

Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program
Advisory Committee on Tolling and Traffic Management
Meeting Summary – Sept. 25, 2013

Committee Members in Attendance

- Claudia Balducci
- Kurt Beckett
- Rick Bender
- Maud Daudon
- Bob Davidson
- Brendan Donckers
- Tim Gould
- Rob Johnson
- Sharon Maeda
- Evan Manvel
- Sung Yang

Committee Members Not in Attendance

- Marcus Charles
- Phil Fujii
- Peg Staeheli
- Henry Yates

Agencies and Staff in Attendance

- Craig Stone, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
- Mark Bandy, WSDOT
- Amy Turner, Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program (AWV)
- Kevin Desmond, King County Metro
- Dan Eder, Seattle City Council Central Staff
- Bob Chandler, Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT)
- Bernard van de Kamp, SDOT

Agenda Item #1 – Welcome and Introductions

Advisory Committee on Tolling and Traffic Management (ACTT) administrator Amy Turner welcomed everyone to the meeting, reviewed the results of action items from the previous ACTT meeting and presented the current meeting's objectives.

Committee co-chair Maud Daudon reported that she had spoken with the Washington State Office of the Treasurer about toll financing for the SR 99 tunnel. She explained that the ACTT's first round modeling efforts were restrained by the restrictions of toll-backed bonds, but the second round of models removed or reduced those constraints in order to study how to best raise the overall revenue stream. The Treasurer's office has requested that the ACTT offer a maximum amount of diversion it feels is acceptable. The co-chairs and the Treasurer's office will meet again to discuss this issue.

Question: Can you tell us what types of bonds the Treasurer's office is considering for financing the SR 99 tunnel?

Answer: Toll-backed revenue bonds come with a lot of restraints, such as assuming that all operations and maintenance must be covered before paying debt service and no escalation can

be assumed. An alternate approach to financing would provide more flexibility in some of these areas, but it is ultimately up to the State to decide which constraints they will accept.

Question: Do we potentially have more flexibility in things like paying for repair and replacement and toll rates with other types of bond financing?

Answer: Potentially yes.

Agenda Item #2 – SR 520 Tolling Update

WSDOT Assistant Secretary of Tolling Craig Stone updated the ACTT with the results of the first year of tolling on SR 520. He reviewed the projections for tolling on this corridor and how traffic has changed since tolling was implemented. Craig Stone also reviewed the role of the Washington State Transportation Commission in setting the toll rates, and he explained the need for an investment-grade traffic and revenue study for tolling the SR 99 tunnel, which will likely happen in 2014.

King County Metro General Manager Kevin Desmond gave an overview of how transit has changed on the SR 520 corridor since tolling was implemented. He noted that the Urban Partnership Agreement has proved to be a great partnership between WSDOT, the Puget Sound Regional Council, Sound Transit and Metro and represents a model for future transportation system management. He explained how additional transit was funded for the corridor and how much transit ridership has increased since the start of tolling.

Question: How significant is the diversion on SR 520 that occurs midday and in off-peak periods?

Answer: Tolling on SR 520 was designed to both manage traffic and to pay for the replacement project's debt. Lowering tolls during the periods you mentioned would reduce diversion but not generate the sufficient revenue. During peak periods, the volumes are very similar to what they were before tolling began.

Question: Can you tell us the percentage of tolled trips by their area of origin or other demographic factors?

Answer: Freight trips on SR 520 account for about one percent of all trips, and this has remained the same since tolling began. The majority of the general purpose trips are people traveling between the Seattle central business district and the central Eastside. We can provide more information about this.

Question: Is it difficult to compare tolling and diversion on the SR 520 corridor to the SR 99 corridor, given that there are so many alternate routes for the latter?

Answer: The diversion rates will be different; the key factor is how good our models are at predicting the diversion. One thing we learned with SR 520 tolling is that people stuck close to their original hours of travel, shifting modes rather than sliding into the shoulder periods.

Agenda Item #3 – Transportation System Approach to Minimizing and Mitigating Diversion

Amy Turner introduced the topic of potential mitigation strategies by reminding the committee of its guiding principles and how the committee has defined the terms diversion, mitigating and minimizing.

WSDOT Urban Corridors Traffic Engineer Mark Bandy reminded the committee of the analysis work completed in two rounds of modeling and reviewed scenario 7 in detail. He reviewed potential uses for the revenue generated by tolling and areas where scenario 7 diversion might put more pressure on the transportation system. He noted that these areas helped inform the transportation system strategies that the agencies have devised.

Mark Bandy explained how the partner agencies came up with a transportation system approach to minimizing and mitigating diversion. This approach takes into account current planning efforts, growth expectations, policy goals, network changes already underway, etc. He discussed what could be achieved with these types of strategies. Mark also reviewed types of strategies to help freight, noting that reliability of routes is very important to freight users.

SDOT Assistant Director of Strategic Projects Bob Chandler reviewed diversion levels for the PM peak period in scenario 7. He explained that the transportation system is sensitive to special events, traffic incidents, etc. and how the system is fragile because there isn't a lot of flexibility in some locations. The strategies developed by agency staff will often improve more than one mode of transportation. He noted that the strategies supplied were not a comprehensive list of improvements for these modes, but were improvements which directly respond to tolling diversion.

Bob Chandler also introduced bicycle and pedestrian strategies for the committee's consideration. He pointed out that another factor to note, which was not listed in the slides is the new Waterfront Seattle project. The City is still concerned about the impacts of diversion on this area.

Kevin Desmond explained that cost and rider experience of transit can be greatly affected by the sensitivities that Bob Chandler mentioned. From King County Metro's perspective, diversion will exacerbate trip variability and decrease Metro's ability to provide reliable trips. He noted that the 2009 SR 99 tunnel agreement, which was signed by State, County and City leaders, included specific transit funding. Kevin Desmond also reviewed types of strategies for transit, many of which were considered as part of the tunnel agreement.

Question: On your slide that explains potential uses for revenue, you list \$200 million for capital contribution. Would that be paid over a 30 year period or all at once via a bond mechanism?

Answer: *The potential revenue uses was part of the discussion about financing mechanisms and costs. We have a rough estimate for how much revenue we will generate but it would be good for the committee to talk in terms of paying the capital costs first. Beyond that, the committee can discuss which priorities we feel best take care of the transportation system.*

Question: Can you explain how the \$735 million in revenue (after collection costs) in scenario 7 is received on an annual basis? Would there be an equal amount earned each year, or would escalation mean more money in later years?

Answer: Scenario 7 modeled a 1.3 percent rate of inflation.

Question: For each transit strategy you've shown, can you analyze them for their cost or benefit in terms of increased ridership?

Answer: We have the ability to forecast how we can drive the transit market and we know how to increase the market share to the downtown corridor. 43 percent of all commute trips coming into downtown are on transit, while less than half of commuters arrive by car.

Question: What is the data for non-commute ridership? This is important information for businesses that rely on people traveling into downtown.

Answer: I am not sure of the exact figures but we do have very good off-peak ridership.

Question: At what capacity are we operating our transit today? Do we have capacity to absorb mode shifts to transit?

Answer: On average we are not at 100 percent capacity, though on some corridors we are over 100 percent. We can provide more information about that.

Comment: The next few years are going to be challenging for Seattle, which is in a boom period. The challenge for us as a committee is that we are focused on one portion of the system, but this portion of the system connects to the broader growth and complexity of the city and region.

Question: Are newer technological advancements, like real-time driver information, considered in your strategies?

Answer: Elements of those are included within these strategies.

Question: Are there examples in other parts of the country where real-time driver information has been used successfully for freight operations?

Answer: Multiple strategies that have been used elsewhere in Seattle could be applied to this corridor. Several local freight companies currently use SDOT's real-time driver information to reroute their drivers during bad traffic. We are pretty advanced compared to the rest of the country in terms of information systems. Conversations need to occur between the agencies about what types of information systems should be installed. We are learning as we go.

Question: Does your definition of freight include trucks and rail?

Answer: It includes mid- and large-sized trucks only.

Question: Do your strategies take into account the impact of coal transport through the city? What assumptions about rail traffic have you made?

Answer: The new South Atlantic Street overpass will reduce the impact of rail traffic through the area. The frequency of potential blockages was not modeled.

Question: How will 500 bicycles in the new bike share program operate in scenario 7?

Answer: That's a broader question, though the cycle track strategy is related to that. We are still examining how we can draw people into bicycling who aren't comfortable riding in downtown traffic.

Agenda Item #4 – Committee Discussion

Maud Daudon provided context for the ACTT recommendations. Amy Turner reviewed the different roles and responsibilities for decision-making bodies that have a role in the tolling process. She then reviewed the process that the committee originally agreed to for coming to a recommendation (i.e. a majority opinion), with space reserved for minority opinions. She also reviewed potential recommendation topics.

Question: Will we have more time at the next committee meeting to discuss these potential recommendation topics? Could you provide a schedule for how and where our recommendations will go, particularly with regard to the Washington State Legislature?

Answer: In terms of toll planning and implementation, the committee's recommendations and commentary will be important for developing the investment-grade study in 2014. Another important component of the tolling process is getting authorization from the Legislature for bonding.

Comment: If we do not find money for our transit system and if there is no money here for mitigation, we'll open a tunnel that has tolls which lead to high diversion and economic costs. We have two years to get mitigation projects up-and-running in advance of the tunnel opening and creating diversion hotspots. Let's think about using some of the money after capital costs to pay for advance mitigation for those hotspots. Every month that goes by we are getting further behind on addressing potential diversion impacts. We are setting ourselves up to fail.

Question: Can we issue bonds to raise capital for mitigation funding?

Answer: We don't yet know how much money will remain for the capital portion of the project after bonding. Until we know this information it's hard to decide what to do with the remaining funds. The committee has previously said that toll revenue should be used for other purposes. The committee could report this timing concern to the agencies and ask about the plan to fund these strategies.

Comment: I am shocked about the loss of transportation funding in June 2014. That's a disaster waiting to happen.

Comment: We should shape recommendations by identifying projects and investments that can be put in place to optimize the corridor. At this point, since we don't know what the revenue figures will look like, we should not be constrained by them.

Question: Please remind me which projects, such as the Coleman Dock rebuild, were assumed to be complete for the model? Is there a way to characterize projects that were not included in the model but which are now happening?

Answer: We can provide that information via email.

Question: I would like more information on the qualitative impact of diversion on the waterfront. I just want to be reassured that we aren't creating a parking lot on the new waterfront street.

Answer: We can provide that information via email.

Agenda Item #5 – Next Steps and Action Items

Maud Daudon invited the audience to ask questions.

Comment: You can't make a recommendation to the State without saying that we don't have enough money to do what we need to do. You can, as a committee, recommend that the Legislature pass a transportation funding package.

Question: Is the committee ready today to recommend implementing scenario 7?

Answer: The committee has not discussed recommending scenario 7, so we cannot answer that question now.

Amy Turner thanked everyone for attending. The next committee meeting will be held in December 2013 and more details about the schedule will be emailed to the committee.

Action items:

- Provide a qualitative assessment of Alaskan Way based on potential diversion.
- Send the SR 520 one-year operations report to committee members.
- Send information about diversion forecasts for mid-day travel periods on SR 520, and information on how much diversion has occurred.
- Send demographic information or data about trip origin and destination of people who use the SR 520 corridor.
- Provide information on the current capacity of the transit system for routes serving the SR 99 corridor.
- Provide a list of planned infrastructure improvements that were and were not included in the model.
- Provide the mode split or transit use during non-commute times in the SR 99 corridor.