Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program
Advisory Committee on Tolling and Traffic Management
Meeting Summary – April 17, 2012

Committee Members in Attendance

- Claudia Balducci
- Kurt Beckett
- Rick Bender
- Marcus Charles
- Maud Daudon
- Bob Davidson
- Phil Fujii
- Tessa Greegor
- Rob Johnson
- Sharon Maeda
- Charley Royer
- Peg Staeheli
- Sung Yang
- Henry Yates

Agencies and Staff in Attendance

- Craig Stone, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
- Kimberly Farley, WSDOT
- Linda Mullen, Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program (AWV)
- Josh Posthuma, AWV
- Eric Tweit, Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT)

Agenda Item #1 – Welcome

Advisory Committee on Tolling and Traffic Management (ACTT) administrator Linda Mullen welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Agenda Item #2 – Guiding Principles

ACTT Co-chair Charley Royer reviewed the new guiding principle and preamble with the committee and received a consensus on the addition of both.

Agenda Item #3 – Questions for the Committee

Charley Royer asked each committee member to respond to three questions. Below are the questions and responses.

1. What do you care about most with regard to outcomes from any tolling strategy?

- Downtown neighborhoods, Pioneer Square
- Regional access to downtown/waterfront
- Downtown/waterfront business vitality
- Regional mobility
- Tunnel gets used
- Urban design perspective related to diversion – urban environment, bicycles and pedestrians
- Mobility for entire system and multiple modes – freight, car, transit, bicycles and pedestrians
- Improvements to downtown facilities so it's safe for all modes

- Minimize diversion
- Understand implications of diversion on freight and freight impacts on other modes
- Transportation funding
- Adequate funding for project
- Transit
- Affordability for users
- Toll as a tool to pay for infrastructure
- Balance interests around table

2. Who do you feel you represent in making your decisions on the tolling strategy?

- Vulcan, South Lake Union, Mercer corridor, north portal
- Small/street retail
- Puget Sound Regional Council policy board
- Pioneer Square
- Downtown
- Existing and future bicycling community
- Port and freight
- Residents in neighboring cities, people who have to commute to and through Seattle
- Legislative and statewide perspective
- Labor
- Low-income
- People of color

3. What could/should this Committee change about the way it operates to better take advantage of your experience and/or judgment?

- Provide graphics (visual learner) – primary and secondary arterials
- Opportunities for question and answer
- Complex topic – still on learning curve
- Give a look ahead to future meetings and give committee members homework
- More interactive way to share information – perhaps a charette or workshop
- Welcome opportunity to pose and answer questions
- Subcommittees on specific issues

Agenda Item #4 – What We Know Now

WSDOT Director of Tolling Craig Stone provided an update on SR 520 tolling. SDOT Project Manager Eric Tweit gave an introduction to routes in the downtown core that might be used by vehicles trying to avoid SR 99 tunnel tolls.

The first three months of SR 520 tolling have been successful. While I-90 traffic has increased during the mid-day period, diversion rates on SR 520 are stabilizing. An important lesson to take away from this is that the price difference between peak and non-peak hours is very important. Mid-day volumes on I-90 have been higher because drivers realize there is less arterial traffic to compete with outside of rush hour. WSDOT feels that the current price points are on target and are balancing revenue needs with a variety of traffic issues. Volumes on SR 99 vary greatly based on time of day, and we expect traffic patterns would change with a tolled SR 99 facility.

Question: If you implemented tolls on SR 520 beyond the bridge, do you think that would change the time-sensitive diversion patterns to I-405 or SR 522?
Answer: Drivers are taking longer routes during the middle of the day, including I-405 and I-90. The time of day is the biggest factor in their decision about which route to use.

Agenda Item #5 – Scenarios Discussion

Linda Mullen introduced the three scenarios recommended by ACTT support staff. She explained that the first round of scenario modeling would look primarily at toll related strategies. Mitigation strategies will be modeled in the next round. The committee discussed the three models briefly and requested that in the future they receive meeting materials in advance and be given more time for discussion. The committee agreed to have staff run all three scenarios, and staff agreed to provide more information at the May 9 meeting on what could be expected from the results.

Question: What toll rates get used in the model and how much revenue will they raise?
Answer: We will model a sweep of toll rates that vary by time of day, ranging from no toll overnight to $3.25 in one direction at peak hours. One of the purposes of running the scenarios is to learn how much money could be raised.

Question: Do we have a final budget for the program?
Answer: Yes. The funding target of $200 million from tolling completes that budget. We don't have to raise that money from tolls, but the state will not contribute additional funds and has authorized the program to use tolling to raise that $200 million.

Comment: My understanding is that we have to raise $200 million through tolls, unless that creates unmanageable traffic problems in on city streets, in which case we would have to figure out an alternate plan. If you minimize diversion entirely then you don't meet the program's funding target.
Response: One of the goals of this committee is to minimize diversion. The scenarios we've proposed create benchmarks that will allow us to achieve that goal while still raising revenue. Scenario three is attempting to find the proper balance. We have tried to incorporate lessons we have learned so far and the needs of the partner agencies into these scenarios.

Question: How is diversion shaping up on SR 520?
Answer: Peak hours are seeing very low diversion whereas off-peak numbers are higher.

Question: Does the state plan to adjust the toll rates on SR 520 based on the information received thus far?

Answer: Originally we thought we would have to make a lot of toll rate adjustments. However, our rates are causing the behaviors that we want, so other than a previously scheduled 2% toll rate increase in July 2012, we don't anticipate taking any other action.

Question: If one of our objectives is to minimize diversion, and drivers have numerous options to divert from SR 99, have you thought of expanding a scenario to include segment tolling?
Answer: We learned some important lessons from looking at segment tolling in the 2009 model. We have a busy summer of modeling ahead of us and we wanted to prioritize what we model. The Port of Seattle had concerns about the impact of segment tolls on their freight routes and the City of Seattle was concerned about the equity of tolling non-tunnel users in the absence of other regional tolling systems.

Question: Is there is a legislative reason why you aren't setting toll rates based on demand instead of by time of day?
Answer: The steps in our variable tolling are supposed to reflect average demands. Feedback we received from the public before tolling was implemented indicated that while people understood the idea of variable tolling, they were less comfortable using a dynamic tolling system because it didn't give them a chance to decide in advance which route to take.

Question: What is the true cost of collecting a toll?
Answer: That varies based on the number of transactions on the facility, the specific attributes of each facility and the tolling scenario being implemented. A one dollar minimum is the general assumption for SR 99.

Question: It seems that you need to balance incurring the minimum cost with the amount of diversion created. If you only charge a toll in peak hours do you decrease the cost of collecting tolls?
Answer: We have some costs associated with operating the tunnel regardless of the costs of collecting tolls. Tolling will generate revenue for those annual operating costs as well as fill the $200 million gap.

Question: How much is the annual operation and maintenance cost for the tunnel?
Answer: The design team is in the process of finalizing the tunnel design so the numbers are not final yet. It will be around $3.75 million per year.

Question: As we look at how much it will cost to pay off the bonds, and as gas tax diminishes with increasingly more efficient cars, will we need additional funds to make up for lost gas tax revenue?
Answer: Traditionally, maintenance costs on facilities were paid for with gas tax revenue. For the SR 99 tunnel, tolls will be used to pay for these costs.

Agenda Item #6 – Closing, Questions and Next Steps

Linda Mullen thanked everyone for attending and noted that the next meeting will be held on May 9.

Action items:

- Re-send the May 9 meeting invite as an optional discussion meeting.
- Provide details about the specific costs that will be paid for by with toll revenue.