

It matters how we get there

Meeting Summary

August 26th, 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:

Administrative:

Technical Advisory:

Kathy Berg
Chris Hatch
Larry Wickkiser

Gordon Rogers
Mary Anderson

Maureen McCarthy
Chris Comeau

Technical Advisors

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

Not in Attendance:

Members:

Administrative:

Technical Advisory:

A.J. Garcia
Glen Hallman
Carole Macdonald
Dave Pros
Patrick Pollock
Carol Berry

John Hergesheimer
Gary Davis
Jessica Lee
Ellen Barton

Administrative Support

Mary Anderson
Gordon Rogers

I. Member Sharing

L. Wickkiser: We have a contract with the Olympics for 15 mini buses, 28 days; they want 1.8 drivers per bus.

G. Rogers: WSDOT is anticipating that a caravan of 900 coaches will be coming through WA for the Olympics, 300 at a time.

C. Hatch: There are 2 TIP projects occurring, one is on Sunset Drive, I wanted to comment that it flowed smoothly, I am amazed how easy it was to get through the construction zone. Wilder is repaving between about Cedarville and Boulder Creek or Maple Falls, also seems to be going smoothly, not very inconvenient to get through.

M. McCarthy: All is well at WTA, up 11% over last year. Bulk pass discount program was approved by our Board; a deeper discount will be given for larger employers, factoring in company size and % participation. Budget constraints hit us too; may be asking the board to consider minor reductions in near term. May take to board for 2010 budget.

C. Comeau: The bad news is the budget, 17 city employees were laid off, maybe more coming, morale is down. Reduction in budget for capital projects as well, no development activity happening. In terms of transportation projects, the Waterfront Project TIGER grant application is due mid Sept, we will find out in January if we get it. We are looking at other funding sources, Urban Vitality and Energy Efficiency. No TIB call for grants this year, our TIP is paired back, usually at 20 projects, now down to 13.

Our Economic Stimulus projects, pedestrian crossings, are being built right now, there are 5 locations, and they will be done by end of month.

L. Wickkiser: I heard from Eric Lenhardt at WWU Vehicle Research Institute, he got a \$400K grant to continue the Lynden methane fuel research.

C. Hatch: I thought they were going to start selling it commercially. What's the immediate benefit?

L. Wickkiser: Ford and Chevy have discontinued their engines that can use this project, so they may have more product than vehicles to use it. The biggest problem for the engine manufacturer is that the fuel must be as clean as natural gas; it has to be really clean. The engines are very sensitive. The fuel is bulky and heavy.

M. Anderson: There is a new ad campaign for everybodyBIKE; we are profiling normal people who are also cyclists.

G. Rogers: Smart Trips had \$300K earmark from the State Legislature, and \$750K earmarked from Patty Murray. It is causing a stir in Olympia, about our program. Greenhouse gas and climate change is in the forefront of many programs, there is an executive order from the Governor that we need to reduce VMT. That is hard to measure, if you don't have a baseline how do you know when you've got there. Smart Trips is a way to deal with those things, Susan Horst starting thinking outside the box for CTR. There were companies who wanted to participate in CTR, but couldn't. We didn't have the budget to support them, and the CRT budget kept getting cut. That is how Smart Trips was born. Elected officials from Olympia have been talking with us over the last few days about the possibility of taking it statewide.

The TIGER program application deadline is mid September, however, they moved the decision date to December, we'll find out a little sooner than we thought.

K. Berg: I was having fun talking to a friend about how great San Francisco's public transportation is, and that led to discussions about Vancouver and London.

II. Washington Transportation Plan - WTP

G. Rogers: Every two years the State must prepare a WTP, just like City's and County's complete comprehensive plans under GMA, we do a Regional Transportation Plan under the GMA and we do a Metropolitan Transportation Plan under Federal Highways Rules. The intent is that these things sync up, it's hard to get there. Cities and Counties think differently, than each other, and the State.

There was an MPO coordinating meeting yesterday. WTP is a policy document, will be a recommendation to legislature, and the legislature will adopt it. In past manage by DOT staff, now managed by Transportation Commission. They are free to think more openly.

The inter-model plan is being prepared by WSDOT staff, on a different schedule, will need to be melded together; the Highways System Plan is also taking place. Highways System Plan is on track to be adopted in June 2010, the projects will already be on the street before they are actually adopted. Maybe the State can amend legislature.

Handout - Many Levels of Planning for Projects in WA State.

May have some transportation commission members talk to the Whatcom Policy Board in October. We are looking at some modern outreach for public comments, such as Twitter. We would like to increase the amount of public discussion, but it is hard to reach people; many people don't have land lines anymore and people are so busy.

III. CTAG Budget and Focus

G. Rogers: I was looking back at where we have been and where we are going. Your membership agreements focus on the document "It Matters How We Get There", you all agreed to the 5 action items. We still have some budget left. There may be some projects that CTAG can work on. Thought it might make sense to talk about issues, and maybe grab a hold of an issue and run it down, and take a position on it. We could send a delegate to Olympia or D.C., there are things that we can do, we could put an informational piece together. Original funding source was from P. Kremen, M. Asmundson and WTA. \$131,000 for two years, we've been really careful about spending the money. We had a consultant come to Bellingham, Dan Burden.

C. Hatch: What have those Cities done with D. Burden information?

G. Rogers: Ferndale has possibly done the most with information; Ferndale now has the River Walk.

K. Berg: Perhaps when you send out next months agenda you could name some things we might discuss spending money on, so we can think about it before the meeting.

L. Wickkiser: We could take a field trip to the methane plant.

G. Rogers: Another concept Chris Comeau mentioned is the Waterfront Project. That will have long lasting effects.

The City of Bellingham is forming a new Transportation Commission, 9 members, will start next year. They are accepting applications. Parking Commission and Bike/Ped Commission remain until Dec 2009, and then will disband.

IV. Membership Agreements

G. Rogers: Most agreements have expired, and those will need to be renewed.

V. Adjournment