

## Transportation Technical Advisory Committee

Whatcom Council of Governments

### Meeting Summary

July 22, 2010

Start time: 10:00am

#### Attendees:

Gordon Rogers, WCOG

Mary Anderson, WCOG

Andres Gomez, WCOG

Ellen Barton, WCOG

Kirk Vinish, Lummi Nation

Mark Sandal, Lynden Public Works

Rollin Harper, Sehome Planning; Everson,

Nooksack, Sumas

John Hergesheimer, Port of Bellingham

Gary Davis, Whatcom County

Janis Marlega, City of Ferndale

Bill Bullock, Blaine Public Works

Kerri Woehler, WSDOT

Chris Comeau, Bellingham Public Works

#### I. Project updates

M. Sandal: Our Stimulus project will hopefully be closed out this month; we are getting other projects designed and ready to go out to bid.

B. Bullock: We have our preconstruction meeting for H Street next Tues, will start construction in a couple weeks, then will shut down during winter and finish by next July. Our residential street projects start soon, the roundabouts are completed now. We have received positive comments from most people about the roundabouts.

K. Vinish: The Haxton Way pedestrian path is moving along, it will be opening this fall.

J. Hergesheimer: The Port is moving along on the waterfront district master plan, the draft master plan has been submitted and is out for review. The airport project is half done with the taxiway; we are on schedule for the runway closure this September.

J. Marlega: 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave almost done, the contractor is just finishing landscaping. It looks really nice. Main St Phases II, 3<sup>rd</sup> to Washington St is out to bid now, we open bids on Aug 10<sup>th</sup>.

C. Comeau: Forrest St is being completed, the contractor is resurfacing, and putting in bulb outs and a bike lane, the Northwest – I5 roundabout opened to traffic, but there is still some work being done. We will build the second roundabout on Northwest next year. There are resurfacing projects all over the city. The crosswalks we put in downtown do not last as long as advertised, they are baked into pavement, like an inlay. Right turn movements have worn it out completely. They were billed as lasting much longer than regular. It costs more and was supposed to last longer.

R. Harper: No major projects for the three cities. The City of Nooksack is trying to work with a local gravel company, instead of battling in front of the Council. We hope to work with company so they will pay for their impacts.

E. Barton: I am updating the EACH plan; it is due to WSDOT in September. The plan will have a project list; looking for projects that serve people in wheelchairs, low income, etc. If you have projects you can propose it for that list. The RFP will be in December. For transit you can get several million. For the last WCOG project we got \$80,000. The projects need to be in a priority array. Thus far there hasn't been much competition.

K. Woehler: There are no barrels on the guide for the first time in three years. The roundabout BP is constructing at Grandview Road will start any time. A new project was announced for I5 from Burlington to North Samish. It has to be out the door ASAP, by September, will cost \$25 million. We did an I5 Bakerview interchange value planning study. We have to go back to the I5 master plan and find less expensive work that can be done. There will be a meeting on Aug 12<sup>th</sup>, contact me for more info.

M. Sandal: Will it be concrete panel work? Do you have an update on the off ramp work happening?

K. Woehler: I haven't heard, they went out to bid last spring.

C. Comeau: The Ohio interchange will start soon.

G. Davis: I don't have a county project update; it looks like we will be updating our transportation chapter in the comp plan in 2011.

C. Comeau: As far as I know COB is moving forward with updating their transportation chapter in the comp plan as well, however, that is subject to change.

G. Davis: The County is going to hold off on replacing the planning director for awhile.

C. Comeau: Same with the city.

## **II. State Transportation Commission Regional Priority Projects (Top 20) List**

G. Rogers: This handout is the most current document provided by the Transportation Commission staff about the top 20 list.

As a reminder, we are doing this because the WA legislators requested that the Transportation Commission agency ask each RTPO to compile a top 20 list. One thing that is evolving is what to do with preservation and maintenance projects; some see those as separate projects, some suggested that there should be a

separate category for those. I suggested everyone give a total for preservation, which would give them the size of the issue. They had a meeting yesterday; I don't know what the results of that meeting are yet. Other RTPOs/MPOs said they didn't know if it would work for them. I think preservation and maintenance might end up separate.

I created an illustrative list for this group, it is just a starting point, and it is compiled from your recent TIPs. I ball parked some projects. It is just something to get us started, they can all go away and we can make a whole new list. I combined a few projects as one; that may or may not be the best way to go.

R. Harper: Are we supposed to exclude I5?

G. Rogers: No, I5 will be included. You saw the timeline. This is intended to be a 20 year list. The Legislators are starting a new biennium budget. If they decided to spend federal money on local roads, they should have a list to choose from. They initially talked about having a timeline on the form; people were not so comfortable with that.

C. Comeau: If they will be spending state money on local roads, do they want projects that will benefit the state system?

G. Rogers: Perhaps. Senator Haugen, who is the most powerful transportation Senator in the state, thinks very locally with regards to her County when voting. Others think more statewide. The projects we submit need to have regional implications.

M. Sandal: Theoretically Lynden doesn't have anything regionally significant besides the Guide and Badger, which are state routes.

C. Comeau: We could put forward projects that are on arterials that will take pressure off I5, which will benefit the state.

G. Rogers: Some projects I put on the list do just that. For example, Lincoln Road to Portal Way is a secondary route for I5.

K. Woehler: This request is coming from the Transportation Commission and the legislators. The WSDOT perspective is very focused in on quantitative demonstration of benefits for all of our projects. For projects we proposed they are having us get into detailed analysis how much congestion it removes.

G. Rogers: You sent me a list of projects of what WSDOT is thinking for this.

K. Woehler: We've been asked to identify projects on state highways, as well as projects that locals might propose that will affect state routes. For this area, we have the Iowa interchange, I5 Bakerview interchange, I5 Birch Bay Lynden Road,

SR 539: I5 to Horton Road, finishing the Guide stage II, finish to Lynden, then Lynden to boarder, ITS improvement, SR 546 Badger road corridor, and SR 548 Kickerville road as a safety concern. The Mt Baker area was asked to submit a list, we went to the I5 master plan and the highway system plan. I will send the list to G. Rogers, who will pass it on to the group.

We are focusing on areas with congestion; although we recognize the economic development potential, it would be difficult to produce a benefit cost ratio for the Blaine exit 274. This is not a final list. We want to work hand in hand with you. I need to know what projects you are proposing that will affect the state highways.

G. Rogers: Nowhere in the discussion of this exercise has benefit cost come up, that's not to say it won't come up in the future.

C. Comeau: The I5 master plan totals \$1 billion; there are many projects that can be built for much cheaper that will be more effective for the system.

K. Woehler: We are trying to come up with a quantitative way to measure things. People may not ask WSDOT, but if they do, WSDOT will answer benefit cost.

G. Rogers: Currently it is up for grabs if benefit cost is an effective way to measure things.

R. Harper: Any discussion of Hwy 9?

K. Woehler: Because of congestion we focus more on I5.

E. Barton: Will any rail projects be added?

K. Woehler: The WSDOT Rail office may be doing something else; this list is just from the Northwest Region office.

G. Rogers: Rail and transit are being treated separately, there are multi-modal considerations being included. WA just got \$590 million for high speed rail, with more money to come. It is unlikely the legislators will fund rail through this.

M. Sandal: Is there a reason that 544 is not on the WSDOT list?

K. Woehler: Mobility and safety are the two lenses that we can look through. We look at the crash data. We have been told that a deficiency doesn't equal a safety issue.

K. Vinish: This isn't a weighted list, what Everson puts on the list no less valuable than what WSDOT has on list.

G. Rogers: I'd like each of you to go back to your jurisdictions, and bring a list of projects to the Aug meeting, we will discuss this again in Sept. At the Oct 13<sup>th</sup> Policy Board meeting the Policy Board will make a final decision to submit to the Transportation Commission by Oct 29. I don't want to make you work too hard on the list. For each project that is on the list, you'll need to fill out the template the Transportation Commission created.

R. Harper: Perhaps we can provide you with a brainstormed list before next meeting. We could submit it to the group for review at least a couple days before we meet next.

E. Barton: Does the Smart Trips program qualify? Maybe we could hire Werner again.

G. Rogers: Perhaps; we can discuss it.

J. Hergesheimer: If we break big projects apart, it creates more items on the list, we are limited to 20 projects total, which will be pretty easy to get too.

G. Rogers: If you knew this was a two year shopping list, it would be much different than a 20 year project list.

### **III. Regionally Significant System Map, Andres Gomez**

A. Gomez: During the May TTAC meeting I presented a first cut of the regionally significant system using the TDM, that's the blue line on the map. At that meeting we had discussions; the red lines are the roads we added then.

After that meeting you contacted me through email and phone, the roads added at that point are the green lines. We haven't had a discussion about those yet additions yet, so that's what we will do today. I also have a list of roads not currently built, but will be in 20 years. When looking at this, remember the definition I sent you, the road must be a direct connection to a regional activity center.

C. Comeau: Add Aldrich since there will be a new school and development going in, also add Cordata, it leads to community college.

R. Harper: Red lines are roads that we added, it seems like we may be straying from the definition by adding so many roads.

C. Comeau: There is a gap in the system, which is why we are adding the roads. We need more East West routes in this location, until we can construct those roads, we will see congestion. Parents will be driving their kid to the new Aldrich school. Deemer is the only North South Route between Meridian and James St. The Fire Department is on that road and there is commercial development.

Telegraph is a secondary arterial, it connects meridian and James, and the City of Bellingham just annexed the King Mountain area. Irongate is the largest industrial area in the county. Alabama is the main commuter route out of the city to Woburn then Hannegan. East Maple and North Samish Way are on the Samish Urban Village Plan, South Samish Way is heavily used.

Many East West roads don't exist today; when built they will really benefit the system for far less cost than the I5 master plan.

G. Rogers: On Slater road, there is a gap left there.

C. Comeau: We've identified the gap as a need; Slater to Cordata needs a direct access to freeway. There should be another one from Aldrich to I5.

G. Davis: Some sort of alignment needs to be done.

C. Comeau: The ROW exists, it's owned by Whatcom County. The road probably won't be built until the area becomes part of the cities jurisdiction. There will have to be acknowledgment that some of these projects will be pricey, north Bellingham is very wet.

A. Gomez: When we go through STP-R process, if the road is not in the regionally significant system, it can't be funded.

J. Marlega: At the last go around, how many projects where on the regionally significant system?

G. Rogers: In the past most roads have been on the regionally significant system.

J. Marlega: I am wondering how well the two criteria line up, STP-R funding and Regionally Significant Routes?

G. Rogers: When we went through this process before we had a similar discussion. There was some rational discussion for adding roads that didn't meet the criteria, which is how we ended up with primary and secondary routes.

M. Sandal: That is a concern for small cities; it really limits what we can apply for. The road has to be Functionally Classified and on the map, or we can't apply for funding.

J. Marlega: Can the door be opened at a later date for us to fund projects? I was asked last time if I wanted Barrett or LaBounty, we ended up having both.

A. Gomez: An industrial area where usage is regional in nature should be added, even if it is a future development. We are looking at a 20 year horizon; think about roads that will be used at that time.

J. Marlega: I wonder if all streets on the map in Bellingham meet the criteria.

R. Harper: I don't see the problem with adding roads.

A. Gomez: Janice, you and your staff can look at the map and we can add more roads in Ferndale.

J. Marlega: I don't mind adding more roads as long as we are consistent within each agency.

A. Gomez: The Regional Activity Center needs to be a regional draw into community; grocery stores and schools don't qualify.

R. Harper: There is an industrial area planned in Everson with an East West connector between Mission Road and Everson Goshen.

B. Bullock: The danger of adding too many roads is that you have a litmus test to qualify roads. The road project must have FC, if it doesn't, it can't have federal funding. Just because it's on the map it doesn't mean it'll be funded if it's not FC. I'd love to add every road in Blaine, but I need to be able to justify it as regionally significant.

A. Gomez: Part of the federal definition was to have major arterials; it had nothing to do with activity centers, only FC. The regional system is the network; we wanted to get away from labeling roads as primary and secondary. If you don't see a colored line on the road, then the secondary label is being taken away.

G. Rogers: Not sure what you mean by network.

A. Gomez: Every road in the modeling network, minor collectors and higher.

G. Davis: Should we compare it with FC map?

A. Gomez: It's on the State's website, I can look at it. I can code in the FC or email you the map.

G. Rogers: It might be helpful to send out the federal definition of a regionally significant road again. We need to go through this exercise.

A. Gomez: If we end up covering each road with a colored line it defeats the purpose of designating roads regionally significant.

B. Bullock: For example, Semiahmoo Parkway is on this map, but it is a 09 local access road. It would be really hard for me to get federal money for that road.

A. Gomez: It meets the Federal definition to have it there, but you're right, you might have trouble getting money for the road. For Blaine the new roads we added are D St, Boblett and Oedell. In Ferndale I added LaBounty and Barrett.

G. Rogers: You do have employment as a regionally significant center, many people at Cherry Point.

A. Gomez: For Sumas I added Railroad. In Lynden I added Grover Street. I don't think anything was added for the County since last meeting.

G. Rogers: Gary, do you want to talk to Joe about the missing link on Slater Road?

G. Davis: Yes, that's something I'd like to nail down.

A. Gomez: Looks like we'll do another round. Then will have to come up with a project list, some new road projects on the may not be able to be funded within 20 year time frame.

G. Rogers: There will be a Policy Board meeting in March 2011, then in July. Do we want to have them approve the map before the project list?

A. Gomez: No, because we might change things on maps.

C. Comeau: I see that as two different things. It shouldn't affect this map. You can show the existing and future roads as different, have future roads marked with a dashed line.

A. Gomez: Ferndale and Everson and Nooksack may add roads. The map can go to Policy Board in October.

R. Harper: If the road improvement isn't meet fiscally constrained will it be removed from map?

A. Gomez: We can make that call.

C. Comeau: It won't show up on 20 year timeframe list.

G. Rogers: That get's into a gray area. It was brought it up at statewide RTP/O/MPO coordinating meeting, I mentioned that the rule is that the fiscal constraint comes from the MPO planning area. When I said that, a guy from Spokane asked why, isn't it easier to have all constrained? I think it's preferable, when we first came out with plan 15 years ago the whole thing was fiscally constrained. Last time we didn't do it, since it was not required. It shows more credibility if the list is fiscally constrained.

A. Gomez: This is not a vision plan; I think it should be fiscally constrained. Use your best guess; look at revenue sources and needs. What you think you can fund.

G. Rogers: If you take a small cities budget it won't take into STP-R, or the top 20 list. I agree that it should be fiscally constrained; we need to define what that is though.

A. Gomez: Should we show roads that may not be funded in the future?

C. Comeau: There may be an opportunity for funds, like ARRA and TIGER funds.

G. Rogers: There also will be a new act; they might ask to what degree does your TIP reflect livability?

C. Comeau: For our TIP, we only include projects that are regionally significant.

G. Rogers: We have to demonstrate to the Feds that the list is fiscally constrained.

A. Gomez: We'll have a number for fiscally constrained that we'll get you.

G. Rogers: Actually, we will get a number from the local jurisdictions for their proposed budgets. It may depend on policy, depending on what the Council wants to focus on. We still have no idea what will happen with reauthorization.

C. Comeau: Can you give us an update with reauthorization at the next meeting?

G. Rogers: There are some proposals out there, I can give you updates. TIB is up in the air. There was an order in the State budget for TIB, then they were defined as excess and had their budget cut in half, as far as I know, that's where it stands. Sam Crawford, who is on our board, also sits on the TIB board and hasn't heard anything.

#### **IV. Adjourn**