

Transportation Technical Advisory Committee
Whatcom Council of Governments

Meeting Summary

April 30, 2009

Start time: 10:00 AM

Attendees:

Ron Cubellis, WCOG	Kerri Woeler, WSDOT
Gordon Rogers, WCOG	Steve Banham, City of Blaine
Mary Anderson, WCOG	Joe Rutan, Whatcom County Public Works
Rory Routhe, Bellingham Public Works	John Hergesheimer, Port of Bellingham
Chris Comeau, City of Bellingham	Ellen Barton, WCOG
Rollen Harper, Sehome Planning	Dale Purcell, City of Lynden

I. Member Updates

R. Routhe: We are getting close on our ARRA project, should be going to bid in a couple weeks. Working on W Illinois, but may not get to it this year. The Fraser St. project just got WSDOT approval and will start this summer. The Bakerview Irongate signal will be up and running soon. On Sunset, they are starting grading for curb & gutter, will be done June/July.

C. Comeau: The 6 year TIP is prepared, will be having public hearings end of May, beginning of June, we just finished concurrency review.

J. Rutan: ARRA project, DOT had a question on BA, thought we changed something, but didn't, should be on track. Pole/Hannegan paving almost done, it looks beautiful. Signal will be on in 2-3 weeks, the Hampton road bridge is now closed, and we are moving on that; a drunk driver drove thru the barricades there yesterday. On the Yew St Project, the Council met and discussed the \$1.6 mil lost TIB funds. We are still moving forward, and hope to have it out to construction next year. Lincoln Road project, has received \$2.4 million in RAP funds, looking for \$1.5 million more, from local funds, etc.

K. Woehler: Reminder, WSDOT local programs is hosting a meeting next week, Tuesday May 5th, area 1, at maintenance office near the airport at 9:30 am. Contact me for more information. The roundabout at ten mile on Guide will open next week, weather permitting.

The SR 539 Nooksack River bridge construction starts next week. Planning to have bridge done in September.

Also planning on having additional booths open at Lynden and Sumas during the summer.

Peace Arch project handout was provided

Blaine exit interchange project is roundabouts, looking to start construction Spring 2010. Thank you for reviewing high priority list for ARRA projects, our area didn't do too well.
Handout provided

Our area was asked to develop a list of priority projects in our Counties. The list came back from State, there was nothing in our three Counties, Todd Carlson worked hard to get one on the list. We got the Cook Road project added to the list (in Skagit). Will keep working away on what we can control and affect.

S. Banham: Roundabouts progressing nicely, we have a difficult downtown project, there are people for and against it. It is challenging to get people to buy into it. Working on 6 year TIP, Boblett is our ARRA project. We also lost TIB money for H Street; we were short on money, now even shorter on money.

J. Hergesheimer: Port, still trying to bring NOAA fleet to Bellingham. It is a long process, short schedule. We are still meeting with NOAA, finding out what they want and don't want, still in the mix with 4 other jurisdictions who are also courting them.

The City and the Port had a joint meeting last night 4/29 regarding waterfront district, core street network, we are moving forward with a master plan, three street network that leaves a lot of open space for future streets.

\$50-60 million clean-up, at 50-60% design, the permit process will take at least 12 months. It will take 4 construction seasons to get it done.

We received some Stimulus money for the airport, constructing an airplane parking lot, \$3 million so the airplanes don't sink in the asphalt overnight. Out to bid, bids open next week, will start this summer.

C. Comeau: New carrier? Alaska?

J. Hergesheimer: Yes, they will be starting some flights soon, test and may keep, or take away. Will start with flights to Las Vegas and probably more, it is driven by the consumer market. We have a high percentage (50-60%) of Canadian travelers. A lot of space for surface lots, the Port has to invest, carriers don't pay for. Transit service is a lot cheaper than a surface lot. FAA will give money for grants, when available.

R. Harper: Sumas is going ahead with Bob Mitchell Way, will be out to bid by end of May.

J. Rutan: What is the status of combing cities?

R. Harper: A committee is preparing a draft report. You will have to see the report; the press may have gotten ahead of the process.

E. Barton: May is Bike month, tonight is kick off reception for those that have registered teams. Register online at www.everybodyBIKE.com, three times a month or more, biking or walking trips count. Four – six people on a team, double points for new commuters and top executives.

Bike classes, encourage you or your staff to take the classes. Learn why bicyclists are positioned the way they are. Classes are May 6 and June 3 at the Co-op in Bellingham.

Bike to Work and School Day May 15th, over 50 stations, people are coming to us to staff stations, instead of us seeking out volunteers. Looking to host a celebration station in Everson, if you know anyone that's interested in helping, let us know.

M. Anderson: There is 100% participation within the Bellingham School District for Bike to Work and School Day, this is the first time ever. The newest section of the Whatcom Creak Trail is open, I rode my bike on it a couple days ago, it's great and I encourage all of you to check it out.

D. Purcell: Lynden, both bridge projects are done and back open. The East Grover, going to Council for approval on Monday.

A. Gomez: Travel demand model, done by January or sooner. I will have you review the area type in your community. Will be used for various things, to guide us for project selection, VMT, LOS, see where problems are, and use it for comp plans. I want it to be as inclusive as possible; I want you to use it.

C. Comeau: We got a call for projects from freight mobility and investment board. Do you have any information on that?

G. Rogers: No, and I don't recall what their budget is; will probably add projects to a list, for when funding is available.

II. Review of TIB presentation and budget status

G. Rogers: Would like to move item II to the next meeting. TIB has had their budget cut; I suspect it's lower than last year.

R. Routh: I heard that there is no call this year for TIB.

S. Banham: Money that you had from previous projects will be gone if not awarded.

G. Rogers: How many TIB projects lost here? At least two.

G. Rogers: I encourage you to check in with Steve Gorcester and make sure your projects aren't at risk.

J. Rutan: At TIB meeting, they had a list of three categories, Yew St lost.

R. Cubellis: Was H St lost or contingent?

S. Banham: I think it's lost, but will follow up. Is this a short term thing or is it morphing away? It is one of a few funding sources for cities under 5,000. If it's gone it really limits our ability to do road projects.

J. Rutan: Funding source is not sufficient.

S. Banham: Public works trust fund not well either.

R. Routhe: No calls this year, and next year urban arterial program only, no small city.

G. Rogers: At last legislative meetings, there was talk of disbanding TIB.

S. Banham: Where do we go to get projects done? We need something else. It would be nice to see something at the COG level.

G. Rogers: I may be able to help, I suggest that we take this up as an issue and can talk to other COGs statewide.

III. Discussion of STP Regional funds project status

G. Rogers: I wanted to put something on the radar screen for Yew Street, looks like it's back on track.

J. Rutan: Fully designed, need ROW, construction in 2010 spring.

R. Routhe: Lynden bid came in over 10% below engineer's estimate, lost \$200,000 of ARRA money.

G. Rogers: WCOG staff has been in conversations with Kathleen Davis.

R. Cubellis: The requirement if bid is less than estimate, is that the states must maintain a process to adjust federal share, if this should happen. If it's more than \$250 K then excess is reduced from federal share. At end of local agency agreement, de-obligate and goes back into funding. But with ARRA money, the panel said that if money comes back, the fed's pay less. Will let you keep 10% of the original estimate, if the difference is greater, it goes to second tier projects. These amounts will be pooled and the oversight panel will decide which projects gets the money. This pool of local non-TMA's, it could go here or could go somewhere else.

J. Rutan: Project estimates are much lower now than three months ago. Engineers estimate is much lower, 30-35% below last summer.

R. Cubellis: Only silver lining is that Lynden gets to keep 10%. Most ARRA around the state have other funding as well. J. Miller is working on making the case that the 10% rule will delay the money getting out there. If \$200K was left in Lynden, it would be out on the street right way. When goes to tier 2, who knows when the money will get on the street. Not the intent of the ARRA to hold the money back.

IV. Functional Classification

A. Gomez: I used a general methodology, if you want to refine it we can. Principal arterials, urban areas, not necessarily in a city, connects two urban areas. Minor arterials

connect neighborhoods, just in urban areas, not rural; and runs longer than a major connector. Distinction between urban collector and rural major collector, there aren't any minor collectors in urban areas, so all minor connectors in rural areas. Difference of minor collector from major collector, is that the major connects two activities, schools, shopping centers, etc. That's the broad category that I used to define methodology. It can be refined though.

Speeds; I didn't see anything that distinguishes one functional classification over the other. Speeds probably won't be that relevant.

J. Rutan: May be something to look at.

A. Gomez: County has default speed as 35mph, Bellingham 25mph, other cities the same. Pavement management system; some all weather roads, some seasonal road restrictions (weight). Can that help in anyway to classify the roads?

C. Comeau: This map is dated, 2003, not correct, Bakerview does not have a seasonal weight restriction. What about roads that have year round restrictions? This just shows seasonal weight restrictions.

A. Gomez: Down grade it from principal to minor?

J. Rutan: Every road in county has a potential seasonal weight restriction.

S. Banham: If we have a deficient roadway, we eventually have to figure out how to get that roadway up to that level. Should condition of that roadway define the classification? Or should we classify it to what we want in the future.

C. Comeau: We have the opposite objective in an urban environment; we won't upgrade and widen the roads; that is why we have changed the LOS standard.

S. Banham: There is a freight element as well, where you don't want the industry traffic to be. Don't want them driving down main street in town.

C. Comeau: Want streets to move freight and goods, as well as people. Need to consider transit, too.

A. Gomez: It looks like Iowa and Alabama exceeding capacities for a minor arterial. Classify them higher? Somehow meets general methodology. Thinking about classifying Hannegan as principal arterial, when turns into Woburn, make it principal to Lakeway. Have Iowa and Alabama from James to Woburn, labeled as principal arterials (in that area).

S. Banham: Can't have a gap between principal arterials.

- C. Comeau: You have to look at the way these roads are designed and built; it doesn't have the designs and features as a principal arterial.
- R. Routh: Principal, move things thru the system, from city to city. What does it serve? Smaller region or larger?
- R. Cubellis: Goal of the model to mimic what's really going on? Don't see how you can ignore things like King Street.
- K. Woeller: Model will tell us that this street isn't made for that volume.
- C. Comeau: Every single interchange will have problems that show up.
- R. Harper: Different categories; we don't have minor arterials in rural areas. Rural major and minor, urban major and minor.
- A. Gomez: Birch Bay – Lynden as a major, East Badger is as a principal, but maybe shouldn't be, rural minor arterial. Secondary routes to major arterials.
- S. Banham: To be used in modeling, to what extent does the condition of the road affect how people use it. Traffic patterns are from small areas to Bellingham.
- R. Cubellis: Should we have a road condition criteria?
- J. Rutan: Have to decide how you're going to cross the river, limits your choice.
- A. Gomez: Look at connectors from rural areas to Bellingham as being principal arterials. That gives me good guidance; I will probably change the rural collectors.
- E. Barton: Is there an effect on whether bikes/peds will use these roads?
- C. Comeau: We have policies in place on principal arterials when constructing new or overlays, have to take into account bike/ped use.
- A. Gomez: This is year 2008, will also do 2020 and 2032, since will be altered in the future. If your area is changing, areas urbanizing that aren't right now. It will have to be revisited. I would like to be able to use the model for comp plans.
- J. Rutan: Model could show red, we won't change the road, will try to get people off it, move them to where they should be.
- A. Gomez: Will go through a calibration and validation process with model. We may need to change it.
- J. Rutan: If changing functional classification of Hannegan and Woburn should also change Yew, since they all connect.

E. Barton: So we are establishing a base year to predict future?

C. Comeau: Does it produce a policy change? Not always.

S. Banham: How are you working with some of these State Routes? Having a State Route (Pole Road) taken out as an arterial doesn't make sense to me. Need something in between in rural areas.

A. Gomez: Consider including a minor arterial on some State Routes. I will have discussions with the State. Downgrade Chuckanut, I know that road, but not others (in the County).

R. Cubellis: In response to the question concerning the point at which an engineers estimate is compared to the winning bid by WSDOT on a project is, according to M. Sandal, is when you turn in documents to get your DBE requirement.

A. Gomez: Next step, I will go to your communities, or you come to me, come back and take notes. Discuss comments, wrap up and done. You will be hearing from me next week. I'll discuss the cut points with you. We will talk about the area type and functional classification.

V. Washington Transportation Plan

G. Rogers: What Andy is trying to do, is adjust it to address the functionality of the system. The model will be used in the new Whatcom Transportation Plan, and maybe in your comp plans. Model is a tool to use, for the decision makers.

Starting a new process to develop a new Washington Transportation Plan, I am on the committee, under the Transportation Commission. Want to make it more reflective of reality. It has never been done that way before; I'm pleased to play a role it in. Will take about 18 months, plan due in December 2010.

K. Woehler: Because the commission is leading the plan, I also understand that headquarters will be doing the statewide multi-model transportation plan. Previous plans have been both the policy level and multi-model piece. This is the first stand alone multi-model. Wrap it up for next budget session, which is 2011.

G. Rogers: The Washington Transportation Plan is a difficult thing to do; I will update you on the process.