



US 2 Trestle Capacity Improvements and Westbound Trestle Replacement PEL Study

Resource Agency Committee, Meeting #1 Summary

March 27, 2024, 2:00 p.m.

Microsoft Teams Meeting

Meeting Purpose

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) hosted the first meeting of the Resource Agency Committee (RAC) for the US 2 Trestle Capacity Improvements and Westbound Trestle Replacement PEL Study to develop a common understanding of the current PEL process and gather feedback on the draft National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Purpose and Need statements.

RAC attendees:

- Adam Osbekoff, Snoqualmie Indian Tribe
- Bonnie Shorin, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
- Caroline Corcoran, Washington State Department of Ecology
- Dennis Wardlaw, Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP)
- Elisa Albury, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Maureen Elenga, DAHP
- Michael Villnave, FHWA
- Penny Kelley, Department of Ecology
- Rustin Director, U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)
- Samantha Stanford, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Steve Fischer, USCG
- Susan Sturges, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Consultant team attendees:

- Anne Broache, WSP
- Chris Wellander, WSP
- Jared Nakamoto, Parametrix
- Jennifer Rash, PRR
- Larissa King-Rawlins, WSP
- Laura Lloyd, HNTB
- Lisa Sakata, HNTB
- Michelle Auster, PRR

WSDOT participants

- April Delchamps, WSDOT
- Curt Winningham, WSDOT
- Elizabeth McGovern, WSDOT
- Maraea Skeen, WSDOT
- Lucy Temple, WSDOT
- Josh Shippy, WSDOT
- Kyengo Ndile, WSDOT
- Sanaz Malaki, WSDOT
- Oteberry Kedelty, WSDOT



Welcome and Introductions

WSDOT and the consultant study team welcomed attendees to the first RAC meeting with a safety moment, introductions, and an agenda. They asked attendees to introduce themselves in the chat and invited them to answer the first Mentimeter poll question: **How familiar are you with the US 2 Trestle?** Feedback is captured in the chart below:



PEL Study Overview

- WSDOT briefly reviewed previous planning studies led by WSDOT and others, including City of Everett, at or near the US 2 trestle dating back to 2009. It was noted that the 2021 US 2 Westbound Trestle Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study provided recommendations -that are guiding the current PEL study,-including expanding the study area -to include Interstate 5, considering multi-modal mobility options, and continuing to conduct robust tribal, community, and agency engagement.
- The intent of the current PEL Study is to hear from a broad range of voices and directly adopt a Purpose and Need statement and a range of alternatives into NEPA to streamline a future NEPA process.
- The PEL Study process is very similar to planning processes you might have previously participated in. The biggest difference is the PEL Study process includes four FHWA concurrence points.
 - 1: Determine reason for PEL Study and desired outcomes
 - 2: Purpose and Need and Project Limits
 - 3: Evaluate and Screen Alternatives and Identify Red-Flag Environmental Impacts and Potential Mitigation
 - 4: Finalize PEL document
- The PEL Study steps include a pre-screening followed by a Level 1 and Level 2 screening. Level 1 is high-level and less intensive, more qualitative. Level 2 is analysis more intensive and quantitative.
- Ongoing community engagement will include focused engagement with stakeholders and the public to allow for review and comment on the NEPA Purpose and Need, Range of Alternatives, and the Draft PEL Study
- There are other existing or planned projects in the study area that require ongoing information sharing, including the City of Everett's I-5/US 2 Interchange Planning Study.

Additionally, the study team is regularly coordinating with FHWA, the WSDOT Toll Division, and other study area jurisdictions.

- In addition to community engagement, WSDOT will collect feedback from Technical Working Group (TWG), the Executive Advisory Group (EAG), the RAC, and tribal partners to inform decision-making with FHWA.
- WSDOT had planned to form an Equity Advisory Committee, however, recent listening sessions confirm that many organizations in the study area are overcommitted to other efforts and voiced little desire to participate in another committee. The study team is currently reevaluating how to engage priority populations. WSDOT welcomed RAC feedback and suggestions on that approach.

RAC Roles and Responsibilities

- WSDOT asked the group another Mentimeter poll question: ***What makes an advisory group successful?*** Feedback is captured in the word cloud below. The larger the size of the word, the more often it was mentioned by the RAC members. “Transparency” was mentioned the most, followed by “communication”:



- RAC members are expected to attend or be represented at four meetings during the PEL study, reviewing and commenting on materials as needed.
- The Study team will provide background materials, answer questions, and report back to the RAC on how their feedback was considered and addressed.
- WSDOT showed an overview of the PEL process schedule, including RAC meetings, their high-level agendas, and how they overlap with other PEL committee meetings.

Study Updates and Engagement

- The study engagement lead reviewed PEL study community engagement objectives, including consideration for the HEAL Act. Findings from the engagement area demographic analysis included language access needs, with planned translated materials in Korean, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.
- The study team has completed 14 listening sessions with representatives from area community based organizations, neighborhood groups, social and human service organizations, and advocacy groups that serve a variety of interests like active transportation. A final listening session with the Lake Stevens Community Resource Center is planned for early April.

- Key themes from the listening sessions include:
 - Communities on the east side of the trestle are heavily reliant on it for accessing essential needs like medical care and jobs, as well as amenities like retail and restaurants.
 - Access to active transportation facilities and transit options could be improved.
 - There are mixed feelings on tolling, with strong opposition from communities on the east side of the trestle.
- Upcoming engagement milestones include a spring 2024 online open house for public review of the draft NEPA Purpose & Need statement, with future public comment on the draft alternatives and the draft PEL Study report in 2025.
- The study website is live at <https://wsdot.wa.gov/construction-planning/search-projects/us-2-trestle-capacity-improvements-westbound-trestle-replacement>

Discussion: Draft NEPA Purpose & Need and Supporting Data

- Participants were asked a Mentimeter poll about priorities in the study. Answers included water quality, stormwater treatment, and unobstructed navigation.
- WSDOT gave a general overview of what a purpose and need statement is.
- WSDOT also indicated that Consistent with 23 U.S.C.168, this PEL Study intends to adopt the Purpose and Need statement into the future National Environmental Policy Act review process.
- The draft NEPA Purpose & Need statement shared with the RAC was reviewed by FHWA.
- Feedback from the PEL committees and the public is an important element and will be considered before the statement is adopted through FHWA Concurrence Point #2.
- Draft NEPA Purpose: The purpose of this PEL Study is to develop long-term, equitable transportation solutions to 1.) improve **multimodal mobility** to and across the US 2 trestle, 2.) improve **safety** to and across the US 2 trestle, and 3.) address the **resiliency** of the westbound trestle.
- Draft NEPA Needs - **Multimodal Mobility**: The US 2 trestle faces challenges accommodating all transportation modes, which limits equitable travel options.
 - Vehicular – All motorized vehicles using the US 2 trestle face recurring traffic bottlenecks during the weekday morning and afternoon peak travel periods.
 - Freight – Recurring bottlenecks affect the reliability of freight truck movement across US 2, which is a designated freight route for the movement of goods.
 - High Occupancy Vehicles (HOV) and Transit – Due to a lack of dedicated facilities, existing HOV and transit using the US 2 trestle face the same bottlenecks as general purpose traffic.
 - Active Transportation – There are no bicycle and pedestrian facilities on the westbound trestle, existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities on the eastbound trestle do not serve all ages and abilities, and there are missing connections to existing active transportation facilities at either end of the trestle.
- Data supporting **multimodal mobility**:
 - WSDOT Initial data included land use growth in households and employment from 2018 to 2050. On the east side of the trestle, the number of households is forecast to grow by 112% and employment by 44%. On the west side, the number of households is forecast to grow by 241% and employment by 86%. Notably, the number of households in downtown Everett is expected to grow by 1143% and employment by 306%.

- Existing and 2050 bottlenecks in the study area during morning and evening peak hours include:
 - SR 204/20th Street on-ramp (morning)
 - US 2/SR 204 ramp (morning)
 - US 2/I-5 ramp connection (morning and afternoon)
 - SR 204 at Sunnyside Boulevard (afternoon)
 - East end of the trestle (afternoon)
- Speeds degrade to 20 mph or less in the study area and travel time variability could double in the morning and evening peak period by 2050.
- US 2 is a T2 Freight Economic Corridor (carrying an average of 2,800 trucks per day and over 9 million tons of freight per year). Freight makes up approximately 17% of morning traffic and 7% of afternoon traffic on the westbound trestle; and approximately 14% of morning traffic and 9% of afternoon traffic on the eastbound trestle.
- HOV trips account for approximately 3% of traffic in the morning on the westbound trestle. However, I-5, in the preliminary study area, has a dedicated HOV lane and HOV trips represent 13-28% of traffic.
- While there is a two-way active transportation path on a portion of the eastbound trestle, there are no active transportation facilities on the westbound trestle.
- Draft Need - **Safety**: Serious injury and fatal crashes are reported on WSDOT facilities in the preliminary study area.
 - Data supporting **safety**:
 - WSDOT has a Target Zero goal to eliminate crashes and traffic fatalities, which is part of why WSDOT has incorporated safety as a Need for this project.
 - There have been 3,708 total crashes in the preliminary study area between 2018 and 2022.
- Draft Need- **Resiliency**: The westbound US 2 trestle lacks resiliency, which presents a risk of disrupted travel on this critical route.
 - Data supporting **resiliency**:
 - Seismic Resilience: Westbound trestle is vulnerable to instability in the event of liquefaction from seismic activity.
 - Asset Management: Westbound trestle is classified as functionally obsolete; planned shutdowns and lane closures require lengthy detours.
 - Climate and Natural Hazard Resilience: US 2 is identified as a highly critical asset/lifeline route in WSDOT's Climate Impact Vulnerability Assessment.
 - Operational Resilience: Ongoing maintenance costs related to log jams and culvert repairs.

Comments/questions:

- Steve Fischer, USCG, asked if there would be any crossings removed or replaced over navigable waters.
 - WSDOT clarified that the trestle crosses the Snohomish River and Ebey Slough. Steve indicated both are considered navigable waters and will require a USCG permit.
- Steve Fischer, USCG, noted that maritime transportation is missing from the multimodal mobility draft Need statement.

- WSDOT noted the consideration and said WSDOT will consider modes within its jurisdiction. Steve suggested incorporating words like “maintained or improved” to cover maritime transportation.
- Steve Fischer also noted that navigation is considered a resource for environmental analysis.
- Penny Kelley, Washington State Department of Ecology, shared that this is the first time she has heard of the PEL study and asked if this was the first RAC meeting. She also asked why the turnaround time for providing comments on the NEPA Purpose and Need is relatively short and if there was any additional information she could review before providing feedback.
 - WSDOT and the study team clarified that it is the first RAC meeting, noting there is flexibility on timing for input on the NEPA Purpose and Need and that it would be ideal to get critical comments by April 5. The April deadline for critical agency comments is intended so that there is time to incorporate their input into the version of the draft NEPA Purpose and Need that will be presented in the public online open house in May. Agencies can provide comments through the end of the online open house in late June. The online open house will be translated into five languages. The website also has links to previous and related studies: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/construction-planning/search-projects/us-2-trestle-capacity-improvements-westbound-trestle-replacement>
- Susan Sturges, EPA, noted the EPA wasn’t involved in the previous PEL Study and asked how the previous PEL Study informs this current PEL Study. Has anything been pulled from it to inform the current draft Purpose & Need?
 - WSDOT clarified that the previous PEL was not a federal PEL and didn’t use the USC 168 code authority. That study provided seven recommendations for what to assess in this study, including expanding the study area.

Next Steps / Action Items

- The study team reviewed upcoming activities and a summary of the evaluation framework for identifying a range of alternatives.
- RAC members should provide critical comments on the draft NEPA Purpose and Need by April 1 by emailing Jen Rash or Oteberry Kedelty if feasible. Comments received after April 1 may be considered for online open house content and will inform the final NEPA Purpose and Need for FHWA Concurrence Point #2.
- The public will be invited to comment on the NEPA Purpose and Need during an online open house in May. RAC members can also provide additional feedback on the NEPA Purpose and Need during the public online open house.
- The FHWA concurrence point #2 memo confirming NEPA Purpose and Need is anticipated mid-summer.
- The study team will begin developing analysis framework and screening criteria for the level 1 screening options.
- The study team anticipates scheduling the next RAC meeting in early fall 2024.