction to put into the introduction.

D. Pros: What is the hierarchy, Federal, State, County, City then WCOG?

A. Gomez: WCOG doesn't own anything; we facilitate discussions and are a data center.

G. Rogers: We do have authority over STP funds.

D. Pros: Should one plan have the authority over the other?

G. Rogers: The locals have authority.

A. Gomez: We won't say anything controversial or specific. We may say bus service should be provided, but we don't say on what road or route.

The group reviewed the goals and policies comments that were sent in by C. Comeau, P. Pollock and M. Anderson. C. Comeau also provided Bellingham's goals and policies, which are much more specific. P. Pollock removed the line "WCOG will" at the start of each policy sentence.

G. Davis: You won't have the Counties transportation element of their Comp Plan until 2011; that will help you write the WTP.

G. Rogers: The State's goals are a moving target as well; they just added another goal, economic vitality.

K. Berg: What is ITS?

G. Rogers: Intelligent Transportation System, we are required to provide an ITS architecture, it is a plan on how to use ITS. It can be anything from and automated transit locator or camera in park and rides, ramp metering, highway information on variable message signs. ITS is about how to use technology to make the system better.

M. Anderson: As I looked at my assignment, it occurred to me that Safe Routes to School and bicycle and pedestrian safety education could fit under both the Education goal and Safety goal. Should they just be in one section, or both?

A. Gomez: At some point we may streamline it.

G. Rogers: Sometimes redundancy is good. Some people may only look at one area of the plan. You may have safe routes to school in the mobility and safety sections.

K. Berg: For example, intermodal transportation could fit into many sections.

A. Gomez: Please provide me with your comments, you can add goals and policies, or delete them, it's up to you. I will distribute the Federal and State requirements to the group.

Assignments are:

Kathy Berg - Health

Maureen McCarthy - Public Participation

Gary Davis - Safety

Carol Berry - Environmental Justice and Access

Dave Pros - Land Use

Mary Anderson - Public Information and Education

Chris Comeau - Freight

Pat Pollock - Connectivity, Congestion and Mobility, Other
Transportation Modes

Ellen Barton - Access and Transportation Demand Management

Carole Macdonald - Alternative Forms of Transportation

D. Pros: When the municipalities do something are you surprised with what happens? It would good to know what they are thinking so we can align.

G. Rogers: The Governor may extend the deadline for Cities to update their Comp Plans. The Bellingham Comp Plan will continue, others may or may not.

Handout- Preview of Whatcom Transportation Plan web-site

Public Participation

We don't want to print hundreds of copies of this plan. The real plan will be web-based; I'll have more details on that next month. You will be able to look at existing conditions under *Today* tab, and forecasted conditions under *Tomorrow* tab. We will have information about all the Cities in our jurisdiction. What ever info the Cities want to provide us with, we will put up. It will be a very different way to read the plan, you will be able to chose what you are doing, where you are going and by what mode, then get information based on those choices. We will have a PDF of the plan online as well. The tag line is "There's a better way to get there".

C. Berry: The Seattle Pedestrian Master Plan is also web-based; it was remarkably accessible, understandable and easy to navigate. Showed some maps and how they choose projects. It was very encouraging since they are so much larger than Bellingham.

A. Gomez: As part of the public education process we are going to have banners on a couple WTA buses and I'll be blogging as part of the public participation process. People will have an opportunity to make comments. I'll be blogging weekly or more; the blogs will be made into a newsletter for those that do not have internet access.

G. Rogers: Perhaps some of you could add the web-site URL to your email signature.

IV. Meeting with Policy Board

G. Rogers: At the last Policy Board I was talking with members about your efforts and let them know what you have done. S. Crawford suggested having a joint meeting, I propose May 12th, 3:30-5pm.

V. Adjourn