

It matters how we get there

Meeting Summary

May 27th, 2009

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

**Start:** 4:30 pm

**Stop:** 6:30 pm

In Attendance:

*Members:*

A.J. Garcia  
Carol Berry  
Larry Wickkiser  
Carole Macdonald

*Administrative:*

Gordon Rogers, WCOG  
Mary Anderson, WCOG  
Andy Gomez, WCOG

*Technical Advisory:*

Chris Comeau

**Technical Advisors**

Ellen Barton  
Gary Davis  
John Hergesheimer  
Jessica Lee  
Maureen McCarthy  
Chris Comeau

Not in Attendance:

*Members:*

Kathy Berg  
Pat Pollock  
Glen Hallman  
Chris Hatch

Dave Pros

*Technical Advisory:*

Maureen McCarthy  
Gary Davis  
Jessica Lee  
Ellen Barton  
John Hergesheimer

**Administrative Support**

Mary Anderson  
Gordon Rogers

**I. Member Time**

L. Wickkiser: Business is slow; travel is down in our sector. We are still excited about working with Eric at WWU, VRI; he is getting further with grants for methane fuel (Lynden Poop Vehicle). Some progress made with the refinery he's building. Still not a done deal, it is depending on grant funding. He is looking at up to 5 vehicles, converted to a CNG Cummins engine.

C. Comeau: Is this the same project Carol Berry presented on?

C. Berry: This is a different project than I presented on, the VRI is also working on a lightweight electric bus, for Kitsap Transit. I haven't heard much on that lately. Methane needs to be converted to a form that will run an electric generator. It needs to be cleaned, to get the impurities out.

Things are winding down at WWU; the students are riding buses and bikes. Not a big level of extra capacity of parking, however there is enough capacity to not displace parking from construction, it will be okay. Buchanan Towers and Miller Hall are both going to construction. Bike/ped paths are being built to divert them during construction. Everything is going well; we have two years

under our belt for bus passes. Just sent out survey for employees transportation use, waiting to get that back. Submitted a grant for Lincoln Creek Park and Ride for improvements; it gets a lot of use.

Looking at adding two more buses to student late night shuttle. It is up to the students how money is spent. Sunday - Thursday more than 50% ridership on late night shuttle, 11pm-2:30am. On and off campus students use it. It started in Fall 2007.

C. Comeau: It is my understanding that WWU got \$400k for Bill Macdonald Parkway & 25<sup>th</sup> intersection.

C. Berry: That I don't know, I believe that portion is part of the project.

C. MacDonald: Have a two mile clear shot trail from Maple Falls to Boulder Creek Bridge, still have to build a bridge over the creek, this is really good news. Will be awhile until it's open to the public. Was difficult, 1 mile out of Maple Falls we had a property owner who refused to let trail go over his property; so we were able to negotiate. Further up a group is working on connecting Snowater Development, people get arrested for walking on Hwy, no where else to walk. Working on a trail from Snowater into Glacier. DOT just purchased Glacier Creek Lodge, sad for us. The owners shut down, it was inexpensive lodging.

Original DOT bridge plan had a walking lane, they took that out. Need to cross bridge safely. Working on grant money with DOT. Our Chamber of Commerce received enhancement funding to hire a consultant to find out where to put a welcome center on Hwy. We have one now, on North side, not visible. We hired a consultant; they are an awesome group of people [Chas Anderson & Assoc.]. We [the Foothills Chamber of Commerce bought the property[with STP Statewide competitive Enhancement funds], it closed last fall. Two weeks ago the Fire Department burned the decrepit old house for practice. We had our first event on the property last Saturday.

Resource Center vs Welcome Center; the East County Resource Center is for the East County residents only. It is a \$7 Million project, hoping to start building in December. On 547, on your way out to Sumas, left side of the road, property donated by Aiki Homes, Marble Falls. It will serve the local community. Welcome Center will serve tourists, if we get money may add area for locals. The Resource Center will serve the 1,000 kids who live in the area; currently nothing for them, they are all are bused to school.

A.J. Garcia: Carol covered all our updates.

C. Comeau: Yesterday we published the draft 6 year TIP, extra sheet that includes capital projects including ARRA project. We have a new Pubic Works Director, Ted Carlson. We will have a public hearing Monday, June 1.

Our ARRA project is 5 enhanced crosswalks: Lakeway/Grant, Maple/Newell, Alabama/Grant, Northwest/Maplewood, York/Railroad. The York/Railroad crossing will connect bike trails into the downtown area.

Also building crosswalks (non-enhanced) on Broadway and a traffic calming project on Pacific Street where railroad trail crosses. Forrest St will receive a road diet, from 3 lanes down to 2; From Warf Street to York Street, ped crossings with bulb outs, moving the curb in, also adding a bike lane on the South side of Forrest. It will look just like State St. when done.

C. Berry: What are your thoughts on State St, around that curb, by Warf Street?

C. Comeau: Seeking money for a roundabout there. Narrower lanes will slow traffic.

C. MacDonald: Do you have any statistics on how much safer the enhanced crosswalks are vs non-enhanced?

C. Comeau: Not sure of exact numbers, but they are safer.

M. Anderson: Bike to Work and School Day 2009 had record numbers; 8,631 participants, 15% increase over last year. Every school in the Bellingham S.D. participated, along with many private schools.

G. Rogers: I had an opportunity to go to China recently, pedestrian safety really a challenge because so many people drive cars now. Some are still bicycling. Intersections are 6 lanes, you are standing on the corner and want to cross; there is a walking signal. Light turns white, the cars in the opposite direction are turning and not stopping, motorists just veer around them (pedestrians). The pedestrians stop. I was there for 10 days, never saw a close call.

## **II. Whatcom Transportation Plan Update - Approach**

G. Rogers: The WCOG plan, in the past we have had convened a special committee, will be doing it a little different this time.

A. Gomez: This is a public participation plan, they are very specific as to what types of groups we have to include. About a year ago you reviewed the public opinion survey, it is posted on transportation town website too, also when we did the household travel survey they were given the opportunity to comment on how they might like to participate further. Some effort was made to make the public aware that survey is out there. We need to do more outreach, results will be used on the Whatcom Transportation Plan update, if statistically valid we will use it for other purposes too. Possibly use results for criteria in project selection process, but only if statistically valid.

I would like CTAG involved in this effort. Perhaps we will give you a brochure; you can talk to your group about public participation plan, direct people to web-site and survey. Once you have people in the room, get their emails for a list-serve, opportunity to comment, I'll email, and ask people to please review the plan. Must make sure all stakeholders are involved. Need public input on plan as well.

Next Steps: groups contacted, ability for someone to ask (Andy) questions, he can respond. All questions and answers will be documentd. How involved would you like to be, letting people know this is happening, get them to take the survey at a minimum. If you are interested in making presentations, Andy can help you out.

C. Berry: CTAG as a group or individuals?

A. Gomez: Both.

C. MacDonald: Where I live there are 7,000 people, most won't come to Bellingham for a meeting. You could come to us to give presentations, we have 3 organizations could pool many people for a meeting.

A. Gomez: First stage is to comment on public participation project. Inform them about the new transportation plan.

G. Rogers: Initially we brought a bunch of folks together to provide comments and review progress on the Whatcom Transportation Plan, it spells out how to do that; a 45 day comment period is required. A good public participation plan is needed before we begin writing the transportation plan. The Transportation Plan needs to be updated by June 2012. The Public participation plan will be done this summer.

A. Gomez: I'm thinking about making some brochures that say what we are doing, with a link to the survey.

M. Anderson: Can you add a place in the survey where people can enter their email address? Only for those who want to be contacted.

C. Berry: All of the large employers (CTR sites) have a very diverse group of people. There are people who live in Kendall but work at WWU. We have people who won't use alternative transportation, but still want to be heard. There are all sorts of intricacies of the system that we may be able to hear about. Perhaps you could use CTR info, maps from employers that show where all there employees live.

A. Gomez: I would like a good geographical representation of all communities within the County.

It was asked how the initial "It Matters How We Get There" group was formed.

G. Rogers: To form the initial group, we phoned people and asked if they'd be interested or if they knew someone who would be.

L. Wickkiser: Perhaps you can call that initial group who formed "It Matters How We Get There".

G. Rogers: It's a little different now in that we have more specific requirements to fulfill [some of those members are currently on CTAG].

C. MacDonald: Could TTAC help?

G. Rogers: C. Comeau and J. Hergesheimer are TTAC members, we will present to TTAC tomorrow.

C. Berry: In years past the BPAC have held meetings with high attendance, through advertising, having food and speakers [Bellingham Bike and Pedestrian Committee appears to be in the process of folding in to the Bellingham Transportation Commission]. Hold a Road Show that happens all around County; invite key stakeholders and community members. Have surveys available and maps.

A. Gomez: Will get more involvement with a survey, meetings are hard to attend. We need people to take the survey, and to get their info so I can contact them in the future for comments on the transportation plan when it's done. We will use the web-site as much as possible. For those that don't have computers, I might have people call me and I'll fill out the survey over the phone, or maybe they can stop by WCOG to take survey (use one of our computers). Also need to conduct outreach to the underserved populations.

C. Berry: I was just talking to a farmer out in Everson; it is hard for workers to get to the farm if they don't have a car. There is a bus stop close, but not great service.

E. Barton: Making it genuine for the people participating is important; tell them how it will matter. With a website based survey, how will you show that it's statistically valid? Outreach in another community used paid staff to make presentations so volunteers didn't have to do it. Looking at the underserved populations; the stuff that will serve the elderly that are going to stop driving, and possibly looking for bus services, funding for that type of project is not as direct as that for building roads.

C. MacDonald: I like the idea of paid staff doing the road show.

L. Wickkiser: Your underserved populations have social service agencies that serve them. Somebody serves every population; senior center has info for seniors, etc. Those are the people you'd go to.

E. Barton: It is hard to get groups to come to us; we have to go to them. For example, the food bank knew that people couldn't come because they didn't have transportation, but staff can't ask them how they can help, because they aren't there.

L. Wickkiser: Maybe you should have a flier that you can take to the Farmers Market, Logging Show, and other events.

### **III. Washington Transportation Plan - Progress**

G. Rogers: State wide plan, updated every 2 years. They put together groups and stakeholders. I've been part of the process the last 4 years. This year, the Governor decided that the longstanding WA Transportation Commission should be in charge of developing the plan. Looking at all the modes, all the aspects to find out how to get there from here.

#### *Handout- Agenda for the WTP Advisory Group Meeting*

You can see what we are talking about, see what the topics are, the timelines. Transportation Commission is primarily private sector people who have been on the commission for a very long time. I hope to take your thoughts to this advisory group. On the second page of that is a suggested vision statement prepared by Ecology.

#### *Handout - Draft Freight Component for WTP*

Another aspect, prepared by Karen Schmidt who leads the Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board, she has some good thoughts and ideas that may be strong, descriptive. She has laid out some concepts that are important to the freight sector.

Won't need to talk to much more about this now, please call me with questions. Timeline is same as Whatcom Plan, needs to be done by Dec 2011.

L. Wickkiser: The Washington Policy Center sent me a plan on how to fund projects, I think it looked good.

G. Rogers: I saw a presentation by them; it wasn't that their ideas weren't good, but I felt they were pushed way over to the Right, almost too far. The examples that were given weren't too good. The transportation guy showed a shallow understanding of the transportation field. Not to say that what they suggest is bad.

### **IV. WTA Update**

*Canceled*

## V. Freight Report and Discussion

*Will talk about next month.*

G. Rogers: Nationwide freight is off by about 30%. The problems associated with that are when you take something apart it's hard to put it together again; it costs more than if it was sustained. At some industries they are almost at that breaking point. Mom and Pop operations are being hurt the most; they make up the bulk of truck operations.

## V. Adjourn