

It matters how we get there

Meeting Summary
September 29, 2010
Whatcom Council of Governments

CTAG Members

Kathy Berg, Chair
Dave Pros, Vice Chair
Glen Hallman
Chris Hatch
Carole Macdonald
Patrick Pollock
Larry Wickkiser

Emily Kraft
Carol Berry
Terry Terry

Technical Advisors

Ellen Barton
Gary Davis
John Hergesheimer
Nicole Willis
Maureen McCarthy
Chris Comeau

Administrative Support

Mary Anderson
Gordon Rogers

Start: 4:30
Stop: 6:30

In Attendance:

CTAG Members:

Kathy Berg
Terry Terry
Carol Berry
Larry Wickkiser
Patrick Pollock
Dave Pros

Administrative:

Gordon Rogers
Mary Anderson

Technical Advisory:

Nicole Willis
Chris Comeau
Ellen Barton
Gary Davis
Maureen McCarthy

Not in Attendance:

Members:

Glen Hallman
Emily Kraft
Carole Macdonald
Shasta Cano-
Martin

Technical Advisory:

John Hergesheimer

I. Member Sharing

K. Berg: I am from Birch Bay. We sometimes have transportation issues, but they are getting addressed. The new roundabout at Grandview is working great.

T. Terry: I live on Lummi Island. There is a new Lummi Nation newsletter and I brought some copies of the current issue. Lummi Island residents are working together with the Lummi Nation. I teach an EMT program for the County at BTC.

L. Wickkiser: I am with Airporter Shuttle and Bellair Charters. We secured a contract with the DOT in Eastern WA the route will be called the Gold Line, with two round trips a day. We also have a contract with the Quinault Tribe, but it hasn't started yet. National Alternative Fuel Vehicle Day is on October 15. We are still working with WWU on the cow powered vehicle. We were down 4% for the year, but when the airport shut down in September we were up 30%.

P. Pollock: I live in Birch Bay as well. I work at BP and I see what the small city of Cherry Point does in terms of transportation, I have been involved in freight movement for many years.

An update on the BP Gulf Spill. We've had incident command training since the 50's. We have a huge training every year, but it's never like the real thing. They were completely unprepared in the Gulf. Going down there found it was chaos. We set up a command center and other centers as well, in LA, AL and FL. From there you had branch centers; I was Deputy Director of one.

BP failed to respond quickly, their reaction was not fast enough. Oil got into marsh lands, which was why it was such a big deal. Nearly 40,000 people were hired across the South to respond. Hotels and restaurants were filled. Many fishermen's boats used. We were organizing people to respond to oil past the salt marsh. The Coast Guard, National Guard and BP were there, Air patrol was there looking for oil. Vessels of Opportunity, using vacuums and booms. We had Mosquito fleet, small boats working as spotters. We had to properly approach the oil, as waves move oil around more. We couldn't go into marsh reeds because the boats do more harm than oil. We also had beach crews, half mile per crew of 50 people. The National Guard built a barrier, requiring that you clean yourself to enter, had to wear tyvec in 100 degree heat. Once three weeks was up, no further oil made it past the islands. It was impressive to see how it all came together, how it happened in a short time.

C. Berry: I work at WWU. We integrated the bus pass with the western ID card. 11,000+ have active bus passes. We've had some issues with older ID cards, so we are replacing some of those. The biggest affect of WTA cutbacks is the elimination of Sunday service. We have offset that a little with our shuttle, by extended hours on Sunday. WWU owns the buses and Airporter Shuttle has a contract to drive the buses. The shuttle detours to Fairhaven Transit Center on Sunday nights. The shuttle gives options when WTA is not in service. We are allowed to stop at WTA stops when WTA is closed. It is funded by students registered for 6 credits or more.

A student was hired to work 10 hours a week at Buchanan Towers since students can't park there due to construction. This person is there to help students plan trips with out a car; many want to get home to see family in the Seattle area.

Mia Birk is coming to WWU to read from her book, *Joyride*, on Oct 13. It is a joint program with ReSources and WWU, she will talk to city staff in morning. With a 2pm presentation and discussion and an evening book reading. There is an opportunity for community groups to table. Mia was the Portland Bike/Ped coordinator in the '90's and is now a principal at Alta Planning. She also teaches at Portland University.

M. McCarthy: I work for WTA. Sept 19 was the first day of our new, reduced service. We got a tenant at the Lynden Station. We are looking into having more advertising on buses with bus wraps. I am glad that WWU can pick up some of the Sunday service that was eliminated.

D. Pros: I attended the Farmhouse Gang meeting in September and I found it very informative.

N. Willis: I am a Community Health Specialist at the Health Department. I try to prevent diseases at the community level, looking at environment, policy and system changes. We received a CDC grant for an ACHIEVE program, looking at how to increase physical activity, healthy eating and decrease tobacco use. We are just about done with our final document, and have working groups looking at focuses. One of the overarching goals is to look at health equity and social justice. We used to do a lot of program level things, but that is shifting away now. However there are a lot of community partners doing great things at the program level. We are seeing that we need to help lay the foundation for those programs to be successful. Beyond chronic disease prevention we have been working on a Comprehensive Health Plan as we recognize that health has a role in how we plan our communities.

G. Davis: I work for the County Planning Department and I work on long range planning. We have lost 8 planners, in addition to the 3 we lost earlier this year.

D. Pros: Does anyone see road impact fees as a way to generate some revenue?

G. Davis: Not too many people want that.

E. Barton: I work for the Whatcom Council of Governments. The County Bike Ped Committee developed a bicycle plan. The plan was approved by the commission and will go to the County Council for adoption October 13th. I will be at the Mia Birk event for everybodyBIKE and I can add some info for CTAG if the group wants.

G. Rogers: I am deputy director for WCOG. I was at a meeting this morning at the Everett Station and I noticed some of the buses had the wraps on them, like Maureen was just talking about.

II. Status of local projects and programs

G. Rogers: Perhaps we should have copies of "It Matters How We Get There" on the table at the Mia Birk event.

M. McCarthy: Maybe we should have a bookmark made that directs people to the Transportation Town website. It could look like the bus board you had made.

C. Berry: Our student employee found that website and really likes it, many of the students also really like the Travel North Puget Sound Car Free brochures.

E. Barton: This could be an opportunity to recruit more members as well.

G. Rogers: Awhile back we went through a process to develop a list of projects for the stimulus package. Last week we got a call from Patty Murray's office asking about the status of the projects and which contractors were hired. All the projects are done except one, which is about 85% done. Currently there is a legislative request that the State Transportation Commission work with MPOs to develop a top 20 project list for the County. TTAC developed the list and it will be voted on by the Policy Board on October 13th. We don't really know what the list will be used for; it may be to find out what the needs are throughout the state.

There is some feeling that some projects on the list could be funded. We have some projects that could start immediately, and some that won't even start design for 6-8 years.

The Whatcom Transportation Plan is due to be adopted in July 2012. Andy Gomez of WCOG had you work on goals and policies awhile back. A bill passed in July 2010 that said that jurisdictions that were planning on updating their comp plan in 2011 could wait until 2014. It's always nice when the WCOG, City and County plans are updated at the same time, for consistency.

G. Davis: We are still planning on updating the transportation chapter and a few others in 2011.

K. Berg: That was discussed at Council last night. Sam Ryan said that staff would get done what they could. The exact details weren't decided yet.

G. Rogers: The Washington Transportation Plan is in draft form right now and is due to be completed in December and presented to Legislators in January. I went to a listening session this morning where they presented. There are six goals and areas of focus. There are some interesting things that they are doing - looking at some hard issues, like where is the money coming from that will fund the projects. There is a window of comment for the draft plan. The deadline to comment is October 15th.

III. Employment Access and Coordinated Human Services (EACH) Plan - Ellen Barton

E. Barton: I sent out the first draft of the EACH plan on August 23rd and it will be presented to the Policy Board for approval on October 13th. One thing that was an eye opener for me is that many of the human service providers, like the food bank and the Opportunity Council, agree that there are transportation barriers for people who use their services. However, they don't have anyone

working on that issue due to staffing. It was even hard for them to send someone to the EACH planning meetings. There are projects listed that in here that may be eligible for a grant. One project proposal is a circulator bus that will connect the smaller cities in the County. Currently if you want to get from Lynden to Sumas on a bus you have to go into Bellingham first, and then to Sumas. If your groups have interests we could add projects to the list. In the column of needs, I couldn't really think of anything, but one possible project came to mind, and that was a parking garage at WWU.

C. Berry: I wouldn't say that a parking garage is a need. We are required by the City to have a certain number of parking spaces and we have to monitor the usage, we aren't allowed to go above 90% peak utilization. If we do, we need to have a plan for reducing or mitigating that. From 2000 on, the peak utilization has dropped. Overall the parking isn't bulging at the seam. Two small projects WWU could add are for the bus stops around campus, a 'you are here' map that shows campus as well as downtown, and real time information for the time the bus is coming. Also having bike and pedestrian routes inside the bus shelter is helpful. We have those on campus and it would be nice to see them elsewhere. Many people don't know how close locations are. That way you can make a decision to wait for the bus or to walk to your destination.

E. Barton: I can add that project to the EACH project list.

L. Wickkiser: Maureen, would I call and talk to you about the community connector in the Sumas region?

M. McCarthy: You'd want to talk to Rick Nicholson.

L. Wickkiser: Nicole, is there any interest in the Health Dept for routes out there?

N. Willis: Jessica Lee from human services of the Health Dept worked on this project with Ellen, so I'd recommend contacting her.

IV. Complete Streets - next steps

G. Rogers: I'd like to first talk about the Farmhouse Gang. Some of you have been to those meetings. It is a coalition of the five local counties, and we meet to discuss transportation issues and projects. It is because of that group that the 80X county connector received funding. It occurred to me that CTAG and Farmhouse Gang are pretty similar, although you are Whatcom County specific.

There is an awareness of Farmhouse Gang through out the state, while most people don't know about CTAG.

Farmhouse Gang also produced kiosks with maps of North Puget Sound to show people local travel information such as bus, train and ferry. There was talk of putting in computers and interactive maps where people could plan out a trip

and print it off, but that fell to the wayside with budget cuts. I thought it might be possible that this would be something CTAG would like to work on, possibly in partnership with Farmhouse Gang. I thought it might be an area of interest.

K. Berg: I have been to a few meetings and found you get a bigger picture view of transportation. It's nice to see that we're not alone. Maybe you could put the CTAG members on the email list for the meetings.

G. Rogers: It's easier for the politicians to do something that the community wants if there is support for it. There are a lot of politicians at Farmhouse Gang, and if you show support for the projects they are more likely to get funded.

E. Barton: I do have a regional trip planning website as a project on the EACH plan.

L. Wickkiser: I would recommend going, you will learn something. I went for six years.

P. Pollock: I have felt that the RTPPO doesn't ask us to do very much and they could utilize us more.

G. Rogers: I have mentioned to our Policy Board that CTAG is here and willing to help. When Bellingham formed the Transportation Commission I suggested that they use CTAG, but they wanted it to be just Bellingham residents.

K. Berg: Could a CTAG representative go to each of the Policy Board meetings?

G. Rogers: You could go, and they only meet four times a year. I can mention at the next Policy Board that CTAG would like to have a representative present and I think they'd welcome that.

K. Berg: What does everyone else think? Would you be willing to go to a meeting once a year?

L. Wickkiser: I think it depends on the time commitment; we are already here once a month. I would support you Kathy if you wanted to go to the meeting.

N. Willis: What was the original intent of CTAG to the Policy group?

G. Rogers: CTAG sprung out of the Transportation Summit, where we talked about transportation issues. From the Summit a group of 22 people formed a committee that produced a document titled "It Matters How You Get There". CTAG formed from that, as an advisory group to the Policy Board. The Policy Board does know that you exist.

P. Pollock: One thing we said in the mission statement was that we'd be an advocacy group, which we have done. We said TTAC and CTAG would be advisory to the Policy Board. Does TTAC have much contact with the RTPO?

G. Rogers: They don't have much contact, they tend to be separated. Gary alluded to this before as he works for the Executive, not the Council members. On the Policy Board we have the County Executive, the Mayor of Bellingham and one council member from the County and city of Bellingham. It's hard to make the leap from a public or staff driven initiative to prime time. Some of the jurisdictions staff can't go and talk to a representative on the Policy Board directly.

K. Berg: We as community members need to take the initiative to show up to the meeting to see how we can be of assistance. Does that sound logical?

P. Pollock: It does. We need to find out more about them.

G. Rogers: There are four meetings a year and the schedule is published each January.

K. Berg: I think I can make it to the October 13th meeting.

G. Rogers: It's possible that Complete Streets could be the poster child for CTAG to work with the jurisdictions. Part of Complete Streets is to adopt ordinances that say 'if you build this, you must include these things when possible'. There are aspects of Complete Streets that can be adopted in the County; it's not just for Cities.

N. Willis: The State Health Department has decided that Complete Streets is something that they want to support. There are some matching funds that we could use to bring training to Bellingham.

G. Rogers: The next CTAG meeting will be November 3rd, Wednesday.

V. Adjourn