



Oversight Committee Meeting Transportation Concurrency Analysis, State-Owned Facilities

**Wednesday, October 25, 2006, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Puget Sound Regional Council, Conference Room, Seattle**

Meeting Notes

Committee Members in Attendance:

Sen. Mary Margaret Haugen
Sen. Craig Pridemore
Rep. Dean Takko
Rep. Beverly Woods

Rep. Alex Wood
Rep. Lynn Schindler (on phone)
Ashley Probart (AWC)

Staff:

Paula Hammond (WSDOT)
Brian Smith (WSDOT)
Elizabeth Robbins (WSDOT)
Eric Phillips (WSDOT)
Karena Houser (WSDOT)
Ralph Wilhelmi (WSDOT)

June Olah (WSDOT)
Leonard Bauer (CTED)
Kathryn Leathers (House Transportation Committee)
Kelly Simpson (Senate Transportation Committee)
Mike Groesch (Senate Transportation Committee)

Joseph Backholm (Senate Republican Caucus)
Jay Balasbas (House Republican Caucus)

Audience:

Paul Parker (WSTC)
Kathleen Davis (WSDOT)
King Cushman (PSRC)

Joyce Phillips (CTED)
Bob Drewel (PSRC)
Rick Olson (PSRC)

Brian Smith opened the meeting and requested that participants introduce themselves. He then opened the presentation by introducing the “three-legged stool” as discussion graphic that symbolizes the balance needed for growth management to work: infrastructure planning, funding, and governance.

Karena Houser continued the presentation with a review of the gaps discussed at the last meeting. She described grouping the gaps into three categories: planning gaps, funding gaps, and governance gaps. From this WSDOT had developed a preliminary list of policy concepts that address these gaps. Karena advised the group that the policy concepts were not a list of recommendations; rather, a list of possible approaches to achieve the objectives of the concurrency analysis proviso. The group was asked to review the policy concepts and comment

on what was missing as well as provide feedback on the relative importance of the policy concepts.

The committee discussed the coordination of transit planning and land use planning and suggested closely tracking the multimodal concurrency study that is also in progress.

Karena then reviewed the analysis objectives and identified the criteria used to evaluate the draft policy concepts. A few committee members had questions about the “sliding scales” and how they are used relative to each of the ten proposed policy options. Eric Phillips explained the scales are a tool for comparing the impacts of each policy concept based on the selected criteria. The scales are provided primarily to support today’s discussion. Eric encouraged dialogue on “shifting the triangles” to better capture agreement on how each policy concept addresses the criteria.

Karena introduced the first planning concept, technical assistance. Discussion followed on the impact of individual plans for local government, assisting local governments before insisting on compliance, and the relative cost and effectiveness of planning solutions.

Next, Karena summarized the WSDOT plan review option as an exercise in “truth in planning,” allowing local governments to make planning decisions based on good information about the impacts of those decisions on the state’s transportation system. The group discussed that the state is required to be on record during the local hearings process in order to participate in a later appeal of a local decision. One committee member suggested that while planning is helpful, good communication between state, regional, and local agencies is critical.

Karena prefaced the discussion of the policy concepts for funding by stating that no one of the funding solutions appears by itself to be sufficient to solve the state’s unfunded transportation infrastructure needs. The group then discussed the WSDOT Development Review policy concept. Brian Smith noted the state already reviews proposed developments through SEPA and this policy concept would devote more resources to doing a much better job at assessing mitigation and working through that process.

Karena continued the draft policy concept review and discussed redirecting state infrastructure funding to transportation improvements needed because of growth. The group again noted that transit resources should be added to the list of potential funding sources, that these funding programs act as “silos” and lack coordination, and that the divided funding results in local agencies dedicating a considerable amount of time to chasing money rather than focusing on and achieving a more comprehensive outcome. The group agreed that while infrastructure funding sources work well to achieve certain goals, overall they are not coordinated to achieve statewide planning and funding objectives.

Karena next summarized the pros and cons of authorizing the state to collect mitigation fees directly from a developer. The committee noted SEPA mitigation is a drop in the bucket in relation to how much funding is needed for state transportation infrastructure improvements, using US 2 as an example. Members of the group also commented that projects would move faster without SEPA and state mitigation collection might push “big box” businesses further

away from congested community centers or result in chasing away developments and their potential sales tax dollars. Several committee members noted that the impacts of the state collecting mitigation fees would be different in urban, suburban, and rural areas.

The policy concept authorizing the state to collect impact fees was then discussed. One committee member suggested the current impact fee system was the result of compromise and it may be time to look at policy alternatives.

Eric summarized the four governance-related draft policy options: local incentives, mandatory good planning practices, mandatory local enforcement of state mitigation, and the expansion of concurrency to state highways and ferries. He then invited committee members to continue the broader discussion of all of the draft policy concepts.

The group discussed the value of technical assistance. Some committee members felt the issue was not the availability of technical assistance but rather the reluctance of some local governments to implement good planning practices. Other members voiced strong support for better technical assistance noting that it is of particular value in smaller communities.

The consensus was there should be more emphasis on comprehensive plan review and proactive state participation in local planning processes. Some members commented the plan review process needs more “teeth.” One committee member voiced concern that good planning practices, access management, and mitigation might result in incentives or requirements that are not sensitive to geographic differences.

The committee discussed subarea planning as an effective tool local governments are using to better manage the impacts of development. Several committee members voiced support of subarea planning and noted that perhaps in some situations development should be precluded if a subarea plan did not exist. Senator Haugen used Kennewick as an example of good subarea planning: the city identified pre-planned access points from I-182 for future development which then went through environmental review as part of the comprehensive planning process. This provides more predictability for developers, local governments, and the state but requires a great deal of foresight.

Several committee members also agreed impact fees of some kind should be available to the state, but suggested that while collection of such fees should be mandatory, it should also remain locally driven. Other committee members did not support the idea of state impact fees, noting difficulties in deciding where fees should be spent and determining what to do if collected fees are insufficient to complete a project. One member suggested that instead of impact fees, system development charges should be considered that allow the state to establish and collect fees for regional transportation improvements needed. System development charges should be used not just for road improvements but for all system management investments, such as park-and-rides or bus stops. Brian suggested that sometimes the most cost-effective improvements to enhance the function of state transportation facilities are not necessarily on the state system. The transportation system as a whole should be evaluated and the most effective improvements should be selected without regard to the ownership of the facility. Several committee members

suggested system development charges should be implemented at the regional level instead of at the state level.

The group agreed that redirecting state funding should be combined with the local incentives policy concept and should focus on better coordination of state funding sources. Several committee members commented that a good portion of these funds are already spent on state transportation infrastructure projects. The committee noted that caveats could be attached to these funding sources to ensure that local governments cooperate to protect the function of state-owned transportation facilities.

The committee also discussed alternative funding sources for transportation infrastructure needed to support growth and development. Local option gas taxes, user fees, and transportation benefit districts were mentioned as potential funding sources.

Paula Hammond wrapped up the meeting by asking what the committee's expectation is for the final analysis product. The committee agreed the pros and cons were helpful and requested that the analysis provide some gauge of the different resource levels necessary for each policy concept.

The committee agreed to continue communicating feedback and ideas with WSDOT via email. The committee requested that the results of the discussion today be circulated to the regional transportation planning organizations.

SUMMARY

Areas of General Agreement

- while infrastructure funding sources work well to achieve their particular mandates, they do not cooperate to further proactive and coordinated state-wide planning and funding objectives
- more emphasis should be placed on comprehensive plan reviews and emphasis on state participation in local planning processes (proactive)
- sub-area planning could be an effective tool for managing development impacts
- redirecting state funding should be combined with the local incentives policy concept and should focus on better coordination of state funding sources
- the analysis should provide some gauge of the different resource levels necessary for each policy concept

Requests

- continue to track the results of the multimodal concurrency study
- circulate the results of today's discussion to the regional transportation planning organizations
- draft of the revised policy concepts to the Oversight Committee by November 16th