I-5 Transportation Alternatives and Operational Traffic Model Study

TRC Meeting #4 Summary
December 3, 2009

TRC members in attendance:

Forest Sutmiller	WSDOT, Olympic Region
Mike Villnave	WSDOT, Olympic Region
Dean Moberg	FHWA
Delphie Nielsen	Clover Park School District
Dirk Brier	Puget Sound Regional Council
Jesse Hamashima	Pierce County Public Works
Larry Mickel	Fort Lewis Public Works
Minh Vo	National Guard (Camp Murray)
Monica Adams	Pierce Transit
Tina Lee	Pierce Transit
Peter Zahn	City of DuPont
Tamara Nack	Gray & Osborne (City of DuPont)
Tera Black	Thurston County Regional Planning Council
Thomas Sena	McChord AFB

Project Team

Craig Helmann	WSDOT, UPO
Jon Pascal	Transpo Group
Mike Swenson	Transpo Group
Richard Warren	WSDOT, UPO
Shuming Yan	WSDOT, UPO

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. Dan and other stakeholders also attended the OEA conference in Florida. Dan Penrose reminded TRC members that this current study is using planning funds only, so as the improvements move into construction stages separate funds for construction will need to be identified.

A powerpoint presentation regarding proposed improvement options was presented which was used as a basis for the current TRC meetings discussions. This presentation has been posted on the WSDOT and City of Lakewood project websites.

Forecast 2030 Growth & Operation Results

The 2030 forecast year was selected to remain consistent with 20 year comprehensive plans for nearby jurisdictions and ties in well with military growth forecast horizon years.

Discussion on the forecast traffic volumes and methodology occurred and information was presented on the corridor and regional population and traffic forecasts. Some discussion occurred regarding the use of the 2030 horizon year. The use of the 2030 horizon year instead of a 2040 horizon year (PSRC) was determined to be appropriate to be consistent with Pierce County and other local planning documents which only have forecasted local land uses to 2030. FHWA staff noted that a longer term horizon year would be required for any IJR process.

Results for the I-5 mainline segment were presented and discussed. Limited discussion occurred on this topic.

System-wide Improvement Concepts

Jon Pascal highlighted that the study is not only considering interchange improvements, but also evaluating how larger system wide improvements would benefit the I-5 corridor. In some cases these may influence the ultimate interchange conceptual designs or options.

Five scenarios were considered for improving mainline congestion:

1) ITS improvements
2) traffic demand management (i.e. consider more staggered departure times for troops leaving bases)
3) transit improvements (Sounder to DuPont, additional P&R's, increased service)
4) mainline improvements (HOV and/or auxiliary lanes, and collector/distributor lanes)
5) a new parallel highway to I-5.

The new parallel highway scenario was considered an unlikely and expensive 'what-if' scenario but was examined to understand whether this could improve congestion along I-5. The parallel corridor would allow 'through' traffic (i.e. traffic to/from Olympia and Tacoma) to avoid congested local conditions along I-5 while regional traffic (i.e. traffic to/from Fort Lewis, DuPont, and Lakewood) within the study area vicinity would continue to use I-5. This improvement does not address the future needs of I-5 within the study area.

Compared to baseline conditions, results of each scenario showed that ITS and existing mainline corridor improvements would increase capacity along the corridor (+7% and +33%, respectively). By implementing traffic demand management or transit improvements beyond baseline conditions, vehicular demands along the corridor would be reduced by (-5% and -3%, respectively). Finally, constructing a parallel corridor would reduce demand on I-5 by 13% compared with baseline conditions.

Additional analysis and documentation was requested as it related to the Transit alternative. The discussion among TRC members focused on:

- Assumed long range plans/consistent with PSRC model
- Coordination between PSRC, Thurston County, and Intercity Transit
- Benefits of transit absent HOV lanes or system improvements
- Impacts to park and ride lots and additional costs associated with needed expansions

The project team agreed that additional analysis regarding transit assumptions will be provided through the Tier III screening process.

Interchange Concepts

Concepts were developed for each interchange and are designated by letters (i.e. Concept A). The project team requested that TRC members provide any feedback regarding additional benefits or limitations not addressed in the previous documentation. Discussion occurred regarding the relationship of the interchange improvements to the system concepts. The following highlight the key discussion points for each focus interchange.

Dupont-Steilacoom Road

Questions regarding the access control points and the status of the gate relocations were asked and discussed

41st Division Drive

Comments from the TRC focused on the potential costs of the improvements, relative to the system benefits.

Berkeley
Three potential issues were noted by TRC members; 1) Impact to the Tillicum area and Camp Murray due to grade separation of the railroad tracks and 2) Constraints of the existing Madigan access point, and 3) visual impacts associated with a three tiered structure.

Thorne Lane
TRC was concerned about the true benefits of Concept A, focusing on minor interchange widening and restriping.

Further refinement and combination of the system and interchange concepts will occur as part of the Tier III screening.

Tier III Screening

WSDOT presented the Tier III screening criteria and presented the objectives of the screening. No additional evaluation criteria was discussed with the TRC. Discussion occurred among the TRC regarding the approach to formal buy-off on key assumptions, methodologies, and conclusions. Questions were raised regarding the need for a formal and documented signature for approval. The project team will consider the input of the TRC members and report back as to the recommended approach.

The project team also requested that TRC members review and the concepts and provide feedback to the project team ASAP.

The next TRC meeting (#5) will be scheduled for Mid February

Meeting ended at 12:05 PM