

**MPO/RTPO/WSDOT COORDINATING COMMITTEE
MEETING SUMMARY
Clarion Hotel, SeaTac, WA
December 8, 2009**

1. Introductions

Coordinating Committee Chair Jeff Wilkens, Executive Director of the Wenatchee Valley Transportation Council (WVTC), opened the meeting and asked for a moment of silence in memory of the four recently killed Lakewood Police Officers.

2. Chair's Report—Jeff Wilkens

Jeff Wilkens mentioned the budget continuing resolutions in Congress and the implications for the MPOs and WSDOT.

The Governor has initiated steps to eliminate and consolidate boards to generate cost savings, including boards the MPOs/RTPOs frequently coordinate with: the Transportation Improvement Board (TIB), the County Road Administration Board (CRAB), and the Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB).

3. Federal Legislative and Financial Updates—Larry Ehl/Charlie Howard/Page Scott/Lon Wyrick/Kathleen Davis

Reauthorization

Larry Ehl, WSDOT Federal Relations Manager, commented that Congress is in a “hurry-up-and-wait” mode. There appears to be agreement to proceed with appropriation bills: a “minibus” (not omnibus) bill covering five or so federal agencies is a consideration. [Since the meeting, the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2010 also extended SAFETEA-LU through February 28, 2010.]

Reauthorization for the short term is unclear, possibly with an extension of SAFETEA-LU for six months or one year. The proposed Jobs bill has a provision to extend SAFETEA-LU through September 2010. Unless Congress enacts a separate extension, funding may continue at the present \$1 billion less per month. The authorized level is higher, but the actual level is lower due to basing the extended funding on 2009 enacted fiscal levels, including rescissions of authorized funding. Larry Ehl discussed congressional priorities, noting transportation is not on its list of things to accomplish in 2010. Livability and sustainability are two of the Administration's priorities.

Charlie Howard, Transportation Director, Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), commented that PSRC needs reliable money projections. Based on 2009 levels of funding, PSRC will be under budget by \$130,000 for the rest of fiscal year 2010. If funding remains the same, PSRC will be under budget by \$440,000 next year.

Larry Ehl encouraged Directors to talk to Washington's congressional delegation about these impacts and the effects on projects. He also encouraged them to explain the difficulties in planning for both the short-term and the long-term.

Lon Wyrick, Executive Director, Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC), recommended talking to Congressman Jim Oberstar's staff.

Larry Ehl suggested WSDOT's frequently updated federal authorization blog might be of interest. The website address and Federal Funding and Policy links are below. <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/funding/federal/> [WSDOT - Federal Funding and Policy](#) If you would like to be added to Larry Ehl's electronic updates please notify Katherine Klockenteger at klockek@wsdot.wa.gov or Willy Leiste at leistew@wsdot.wa.gov.

Charlie Howard asked about the potential Jobs bill. At the time of the meeting, there was not much information. During Paula Hammond's participation in the White House Jobs Summit on December 3, 2009, Paula suggested more funds to the TIGER program. There was \$1.5 billion in the program and \$50 billion requested.

Brian Smith, Director of Strategic Planning, commented we should be aware that there might be a reduction in federal and state planning funds.

Lon Wyrick asked about resources for climate change efforts. He noted at the recent Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations Conference (AMPO) he attended, that planning might not have enough credibility to influence anything. Brian Smith added that cutbacks would affect STP and project funding. He asked about a capacity-building initiative. Larry Ehl responded it was unlikely a capacity-building initiative would be forthcoming.

Secretary LaHood, is beginning a listening tour across the country concerning national transportation policy.

Jeff Wilkens asked Kathleen Davis, Director, Highways and Local Programs, to talk about American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) and Enhancement program funding. Kathleen reminded the audience that there is a weekly ARRA newsletter on the web. All ARRA Tier 2 projects are underway except a Snohomish Tribal project. Another Local Selection Panel will meet in March 2010. By September 30, 2010, a redistribution of all savings will occur to currently authorized projects. Washington State has seen great success in the ARRA program.

Charlie Howard asked about the status of Washington ARRA projects. Kathleen Davis responded that 153 of 154 projects were obligated within 120 days but expenditures are still low on paper because project sponsors have not submitted reimbursement billings. She asked RTPOs to remind jurisdictions to submit billings. Highways & Local Programs will send a reminder to the Association of Washington Cities and to the Washington State Association of Counties regarding this issue.

Jeff Wilkens reiterated Secretary Hammond's comment at the last Coordinating Committee meeting about the Coordinating Committee having a discussion concerning funding levels "falling off the cliff" in the next biennium.

Climate Change Bill

Larry Ehl informed members that the United States House of Representative has passed the Waxman—Markey Bill on clean energy but the United States Senate has not taken up a bill. The bill may wait until spring 2010 for further discussion.

4. State Legislative Updates, “Implementing Alternative Transportation Funding Methods”—Kathy Scanlan, Cedar River Group

Kathy Scanlan’s firm is performing a comprehensive analysis for the Joint Transportation Committee to examine mid-term and long-term transportation funding mechanisms and methods.

Several alternative funding methods (slide 2) examined in the study include tolling, container charges, and technology to collect Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) fees. Many trends (slide 3) are affecting transportation funding. State fuel tax revenues are down because of reduced consumption. Issues related to energy, climate change, and congestion affect transportation funding. WSDOT is revising its VMT forecast methodology with a revised approach anticipated in June 2010. The existing state funding sources for transportation investments are from fuel tax, license permits, and fees. State revenue sources are not set up to grow with inflation.

Four implementation recommendations (slides 11 and 12) are below:

1. Provide funding for the State Department of Licensing to begin upgrading its computer systems and consider building costs into the fee structure. The system is antiquated, and will cost an estimated \$38 million to upgrade, and will be scheduled over a four-year period. The recommendation assumes no major changes in business rules
2. Consider costs and benefits of allowing vehicle owners to make periodic rather than lump sum payments
3. Index fees to inflation rates
4. Conduct a more comprehensive review of fees, licenses, permits, and abstracts to determine:
 - When rate adjustments were last made
 - What an inflation adjusted 2012 rate would be
 - Any discretionary restrictions

Five local funding actions (slide 23) are proposed:

1. Increase if possible state funding for grant programs
2. Authorize cities to create Street Utilities
3. Allow Transportation Benefit Districts to impose license fees up to \$100 by vote of the governing body
4. Amend authority for counties to impose fuel tax to allow a set rate and to provide of the governing body
5. Transfer the increased sales tax limit and employer taxes authorized for RTID to other transit agencies

Jeff Wilkens asked if the report is final. Kathy Scanlan responded the report would be final by December 31, 2009. It will go to the Legislature for consideration. The link to the Joint Transportation Committee report

is: http://www.leg.wa.gov/JTC/Meetings/Documents/Agendas/2010%20Agendas/Meeting_5Jan2010/ImpAltFunding_DraftFinalReport_010510.pdf

5. Draft Fiscal Year 2011 Unified Planning Work Program Guidelines—Julie Rodwell

The Transportation Planning Office e-mailed a draft of the proposed 2010 – 2011 guidance to the MPOs and RTPOs. The Thurston Regional Planning Council, Wenatchee Valley Transportation Council, Whatcom Council of Governments, and Yakima Valley Conference of Governments provided assistance in drafting the guidelines.

WSDOT emphasizes six state themes that RTPOs and MPOs may need to commit time to, including:

1. Statewide planning for all modes and various special topics, such as the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan and the Statewide Transportation Policy Plan
2. WSDOT Headquarters and Region planning efforts affecting MPOs and RTPOs such as route development plans
3. New state or federal legislation such as changes to Growth Management Act local comprehensive plan submissions and federal surface transportation act authorization.
4. Climate change, energy, sustainability, livability, and economic consequences of these
5. Preparing for the 2011-2012 local comprehensive plan update cycle among your jurisdictions
6. Potential new air quality conformity requirements

The Transportation Planning Office will be scheduling UPWP review meetings with each organization. A proposed meeting template was included in the December 8, 2009, packet.

6. Washington Transportation Commission Statewide [Transportation Policy Plan Update](#)—Carol Moser, Paul Parker, Bonnie Berk

Carol Moser, Chair, Washington State Transportation Commission, Commissioner Moser indicated the Transportation Commission intends to collaborate with MPOs and RTPOs to shape the Washington Transportation Plan (WTP) update and wants their feedback. Brian Smith, Charlie Howard, and Gordon Rogers, Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG), have been participating in the Commission Advisory Group. The Advisory Group involves state agencies, business, local government, transit, regional planning agencies, ports, and environmental interest groups. The completed Policy Plan is due the end of 2010.

There have been five meetings of the WTP Advisory Group. The next meeting was in Olympia on January 25, 2010. http://www.wstc.wa.gov/WTP_New/default.htm

The Commission sees this Washington Transportation Plan (WTP) as different from previous statewide plans: as an umbrella plan, it has a new context and direction, focusing on performance outcomes using evolving federal direction, and the plan itself as a strategic approach; a succinct, usable document. There will be more emphasis on transit. It will address new requirements from 2009 related to electric and energy efficient vehicles. <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2009-10/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Law%202009/1481-S2.SL.pdf> The Commission will also look at land use and vehicle miles traveled, emphasize economic development, greenhouse gas compliance, and focus on performance measures.

There will be a lot of focus on connectivity, greenhouse gas, climate change, emerging federal direction, rural freight, safety, and aging population. The Plan's themes include population growth and the aging population, greenhouse gas reduction, revenue needs and challenges, and aging infrastructure. The policy goals include "5 in statute plus 1 more." They are preservation, safety, mobility, environmental quality and health, stewardship, and economic vitality (not in statute). Created during the 2007 Legislative Session in SSB 5412 the policy goals have since been codified at RCW 47.04.280 and is accessible at: <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=47.04.280>

Performance outcomes will determine implementation measures. The following vision statement is draft until the plan update is completed: “Washington’s transportation network connects people and communities, fostering commerce and operating seamlessly across boundaries and modes as an environmentally and financially sustainable system.”

Outreach for the update will begin in January 2010. It will include face-to-face meetings and use of social media, including a blog.

Bonnie Berk, Berk & Associates, the project consultant, shared that the Transportation Commission wants to identify projects and accomplishments since 2006. A letter from Paul Parker, Transportation Commission staff, clarifying this is forthcoming.

Page Scott, Executive Director, Yakima Valley Conference of Governments (YVCG), suggested adding access to jobs, mobility, and economic vitality to the policy planning issues of the Statewide Transportation Policy Plan. She added a concern about transit in rural areas.

Dean Lookingbill, Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (RTC) noted the Commission addressed transit issues and priorities in the presentation but not as policy planning issues. He commented that consideration be given to transit service and cost-effective service in rural areas.

7. Panel discussion—How Do the Various Statewide and Regional Transportation Plans Fit Together Technically, Time-wise, and Strategically?

Charlie Howard moderated the discussion and introduced the panel members, present: Jay Alexander, Director, Capital Program Development & Management Office; Kathleen Davis, Brian Smith, Barb Ivanov, Co-Director, Freight Systems Division; John Shambaugh, Senior Planner, Aviation Division; Scott Witt, Co-Director Freight Systems Division; Commissioner Carol Moser and Ray Deardorf, Planning Manager, Washington State Ferries.

Charlie Howard opened the panel discussion with a question on how WSDOT planning efforts involve MPOs and RTPOs. He raised a concern about lack of local input in selecting Moving Washington projects.

Brian Smith referred to PSRC’s *Transportation 2040* plan, adopted last week, and the WSDOT issues reflected in the plan. He added that PSRC had opted for various alternatives to support transportation policies in SSB 5412. The Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan represents a statewide view whereas PSRC represents a regional view. Because of this, the two may not always fit together in every detail. The different views represent many interests shared by the Governor, the Legislature, and the public.

Brian Smith added the Transportation Commission’s Statewide Transportation Policy Plan is a policy level plan. The WSDOT Multimodal Plan will be more detailed and project specific. Charlie Howard added there was no process to synchronize plans or a way to know when WSDOT agreed or disagreed with a regional plan. Charlie acknowledged that reaching agreement was an ongoing process.

Lon Wyrick commented that TRPC tries to catch up on policies every couple of years. He voiced concern that other plans might contain outdated policies if completed prior to the Commission’s next WTP Policy Plan.

Brian Smith commented that the completion of the Statewide Multimodal Plan would follow the Commission's next WTP.

Charlie Howard added that the next federal rules might be different. He indicated he was not sure how the planning process would respond to the federal rules this go-around or how all the organizations would or would not work together. Brian Smith added that it was the same as ISTEA and the precedents of ISTEA could be a guide.

Brian noted that even though there would be numerous activities taking place, working cooperatively would make the process easier. He pointed to the new issue of livability as an example of what is on the horizon and how Julie Rodwell, Transportation Planning Office, identified it in the UPWP Guidelines.

Dean Lookingbill observed that the transportation system is one system made up of various modes. The difference in project selection when WSDOT was under the Transportation Commission compared to being a cabinet agency was that the MPOs and RTPOs had a greater role in determining priorities. Now the WSDOT process is different.

Jay Alexander commented on the Highway System Plan (HSP); it is difficult to determine needs and project selection with so many influences including federal, state, and environmental. The HSP is more than an engineering exercise. It is a way to prioritize projects related to performance objectives, a way we identify and document how we move from unconstrained needs to equitable priorities for investment. Jay Alexander referenced the "five plus one" goals from the WTP as part of the HSP. He indicated they needed to document financial constraint as part of the prioritization process for the HSP that consisted of WSDOT analysis, the region's needs assumptions, and solutions from past analysis.

Scott Witt commented on the Freight Rail Plan. The Freight Rail Office is updating the Freight Rail Plan for the first time in many years. There are many participants. He started work in July—August 2009 with a scope of work meeting. It includes economic considerations and project prioritization; there are 108 projects at \$1.8 billion for freight rail projects, excluding passenger projects. It is a statewide plan that should roll up into the multimodal plan. The due date for completion of the Freight Rail Plan is December 31, 2009. The link to the Freight Rail plan: [WSDOT - Freight - Rail - State Freight Rail Plan](#)

Discussion followed on the focus of the multimodal plan and if it was comprehensive or targeted. Brian Smith commented that the multimodal plan would roll up other plans by concentrating on connections and by strengthening internal and external communications. He stressed, however, it was not a stapling exercise.

Elizabeth Robbins, Manager, Transportation Planning Office, emphasized WSDOT's desire is to collaborate more closely on how to create the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan; especially using the regional plans as a foundation to understand regional issues.

Page Scott commented about funding uncertainties in state and federal planning funds. She noted there are consequences for not completing some of these things in the timeline and wanted to know how best to make the process meaningful. Her view was we should not create modal plans and then create a separate multimodal plan.

Barb Ivanov explained that in order for our currently funded transportation programs to solve real-world problems an understanding of how users (in the case of the freight system, shippers, and freight carriers) want the transportation system to function is necessary. It is important to identify the actual user problems that need solving. Barb Ivanov added that another planning disconnect is that the state and local jurisdictions aren't required to jointly plan for freight corridors, and that in some cases mismatched state and local goals create corridor problems. She also commented that she sees a dilemma in the connection between the Highway System Plan and local plans for accommodating new development. There needs to be good data such as origin—destination statistics to support the Highway System Plan and other planning documents.

Charlie Howard summed things up by noting:

1. The process must be meaningful
2. The statewide multimodal plan must be useful
3. Placing more focus on connections, access, and east-west issues is necessary

8. [Executive Order 09-05](#) Working Group—Elizabeth Robbins

Elizabeth Robbins, briefed the group on the initial efforts on the Governor's Executive Order 09-05.

In October 2009, the Executive Order Working Group that includes Puget Sound Regional Council, Spokane Regional Transportation Council, Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council, and Thurston Regional Planning Council held its initial meeting.

At the October meeting, the group agreed to focus on implementation of the Executive Order's section 2. A larger group, including local government officials and business, and environmental associations will meet on December 14, 2009. Under the Executive Order, WSDOT is responsible for a report of findings and recommendations on section 2a by December 31, 2010.

WSDOT will report on the group's discussions concerning:

- Estimating current and future statewide levels of vehicle miles traveled
- Evaluating potential changes to the vehicle miles traveled benchmarks in RCW 47.01.440 as appropriate to address low or no-emission vehicles and
- Developing additional strategies to reduce emissions from the transportation sector

A second report (section 2b) is due to the Governor by December 1, 2011. WSDOT will report on:

- RTPO plans for greenhouse gas reduction strategies—strategies that appear to have the greatest potential to achieve benchmarks
- Policy on funding issues needing resolution to ensure implementation

9. Uses of End-of-Biennium 07-09 State RTPO Funds—Jeff Wilkens/Mark Kushner/Steve Harvey/George Kovich/Lon Wyrick/Jim Miller

Six RTPOs received end-of-biennium RTPO funds.

Jeff Wilkens, filling in for Mark Kushner, Benton-Franklin Council of Governments (BFCG), showed a [Tri-Cities Bike Map](#) purchased by BFCG.

Gordon Rogers, reported that [WCOG's funds were used for on bicycle](#) traffic safety education, the 12th annual bike to work and school event, bicycles users'

collaboration with the Whatcom “Smart Trips” Program, and the bicycle traffic enforcement program in Whatcom County.

Steve Harvey, Director, Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments (CWCOG) and the Southwest Washington RTPO, indicated that the end-of-biennium funds were used to develop a logo for the SR 109 Scenic Byway.

George Kovich, WSDOT Olympic Region, representing Peninsula RTPO, commented that the Peninsula RTPO used end of biennium funds for public outreach for the Regional Transportation Plan.

Lon Wyrick indicated that with their funds, TRPC purchased Dynameq, a mesoscopic dynamic travel assignment software program that interfaces with their EMME regional travel demand software. The software will enable evaluation of operational characteristics and improvements in regionally significant multi-jurisdictional urban corridors, particularly for implementation of ITS strategies.

Jeff Wilkens indicated WVTC purchased Vista, a mesoscopic modeling component to update and recalibrate the regional travel demand model to horizon year 2030. A consultant will assist in completing the process as part of the purchase agreement.

10. Meeting Adjourned—Thank you! Next Meeting Date: February 23, 2010

The Clarion Hotel in SeaTac is the meeting location for the following 2010 meeting:

- May 18, 2010
- August 24, 2010
- November 30, 2010