I-5 Transportation Alternatives and Operational Traffic Model Study

Meeting #3 Summary
September 10, 2009

TRC members in attendance:

Amanda Fagan	Dept. of Defense (teleconference)
Dean Moberg	FHWA
Delphie Nielsen	Clover Park School District
Dirk Brier	Puget Sound Regional Council
Forest Sutmiller	WSDOT
J. Duncan Crump	National Guard (Camp Murray)
John Donahoe	WSDOT Olympic Region
Kelly Hayden	Pierce Transit
Larry Mickel	Fort Lewis Public Works
Minh Vo	National Guard (Camp Murray)
Peter Zahn	City of DuPont
Shawn Phelps	Pierce County Public Works
Stephanie Smith	McChord AFB
Tamara Nack	Gray & Osborne (City of DuPont)
Tom Goff	State Senate Republican Caucus
Vince Bozick	McChord AFB

Project Team	
Bruce Haldors	Transpo Group
Craig Helmann	WSDOT
Mike Swenson	Transpo Group
Jon Pascal	Transpo Group
Jilma Jimenez	Berger Abam
Shuming Yan	WSDOT

City of Lakewood
Dan Penrose
Mel Perrussel
Desiree Winkler

Welcome, Introduction, & Status Update

Dan Penrose, Project Manager, welcomed everyone and updated the committee on the current project status. To date, the project continues to be on-schedule and on-budget. The project team has completed the existing conditions section of the report and begun the screening process, reviewing potential improvement projects and identifying problem locations, and focused study area.

Review of TRC Meeting #2

The previous TRC meeting was held on June 25th and meeting notes are posted on the WSDOT project website[1] and were sent to policy makers to inform them of the project's current status.

Comments were made regarding the meeting #2 notes:

- Notes page 3 – Please clarify or correct the use/names of DuPont & Center Drive gates. Soften the reference to Camp Murray data. (Dan P)
- Notes page 4 – Revise the usage of "Preferred Alternative." (Dean M)

The revised TRC meeting # 2 notes will be posted on the City's and WSDOT websites.

Assessment of Existing Conditions

Bruce Haldors briefly presented an overview of the existing conditions analysis general methodology. These are presented in the first chapter of the report. Bruce indicated that it has been challenging to assess the operations of the corridor due to several locations along the corridor where unique conditions occur. The project team has developed exhibits that try to capture the essence of how the total corridor operates, and to be sensitive to stakeholders'

[1] http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/i5/ftlewismcchordtransportation/

experiences along the corridor. TRC members did not provide any specific feedback regarding inconsistencies in the report at this time.

Mike Swenson then discussed more details of the traffic operations analysis. The tools used for the analysis focused on mainline and merging/diverging operations, and ramp terminal and adjacent intersection operations. Figure 16 (page 40) of the report shows traffic volumes and level-of-service results for mainline and merging/diverging segments. Operational results for the ramp terminals and adjacent intersections are shown in Table 10 (page 41). Because of limitations of the tools used for the analysis, the results may show better operations than actually occur, such as at the Berkeley interchange.

Bruce then noted that simulation tools will be used beyond the existing conditions analysis to better quantify and visually show potential improvements once the list of concepts has been screened down to a range of solutions.

Craig Helmann then discussed mainline operations. He noted that backups occur northbound in the evening and can extend for up to 2 miles, with the choke point being the Berkeley interchange. Interestingly, congestion has improved over the last two years despite a slight increase in traffic along I-5. Meanwhile traffic volumes at most other locations throughout the state have actually decreased.

Bruce then summarized that the purpose of the existing conditions analysis is to build modeling tools using the travel demand model, incorporating military gates and user information, and the operations of freeway ramps/merge point/mainline operations. This modeling will become more refined with improved information on existing data. All TRC members were then encouraged to review the existing conditions report and to provide feedback to the project team. The existing conditions text is a living document that will be incorporated into the final complete report. Comments on the report should be provided to Dan who will convey them to the proper project team members.

Level 1 Screening Criteria

Jon Pascal discussed and summarized the September 3, 2009 Level 1 screening criteria memorandum. This memorandum outlines qualitative measurements used within the Level 1 screening criteria. The criteria discussed included military impacts, safety issues, and operational issues. These three measures keep the screening process simple, are relatively easy to measure under existing or future conditions, and allow the project team to focus on specific locations to improve the corridor. The purpose of the screening process is not to eliminate system-wide strategies, but to instead focus on interchange needs and concepts to assess where military impacts are greatest and can best improve the corridor's operational needs. Several questions regarding the assumptions used in the analysis were posed to the project team. These included:

- Are the military impacts, as a percent, measured on existing or future conditions? [ANSWER] The military impacts were based on future conditions
- Is the cross-base highway included in the analysis? [ANSWER] Yes it is part of the baseline assumption

Additional details as presented in the Level 1 screening criteria memo were discussed. It was noted that raw data used to develop the Level 1 screening results summary table could be provided to the group.

Transpo examined the screening criteria and methodology from several different perspectives (weighted or non-weighted), but each perspective ended with similar results. Based on the Level 1 screening criteria, the top four interchanges for further consideration were identified. Each of the three measures (military, safety, and operations) were considered under weighted and non-weighted conditions. The weighted results are recommended because they result in the top four

interchanges located next to one another and present lots of opportunities for improvement. The weighting of the criteria were accepted by the TRC members and the refined area of focus. The top four interchanges include: 1) 41st Division Drive, 2) Berkeley Street, 3) Thorne Lane, and 4) DuPont-Steilacoom Road.

Questions and comments on the screening criteria and results were provided by the TRC members. They are summarized below.

- Are these results similar to military studies that have been conducted?
    - Jon replied that these results are unique because the focus area for potential improvements has been narrowed from previous studies.
- When simulation is done, will the entire corridor be modeled or will only a small portion of the corridor be modeled?
    - Bruce answered that only a small portion would be modeled.
- Will simulating a small portion of the corridor change the screening criteria ranking for those that were not selected, or potentially move the corridor's existing bottlenecks?
    - Bruce responded that when simulation is used, impacts to the entire corridor will be considered.
- Improved operations have been observed in the field at the Fort Lewis DuPont gate. Is it known what these improvements were?
    - Mike answered that the Fort's intention is to relocate the DuPont gate further away from the interchange. The gate would likely be moved further north (parallel to I-5) but is still under internal discussion.

Improvement Concepts

Following the discussion of the screening criteria, the TRC members broke up into two groups to review/discuss existing issues and improvement concepts at the four interchanges. The project team indicated that a summary of the existing issues and preliminary list of concepts as developed by the project team would be transmitted along with the notes from TRC meeting #3.

Discussion regarding Next Steps

A question was asked about why only four interchanges from the screening criteria were considered. Bruce replied that when considering the overall project scope and budget, closely examining the entire corridor would not be feasible given the scope and schedule of the OEA grant. To provide recommendations and improvement alternatives to the level of detail desired in the objectives of the OEA grant, four interchanges were chosen for detailed examination. Additional system improvements benefiting the entire corridor would also be included in later assessment. Rather than have the overall needs of the corridor restricted due to environmentally sensitive issues, it is critical to identify a few specific needs that can be addressed than a lot of ideas that cannot be acted on.

<u>The next TRC meeting (#4) is scheduled for December 3, 2009</u>

Ended at 12:05 PM