

Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program
Advisory Committee on Tolling and Traffic Management
Meeting Summary – Jan. 25, 2012

Committee Members in Attendance

- Kurt Beckett
- Rick Bender
- Marcus Charles
- Maud Daudon
- Bob Davidson
- Tessa Greigor
- Rob Johnson
- Sharon Maeda
- Charley Royer
- Peg Staeheli
- Sung Yang

Committee Members Not In Attendance

- Claudia Balducci
- Phil Fujii
- Anne Goodchild
- Henry Yates

Agencies and Staff in Attendance

- Dave Dye, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
- Kimberly Farley, WSDOT
- Josh Posthuma, Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program (AWV)
- Linda Mullen, AWV
- Dan Eder, Seattle City Council central staff
- Eric Tweit, Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT)

Agenda Item #1 – Welcome

Advisory Committee on Tolling and Traffic Management (ACTT) Administrator Linda Mullen welcomed the members and the public to the meeting. She reiterated the committee's purpose statement.

Agenda Item #2 – Consensus Decision-making

ACTT co-chair Charley Royer led a discussion on the committee's proposed consensus decision-making process. He noted the success that the Central Waterfront Stakeholder Group has had with this tool, and Bob Davidson seconded this opinion. The committee agreed to move forward using this process.

Agenda Item #3 – The Tunnel, Tolling, Traffic and Diversion

Kimberly Farley, WSDOT AWV Director of Operations; Josh Posthuma, AWV Finance Manager; and Eric Tweit, SDOT Mercer West Project Manager, gave an overview of the SR 99 Tunnel Project.

They discussed how the SR 99 tunnel and new Alaskan Way street will change access to SR 99 and downtown, and how tolling the tunnel will change traffic patterns compared to not tolling it. They reviewed the AWV program's use of traffic and toll revenue models. More modeling will

be done in 2012 based on the committee's recommended strategies. A brief update on SR 520 tolling diversion patterns from the first two weeks of tolling was also given.

Question: Could you speak to how the models treat the availability of real-time traffic data and how that informs the decisions of commuters?

Answer: I don't have an answer to that, but we will come back to you with one.

Question: For people traveling from north of downtown, do you anticipate tremendous back-ups as people try to exit SR 99 before entering the tunnel?

Answer: Many of the improvements to the street grid near the tunnel's north portal aim to prevent that, and the models take that information into account. This is something that the committee's strategies could also address.

Question: When discussing tolling costs, are you also analyzing the effect that advanced payment has on low wage workers? In New York the minimum cost for setting up a tolling account was \$50, which is a barrier to many people. This forces them to pay the higher license plate reader rate.

Answer: For the Good to Go pass, \$30 is the minimum cost to set up an account.

Question: Do you have data that illustrates how an individual's income and the toll rate combine to affect that person's choice to pay the toll or divert from the facility?

Answer: In our Final EIS we did not analyze the tolls and diversion by different income levels. In other states, toll lanes see a fairly equal utilization across income levels. We can follow up with more information on this issue.

Question: How do the models incorporate the new multi-use trails and other pedestrian and bicycle improvements?

Answer: The models look at transit and other choices. They analyze the time and cost for people to take these modes of transport and predict what choices people will make. Trails and pedestrian improvements are part of that mix.

Question: What streets do you assume drivers will take when diverting from the tunnel?

Answer: All of the downtown streets.

Question: How much of the regional traffic/transit system can this committee reasonably expect to influence or change with our recommendations? Could we examine tolling I-90 and how that would affect this project?

Answer: The Mayor and Seattle City Council have an expectation that the committee will take a broad look in its analysis. Input from this committee is very welcome, but how that translates into legislative action remains to be seen.

Comment: It would be helpful to have data from other regions or states where tolling is an accepted practice.

Response: We will compile case studies and make that information available to the committee.

Comment: The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) has researched tolling in other regions. It is important to note that while a bill has been introduced, there is currently no legislative authorization to toll the SR 99 tunnel. The issues we are discussing are pertinent because they are in front of the Legislature right now. Committee members should work with the government relations officials of their respective organizations to affect the outcome of this bill.

Question: Does toll scenario C examine tolling SR 99 up to South Spokane Street?

Answer: Scenario C examines only a tolled tunnel, from portal to portal.

Question: In other toll scenarios, what southern segments did you examine?

Answer: One scenario examined tolling the segment up to South Spokane Street. While scenario C was the only one examined in the Final EIS, the committee can explore other scenarios.

Question: Does the public understand that you are only exploring tolling the SR 99 tunnel?

Answer: That is what was outlined in the Final EIS.

Question: Why did you choose to study toll scenario C in the Final EIS?

Answer: For an environmental process it is important to analyze the largest potential set of impacts. Scenario C has the most diversion impacts and is, therefore, a worst case scenario from an environmental standpoint. This committee should examine other scenarios that best minimize diversion.

Question: For the 2030 tolled facility model, have you taken into account forecasted population in the region and the number of people who will be driving?

Answer: Yes, the model accounts for population rates and employment, as well as transit choices and freight movements.

Question: How much of this modeling can you do in-house?

Answer: The model comes from PSRC and is run for the program by Parsons Brinkerhoff.

Question: As you are updating the model, will new data from SR 520 be incorporated?

Answer: There are a few lessons learned that we will incorporate into the model, including the value of time. There is a lot of information about the financing plan that we've learned, and this information will be incorporated in the next round of SR 99 tolling modeling.

Question: Will you use the updated PSRC model to test the recommendations we make?

Answer: Yes, we will use the updated PSRC model and run toll scenario C to see how it changes to give us a base analysis. We can then run the scenarios the committee determines.

Question: Does the time of year affect diversion rates, and does your model account for that?

Answer: Yes.

Question: From a financial standpoint, do diversion patterns on SR 520 have less impact on tolling revenues since people tend to divert in non-peak hours, when rates are lowest?

Answer: The assumptions about tolling revenue accounted for this type of peak period difference, and these predictions were fairly accurate.

Question: When drivers divert from SR 520, which alternate routes are they using?

Answer: We've seen 10-14% diversion to I-90 and some to SR 522. We haven't yet received input on how transit ridership has changed, but overall cross-lake travel has decreased.

Question: During the summer months, as we see people travelling from outside the state, how will WSDOT collect tolls from them?

Answer: Fortunately, SR 520 is primarily used by commuters. For drivers from other states, WSDOT will collect tolls with a "pay by plate" system. We are working with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to address travelers from Canada.

Agenda Item #4 – Review of Guiding Principles

Co-chair Charley Royer reviewed the updates to the committee's guiding principles since the last meeting.

Comments:

- Principle 6 – Suggest changing the word "maintain" to "support." Maintain refers to an existing condition, and I don't believe the current condition of transit is sufficient.
- As "support" is used in four of the seven principles, I second its use in Principle 6.
- The word "maintain" suggests a base level or better, but the word "support" is vague enough to allow for goals to backslide.

Question: Is it reasonable for us to strive for improvement? We could use the phrase "improve upon the efficient use of city streets." Is that goal achievable by this committee?

Answer: Our vision is that the committee uses these principles to inform the scenarios you recommend for modeling, and that you measure the effects of tolls themselves on your recommendations.

Comment: There may be some trade-offs that we have to consider. For example, maintaining a viable port, which is important to the overall state economy, versus transit options.

Response: We will provide the committee data from the scenarios you recommend. You will use your guiding principles to examine whether those scenarios are holding up to your criteria.

Comment: I am also concerned about the word "maintain." In Rainier Valley transit was "maintained" by light rail, which replaced bus lines. It was assumed that was a sufficient trade, but there are numerous elderly people who cannot walk the distance between light rail stations.

Response: You might consider using both "support" and "maintain."

Question: One thing missing from these principles is a connection to city, regional and statewide climate change principles. Is that something we'll have the ability to measure?

Answer: Some analysis, including air quality, was completed for the Final EIS. We can bring that information to the next meeting.

Comment: I appreciate some of the additions made since the previous meeting. What is still missing is how connectivity will be measured. We risk having each goal remain in a silo. In the future we should use the lens of connectivity to sum up each of these principles.

Agenda Item #5 – Evaluation Approach and Tool Kits

Administrator Linda Mullen introduced the evaluation process the committee will follow. Program staff are deciding what can be measured and how to present that information to the ACTT. Staff will propose some evaluation criteria. These will be linked to potential strategies that will help form the basis of ACTT recommendations.

Question: What does systems tolling mean?

Answer: Generally, it means adding tolls to other roads in the system. This could be other segments of SR 99 or surface streets.

Comment: Some of these toolkit strategies are being sought in the Legislature right now. The Governor's transportation bill includes an excise tax for counties to use.

Agenda Item # 6 – Public Input

Co-chair Charley Royer introduced a proposed process for gauging public sentiment and gathering input as the committee moves forward with its work and recommendations.

Comment: The Transportation Commission will meet in Seattle on May 23 and will want to hear from the ACTT.

Comment: It might be good to have meetings or briefings in West Seattle, Burien, Ballard and Beacon Hill.

Comment: The City's Waterfront Seattle design team will have another public meeting soon. That might be a good time to address the public or at least make materials available.

Agenda Item #7 – Closing, Questions and Next Steps

Administrator Linda Mullen thanked everyone for attending and noted that the next meeting will be held on Feb. 29, 2012, at Sound Transit from 3 to 5 p.m.

Action items:

- Compile information and discuss economic / environmental justice analysis at a future meeting.
- Compile case studies from toll facilities in other states.
- Provide an ACTT update at the May 23 Transportation Commission meeting.
- Update guiding principles based on discussion.
- Update public input document based on discussion.
- Provide a briefing on the PSRC model. Discuss how real-time traffic data is accounted for in the model.