

Transportation Technical Advisory Committee
Whatcom Council of Governments

Meeting Summary
February 10, 2009

Start time: 10:00 AM

Attendees:

Ron Cubellis, WCOG	Kirk Vinish, Lummi Nation
Gordon Rogers, WCOG	John Hergesheimer, Port of Bellingham
Mary Anderson, WCOG	Joe Rutan, Whatcom County Public Works
Rory Routhe, Bellingham Public Works	Brent Baldwin, Bellingham
Rod Fadden, City of Sumas	Dave Bren, Blaine Public Works
Mark Sandal, Lynden Public Works	Bill Henry, Ferndale Public Works

I. Economic Stimulus Update

G. Rogers: We are holding a special TTAC meeting to discuss the economic stimulus package, there is a policy meeting tomorrow, February 11 at 3:30, which you are all welcome to attend. Honestly I don't know what's going to happen at that meeting, since the beginning we have had almost no information other than the fact that this was coming. WSDOT asked MPO's statewide to assemble a priority list of projects, which you are all aware of. The time has been short and there was not a typical agreement on a set of criteria to evaluate the projects. We haven't had the time or enough information to create the criteria. We have been keeping in touch with WSDOT as much as possible.

At the full council meeting we learned about the possibility of different numbers for the transportation and highway funds. I've been spending about 2/3 of my time dealing with this.

A handout was provided for the group titled "Project development and funding obligation" from Ed Conyers at WSDOT.

This handout should clear up some questions about the term 'shovel ready'. WCOG has expressed no opinion as to the shovel readiness. You elected officials saw the list at the last full council meeting on January 28th, no decisions were made, just suggestions. Mayor Louws suggested that to fund more projects they would introduce a match. Until the president signs the bill we don't know how much money we'll get, but we anticipate that it will be in the 3.5 - 4 million range.

In the Senate Bill there was an identification of a national discretionary program that would be competitive. This is for larger projects with a minimum cost of 20 million, with a maximum of 500 million per project. I believe it was Mayor Pike who suggested that we proceed with the national discretionary project list, by grouping all the Waterfront Projects together as one. If that is not an option, the list should stand as it is.

We're set to add projects to the TIP if needed. I'd like to hear your thoughts and concerns and would like to pass on your comments to the policy board.

J. Rutan: Why is the Whatcom County surface overlays rated much lower than COB?
How did this list come about?

R. Cubellis: Each of the 8 entities submitted their projects; projects are first sorted by their own ranking, everyone has a project in tier 1; that is your number 1 priority project, within those 8, they are then sorted by ad date. Next are the regionally significant projects, after those are each entities number 2, 3 and 4 ranked projects. The list has nothing to do with what the project is, just how you ranked it.

J. Rutan: What happens if someone said the project would start in March, but won't really start until June?

R. Cubellis: We did not question what you told us, everyone said their ready to go.

J. Rutan: I would propose that we should have to prove ad date; we're ready to go, we have a bid ready package set. Bring in your plans and show that you're ready to go.

Why are we behind Everson who also said they'd be ready in June?

R. Cubellis: When this criteria was set, the Policy Board thought that all top tier projects would be funded; they are listed by ad date, then alphabetically. The criteria worked when we thought we were getting 20 million, it doesn't work as well now that we know we are only getting 4-5 million.

J. Rutan: We need a better process, show that you're actually bid ready; it's hard to compete when you don't know the criteria.

G. Rogers: Councilman Crawford suggested that it might be appropriate to move up a pavement project, because of the amount of money available, he couldn't commit to that though.

K. Vinish: I suspect that the council will still say everyone gets their top tier projects, even if those projects change, they will try to distribute them across jurisdictions.

J. Rutan: If we are going to be ranking these on when they are going to be done I still say that you should have to prove that you are bid ready, show that you have all your permits and right away.

R. Cubellis: We are too late for that; the policy board already approved this list.

Highways and local projects will say 'show us your stuff'; if you don't have it they'll move on to the next project on the list.

G. Rogers: Who ever is coming to the policy meeting tomorrow needs to know your concerns.

M. Sandal: It was suggested by Mayor Louws that we require a match to get more projects funded. Everyone would have changed their projects if they knew the criteria.

J. Rutan: Why should Bellingham and Everson get to present before us just because they start with a B and an E, and we start with a W?

R. Routh: A lot of our project have some funding, but are not fully funded.

K. Vinish: There may be some merit by making a list to the board because of the funding change.

G. Rogers: The board would welcome a revised list.

The bills are different; one version for MPOs has different requirements than non-MPOs.

R. Cubellis: The timeline is 75 days in the House bill and 180 in the Senate bill, they will hopefully figure out a compromise soon.

G. Rogers: Obama wants to sign the bill on the 16th or 17th. It's a good idea to submit a new list to the State, if you don't do that the policy board will make the decision.

B. Henry: I don't want to move any projects without my Mayors approval.

G. Rogers: Mayor Louws is chair of the full council and it was his idea for the matched funds.

R. Cubellis: If the council requires matched funds, Joe, could you get by with 3.5 million?

J. Rutan: I'd move another project to tier one.

B. Henry: We are going to tailor the project around how much money we get.

B. Baldwin: We are ready to go, but don't have match money.

J. Rutan: Don't necessarily count on us to do the C.A.

R. Cubellis: The House says that 30 billion will go out with the SAFTEA-LU criteria, the Senate has a different version, but very similar.

G. Rogers: Initially the Governors office would select projects on readiness and number of jobs created; then they said that we don't have to show up front how many jobs would be created.

Jim was on the phone with the Governors office and others for methodology for job creation, turned down and couldn't get access to it, we then found out that they are using an old system that was already in place.

K. Vinish: Will MPO choose projects or the Governor?

G. Rogers: From what we've heard if the list is solid and ready to go, they will approve it. There will be a problem if a project comes up for funding and isn't ready to go, the money will go away and probably won't stay with in the county.

R. Cubellis: My understanding with Kathleen Davis was that she would just move down the list and fund the projects that are ready to go. My suggestion as a staff member is that if you want to move up projects from a lower tier, the date stays.

G. Rogers: I would like to give the board a revised list at their meeting tomorrow.

J. Rutan: I can't commit to 50% match, I need 4/7 council members to approve.

R. Cubellis: Not actually a 'match', are you willing to accept half of what you have listed here to make the money go further within the group?

J. Rutan: Maybe, if you're asking for more than 1 million then you need to match.

R. Cubellis: As the bills stand today, there are no other criteria; everyone has the option to substitute their tier one project.

R. Routh: Bellingham crosswalk project will move to tier one, if there is only 4 million.

G. Rogers: The match issue will be talked about at the meeting tomorrow.