

Transportation Technical Advisory Committee
Whatcom Council of Governments
Meeting Summary
April 29 & May 6

Start time: 10:00am

Attendees: April 29, 2010

Gordon Rogers, WCOG
Bill Bullock, City of Blaine

Andres Gomez, WCOG
Chris Comeau, Bellingham Public Works
Becky Kelly, WTA
Gary Davis, Whatcom County
Elizabeth Sjostrom, WSDOT
Rory Routhe: City of Bellingham

Mark Sandal, Lynden Public Works
Rollin Harper, Everson, Nooksack, Sumas
Kirk Vinish, Lummi Nation
John Hergesheimer, Port of Bellingham
Jori Burnett, City of Ferndale
Ed Conyers, WSDOT
Joe Rutan, Whatcom County

I. Member updates

R. Routhe: Northwest is continuing on schedule to be done this summer, going out to bid for Ohio, King, State Street project end of May. Diamond Jims café was relocated to the Fountain District.

B. Bullock: Boblett St is open, and roundabouts are marching along, hope to finish up before end of May. H Street reconstruction project out to bid in two weeks.

J. Rutan: Yew Street project was awarded, will get started soon, Middle Fork Bridge on Mosquito Lake Road has been closed for months. It will open up next month. County Public Works Admin Offices will be moving, right now in Copper building, will relocate to Third floor Civic Building.

C. Comeau: We are putting in pay stations instead of meters; you can pay with your debit card. Will be put in front of the civic complex as a pilot project, if it works well, it will be expanded. We are getting our six year TIP ready to go, preliminary draft will be sent out in next two weeks, public hearing to city council in May, hope to have it adopted in June.

J. Hergesheimer: Taxiway renovation is underway, North end of taxiway is completely excavated, plan to pave first segment end of May, and on track for closing running way 11pm-6am during all of Aug, with full closure for three weeks after that. On the Waterfront District, an amendment to the supplemental EIS draft is nearly finished, the Port is working with the City on the master plan,

breaking it up into segments to start with. We will start cleaning up the site next year.

E. Sjostrom: SR542, East Church Mountain Rd realignment, 542 will be down to one lane during construction June – Oct. Gallup Creek Bridge replacement will be awarded soon.

C. Comeau: Will the road be torn up during Ski to Sea?

E. Sjostrom: I'll find out for you. [subsequent e-mail reflected closure of one lane during event] Four interchanges in discussion Bellingham I-5 ramp reconstruction, advertise in May, construct in July. BP is funding a roundabout at the Grandview/Blaine Rd intersection. WSDOT got a National Forest Highways grant to pave part of SR542. There will be widened shoulders on both sides of the Gallop St Bridge, no separated pedestrian facilities for now. We are looking at what we can do to improve safety on Badger Road, SR546, safety issues didn't point to one particular solution. The CBI (coordinated boarder infrastructure) money is not currently available for this project, but that may change.

G. Rogers: There are two components of CBI, one is unanticipated remainders through the end of SAFETEA-LU, and there is now a new part with the continuing resolution. The State Legislature has allocated that, I thought that project was in there, so I don't know what happened.

B. Kelly: The WTA sales tax measure did not pass so we are planning a 14% service cut that includes eliminating all Sunday service starting Sept 2010. After that we will plan for an additional 15-20% of service cuts by 2012. About 28 drivers and other staff jobs will be eliminated with the first cut.

R. Harper: No major projects in Everson, Nooksack or Sumas. Everson is looking at a parallel arterial to the downtown Main Street. It might be an option for the future.

J. Burnett: Second Ave is scheduled for the first lift of pavement on May 10, LaBounty is closed now due to disrepair, and the contractor for that work should start on May 17th or 24th.

K. Vinish: Haxton Way project is underway; expect to open it up in the Fall.

G. Rogers: Would you like to talk about the \$16M earmark requests?

K. Vinish: It is mainly for safety improvements around the ferry.

G. Davis: The Legislature did pass something that allows Counties another three years to update their comp plans; I think we will still go ahead with ours.

G. Rogers: Is anyone here is going to wait to update their comp plans?

C. Comeau: My understanding is that Bellingham will continue with a minor update:

R. Harper: I have heard that Bellingham, Whatcom County and Lynden will go ahead with their updates and the four smaller cities will wait.

II. WCOG Travel Demand Model – Regional Activity Centers – Andy Gomez

A. Gomez: This is the first part of a process on developing a regionally significant system. The idea is to come up with regional activity centers. I came up with ‘productions’ which are households, there are one or two in each jurisdiction and urban area as a sample. I then did a first cut with regional activity centers and discussed with CTAG where there are other regional activity centers. I looked at all the paths between each production and the 21 regional activity centers. In May I will come back to you and show you all the paths. The regional activity centers have to be regional in nature, they must attract trips from both within their community and from outside it, most days of the week, and most of the year. An event center that attracts trips only on the weekend wouldn’t be added. Airports, business parks, major transportation centers and major shopping centers are added.

When I run the model, it will pick the route that takes the shortest amount of time. The model will also have a transit component with the WTA routes; it won’t differentiate a charter bus from a personal vehicle though. If there are paths that we aren’t in agreement with, we can change them.

G. Rogers: The model doesn’t have all roads in it. If there is a question about a segment you think should be in the model, and you can give us traffic counts we can discuss whether it should be added. Border crossings act as more of a tunnel, the border is not an originator. We do have border crossing counts.

A. Gomez: I’ll smooth the routes out to include the border. We will look at the map in May; I will then make changes and show you the revised map at the June TTAC. This map will then be used to show the regionally significant roads for STP funding.

III. STP Regional Funding Process Review

G. Rogers: Our next Policy Board meeting is May 12; we anticipate availability of STP funding at about \$2 million per year for at least the next two years until re-authorization is accomplished. I’d like to go through the three baseline requirements and the weighted scoring criteria we used in the past and recommend the final list to the board on May 12. All three baseline requirements must be met by each project submitted. Number one ensures project is on the regional system, or is eligible to be added. Seeing no objections we’ll leave that in. Number two is related to timing, SAFETEA-LU rules say that the first four years of TIPS must be fiscally constrained, so this qualifying criterion should be

changed to 4 years since the last two years of the TIP may include projects that have little funding and are less likely to be started.

R. Harper: The problem with that is that if your project is on the TIP within the first four years you are saying that it's already funded. You wouldn't want to preclude projects that need to be done.

G. Rogers: The group agrees to change 3 years to 4 years. Number three relates to the funding amount we will receive, we are assuming that we'll get the same amount this year as last time.

J. Rutan: We did that so that we wouldn't federalize small projects, so that the money goes towards construction not overhead.

G. Rogers: We'll leave number three as it's written. We will now look at the criteria, we awarded points for greater than required match, we might want to eliminate that in this economic time.

M. Sandal: Did we require letters to show that we had multiple funding partners?

G. Rogers: I don't recall requiring letters.

M. Sandal: Realistically if you have multiple funding partners you will already have funding.

K. Vinish: I think we need to give more direction for number five.

J. Rutan: I think that we should give the effort that has been put forward some recognition.

G. Rogers: We will leave one and five in. Number two is about providing choices.

J. Burnet: There are some roads where there are not legitimate alternative transportation choices.

J. Rutan: You should build the road the best you can, add in a shared use shoulder.

G. Rogers: The group agrees to keep number two as it is. Number three will stay as it is. Number four, does it still have value?

R. Routhe: I'd rather have it weighted toward connectivity.

K. Vinish: I'm okay with deleting it.

G. Rogers: I'd concur with taking it out. Number six relates to freight and goods movement, i.e., if you had a rail conflict on a road and your project did something to improve it, you'd get points. The group agrees to leave six, seven, eight and

nine in. Number ten relates to being on the top of the unfunded projects. My recommendation is to eliminate number ten.

C. Comeau: James St is at the top of the list, it wasn't funded when we relocated STP funds from Lake Louise. Projects under ours were funded.

G. Rogers: If it was such a good project then, it should compete well this time as well. The group agreed to leave it in.

J. Rutan: We don't address capacity and safety. Somehow we aren't addressing those two things. I would take away some of the continuity and add capacity. Continuity is heavily weighted throughout.

G. Rogers: We did delete number four; you could argue that all projects will increase capacity. We haven't talked about weighting yet.

R. Harper: Adding system capacity, identify system deficiencies.

G. Rogers: What you said there is neutral, all projects improve capacity.

J. Rutan: Paving projects don't improve capacity. I like his wording.

G. Rogers: Does everyone agree with his point?

J. Burnet: In one and five it awards speculation rather than projects that are ready to go.

C. Comeau: The problem with that is that it eliminates all projects with permit requirements.

M. Sandal: We can add points if you show that you've put some funds into engineering and design. It shows that a jurisdiction values a project.

B. Bullock: Number two says that you've budgeted money towards the project, not that you've already spent money on engineering or ROW.

R. Routh: Expand the definition of Number One to include already expended funds.

B. Bullock: Add in: and or the equivalent previous expenditure of funds.

G. Rogers: I'll add that into Number One.

R. Harper: Might want to add in criteria for reduction of greenhouse gases.

G. Rogers: We will look at that during the next cycle. We should have another meeting before the Policy Board on May 12, to finish this discussion.

May 6, 2010 *Continued from April 29, 2010*

Start time: 9:00am

Attendees: May 6, 2010

Gordon Rogers, WCOG
Mary Anderson, WCOG
Andres Gomez, WCOG
Chris Comeau, Bellingham Public Works

Mark Sandal, Lynden Public Works
Rollin Harper, Everson, Nooksack, Sumas
Doug McDonald, Lummi Nation

III. Capital Project Map

G. Rogers: We got input only from the State and the County. I need to know if you want to proceed with this. If so, there are two ways to do it, we can make PDFs of what you send us and simply put those on our web site, or we can develop a new map including all projects. If you don't want to do that it's fine.

C. Comeau: I thought we sent it to you awhile back. Do you want GIS? I'll resend it.

R. Harper: What is the bar that makes projects qualify? Projects down the road?

G. Rogers: Whatever you want, County has projects a ways out. Putting everything on the map might make it too busy, we can try to minimize the amount of text. The TTAC group thought it was a good idea.

C. Comeau: If we sent you a map in CAD, how long would it take to put into GIS format?

A. Gomez: Could take a long time, depending on what's on it, how much data.

G. Rogers: Just send us transportation projects, road and bike ped projects.

R. Harper: Nooksack Loop Trail?

G. Rogers: Not that yet. The projects should be in the TIP. Not something that's 12 years out.

A. Gomez: Is San Juan Blvd in the 6 year TIP?

C. Comeau: Not in TIP, what I sent was just draft, not funded projects. We have comp plan map that shows 20 year project list, UGA not in City.

A. Gomez: Twenty year fiscally constrained project map would benefit me.

G. Rogers: What ever you want to give us. For MPO 20 year is fiscally constrained for Bellingham and Ferndale, that is not the case for other Cities or County.

C. Comeau: Wouldn't that make sense to use map from last project.

R. Harper: I thought it was going to be projects that are coming up soon.

C. Comeau: Thought it would be more of a working map for TTAC group. If you map 20 year projects you might see gaps in the system.

M. Sandal: Current project list could be updated.

A. Gomez: Construction Zone Map.

G. Rogers: I will put this on the June agenda.

IV. Tiger II

G. Rogers: Handout for your info, we don't need to talk about right now.

C. Comeau: Is there anything that is glairing different from TIGER I?

G. Rogers: I think it's very similar, the handout compares the two.

C. Comeau: Is there anything going on with other major transportation act?

G. Rogers: L. Ehl sent out email on May 3, said 20 weeks left in Legislative year, listed 5 -6 topics of what they are focusing on, there is nothing on transportation.

C. Comeau: What ever happened to the HIRE thing?

G. Rogers: Nothing, it was supposed to be phase two, but didn't happen. There was a promise from H. Reid there would be a follow up bill for transportation, We have heard it was on life support, but it could have been unplugged. TIGER II is nationwide competitive, compared to allocation.

C. Comeau: Out of 1,400 applications, 51 projects were awarded last TIGER go around.

V. STP Regional Funding Process Review

G. Rogers: I have copies of the revised STP funding process for your review.

M. Sandal: How did alternate modes end up with 20 points? When you're trying to get rail or marine it's hard for small cities. Almost any project needs ped facilities with fed money.

G. Rogers: Also carpool, vanpool, transit.

M. Sandal: We only have one bus route in town.

D. McDonald: K. Vinish thought safety should be rated higher, also thought #2 was a bit high.

G. Rogers: It doesn't have to add up to 100.

C. Comeau: With the exception of the first three, others are 10 points. Is any one supposed to stand out for the regional transportation system? What are we trying to achieve here?

M. Sandal: I like seeing this money go towards projects, not design. You could have it sitting on your shelf and permits aren't valid anymore.

C. Comeau: A lot of the arterial streets are going through environmentally constrained areas; it can be a multi year process dealing with feds.

M. Sandal: A lot of Lynden projects are trying to reconstruct existing streets.

C. Comeau: All the way across Northern part of City, wettest ground in Bellingham. Much money is going to offsite mitigation purposes. Grants wants projects to be shovel ready, makes sense.

M. Sandal: We have Benson Rd project, we can't improve street until we realign the channels of Benson Creek.

R. Harper: If projects are sitting out there in holding, they can't afford to take a gamble on design costs, don't have the tax base. They need to use the money for design, not a long project, could still make it to construction.

C. Comeau: The longer it sits on the shelf, environmental regulations could change. Curious why first three are rated different than others. What are we really trying to achieve?

G. Rogers: In the Federal Highways Act cycle, we are in somewhat of a holding pattern under continuing resolutions when we have a new Act authorized, things will change. Right now, the State Legislature has 6 adopted goals. If you look at WCOG MPO planning factors, they align with those goals pretty well. I suggest that the criteria we are discussing also align quite well and should , therefore, be

of equal value by making them all worth ten points each. Some factors have changes since we first weighted these.

C. Comeau: All would be equally weighted, not one is more important than another.

G. Rogers: For this cycle.

R. Harper: I wouldn't have a problem with making them all 10. Number 1, 13.5% must be prepaid, pre-expenditures.

M. Sandal: On the application, preliminary work can't be in total cost.

R. Harper: There will be two totals, one for the pre-paid project costs and one for total.

M. Sandal: Figure out percentage.

C. Comeau: If we are spending money, it should be in the project total. 100% should be counted in project cost.

G. Rogers: Will WSDOT buy that as your total project cost?

C. Comeau: I don't think they know the real cost of doing projects, it is a real cost, we have to do a wetland study before we even know if we can build something. That doesn't get any weight here, even though it's a real cost.

G. Rogers: Part of discussion at Board retreat yesterday, costs for building things, B&O taxes, storm water management. There are a lot of requirements, nothing we can control.

M. Sandal: That is why I wanted to add points to Number 1.

G. Rogers: Could change number 1 back to how it was. If engineering is done 1 point, environmental done 1 point, ROW done 1 point.

C. Comeau: At least you'd get credit for things you've done, what level is considered done, 30%, 60%?

R. Harper: Up to 5 points for some % that you've contributed already.

G. Rogers: Might be tricky, every one will get 5 points.

C. Comeau: Where is off-site mitigation costs accounted for? Need to have mitigation before starting project.

M. Sandal: Is mitigation site permitted.

C. Comeau: No, for the footprint of the road.

M. Sandal: Phase 1 of project, to build Road, you have to do mitigation; phase 1 is off site mitigation.

G. Rogers: Your Council may change priorities before the project can be completed.

C. Comeau: Project is already on 6 year TIP, would have to refund money.

G. Rogers: What about stormwater? Is this getting somewhat peripheral to what this money should be used for?

C. Comeau: This is a real cost.

G. Rogers: My recommendation would be to go with what we have for this go around. I am open to what you are saying. Not sure what other TTAC members will think of this.

M Sandal: Do we need letters for Number 5?

C. Comeau: I agree that letters should be required.

M. Sandal: I do think we should look at next go around for off site projects that are needed for transportation projects.

G. Rogers: I'll bring that up with the board, if you'd like me to.

R. Harper: On Number 1, taking it from 5 to 10 points, up to 5 points for completed project work, and expenditures for previous funding spent. You can make the case and group can look at it.

[Group likes that idea]

R. Harper: On Number 2, baseline requirement, link to TIP in first part, second part "will be committed", jurisdiction saying 'yes we'll get this going', vs. has to be listed on TIP. Don't want to have confusion down the road. Will have to change language, IS on the TIP, committed spending 5% in first years.

G. Rogers: For the language that's here, the original intent was that project needs to be completed. Previously there were some projects that had been funded that didn't get done. Should be in the first three or four years of your TIP, can be added in.

C. Comeau: Isn't it that as local agencies it has to be first three years? I remember Ron talking about this, there was some change, four years for you, but three for us.

G. Rogers: Came out in SAFETEA-LU.

C. Comeau: We can only show projects in first three years that are fully funded.

G. Rogers: I will check with Ron. I think they added the year because some people needed more time.

A. Gomez: We don't have to meet Air Quality Conformity, MPOs that do, have to update their plans every 5 years. They tried to tie together update of plan and TIP.

R. Harper: I'm fine with the language as is I just didn't want to have confusion down the road.

C. Comeau: How do you show that you're committed then?

R. Harper: Saying that TIP could be amended, if you get the money.

C. Comeau: This is getting your foot in the door; have to meet criteria to get on the list. Jurisdictions have to be committed with some funding to show that they are serious.

R. Harper: Anyone who has a project is going to be committed and will have put funds into it.

C. Comeau: As I was preparing 6 year TIP I would include projects and show that I'm committing funds. We show projects that are good projects and grant funding candidates.

G. Rogers: Committed means spent.

R. Harper: Committed means budgeted.

C. Comeau: 6 Year TIP is committed, but budget is only 1 year. It is a planning document, hoping that there is money out there.

R. Harper: Language doesn't say that, County has a project that is ready to go, on TIP in year 4, would have to find money to put onto it.

G. Rogers: We have to look at the existing program. WSDOT sends us a letter annually with an STP-R allocation. In the past we have used a three year cycle and selected project for that time frame. Some MPOs use a six year cycle and

jurisdictions actually borrow money in anticipation of that future funding. To go out further than three years is to incur some level of risk. If you agree that you're going to do the project and do it in anticipation of receiving funds and don't get them, that risk is on you.

R. Harper: Can you amend TIP after you receive funds?

G. Rogers: There are two different aspects there. I think it should be in first four years of the TIP. Provide assurance that projects will get done and money will be spent.

C. Comeau: If we don't have a %, there is a risk that the TIP becomes a wish list, not a fiscally constrained document. Many years ago Whatcom County had 60 projects on their TIP; a few years ago it was down to 20.

G. Rogers: It's politics. Many TIPS are wish lists to some extent, but the first four years have to be constrained.

C. Comeau: I think there needs to be something in the first three years as a commitment. It gives you some flexibility; maybe project becomes a higher priority or goes away.

R. Harper: I could put it in year 3 or 4 just to meet requirements. Would have to change wording from Will be Committed to IS committed.

G. Rogers: I don't have a problem with that; however, it will be a problem with those that don't have it in their TIPS. It's not on docket, and will have to go to council, etc. This has worked so far, hasn't really been a problem.

C. Comeau: Fine with leaving it as it is.

R. Harper: I'm fine with it as well.

VI. STP Enhancement Process Review

Moved to next meeting

VII. Adjourn