

Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program
Advisory Committee on Tolling and Traffic Management
Meeting Summary – June 27, 2012

Committee Members in Attendance

- Rick Bender
- Cynthia Chen
- Maud Daudon
- Bob Davidson
- Phil Fujii
- Rob Johnson
- Charley Royer
- Peg Staeheli
- Sung Yang
- Henry Yates

Committee Members Not in Attendance

- Claudia Balducci
- Kurt Beckett
- Marcus Charles
- Tessa Greigor
- Sharon Maeda

Agencies and Staff in Attendance

- Kimberly Farley, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
- Mark Bandy, 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 and introduced new committee member Cynthia Chen.

Question: If today we are talking about traffic modeling and at our next meeting we will talk about revenue modeling, when do we connect these two?

Answer: At the next meeting we will discuss tweaks for the next round of modeling, and will have questions answered about traffic and revenue.

Agenda Item #2 – Scenarios Review

AWV Finance Manager Josh Posthuma reviewed the toll scenarios that were modeled for the first round.

Question: On scenarios two and three, how short are we from the \$200 million toll funding goal?

Answer: We will talk about revenue next time.

Agenda Item #3 – Traffic Modeling Results

SDOT Project Manager Eric Tweit and WSDOT Traffic Engineer Mark Bandy explained some of the significant findings from the traffic modeling, including projected levels of diversion and resulting travel times with each toll scenario.

Question: It looks as though the diversion you've shown is only cars moving from the tunnel onto the street grid. Do you make any assumptions that people will divert to other modes?

Answer: We did try to assume appropriate levels of ridership on other modes before running the scenarios, but the Dynamic Traffic Assignment (DTA) model is fixed in its mode assignments.

Question: Since you didn't model the morning peak period, are you assuming that it would mirror the evening peak period? Is this a comparable experience with SR 520 tolling?

Answer: For the project's Environmental Impact Statement we did model the morning peak period and saw some mirroring of evening peak travel patterns. With a limited amount of time to model this round, we chose the evening peak period because it represents the highest traffic volumes during the day. SR 520 volumes in the peak periods have returned to where they were pre-tolling.

Question: As a follow-up to the question about mode shift, are you not assuming that there will be new trips in the system with these models?

Answer: Yes, that's the assumption for 2017.

Agenda Item #4 – Small Group Discussion

The committee broke into small groups with technical staff to discuss the modeling results and ask questions. Committee members were charged with coming up with three questions and answers to report back to the full committee, as well as three questions that weren't answered during this break out session.

Agenda Item #5 – Report out / questions

Representatives of each small group reported their respective questions, answers and unanswered questions.

Group One

Question: Are there instances where we should keep tolls high at mid-day to get more revenue and just ignore the drivers that will inevitably divert?

Answer: Because city streets tend to have capacity in mid-day, it is logical that people may divert to avoid paying the toll. Of the scenarios studied, the higher mid-day tolls produced the most revenue and the most diversion. This is something to consider further in the next round of modeling.

Question: It's important to re-think congestion as something that could be seen as positive for the pedestrian and bike environment and safety. Slower moving cars in the heart of the city can be a good thing for livability and walkability.

Answer: Can't just think about the driver's experience.

Question: Who decides on mitigation measures?

Answer: The State can affect toll rates and management of I-5. The City can affect traffic management efforts on the street grid.

Unanswered Questions:

- Has staff provided enough information about midday traffic volumes?
- What are some methods to reduce and prevent diversion?
- Can we have a presentation by Metro to learn more about their 2017 plans?

Group Two

Question: Was a specific toll location assumed for purposes of the model?

Answer: Yes, tolls are located at the tunnel's entry points.

Question: Could you move the toll collection location to the north side of the Aurora Bridge? Would that push diversion north?

Answer: Moving the toll point to north of the Aurora Bridge would shift the area of diversion north (diversion would occur wherever the toll collection facility is located).

Question: What are the critical model assumptions?

Answer: Critical assumptions include the value of time, which is consistent with the SR 520 analysis; no toll rate escalation over time; and adjustments to population and employment figures, which were updated after the recession. The street network is also a critical assumption – we have assumed the bored tunnel, Alaskan Way, Mercer Street and Spokane Street projects are all in place.

Unanswered Questions:

- How would those variables change the outcomes of a model run?
- Are King County's six-year plan transit assumptions in the model?
- Can you use an elasticity measure based on the model output? The percent change in toll rate or the percent change in traffic would help us to assess if our results are consistent with our expectations. This would benchmark the rate of diversion.

Group Three

Question: Is light rail to the University of Washington in the model?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Does the model account for people shifting to another mode (to transit, for example)?

Answer: Yes, the travel demand model that we've used for previous modeling work takes into account people shifting to transit and other modes. The previous modeling work showed very small changes in the total number of vehicle trips due to tolls on the tunnel, and, therefore, we chose to use the same number of vehicle trips in the DTA model across all scenarios.

Question: How does tolling affect transit moving on Stewart Street?

Answer: Transit lanes help minimize impacts, so we didn't see much change in transit travel times for routes on Stewart Street. Note that we still need to perform an A.M. analysis, which may have different results.

Unanswered Questions:

- Can we look at Nickerson Street and Corson Street south of Spokane Street to see how tolling affects these routes?

- Can you overlay freight routes on the congestion maps?
- Does the model consider how lower income people will behave?

Agenda Item #6 – Next Steps and Action Items

Linda Mullen thanked everyone for attending. The next committee meeting will be held on Sept. 19, 2012.

Action items:

- Staff will provide a list of all questions, complete with answers, before the next meeting.