

SR 167 Corridor Plan, HOT Lanes Pilot Project and S 277th to 8th St. E Managed Lanes

Corridor Working Group Meeting – Meeting Summary

January 9, 2006

1:30 – 4:00 p.m.

WSDOT Kent Design Office
21851 84th Ave. S Kent, WA 98032

Attendees:

WSDOT

Ed Barry
Carol Hunter
Ron Landon
Mike Sallis
Susan Everett
Mike Howard
Steve Fuchs
Paul Johnson
Denise Cieri
Brian Glas

City of Algona

Thomas Reber

City of Auburn

Dennis Dowdy
Roger Thordarson

City of Kent

Steve Mullen
Cathy Mooney

City of Pacific

Jay Bennett
Dick Wooding
John Welch

City of Renton

Keith Woolley
Peter Hahn

King County

Paul Takamine

Pierce County

Cindy Bui

EnviroIssues

Amy Turner

Perteet

Michael Booth
Jeff Lundstrom
Scott White

Welcome and Introductions

Carol Hunter, WSDOT

Carol Hunter, WSDOT, welcomed the group and thanked them for coming. She asked the attendees to introduce themselves and the agency or organization they represent.

Approve December 2006 Meeting Summary

Carol Hunter, WSDOT

Copies of the December 2006 meeting summary were sent to the partners via email before the meeting and a hard copy was provided at the meeting. Carol approved the summary without additional comment.

Overview of WSDOT RTID projects

At the December Corridor Working Group meeting, partners suggested having presentations from other potential RTID projects. Various presenters will describe the challenging project scope and budget issues.

1) SR 18 / I-5 Triangle Project

Brian Glas, WSDOT

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The sides of the triangle include I-5, SR 18 and SR 161, and connect in Federal Way. The current configuration includes a clover leaf interchange and loop ramps which contribute to an increased volume that is creating congestion on I-5 and SR 18. The opposing loop ramps also contribute to car accidents and congestion on local streets. The project is at 25% design and alternatives are being discussed such as eliminating loop ramps and replacing them with direct access flyover ramps from westbound SR 18 to southbound I-5 and eastbound SR 18 to northbound I-5. This would eliminate the weaving problem with the opposing loop ramps. There are a few other elements to the project including extending improvements on SR 18 near Weyerhaeuser Way and realigning on-ramps to increase spacing and eliminate weaving.

The project has \$112 million in funding which is about half the project cost. The flyover ramps could be built in phases and the rest of the project would be delayed without further funding. The proposed \$50 million from RTID would contribute to a collector-distributor from southbound I-5 and SR 18 ramps as well as connecting to the S 356th ramp. Without the proposed improvements, traffic will be backed up on I-5 by 2020.

The schedule for construction is to advertise the job in October 2009 and construction would last for 2.5 years.

Discussion

- Michael Booth asked what the 2030 traffic modeling shows after improvements. Brian explained that traffic is still bad, but there are reductions in accidents. Susan Everett explained there have been 128 injury accidents at this interchange. WSDOT has found removing a clover leaf leads to significant traffic improvements in addition to a reduction in accidents.

2) I-405 Corridor

Denise Cieri, WSDOT

Denise gave the group background information on I-405. There was a Record of Decision for the entire corridor. The project team looked at needs for the next 30 years and determined the 30-mile corridor needs two lanes in both directions.

The Nickel funding package provided \$485 million and the 2005 Transportation Partnership Account provided another \$972 million. The total investment on the I-405 corridor is \$1.4 billion. Denise provided a handout that shows funded projects along the corridor. There are some gaps where the funding didn't match up with necessary improvements.

The Blueprint for Progress shows \$1.3 billion, but that is not guaranteed funding. If the funding comes through, there are three major areas where it would be utilized:

- 1) HOV direct connect between I-405 and SR 167: The project team looks at SR 167 as an extension of I-405. The two corridors are interconnected.
- 2) SR 169 and 112th area: This project is critical because of congestion. There is currently \$150 million in funding, but that isn't enough to fix the problem, so that money will be used in the future. The first job would be building tall walls, then rebuilding pinched interchanges along the way
- 3) Downtown Bellevue core: The proposed braid project is too expensive, so the project team has identified other ways to manage northbound congestion as people are moving to SR 520 near NE 8th. Traffic needs to be separated to keep it flowing and avoid accidents.

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3) SR 167 Corridor

Susan Everett, WSDOT

Susan Everett told the group that the Blueprint for Progress never included additional lanes in one direction on SR 167. She provided handouts that demonstrated the projects in the original RTID set, a revised RTID set and the addition of the flyover ramps. The project costs increased, which is why the proposed projects had to change. The current recommendation to the RTID board is the flyover addition set which includes \$420 million to be used for three projects:

- 1) Extending the HOV lanes from 8th St. E to 15th St. SW (\$137 - \$189 million)
- 2) Adding an auxiliary lane from S 277th to SR 516 which is a bottleneck project (\$102 - \$159 million)
- 3) Flyover ramps from SR 167 to 405 (\$120 million) The majority of funding for this project actually comes from the I-405 project.

Traffic analysis and modeling showed that building the flyover ramps from SR 167 to I-405 would save drivers 11 minutes. The flyovers will also reducing weaving on I-405 and SR 167. Carol Hunter added that all the projects on SR 167 would provide benefits, however the travel time benefit is lost when people get to the I-405 interchange.

Susan also provided a handout showing that adding an additional lane in each direction would cost somewhere between \$1.4 and \$2.3 billion. The numbers provided assume that all the money needed for the project is available on July 1, 2008. With delay, costs of construction and real estate escalate.

Discussion

- Dennis Dowdy explained that the goal of the valley cities is to add lanes on SR 167 in both directions.

4) SR 167 Extension

Steve Fuchs and Mike Howard, WSDOT

Steve explained that the completion of SR 167 originally extended from I-405 in Renton to I-5. The project has been around for more than 30 years. In 1990, the Legislature appropriated money for the project. The Tier II Environmental Impact Statement was finalized on Dec. 1, 2006. The project has received \$160 million in funding, mostly from the 2003 and 2005 gas taxes. That funding will get the project through June 2009, but the overall cost of the project exceeds \$2 billion.

Mike Howard explained the design of the extension. It would tie into the existing terminus of SR 167 with three lanes in each direction. There would be a new crossing at Milwaukee Avenue, a full interchange at SR 161 and Meridian, a truck weigh station would be developed near Freeman Road, full interchange at Valley Ave. and then continue to I-5 with a full directional interchange and directional ramps. Southbound I-5 would need to be relocated to accommodate direct HOV connection lanes between SR 167 and I-5. SR 167 would go across I-5 with a directional interchange at 54th. The freeway would connect to SR 509 and from I-5 would have two general purpose lanes in each direction. There is a lot of environmental work and a lot of flow control work that is being done.

Steve explained that the funding is primarily for property acquisition. The project needs about 300 parcels and have purchased 60 to date. The real estate program is taking off and soon the

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engineering effort will ramp up because the EIS is finished. The RTID proposal could provide \$1 billion for the project, but the most recent CEVP estimate was \$1.47 billion.

The project team is working on buying real estate to keep the cost of the project down and is also advancing design so when construction money becomes available the project is ready to go to construction. A Record of Decision is expected in March or April.

Discussion

- Susan asked what the red area was on the map. Steve explained it is the riparian restoration proposal that is an alternative approach to flow control. The team proposes to buy property along streams, remove man-made improvements and restore it to natural conditions in lieu of creating acres of ponds. The high water table and infiltration doesn't work.
- Keith Woolley asked if the structures over I-5 are forward compatible. Steve said they are. The proposed interchange at I-5 would cost about \$500 million with full CEVP numbers.

5) SR 509 corridor

Paul Johnson, WSDOT

The SR 509 had a Record of Decision in 2003 and \$86 million in funding that is split between right of way and design. Extending SR 509 consists of building three miles of new six-lane freeway. The project starts at 188th and goes southeast around SeaTac, then connects with I-5 and 216th and continues to 320th in Federal Way. The project would also include an interchange at S 200th, SeaTac's new 24th / 28th corridor and rebuilding the SR 516 interchange.

The project costs keep escalating due in large part to structures and walls. The RTID blueprint called for \$870 million which would have fully funded the project in the past. The project team came up with a new blueprint that eliminated the southbound alignment completely and put the northbound alignment at SR 99. This blueprint included two general purpose lanes in each direction with the minimum width. It also eliminated bridges and the single point urban interchange at 188th, the S 200th interchange and the grade separation for the airport direct access. The cost of the project is now \$955 million. The project team needs to do extensive traffic modeling and FHWA has some concerns with aspects of the project.

Discussion

- Keith Woolley asked how Sound Transit figures in with the sound end of the airport portion. Steve explained that there are two proposals for Sound Transit alignment including I-5 and SR 99.
- Michael asked what the total project cost is and how much would come from RTID. Susan said the total project cost with everything is \$1.35 billion. Phase one with the additional southbound lane from 272nd and SR 516 is a little over \$1 billion. The project needs \$955 million, but RTID earmarked \$870 million, so there is a shortfall of \$85 million. Paul said the team is looking at ways to shave additional costs, but still needs FHWA agreement and the traffic analysis.

167 New Surface Water Approach

Ed Barry explained the new stormwater approach would be used on the funded project of extending HOV / HOT lanes from 277th to 8th St. E. Stormwater is of particular importance to

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Sumner, Algona, Pacific, Kent and Auburn. Recently the project team sent letters to property owners along the corridor asking for rights of entry for groundwater monitoring. Scott White explained that conventional detention, building large ponds, won't work on the valley floor with the water table so high. The team is looking at flood plain storage alternatives which require a different approach when working with resource agencies. So far, the agencies have provided positive feedback.

The team faces the challenges of looking for flood plain storage sites – wetlands with low spots that can offset impacts so WSDOT doesn't obtain additional area for mitigation. The team has been talking with the Department of Ecology about water quality impacts and the Army Corps of Engineers for permanent wetland impacts. The topography doesn't lend itself well to natural storage ideas. In the next month and a half, the team will identify sites that are near the roadway with wetlands, stream corridors and natural habitat to enhance. The biggest challenge is time because decisions like this normally take much longer, but the project team only has a few months in order to stay on track for an early 2009 advertisement date.

Ed explained that the Mill Creek Basin is more challenging and WSDOT is looking to collaborate with local cities. The sites need to be identified in the next couple of months. Standard detention methods would be tanks tied down below the water table with pumps. This method isn't efficient and it is costly.

Discussion

- What about the 100 foot buffer? Does WSDOT have to compensate the property owner for the buffer? Scott noted the main criteria is to find the largest sites possible to reduce the number of sites.
- Thomas Reber mentioned the residential area floods near SR 167 and he would be interested in discussing methods to reverse this. Thomas wasn't sure how many residents were impacted. Susan explained that WSDOT can't solve the problem because the money for the project is directed toward transportation, however, they can will help if possible. Thomas would like to see the modeling that RW Beck is completing.

Wrap up – Action Items

- Susan Everett will talk with the Attorney General's Office about the buffer issue.
- Scott White / Ed Barry will send Thomas Reber the preliminary stormwater report and additional modeling by R.W. Beck.
- Carol Hunter will follow up with the group to share additional messages and modeling for the SR167 RTID projects.

Adjourn

Next Meeting: 2/20/07

WSDOT Kent Maintenance Facility
26620 68th Avenue South, Kent 98032