

Transportation Technical Advisory Committee
Whatcom Council of Governments

Meeting Summary
March 26, 2009

Start time: 10:00 AM

Attendees:

Andres Gomez, WCOG	Kerri Woehler, WSDOT
Gordon Rogers, WCOG	Kerri Shepherd, Lummi Nation
Mary Anderson, WCOG	Joe Rutan, Whatcom County Public Works
Rory Routhe, Bellingham Public Works	Brent Baldwin, Bellingham Public Works
Lisa Grueter, ICF Jones & Stokes	Dave Bren, Blaine Public Works
Dale Purcell, Lynden Public Works	Bill Henry, Ferndale Public Works
Rollin Harper, Sehome Planning	Gary Davis, Whatcom County Public Works

I. Member Project Updates

G. Davis: Working on growth management, rural element update, establishing LAMIRDS throughout the County.

J. Rutan: We are paving Hannegan, will try to get Pole done later in the week. We are moving forward on Yew St, although we heard that they may be pulling the TIB funds. I will be meeting with the TIB board later today. It was for the 15,000 ft project in front of school. We have 5 bridges going to construction this summer. One bridge is Scott Ditch, which has the ARRA funds on it. I misspoke at the last meeting, we aren't just replacing the deck, we are driving 120 foot piles; the bridge will be out 2 months, starting after the fair. Will be restrictions on heavy loads (they will have to use Guide). West Illinois-Timpson is the other big project, will not start until after the fair.

D. Bren: Boblett connector, simple fast project, took the round a bout out, B- 4th and 9th are rolling forward, late summer start, H Street will start construction next year.

R. Harper: We have a proposal to deal with all the garbage from Vancouver, they want to truck thru Sumas, 600,000 tons a year, load it on rails there, and take it to a garbage dump in the US. So Sumas is concerned with 24/7 movement of garbage, this is under the radar for transportation. Sumas' water is from Canada, and sends it sewage to Abottsford.

K. Woeler: The first Guide roundabout will open next month or so, there will be a media event, it will be at Ten Mile. The paving on I-5 continues in the evenings.

E. Barton: Smart Trips in depth mobility survey (July – Sept 2008) showed that we can increase bike trips by 800% with education, without building things. Research was done by Socialdata; the analysis was within Bellingham and in rural areas. Showed that bus trips could double with marketing alone. The bus drivers are inviting us to give them a share the road presentation.

K. Shepherd: We working on the Haxton project, environmental is done, AAR complete, will start in 60-70 days, and the tribal center starts design next month.

R. Routh: Forrest St overlay at bid, road diet, from three lanes to two, added bulb outs, project is from Rose St to Ellis St. Second project is the sewer main on Lincoln Street, I-5/Meader to Lakeway, 18 inch sewer main, will keep two lanes in the morning and evening, will go to one lane during the day. Getting close to curb on Sunset, will finish in June. Fraser St bike/ped project will start this summer. Our stimulus project – environmental is done, hopefully will submit to DOT by end of month.

M. Anderson: Getting ready for Bike month, which is in May, also starting to do bike rodeos at the elementary schools.

A. Gomez: Household survey will be done next week, will use the data to estimate, calibrate and validate the travel demand model by January. Map functional classification. I will be going back to your communities, the TAZ data will go to Burke and Assoc., will use numbers to estimate what TAZs are rural, suburban and urban. I'll get your input, and ask you if it make sense. It is a 2008 base year model, will be complete by January 2010. Land use planners see it by TAZ, will use it to populate network.

G. Rogers: I just spoke with Harry, the federal functional classification requests with current ARRA funds are fast tracked, will be completed very soon. Transportation funds are taken back every year; it is the end of SAFETEA-LU, overall over \$12 Billion nationwide, \$245 million in WA. For us, it's a planning hit; about \$20,000 if could be higher though, this is probably twice what's it's been in the past.

II. Whatcom 2031 UGA Review Process ICF Jones & Stokes

L. Grueter: Our firm is helping the County with the 10 year UGA review. We are asking if the UGAs are sized right for 20 years out. We did an EIS with 4 alternatives, no action and 3 alternatives to spread growth. We are doing the transportation analysis with the WCOG model, Burke and Assoc. is updating land use and accessing output. Early April will have the draft EIS done.

I will provide EIS in email and welcome comments, the draft will go to the public for comments on May 1, for a 30 day comment period. The County has asked the hearings board for an extension; we are still waiting to see if that will be granted. If there is an extension we will extend the public comment period for the preliminary draft.

The land use info is at parcel level, with the new model we can cut the data differently; the County will be continuing their planning efforts after June 2009 (or Dec 2009 if we get the extension), because there is another requirement that they do a 7 year review. The cities and county will need to take a closer look at what needs to happen to fine tune land use data, during 2009-2011 hopefully will sync everything up within the jurisdictions and use the new model for plan updates.

A. Gomez: The model was converted to Trans-CAD, old ME2, refinements made, we updated network info; the model has been validated to traffic counts.

B. Baldwin: My concern is that the first step looks things in for the 2011 reviews. The review is happening so quickly, a lot of people concerned that there will be errors because we don't have time to go through the scenarios the way we should. The model originally created for boarder situation, it is the wrong tool, and it concerns me.

G. Rogers: ME2 was created with 3 components, one was regional, county wide, and one cross boarder, the bi-national model was developed by different people. DKS used the model for work on I-5 master study.

B. Baldwin: There are portions that are good, some are not so good, and I am concerned that decisions may be made from not good data; we will have to deal with it in 2 years.

R. Routhe: In 2005 we knew it was weak in urban areas.

G. Rogers: Clear that it needed work, it was built in 2002 and updated in 2005. We made it as good as we could at the time, within the budget.

L. Grueter: We can point to caveats, and say that a new model is underway.

R. Routhe: I know the County has done a lot of work for concurrency, how does that play into this picture, how does it compare to what the model says?

G. Davis: We are putting together concurrency update changing the LOS on some major routes.

R. Routhe: The Council just made recommendations on population, how does it compare to the alternatives?

L. Grueter: Alternative Y is close, 113,000, Alternative X, 126,000, is quite a bit higher than what Bellingham said they want to go to.

R. Harper: It was a confusing recommendation, they said they want to go low of low, but should get historical share, 45%, they didn't name a number.

III. Discussion of possible county-wide uniform roadway classification system for modeling purposes

G. Rogers: Right now there are 7 requests for federal functional classification. In building the new model discovered that over time you all have used different functional classification systems, now Andy put all the different systems into map, makes sense to discuss a uniform system.

A. Gomez: I can offer to collect data from your jurisdiction, such as speed limits, intersections, etc, so you can see region wide patterns of consistency, and come up with a map. You're the decision makers; this is what I have to offer.

R. Harper: We should go from the top down and come up with shared definitions of parameters and criteria.

A. Gomez: What parameters should we use? If you do already have criteria, we could start there. I am open for discussion.

R. Routhe: We call them primary, some call them majors, they are high volume, usually truck routes, moving goods and services.

G. Rogers: Goal today to see if there is a palate for it, are you willing to do it? Come up with a preliminary list of criteria.

G. Davis: This would be a great planning tool.

A. Gomez: County uses fed functional Classification.

J. Rutan: Side comment, never produce a Whatcom County map without including Point Roberts.

G. Rogers: Is it okay to proceed with this?

G. Davis: Should we meet separately to hash it out?

G. Rogers: My thought is that many people already have to attend many meetings; we would like to do it here.

R. Routhe: Our documents are online, you can use at them.

A. Gomez: The deadline is this summer, the earlier the better, July or August.

G. Davis: In the past we talked about having a coordinated LOS parameter.

R. Routhe: Ours won't have rural of course.

J. Rutan: I'd like to look at corridors. People care about travel times, how long does it take to get there?

B. Baldwin: Do you need timing for signal control?

A. Gomez: Don't know if we need that. Once new model is complete, I will use methodology to define regionally significant roads, like near the hospital, or the mall routes. I will define (with your help) regional activity centers, I will then use travel

demand model for routes to these areas. We will start discussions next January or February.

R. Harper: For the TIB, we all have a list of arterials, but the words may differ, so we'll want to make sure we use the same definitions for the words.

IV. Economic Stimulus Program

G. Rogers: Starting to see what's going on, some projects may fall off (not ours). It's possible that there will be another call for projects. The panel will honor the local list, unless there are mis-steps or they don't make the dates. We have the Bellingham project as a back-up; still not a word on the national discretion projects.