

## **Meeting Summary**

### **In Attendance**

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#### **CWG Members**

Jim Arrowsmith, King County METRO  
Bob Brock, City of Issaquah  
Rory Cameron, City of Issaquah  
Phil Harris, City of Bellevue  
Robin Mayhew, PSRC  
Dan Marcinko, City of Snoqualmie  
Andrea Tull, Sound Transit  
John Cunningham, City of Sammamish

#### **WSDOT Staff**

Carol Hunter, WSDOT Urban Planning Office  
Stephanie Weber, WSDOT Urban Planning Office  
Richard Warren, WSDOT Urban Planning Office  
Rick Roberts, WSDOT King County Traffic Engineer  
Dale Tabat, WSDOT Freight Office  
Zak Griffith, WSDOT  
Craig Helman, WSDOT

#### **Consultant Team**

Don Sims, HDR  
Torsten Lienau, CH2M Hill  
Kirsten Hauge, PRR

### **Not in Attendance**

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#### **CWG Members**

Ingrid Allen, FHWA  
Jennifer Lindwall, King County Department of Transportation  
Gary Costa, City of Issaquah  
Jeff Brauns, City of Sammamish  
Kirk Holmes, City of Snoqualmie  
Ron Garrow, City of North Bend  
Barbara Briggs, WSDOT  
Elizabeth Stratton, WSDOT  
Chris Picard, WSDOT

## Meeting Summary

### Meeting Agenda

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#### I. WELCOME – *Carol Hunter, WSDOT*

Carol Hunter opened the sixth meeting of the Corridor Working Group (CWG) and led introductions. Since the last CWG meeting in January, the project team developed improvement options for the I-90 corridor and conducted a screening process to identify preliminary recommendations. The recommendations are in line with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Moving Washington vision. The Moving Washington vision aims to identify improvements that reduce congestion by adding road capacity strategically, operating the existing system efficiently, and supporting different mode choices. Traffic studies along the corridor show that most congestion occurs around key interchanges, so the proposed improvements target the congested areas to make them work better without rebuilding.

Carol said the meeting purpose was to review staff's recommendations with the CWG and collect their feedback. With the end of the biennium approaching, the project team is looking to wrap up the study by the end of June and would like CWG feedback on the recommendations by May 8, 2009.

Carol also noted that WSDOT will introduce variable speed limits on the I-90 Bridge as of April 28, 2009. The variable speed limit signs begin just east of the East Channel Bridge.

#### **Meeting Objectives:**

- Present cost analysis results
- Discuss and gather comment on the draft list of recommended improvements
- Review next steps

#### II. ST2 Overview and Update–*Andrea Tull, Sound Transit*

Andrea Tull provided an update on Sound Transit planning and projects. First, the Central Link light rail is scheduled to open for service on July 18, 2009. She then discussed the ST2 plan. The plan includes studying light rail expansion to Lynnwood, Issaquah and Federal Way. Sound Transit will conduct a number of planning studies that are expected to be complete by mid-2014. Sound Transit is coordinating with the City of Issaquah to better understand the City's future development goals and plans. She distributed a handout with further information on ST2.

Carol added that recommendations in the I-90 Corridor Study would not preclude Sound Transit from using the right of way for future light rail.

### **III. Staff Screening Recommendations and Planning Level Cost Estimates– Don Sims, HDR and Torsten Lienau, CH2M Hill**

Don Sims presented the planning level cost estimates and screening recommendations for the I-90 corridor (see PowerPoint presentation, I-90 Corridor Study Options & Initial Screening). Carol noted that one of the challenges for the project team is to find projects that can be phased over time, due to the limited availability of funding.

Don first reviewed the cost estimate table for both mainline and interchange improvement options. He reminded the CWG that the study limits are between Eastgate in Bellevue and 465<sup>th</sup> Ave NE in North Bend. Jim Arrowsmith commented that everyone is aware that High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes only work well if it is a continuous HOT.

Don then reviewed the benefits or deficiencies of the I-90 corridor options. These are outlined in bulleted form below. Each option and corresponding cost estimate is provided in the PowerPoint presentation.

#### Auxiliary Lane Eastbound

##### *Eastgate Interchange to West Lake Sammamish Parkway Interchange*

- Addresses p.m. peak congestion.
- Improves traffic flow on arterial streets.

##### *Added Westbound Lane from SR 900 to Eastgate*

- Addresses a.m. peak congestion.
- Eliminates traffic in left general purpose lane.

##### *-Widen shoulders to full design standards*

- Little cost benefit--expensive fix for a small problem.
- Widening could create potential conflicts, including some bridge reconstruction.

Rick Roberts asked about the traffic volumes at the SR 900 interchange and whether it was possible to extend the westbound lane to the Sunset interchange. Torsten Lienau stated that SR 900 volumes were higher than at the Front Street interchange.

#### Convert Existing HOV Lane to a HOT Lane

- Requires minimum buffer of two feet

Rick Roberts asked whether HOT lanes showed enough benefit to include the option on the project list. Carol responded that WSDOT is committed to moving forward with HOT lanes and the SR 167 HOT pilot project is teaching WSDOT how people respond to HOT access. WSDOT is also looking at HOT lanes on I-405 that would help extend the system.

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Until there is full build-out of an HOT system, there will be some outstanding issues. The project team recommends keeping the HOT option on the project list.

### Reversible Managed Lane Facility

- Not recommended since it would preclude future Sound Transit High Capacity Transit from using the median.

### Active Traffic Management (ATM)

- Includes strategies such as variable speeds to reduce collisions and manage congestion.

Rick Roberts wondered whether WSDOT could employ ATM in conjunction with HOT lanes. Carol answered that it was possible to implement a number of different project combinations.

Don then discussed that the project team found some interchanges were starting to fail by 2030. To address future deficiencies, the team considered interchange improvement options along the corridor. He reviewed each of the options from west to east on I-90.

### Eastgate Interchange Options

- Considered different concepts such as a split diamond and single point urban interchange, but they were too big of an investment for minor issues.
- Ramp terminal signal and channelization improvements seem to better target potential problems and mitigate additional traffic.

### West Lake Sammamish Parkway Interchange Options

- Plan to talk with the City about any issues with future widening of the existing roundabout.
- West Lake Sammamish Parkway experiences a lot of Microsoft traffic and adding capacity at the interchange could encourage additional commuter trips.
- Preliminarily recommend a multilane roundabout to provide some type of improvement at interchange.

Rick Roberts raised the issue of whether there were any weight restrictions on West Lake Sammamish Parkway. He wondered whether the team had considered two separate, single-lane roundabouts rather than one, two-lane roundabout. Don responded that single-lane roundabouts were briefly considered, but the metered on-ramp creates queues that would spill back into a single-lane roundabout.

### SR 900 Interchange (Vicinity) Options

- Interchange operations currently function well.
- A new direct access connection would create a new structure over I-90 that could serve HOV and transit-only or transit-only traffic.

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- Improvements could also address the need for north-south access through Issaquah.
- It is a high cost project, therefore the long timeframe to implement the project allows ample time to coordinate with transit agencies and ensure all design issues are worked out.
- An extension at 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue could also help with local circulation and free up capacity.

### Front Street Interchange Options

- A flyover ramp was considered, but it would need to tie into the arterial system and the high expected cost in addition to relocating the off-ramp created some issues.
- Traffic modeling shows that a single point urban interchange could work, but would involve rebuilding both bridges.
- A tight diamond interchange was also studied.
- The interchange should be addressed with some improvements; however more detailed study is needed.

### Preston/Fall City Interchange Options

- The interchange has experienced traffic increases during the p.m. peak.
- Improvements could include either a signal or roundabout.
- The large cost range for the signal is due to the variety of options that could be implemented. A low cost improvement would signalize using the existing channelization, but a larger cost option would require widening the bridge over I-90.

Jim Arrowsmith noted that there is a desire for regional bus service at the interchange, right now there is just local bus service. Dale Tabat asked about the freight traffic in the area. Currently, the area does not see large truck traffic.

### I-90/SR 18 Interchange Options

- One of the big challenges is the location of the weigh station. Currently, trucks weighing over 16,000 gross vehicle pound that are SR 18 bound must make an out of direction movement to access the weigh station. Moving the weigh station east of the I-90/SR18 interchange would help resolve the issue.
- Half of the traffic on I-90 exits onto SR 18 during the peak period. Adding a right turn lane would allow traffic to move through to SR 18 without waiting at a signal queue.

Dale Tabat noted that the Washington State Patrol prefer an eastbound weigh station, east of SR 18.

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Carol stated that WSDOT recently conducted a license plate survey of the the Eastgate Park and Ride Lot and Issaquah Transit Center found not as many Snoqualmie Ridge residents as expected were using the lot. Data from the license plate survey will be included in the report.

Rick Roberts asked about the position of the Mountains to Sound Greenway in regard to future I-90 improvements. Carol responded that they are concerned about any potential visual impacts as well as trail linkages and that the interests of the Mountains to Sound Greenway would be addressed within the corridor study.

### SE North Bend Way Interchange Options

- Currently the eastbound off-ramp does not meet current design standards, due to the sharp curvature of the ramp and geometric deficiencies.
- WSDOT recently changed the stop control to free movements to address additional traffic produced by the Snoqualmie Casino which opened in November of 2008.
- A loop ramp is recommended, but it is expensive due to the topography. Constructing the ramp would involve a lot of earthwork and retaining walls.

### 436<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE Interchange Options

- The advantage of adding roundabouts at the ramp terminals is that they wouldn't require queue storage across the bridge.
- Signal improvements at the interchange have a large cost range due to the wide range of potential improvements

## **IV. Discuss Draft Project List- CWG Members**

Following the review of the cost estimates and initial screening, Carol Hunter asked CWG members for additional comments or questions regarding the presentation. Jim Arrowsmith asked if 436<sup>th</sup> Ave SE beyond the North Bend Boulevard was functioning well. Don Sims noted that it was working pretty well with the addition of the new roundabout.

Andrea Tull asked Carol to confirm the purpose of the corridor study. Carol said the goal is to provide a set of proposed projects to the Legislature and receive buy-off from FHWA. Andrea thought it would be helpful to provide further detail on the each project's potential benefits in order to help prioritize funding for future improvements. Carol said the team will conduct a cost benefit analysis on the projects that get screened.

Jim Arrowsmith commented that he wants to look at the Issaquah Transit Center in conjunction with the SR 900 interchange and study how it could work. Bob Brock also would like further consideration of the I-90 crossings. Carol noted that in addition to the corridor plan the team should prepare white papers on the potential issues concerning the

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SR 900 area issues and the I-90/SR18 interchange area issues . She asked Bob to share a few key points on the City of Issaquah's specific issues and concerns.

Rory Cameron asked about how the connection could work between a new HOT lane and the direct access ramp. Torsten responded that WSDOT needs the potential to better utilize HOT lane access. Jim added that one other area of concern is the I-90/SR 18 interchange. None of the options seemed to address the conflict between the southbound to westbound Snoqualmie and Maple Valley traffic.

### **V. Next Steps- *Carol Hunter, WSDOT***

Carol asked CWG members to discuss the draft project list with their respective agencies and provide feedback to the project team by May 8, 2008. She noted that a reminder would be sent in advance of the deadline. Carol thanked the CWG for their feedback and adjourned the meeting.