

**MPO/RTPO/WSDOT COORDINATING COMMITTEE
MEETING SUMMARY
Clarion Hotel, SeaTac, WA
May 19, 2009**

1. INTRODUCTIONS

Coordinating Committee Chair Jeff Wilkens, Executive Director of the Wenatchee Valley Transportation Council (WVTC), welcomed the members and guests of the Coordinating Committee and thanked them for coming. Those present introduced themselves.

**2. WASHINGTON TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION UPDATES DIALOGUE
Guest Participants—Transportation Commissioners: Dan O’Neal, Chair; Elmira Forner, Vice-Chair; Bob Distler; Latisha Hill; Carol Moser; Philip Parker. In addition, Commission staff, Reema Griffith, Executive Director, and Paul Parker, Senior Policy Analyst, attended**

Mr. Wilkens opened by explaining that this agenda item was an opportunity to interact with the Transportation Commission. The Commission used the first part of their time to describe the Commission’s Washington Transportation Plan (WTP) update strategy and the second part of the session to interact with the organizations and other attendees present. The Transportation Commission members and staff gave a [PowerPoint presentation](#) (pdf 541 kb) and provided information on the following handouts:

- [Overview: 2011-2030 Washington Transportation Plan](#) (pdf 143 kb)
- [WTP Workplan and Timeline](#) (pdf 144 kb)
- [Role of Advisory Group and Plan Development Process](#) (pdf 146 kb)
- [WTP Advisory Group](#) (pdf 106 kb)
- [Washington Transportation Plan Communication Effort—April 2009](#) (pdf 146 kb)

3. ECONOMIC STIMULUS—STATUS AND NEXT STEPS

Jeff Wilkens, Dave Dye, Jay Alexander, Kathleen Davis, Scott Witt, Brian Smith—WSDOT

Mr. Dye, WSDOT Deputy Secretary, explained he was back to continue the ongoing conversation with the MPOs/RTPOs that was promised during the February 24, 2009, meeting. He explained that he wanted to talk about the interlaced roles of WSDOT and the MPOs/RTPOs in relation to upcoming stimulus projects. Mr. Dye indicated there would be new Recovery Act dollars available for rail projects, Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER), Capital Investments in Surface Transportation Infrastructure, and other grant programs ([ARRA: Washington State Program Summary](#) pdf 147 kb).

Mr. Dye then asked Mr. Witt, WSDOT State Rail and Marine Director, Mr. Alexander, WSDOT Systems Analysis and Program Development Manager, and Ms. Davis, WSDOT Highways and Local Programs Director, to provide the Coordinating Committee with an overview of the Recovery Act opportunities and status of projects to date.

Mr. Alexander provided the following about WSDOT's ARRA projects:

- 32 Tier 1 projects funded—\$340 million
- 24 projects advertised—9 awarded
- Washington State is eligible for other states' ARRA funds
- WSDOT is now funding Tier 2 projects

Ms. Davis provided the following local ARRA project information:

- 147 Tier 1 projects funded—\$67.1 million
- 33 projects advertised—7 awarded

For more up-to-date information, visit WSDOT's Recovery Act Web page at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/funding/stimulus/>.

The following represents the comments, questions, and responses regarding this agenda item:

Q If a project comes in under bid, do the savings go back to the region?

A Savings within a Transportation Management Area (TMA) go back to the TMA but savings in other areas are not required to stay in the same area.

Q Who picks the Tier 2 projects?

A The ARRA Local Project Review Panel vets the Tier 2 projects.

Q May a MPO or RTP approach the Panel with a recommendation and if so, would it make a difference in the Panel's decision-making process?

A Ms. Davis doubted there would be any chance to make a recommendation to the Panel. Besides, the panel will be working off the MPOs' Tier 2 list of priorities.

Q Once these new ARRA projects start up again, will WSDOT be advancing STIP amendments to the FHWA and FTA more frequently than once a month?

A Nothing is set yet, but we'll do what is necessary to meet ARRA time constraints.

Q Are the state projects on the website?

A Yes. (The website is at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Funding/stimulus/>.)

Rail

Mr. Witt indicated WSDOT was preparing its list of capital rail projects and intended to seek structured [input from stakeholders](#) through May 22, 2009. He also noted WSDOT has an ARRA website dedicated to rail (<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/funding/stimulus/passengerrail>). Mr. Witt explained that on June 17, 2009, application guidance would provide instructions for the application and the competitive selection process for \$8 billion for high-speed passenger rail.

Mr. Witt provided a [handout](#) (pdf 228 kb) noting Chris Gregoire, Washington State Governor, and Paula Hammond, Secretary of Transportation, would be holding an informational meeting on Wednesday, May 27, 2009, to discuss WSDOT's proposed recommendations for projects along the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor. Immediately following the meeting, the Federal Railroad Administration will be hosting a High Speed Rail Workshop.

Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Grants

Mr. Smith, WSDOT Strategic Planning and Programming Director, pointed the attendees to the three ARRA grant handouts ([ARRA Mega Fact Sheet](#) (pdf 21 kb), [ARRA Mega News Release](#) (pdf 39 kb), [ARRA Mega Guidance Advance](#) (pdf 134 kb)) and indicated state, local, and tribal governments, transit agencies, ports, and multi-state and multi-jurisdictional entities are eligible to apply. Mr. Smith explained that projects need to have a significant impact on the nation, a metropolitan area, or a region. Specific criteria consist of a project's readiness to proceed, technical feasibility, and financial feasibility. These criteria also prioritize projects for use in the areas of bridge replacement, transit, and port infrastructure.

Mr. Dye suggested the group read the requirements in the *Federal Register* [[Docket No. OST-2009-0115](#)] and Mr. Smith commented that WSDOT and the MPOs/RTPOs have an opportunity to comment as a whole if they chose to coordinate their response. June 1, 2009, was the deadline to comment to the *Federal Register* docket.

The following represents the comments, questions, and responses regarding TIGER projects:

- Q Will Section 1511 certifications and TIPs need to be done for these projects?
A Yes, these projects have the same requirements as previous ARRA projects.
- Q Has the state picked any large projects for this program yet?
A Yes, SR 520, as well as pieces of other large projects, e.g. Columbia River Crossing. This is a good coalition-building program.
- Q If there is a regionally significant project that a MPO has in its Metropolitan Transportation Plan and wants to support and wants WSDOT to send forward, how does it do that?
A That is WSDOT's question to the group. How do you want to be involved? WSDOT seeks good communication with the MPOs/RTPOs on this opportunity. The MPOs/RTPOs could do a local vetting of projects, share that vetting with WSDOT, and WSDOT could share that information with the Governor's Office.
- Q The MPOs/RTPOs need to know their projects will see the light of day. Should we send our project lists to WSDOT to ensure that?
A That is a good idea. Send the list to Brian Smith at smithb@wsdot.wa.gov.

4. FEDERAL RESCISSIONS UPDATE

Lon Wyrick—Thurston Regional Planning Council, Jay Alexander—WSDOT

Mr. Wyrick, Executive Director, Thurston Regional Planning Council, started by indicating that the meeting with WSDOT on federal rescissions went very well. WSDOT presented options for discussion and not just one possibility. WSDOT explained the differences between appropriations, apportionments, and obligation authority. The option picked that applied all of the small (\$3.15 billion) rescission to local programs was not inappropriate once the reasoning and the impact on covered and protected programs was understood. Mr. Wyrick thanked WSDOT for all the hard work that was apparent to him in going through the calculations and options for the various rescission scenarios. The end result is that Washington State's share of the federal funds rescission will not affect MPO planning funds or the Statewide Planning Research (SPR) program funds.

Mr. Alexander then described for the committee's benefit the differences between obligation authority and appropriation/apportionment to the states by program. At the federal level, appropriations are a policy approval by program. The state must also receive obligation authority to contract for specific projects.

There was additional discussion by the group of why WSDOT waited six years (since the passage of SAFETEA-LU) to address the rescission issue. An explanation followed that the requirements for the rescission were unknown at the time of SAFETEA-LU's passage and it would only take affect at the end of FFY 2009. Meanwhile, Congress created an additional rescission of \$3.15 billion nationally, in the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2008, in early March and this one took affect sooner than the still pending SAFETEA-LU rescission of \$8.71 billion nationally. In late April, FHWA issued instructions for the Omnibus rescission.

5. STATE LEGISLATIVE RECAP

Dillon Auyoung, Elizabeth Robbins—WSDOT

Mr. Auyoung, Government Relations Director, WSDOT, indicated the state transportation budget had more than \$4.4 billion in transportation project spending in the next two years (over 400 projects from the 2003 and 2005 gas tax packages). Key investments include the SR 520 Bridge and the Alaskan Way Deep Bore Tunnel.

Mr. Auyoung noted there are funds in the transportation budget to build four new ferryboats in the 2009-11 and 2011-13 biennia and if federal funds are received, the Anacortes ferry terminal may be replaced and the Mukilteo terminal moved, pending results of environmental and archeological studies.

The Joint Transportation Committee is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of mid- and long-term transportation funding mechanisms. Mr. Auyoung explained that WSDOT is to prepare facility-based tolling studies on the Columbia River Crossing and I-405 corridors similar to the process for the SR 520 Tolling Implementation Committee. He indicated WSDOT is also charged with studying SR 167 and SR 509 port connections to identify opportunities for tolling these corridors, recognizing their value to freight movement.

Ms. Robbins, Transportation Planning Manager, WSDOT, indicated Governor Gregoire had partially vetoed [HB 2129](#) (pdf 31 kb), [ESHB 2072](#) (pdf 24 kb), and [ESSB 5560](#) (pdf 26 kb). She discussed the provided [legislative bill information](#) (pdf 449 kb) and highlighted the following bills that passed the 2009 Legislative Session:

- **Climate Change Bill SSHB 1481** includes directing the state and PSRC to seek federal or private funding to develop and plan for implementation of an electric vehicle infrastructure. It directs WSDOT to pursuer partnerships to establish an alternative fuels corridor pilot project along I-5 and to install charging outlets for electric vehicles in areas such as safety rest areas, state parking, and maintenance facilities. It provides tax incentives for electric vehicle infrastructure and to the extent practicable state agencies and local governments must achieve 40% fuel usage using electricity or biofuel for publicly owned vessels, vehicles, and construction equipment by June 1, 2013.

- **Climate Change Bill ESSB 5560** requires state agencies to meet targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from their buildings, vehicles, and operations. This bill requires all state agencies to report their estimated greenhouse gas emissions and the strategies they took to reduce their emissions. It requires the Governor to designate an existing position as the single point of accountability for all energy and climate change initiatives within state agencies. It requires the state agencies to develop strategies to reduce fuel consumption and emissions from all classes of vehicles. This bill also requires all state agencies, beginning in 2010, to consider when distributing capital funds whether the entity receiving the funds has adopted policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. State agencies shall strive to incorporate adaptation plans of action as priority activities when planning or designing agency policies and programs. Agencies shall consider the integrated climate change response strategy when designing, planning, and funding infrastructure projects. Agencies should also consider incorporating natural resource adaptation actions and alternative energy sources when designing and planning infrastructure projects. The bill also directs the Department of Ecology in consultation with WSDOT and other agencies to develop a response strategy to climate change impacts.
- **Commute Trip Reduction Bill SSB 6088** transfers current responsibilities related to commute trip reduction (CTR) programs for state agencies from the Department of General Administration to WSDOT. It requires WSDOT to develop a joint comprehensive Commute Trip Reduction Plan for all state agencies within the Olympia, Lacey, and Tumwater urban growth areas (including institutions of higher education). It also requires these state agencies to implement a CTR program that is consistent with the objectives and strategies of the joint comprehensive CTR plan. Funding is provided for WSDOT to implement the bill in the General Fund capital budget.
- **Highways of Statewide Significance Bill SB 5642** designated SR 164 as a Highway of Statewide Significance. The City of Auburn supported this bill, but it did not go through the HSS Designation process coordinated by WSDOT and the RTPOs. The related bill HB 1431, which would have concluded the recent update process, did not pass this Session.

Ms. Robbins indicated that Program T of the Transportation budget experienced cuts, specifically due from the following three areas:

1. Decrease funding by \$396,000 for administration costs and the more efficient use of department resources.
2. Transfer \$350,000 to the Transportation Commission for their update of the statewide transportation policy plan.
3. Decrease of \$785,000 in funding to reflect savings that resulted from the Governor's directive for state agencies to cut gasoline consumption and freeze new hiring, out-of-state travel, personal service contracts, and equipment purchases not related to public safety or other essential activities.

Ms. Robbins indicated that presently there are no proposals to reduce state funding to the RTPOs.

6. HIGH PRIORITY PROJECTS (HPP) & REAUTHORIZATION NEWS

Dillon Auyoung—WSDOT

Mr. Auyoung explained that he was representing Larry Ehl who is the Federal Liaison Manager and the [High Priority Projects \(HPP\)](#) (pdf 28 kb) contact for WSDOT. Mr. Auyoung further explained that Mr. Ehl was in Washington D.C., so he would respond to concerns or take back questions to Mr. Ehl for answering later.

A discussion followed by the members expressing their concerns with the HPP process. Some of the members were troubled because some HPP projects chosen by WSDOT were not in the MPOs' long-range plans. The MPO members were uncomfortable supporting the projects to their Boards or to their federal legislative representatives since they felt they did not get the opportunity to provide input into WSDOT's process. The Coordinating Committee requested clarification on how WSDOT chose the HPP projects and why the coordination with the MPOs, RTPOs, and WSDOT Region planners was so limited.

Mr. Auyoung said he would take the Coordinating Committee's concerns back to Mr. Ehl.

MEETING ADJOURN

After asking if there were any more comments, Chair Wilkens noted that the next meeting date is August 25, 2009, and then adjourned the meeting at approximately 2:00 p.m.