

It matters how we get there

Meeting Summary

September 23rd, 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

Administrative:

Gordon Rogers, WCOG
Mary Anderson, WCOG

Technical Advisory:

Chris Comeau
Ellen Barton
Maureen McCarthy

Technical Advisors

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

Not in Attendance:

Members:

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

Technical Advisory:

John Hergesheimer
Gary Davis
Jessica Lee

Administrative Support

Mary Anderson
Gordon Rogers

I. Member Sharing

K. Berg: Nothing to share.

D. Pros: In visioning workshops people said they wanted a model of small towns becoming their own economic center, how does that play into the current model for transportation.

G. Rogers: With the activity that's going on with GMCC, up until the end of this year it's all focused on UGAs. Economic vitality is not a high profile item right now. We just got results from consultants and will send data to the County based on those results. The comp plan update will start beginning of year 2010, more modeling will be done then.

C. Berry: 9,000-10,000 WWU students have their bus passes. Started on September 15th, students moved in Sat and Sun, we will continue to distribute. Construction projects are causing delays. More students are asking about, and riding the bus for recreation purposes. Fred Meyer held a big event Tuesday night, it was huge, had record numbers riding shuttle that night.

Still hope to have bus pass and WWU card as one, maybe next fall. The University of Victoria data system and fare boxes are very similar to WWU and WTA; they have a one card system. The technology is there.

M. McCarthy: It would be good to have larger CTAG group together October 28th, WTA is going out with proposed budget. There is the potential for possible service reductions.

D. Pros: What is the status of the program for seniors?

M. McCarthy: No change in program, Specialized Transit, steady in ridership and use.

D. Pros: What is the goal of the large employer's bulk pass discount?

M. McCarthy: More passes in the hands of more people. Modeled after WWU, we didn't think we could increase ridership there, but did significantly.

C. Berry: Students pay a fee, they choose what they want; they chose bus pass and shuttle service. For employees, we take the passes on consignment, pay full price to WTA. WWU subsidizes cost to employees. A bus pass costs much less than paying for parking.

E. Barton: Report on a roundtable I attended, Governors Committee on Disability and Employment. The group goes to 4 towns a year and visits them, a way to increase awareness and get input on needs. Held in Lynden, standing room only crowd. Volunteer said that never happens. People in attendance were caregivers and people with disabilities. Many people describing what was working and what was not. Evening was open to the public, people were voicing their concerns. Morning meeting was for agencies; they were there to hear about what had been voiced the night before, and talk about what could be done. There is an element of that which applies to this committee. Perhaps someone from there could come to CTAG.

Some of the concerns were: disabled transportation to programs cut, people knew the programs existed but couldn't get to them. Sidewalks and curb cuts. The Hospital had Braille wording above rooms, also at the St. Joes, the wheelchair parking was way around the side of the building, no direct route to get there. I will try to get a contact list and send an invitation, if CTAG agrees to a meeting with them.

The Transportation Commission is forming, they need members representing walking and bicycling.

C. Comeau: The deadline has passed, 25 applications received, plenty of bike ped advocates.

E. Barton: The EACH (Human Services) grant, nearing process to create a publication, 3rd grant will allow us to continue with outreach towards seniors and low income.

C. Comeau: Last week, the City sent in the TIGER application, for waterfront project. It's a big deal, a lot of staff worked on it. Announcement of grant winners will be in January. A couple pieces have to be done together. State submitted a few projects as well, 520 Bridge, and projects in Vancouver and Spokane. All up in the air, we remain hopeful, but there is a lot of competition. No grant template, very vague instructions and little guidance.

G. Rogers: At National meeting I attended, I met a guy who will be reviewing the applications. 1,500 applications received, minimum amount of \$20 million per project.

E. Barton: Parking is a huge quantity in the proposed Waterfront Redevelopment; do you have any comments on that?

C. Comeau: The preferred alternative EIS makes a recommendation for parking, no final decisions made. They are talking about parking garages, also talk about too much parking, maybe limiting parking is bad. Numbers in EIS came from national standards, progressive numbers for mode split.

Other good news, Bellingham's multi modal concurrency program won the APA award for statewide transportation planning. APA award will be received in November. Bellingham recognized as being on the cutting edge, we've getting calls from all over North America.

M. Anderson: October is Walk to School month, will be celebrating on October 14th. About 50 countries across the world participate. Schools can contact me to participate and get goodies.

C. Berry: There is a group on campus, Students for Disability Awareness; they look at routes that they can't access. Between WWU and Sehome Village, by Sehome High School lack of curb cuts prevent access with wheelchairs. You can't get from Buchanan towers to Sehome Village if they use wheelchairs (on Bill McDonald Parkway).

D. Pros: Is there a Ride the Bus week? I think there is a high need for that. Make your high school parking lot a Park and Ride for a week.

C. Comeau: There are High School students talking about transportation issues and sustainability, then driving to school, need to get them to drive less.

C. Berry: WWU students could mentor/work with the High School students to find out impact of parking.

G. Rogers: On Congressman Larsen's list, there is park and ride money, in Skagit where Chuckanut meets I-5. Need reauthorization to make that happen. Inter-county 80X, in terms of high speed bus service, I wanted to talk about high speed rail, it is defined as anything over about 120 mph. Several years ago they went through upgrades to tracks, to compete with car trip. This was difficult because people wanted lots of stops, but that makes it slower, so it's not as appealing. See the need; find a way to fill it, there are unintended consequences of political pressure to make it stop in certain places. State has submitted a number of projects for grants, improvements around the state.

II. Washington Transportation Plan

G. Rogers: Project schedule for plan, might be opportunity for you as a committee to weigh in. This is WA State Transportation Commission; in past it was always done by WSDOT headquarters. March on, according to timeline. Goal is to develop set of strategies for 2011-2013. Also, the State Multi-Modal Plan being developed as is the Highway Systems Plan.

Highways System Plan is a list of projects based on projects they want done. It is used as a reference by State DOT, those two will sync up. 3 months ago, they didn't sync. They changed the schedule of the Highways System Plan so that it would sync up better. For the Multi-Modal Plan, WSDOT will be working with TTAC; regional DOT will be talking about various aspects of that plan.

The County Comp Plan is due to be updated 18 months, Whatcom Trans Plan adopted in 2012, new abilities with model. All of these present opportunities for CTAG to voice opinions.

Berk and Associates uses a lot of public outreach sources, computer, blogs, Twitter, other Social Networking methods.

C. Comeau: Comment period, are you inviting comments, how will you keep track and respond?

M. McCarthy: Invitation is inherent, just by having it out there.

C. Comeau: If agency has to respond to all comments, the paperwork will be huge. In EIS you are required to respond to all comments.

G. Rogers: Andy will publish a blog, will generate conversation, it will give people access to information. He is letting people know it's going on. Later on, we will ask for comments and respond to them. We also need to focus on historically underserved populations. Effort to get people informed.

G. Rogers: 5 meetings next year before WA Trans Plan adopted. A broad group of people involved, it's quite inclusive.

E. Barton: I don't see anything that says this document will inform the Highway System Plan.

G. Rogers: You are right, they are separate.

Complete Streets - added to agenda

K. Berg: CTAG can sign up to be a Complete Streets Coalition member.

M. McCarthy: Two options, National Coalition is looking for 2 types of support, endorse it, at no cost, or make a donation, \$500-\$1000; it's not things we get as a group, but things we'd help further with the contribution, such as tools they provide to legislative groups. It's something to consider, since we do have budget for CTAG.

G. Rogers: If we can do it for free that would be preferable. Not sure about a recurring contribution to another group.

C. Comeau: Bellingham doesn't have Complete Streets ordinances; we support it, but don't have any ordinances that are called Complete Streets. We have policies that speak to the same thing.

K. Berg: Would this group supporting Complete Streets be okay?

C. Comeau: As we have seen today, you can develop the regulations, but then you need to use it, to apply it and do it, it's costly. CTAG represents so many towns, not sure Complete Street Ordinances would be applicable in all our communities.

K. Berg: Put it on the agenda for October.

III. Membership

G. Rogers: I ask you to think about membership, CTAG should increase its membership, fill the blanks of geographical and interest representation. We will be diving into Whatcom Transportation Plan next year.

D. Pros: Will you give us the areas you are looking to fill? We should find out if current members who haven't been coming still want to be members.

G. Rogers: I'll review the matrix and send it out.

VI. Other - None

VII. Adjourn