



It matters how we get there

Meeting Summary

June 24th, 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:

- Kathy Berg
- Dave Pros
- Carol Berry
- Larry Wickkiser
- Carol Berry
- Pat Pollock

Administrative:

- Gordon Rogers, WCOG

Technical Advisory:

- Gary Davis
- Chris Comeau
- Ellen Barton
- Jessica Lee
- Maureen McCarthy

Guests:

- David Brunnemer
- Wendy Crandall

Technical Advisors

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

Administrative Support

- Mary Anderson
- Gordon Rogers

Not in Attendance:

Members:

- A.J. Garcia
- Glen Hallman
- Carole Macdonald
- Chris Hatch

Administrative:

- Mary Anderson

Technical Advisory:

- John Hergesheimer
- Chris Comeau

I. Member Sharing

K. Berg: I represent Birch Bay and am the chair of CTAG, there are a few new faces here tonight, please introduce yourself.

D. Pros: I am the vice chair and live at Lake Sammish and represent rural to urban.

C. Berry: I brought two colleagues to comment on the Whatcom Transportation Plan, David Brunnemer works for the students disability resource center and is a bus rider, Wendy Crandall works in the sustainable transportation office and volunteers for the Girl Scouts of Whatcom County.

M. McCarthy: I am a technical advisor for WTA.

P. Pollock: I represent Birch Bay Cherry Point, bring trans issues related to freight.

J. Lee: I am a technical advisor; I work for the Counties developmental disabilities program.

E. Barton: Working on the employment access plan, technical advisor from WCOG.

L. Wickkiser: I represent Airporter Shuttle - Belle Air Charters.

G. Rogers: I am the Deputy Director of the Whatcom Council of Governments.

P. Pollock: Wondering if Transportation Town has developed any data, how it is going.

G. Rogers: It is fully up and running, we are always looking for content to add. We have about five links for each transportation mode; one of them was Wikipedia, they have expanded a lot recently and have really added to the richness of the information. We are always looking for new links and information to add.

L. Wickkiser: We bid on a contract for the Northwest Regional Council on Aging and will be a provider for them. Not sure what exactly that entails yet. We are putting together a wine tour proposal.

G. Rogers: We talk about all things transportation, one thing in that category is freight. This handout talks about that, cost of freight and what's happening to those costs. Background info on the cost of moving things around the world.

Handout - U.S. logistics costs drop for first time in six years, benchmark report says

P. Pollock: The last sentence in that handout is key, and important to take note of. Rail and truck companies used to be enemies and are now working together across the nation. It isn't happening as much in Whatcom County.

II. Whatcom Transportation Plan - Public Participation

At the first of the year we started working on a county wide transportation plan. We have to update it every five years. We are asking that CTAG participate as much as possible to help update that plan. The deadline is July 2012; we wanted to start early to have a great plan. We are required to do this under federal highways rules. Part of the plan is to have a public participation policy in place. It has requirements that various groups are able to comment on the plan.

The stage we are in now is developing a draft that we can put on the street for the 45 day comment period. [This will occur in early August.] We will then take those comments and put them into the plan and present the plan to the policy board [for adoption]. After that step we can start the transportation plan.

We hope that you will review the public participation plan before we send it to the public for review. We would like you to also take it to your peers for review.

J. Lee: One thing I noticed is that it would be good to identify by name all the stakeholder groups that will be involved. Have some simple context that outlines what participation will give a person, what is the benefit for a person to participate.

K. Berg: What is it that they want to know? I have been to public participation forums in the past and it wasn't communicated what they wanted to know, also, I feel that my and others comments weren't used. Too often they are just checking off the public participation box, they don't really want to hear us.

D. Pros: Are there any visioning workshops planned that someone could tag along with and talk about this?

G. Rogers: I don't know, you are probably referring to the urban grown review process or their comp plan update process; it looks like that won't kick off until January. I don't know if they will be doing visioning workshops.

J. Lee: One of the most important parts of the public participation process is education. Telling people what's out there.

G. Rogers: That was part of the goal for Transportation Town, to educate people about different transportation modes and to show how they are connected.

E. Barton: WCOG staff would like people to be informed through our outreach, so they can plug in now, not at the end.

J. Lee: Go to the existing groups that are already meeting.

C. Berry: Identifying those groups in the draft plan would be good, so that groups that aren't on there can comment if they wish.

It was asked if a brochure has been developed yet for members to give out.

G. Rogers: That is being developed.

P. Pollock: How do you get their input? Open forum? Ask survey questions? It's difficult for me to grasp what we are trying to do beyond a survey.

G. Rogers: That is what we are trying to decide right now. Where would we put rack cards? How will we grab their attention?

P. Pollock: If people know that public participation is the most important thing they are more likely to give input. Say right up front how important their input is. We need you to go to our website because transportation is an integral part of your life, without your input we will be suffering in the future.

C. Berry: Being able to identify all the groups will be hard, there are so many in Whatcom County. Ask if staff [of those groups] can present information or if they want us to present.

E. Barton: May want to have a goal of educating people so that they know where to go in their own jurisdiction to comment about transportation projects.

K. Berg: You need to be careful how you frame the questions.

P. Pollock: It seems that we have done a lot of surveys in the past, how much more do we need? Have done surveys for Smart Trips, CTAG and more. Can we use that information? How much historical data can we use? Can we learn from those questions?

G. Rogers: I don't think you can have too much data, have really only scratched the surface with the surveys in the past.

P. Pollock: If we ask the same questions we have asked in the past, we can compare the data, find out if things have gotten better or worse.

M. McCarthy: I think that at this time we are just looking at how we will get input and show that we are going to solicit meaningful input on plans and policies. What are the ways that we are going to commit to for plans, policies and programs? We won't be asking open ended questions. We just need to provide input on what methods to use to get people interested in reviewing and making comments on the plans.

G. Rogers: That's correct, that's where we are right now.

P. Pollock: I understand that, however we have done this in the past and can use lessons learned from the past, the initial transportation plan.

G. Rogers: This is our fourth update of the plan. Back when I started the public participation plan was advertising on buses and an ad in the paper. We only got 10-15 people who commented. Based on that, the next time we had a large advisory group to provide their perception of the plan. The third time we had to redo the plan because federal rules changed. There wasn't a lot of public outreach at that time because we'd already had it and we were just making amendments that made it in compliance. In the past we have always been rushed, now we have time. We just did a household travel survey to see what trips people are making.

I need to know what you think about the public participation plan, so we can move onto the plan itself.

III. WTA Update

M. McCarthy: We have 38 vehicles that need to be replaced, a \$16.6 million project. We ordered 14 a while back. They are arriving next month, and will be in service next September. Eleven more are on order. That leaves 13 remaining to be acquired. Funding for those 13 is on a high priority list for Congressman Larson.

Our funding comes from local sales tax; last month was down 16%. WTA is set to survive for two more years at our current level of service. Ridership continues to be good news. April of 2009 was highest ridership ever, with ½ million boardings. Those numbers are up 9% over last year, and 59% over April 2007. Year to date ridership up 14% over last year. WWU is our biggest customer, but has the lowest level of new riders. The routes in the county continue to grow in ridership the most. We have not seen a fall with gas prices falling. People who never thought they were bus riders are trying it out.

IV. Membership Issues

G. Rogers: We need additional members, hoping that you will consider that. All people who become members of CTAG sign an agreement; all agreements are expired and need to be renewed.

V. First Draft Transportation Bill

G. Rogers: This is the first real thing we have seen for the re-authorization of the federal transportation bill. The highway trust fund is in some jeopardy, sales tax and gas tax have dropped. This summary shows the plan to consolidate 108 programs into 4, eliminating about 75 programs. We will be talking about this a lot in the future.

VI. Other

C. Berry: May the guests limit their participation to the Whatcom Transportation Plan?

G. Rogers: Yes.

Adjourn