

Transportation Technical Advisory Committee
Whatcom Council of Governments
Meeting Summary
August 27, 2009

Start time: 10:00 AM

Attendees:

Gordon Rogers, WCOG	Kerri Woehler, WSDOT
Mary Anderson, WCOG	Elizabeth Sjostrom, WSDOT
Kirsten Wert, WCOG	Ted Carlson, City of Bellingham
Andres Gomez, WCOG	Chris Comeau, City of Bellingham
Ellen Barton, WCOG	Rory Routhe, City of Bellingham
Dale Purcell, City of Lynden	Bill Bullock, City of Blaine
Bill Henry, Ferndale Public Works	Rollin Harper, Everson, Nooksack, Sumas
Ian Macek, WSDOT	

I. Member Project Updates

B. Kelly: WTA is working on an online trip planner; we hope to get rolling ASAP. New buses will be on the streets Monday, both small and large sizes, with new graphics, a bright blue design. Getting ready for WWU, universal bus passes. We will have a fair increase Oct 1; .75 to \$1.

E. Sjostrom: Border crossing (northbound I-5) for GSA is opening bridge, 539 bridge also connecting today, over Nooksack River. Something pending on 542 forest grant might help pave on that roadway, it is between Deming and Glacier. Church Mountain Road, culvert improved, to make it fish friendly, it is a full bridge project, with design aesthetics standards. Out to ad next couple months, construction next spring. Glacier Gallup Bridge near Glacier, channel is unstable, had to buy the Glacier Lodge because of repeated flooding. They sold cabins and lodge, will help stabilize land. Might go to ad next spring.

G. Rogers: Interesting side note on the sale of those buildings, the Welcome Center in Kendall, did a study to find location, etc. Group got \$800,000 enhancement grant to buy property, they bought the Glacier Lodge for \$250. They will use it temporally, until they build a new facility.

I. Macek: Call for grants for both bike/ped and SRTS in early 2010. Annual bike/ped counts last week of September. www.wsdot.gov/bike/counts We are using methodology from a national documentation program, have AM and PM peak counts. We worked with local jurisdictions to pick locations. Challenge doing it at 4pm, no school trips in there, hopefully we'll capture the morning school trips. We do ours later in the month to capture university school trips. WSDOT is working with Cascade Bicycle Club to organize this.

R. Routhe: Stimulus project under construction. We gave \$40k back. Sunset Drive final lift this week, lanes opening next week, this project is going on 8 years. Project coming up, Northwest Drive, ped/bike improvement, from I-5 North to Bakerview. Will be going to ad soon on that.

C. Comeau: Bellingham is putting together TIGER project grant, due Sept 15th. There will be a new Transportation Commission; it absorbs Bike/Ped and Parking Commissions. We are looking for funding to replace lost funding, couple options out there. Our TIP went from 22 projects to 13. Bellingham has put together a few new locations for the WSDOT bike/ped counts.

E. Barton: I got a call from Steve Banham in Blaine to meet with GSA to talk about a trail connection over the boarder. EverybodyBIKE has monthly bike classes; we are trying to get people who don't consider themselves cyclists try it. Would like to have them in other cities within Whatcom County, we just ask for help with publicity. Community Development Block grant related to transportation, we're looking for a partnership to apply. The Federal Administration has Triad, which is HUD, EPA and FTA those 3 working together have funding sources maybe not available otherwise. County Bike/Ped committee completed update of its plan. We will present to the County Planning Commission in November.

R. Harper: Haven't heard any bad news about Sumas stimulus project, so it should be fine. 12 years ago Everson created an LID to do improvements; they recently discovered they have a pot of money, Council decided to spend money on strips, stamped concrete sidewalks. Some striping work in areas adjacent to downtown. DOT is doing a no parking zone on either side of intersection of SR9. Nooksack project on horizon, SR 9 East to Madison, Breckenridge Road, the road has been deteriorated by gravel mining and trucks.

B. Henry: Precon next week for stimulus project, we are in serious funding woes, we need more money. It is a good project. We finished the project on roundabout repairing water main break. The new Frisbee golf course is getting a lot of use. We have a new Public Works Director, Janice Marlega, from WSDOT.

D. Purcell: East Grover moving quickly, our stimulus project. Finished Front St. repaving.

G. Rogers: Extra stimulus money went to other Counties, did not stay here. Chair requested to meet with Governor, but heard nothing back from her office.

M. Anderson: I am excited to see construction beginning on Fraser St, for the bike/ped improvements.

B. Bullock: East Boblett extension, complete missing link. Going across the old airport, will build industrial and freight connections. Next year we will start H Street improvements; widening from 2 to 3 lanes, sewer replacement, it is a TIB project. Roundabouts, met with GSA yesterday to talk about bike lanes, going into D Street b/w roundabouts. Need bike/ped connection at the border.

G. Rogers: Controversy, about 4 -6 months ago CBSA announced they were going to close Aldergrove boarder traffic to freight. This was a surprise announcement at IMTC

meeting. The reason being, that they don't have a secondary security facility. I have attended some meetings, looks like strong push across board to move that to a more high profile crossing. We may see some activity in the near future pressing for a bigger facility, perhaps on both sides of boarder. They have withdrawn closure for now.

II. Smart Trips Briefing – Kirsten Wert

G. Rogers: Smart Trips has some funding earmarked, so I wanted you to see a presentation so that you can learn about all the projects they are working on.

K. Wert: CTR law only addresses work trips. However, only 20% of the traffic on roads is for work trips. Smart Trips came about to offer CTR to all people and all trips. The goal of the program is to ask you to change some trips; we don't expect you to change every single trip, just some. We also want to reduce congestion on roads. We have over 100 employer partners, only 18 of those are required to participate under CTR law. When you sign up for Smart Trips you see statistics, both county wide and personal. The reason we talk so much about bicycling is because that is the easiest way to change a car trip. There are fewer constraints, you are not stuck to a bus schedule or limited to a smaller walkable distance.

In depth mobility studies, we contracted with Socialdata, also did an educational campaign. In summer 2008 we did an individual marketing campaign. Through the educational campaigns Socialdata sees a 10-15% reduction of single occupancy trips. With the information that we got from those surveys we now know who to market too. In Bellingham we don't need to focus on men, they are already making 8% mode share trips by bicycle, however, women are only at 2%. Senior citizens are also making few Smart Trips; we are educating them on how to ride the bus.

We have a new Shop on Foot promotion, 500 households around Bellingham Meridian Haggens store will receive a flier in the mail encouraging them to walk to the grocery store. They are able to earn a free Chico bag if they make a certain amount of trips within 30 days.

Overall we are trying to get specific information to people. They are more likely to try a new transportation mode, if they have personalized information.

Socialdata has done surveys and educational campaigns all over the world. Their educational campaigns are very targeted. People request materials and the requested information is all delivered by bicycle. The data is very useful and complete. One thing we found is that in Bellingham, 40% of trips are less than 2 miles.

E. Barton: 10,000 people were targeted, with an 89% response rate. Quality of research is high.

G. Rogers: The State Transportation Office is looking at duplicating Smart Trips statewide.

III. State Bicycle Plan – Ian Macek, WSDOT

G. Rogers: Looking at new transportation plans, many different plans being updated now, multimodal plan, WA transportation plan, and highways system plan. Also, a number of other portions of the plan, sub-plans, scenic byways, bike/ped.

I. Macek: Current Bike/Ped plan approved in 2008. Working on 2010 technical update of plan. Review of projects on plan, how they were selected, how to update.

Projects identified by a number of sources, local TIPS, etc. Found 1.6 billion in unfunded projects across the State. From that we looked at State interest projects, school related, known net loss and gap projects. Through process choose 400 million from the 1.6 billion. Then looked at them and evaluated and tiered, DOT RTPOS dialog for development of list. In the following months would like to have list of projects reviewed and have everyone on same page and happy.

Second part of process, how do we solicit local projects? Look for projects through a different method. How can we improve on that? Need an assessment of statewide need per state law.

C. Comeau: What year TIP will this include?

I. Macek: I think 2007.

G. Rogers: The TIP may be a good starting point, but not the best perhaps. Unmet needs wouldn't be on the TIP.

I. Macek: I need a list that is prioritized, feasible.

G. Rogers: Looking at the TIP you may not know it's a bike/ped project. The TIP is not as detailed.

C. Comeau: We are working on 20 year plan, have a bike/ped section in there.

I. Macek: Deadline is November or December, narrative section. Will work on the more technical pieces next spring.

G. Rogers: Across this table we can develop a bike/ped list for Whatcom County.

C. Comeau: Our budget and TIP are already set for the next 2 years, this is out of synch.

K. Woehler: At a meeting earlier we also talked about out of synch. State wide multi-modal projects, longer time frame.

C. Comeau: I don't see the Northwest bike/ped improvement project on here, this list is not very clear.

I. Macek: Looking at larger funding projects, making sure they are safe for pedestrians and bicyclists.

E. Sjoström: Need to get together and find out what projects we want in Whatcom County, to meet goals.

G. Rogers: Will put it on the September agenda.

K. Woehler: Ian, let us know what you are looking for in the lists.

D. Purcell: Guide runs from City – County – State, parts that we have no control over.

IV. Washington Transportation Plan

G. Rogers: Tuesday meeting of RTPD and MPO coordinating committee, Paula Hammond said ‘we need to get synchronized’. Now all plans are different. Highways system plan is due to be adopted next July, in that a list of all State projects, 2010 policy plan will be adopted by legislature. System plan should be based on policy plan. Federal and State regulations create disconnect.

Handout: Many Levels of Planning for Projects in Washington State

K. Woehler: We are doing the best we can, ideas on how to improve, let us know. Headquarters guy said to focus less on planning and more on overall goal. A lot of consternation on how projects selected, want to avoid that. Don’t want surprises, everyone on same page.

Highways System Plan update, 2011-2030, focus on 2011-2013. Will be more programmatic than project lists. Mobility is what our region has been asked to work on. Theme, “Moving Washington”, let’s not always jump to highest cost. 1. Are we operating as efficiently as possible? 2. Have we done everything to manage demand? 3. If we do want to add capacity, how can we do it strategically?

Look at lower cost multi-modal projects. Example, intersections; can you do ramp metering, channelization improvement, transit or bike/ped improvement. Effort will last through March 2010. Once through that process we will identify a couple locations we want to concentrate on.

E. Barton: Managing demand may mean money for Smart Trips?

K. Woehler: Possibly, we can look at it.

V. Whatcom Transportation Plan – Public Participation

A. Gomez: So far with model update we have expanded household survey data. It will have a transit component and we might add bike/ped too. Did some time of day analysis, will evaluate for AM PM peaks. Model will be finished by end of year 2009. Will come

up with strategy to fund federal projects, use the model to see if project will really help. We should compile crash stats too.

We will have two forecast years, 2020 and 2032.

Burke and Assoc. will submit their work to County by Monday. GMCC.

G. Rogers: County should adopt numbers for the updated Urban Growth Area Exercise.

C. Comeau: Will they change forecast numbers?

A. Gomez: If forecast changes that's okay, most important is 2008 base year.

G. Rogers: Two things going on, UG revision and Comp plan update. Model will be used for both.

E. Barton: Is there an estimate for VMT rate of increase for the model?

A. Gomez: The state has counts, but not the model.

A. Gomez: I will use social networking tools; will be writing a blog, people can follow on twitter. One of the ways to get the word out, not the only way.

VI. TIGER

Handout: Copy of letter of support for TIGER grant.

G. Rogers: If more is needed, we can provide it. Perhaps a letter with signatures from all TTAC members?

VII. Other

Handout: STP Rural and Urban Projects

G. Rogers: New compilation of STP funds, almost at the end of all projects. Generally recognized that there isn't time for a new bill, there may be a 1 month – 18 month extension of SAFETEA-LU funds, so we may get more STP funds. May get \$2.5 million, should program more than 3 years projects. It's likely to be an 18 month resolution. Secretary LaHood wants to provide something new and better.

At the Coordinating Committee meeting, talked about what regional councils are doing.

Handout Federal Livability framework: A Central Role for Regions

I would like to move the Sept 24 meeting to Oct 1.

The group agreed to the date change.

VII. Adjourn