

Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program  
Advisory Committee on Tolling and Traffic Management  
Meeting Summary – July 24, 2013

**Committee Members in Attendance**

- Claudia Balducci
- Kurt Beckett
- Maud Daudon
- Bob Davidson
- Brendan Donckers
- Rob Johnson
- Peg Staeheli
- Sung Yang
- Henry Yates

**Committee Members Not in Attendance**

- Rick Bender
- Marcus Charles
- Cynthia Chen
- Phil Fujii
- Sharon Maeda

**Agencies and Staff in Attendance**

- Linea Laird, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
- Todd Trepanier, WSDOT
- Amy Turner, Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program (AWV)
- Josh Posthuma, AWV
- 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) co-chair Claudia Balducci welcomed everyone to the meeting. She noted that the Sound Cities Association wrote a letter to the Puget Sound Regional Council recommending that a regional tolling study be conducted. ACTT administrator Amy Turner reviewed topics from past meetings and the current meeting's objectives.

**Agenda Item #2 – Review Scenario 7 Traffic and Revenue Results**

AWV Special Projects Manager Josh Posthuma provided an overview of the scenario 7 traffic and revenue modeling results. He noted that scenario 7 diversion is between scenarios 5a and 5b in size and scope. He also reviewed the vehicle hours of delay for scenarios 4 - 7.

**Agenda Item #3 – Committee Discussion about Traffic / Revenue Analysis to Date**

Question: Do the car/freight travel time figures refer to streets other than the SR 99 tunnel?  
Answer: *The map showing the travel times on some city arterials is in your packet.*

Question: In WSDOT's previous experience with tolling forecasts, how accurate have your projections proven to be?

*Answer: We can provide updated information to the committee on the actual results of the first year of SR 520 tolling in comparison to the forecasts that were made for that facility.*

Comment: My experience with the SR 520 mediation team (2006-2007) has been that in some places we did a good job predicting outcomes and in others we didn't. Anecdotally, the Mercer Corridor Project forecasts seem to have been more of a mixed bag.

Question: Are you measuring vehicle hours of delay on a yearly basis in the figures shown here? Some of the costs you've shown have been for a 30-year period.

*Answer: Yes, the vehicle hours of delay are shown for only 2017 and we have not calculated this figure into the future. We know that the system will get more congested over time, which will also increase vehicle hours of delay.*

Question: What are the differences between scenarios 5a and 5b in regards to some of the overall costs which are built into them? Did scenario 7 eliminate toll-backed bonds and reduce facility insurance as scenarios 5a and 5b did?

*Answer: We are not making assumptions about financing, as we think that the State Treasurer's office should determine that structure. Scenarios 5a and 5b didn't generate enough revenue to meet the funding target, so with scenario 7 we tried to maximize revenue without any type of financing discussion.*

Question: Do the toll collection costs on other tolled facilities in Washington state include funding operations and maintenance (O&M) and repair and replacement (R&R)?

*Answer: Each toll facility has handled these expenses differently. Tacoma Narrows Bridge used a different financing method. SR 520's toll-backed bonds covered the same expenses but in a different sequence. We have shown a range of expenses for the facility without stating explicitly the sequence in which they would be addressed or the type of bonds that may be used because these decisions have yet to be made.*

Question: Is the use of 24-hour tolls the biggest difference between scenario 7 and scenarios 5a and 5b?

*Answer: Yes.*

Question: Would it be fair to assume that the cost of financing is double the contribution amount?

*Answer: The insurance cost would be added on top of the total contribution. The actual financing costs depend on what types of bonds are sold.*

Comment: We are trying to maximize the revenues without creating havoc in downtown streets. Total revenue collected from tolls is the key number for this committee to focus on. It is up to the state to decide how to spend that revenue and how to finance it. Our goal is to find the strongest revenue stream possible and recommend ways to toll the facility. We can ask for guidance from the State Treasurer's office about financing.

Question: What is the current budget for the Alaskan Way Viaduct O&M and R&R? We should look at these amounts since presumably they will be contributing to the O&M and R&R for the tunnel, and could theoretically help us to find money for mitigation.

*Answer: We can bring these numbers to the next meeting, but the current O&M and R&R numbers will be very different from what is required for the SR 99 tunnel.*

Question: Are you showing the vehicle hours of delay on the entire system, including I-5, thereby affecting the general population?

*Answer: We examined delay within the bounds of our modeling area (from Spokane Street in the south to about North 45th Street in the north), meaning all trips within that area. One way to think about diversion is that it moves eastward from the SR 99 tunnel as people leave that facility to find other routes. As those volumes increase on city streets, traffic slows in the modeling area.*

Comment: Scenario 7 seems almost too good to be true. Even though we have relatively high diversion, the travel times are the same as, or lower than, other scenarios, and that seems to be inconsistent at a 10,000-foot level.

*Response: The model isn't fine-tuned enough to show exactly what is happening on city streets. It is intended instead as a way to compare scenarios.*

Comment: Eventually we will need to identify hotspots where mitigation should be applied.

Comment: Saying there are 18 lanes downtown is misleading since there are only a couple of real through-points and most traffic will spread out on just three lanes.

*Response: We are beginning the discussion of minimizing diversion and mitigating its effects, and that conversation will need to look at these hotspots. We are also looking for feedback from committee members as to which types of scenarios you prefer. This helps the partner agencies scale proposed solutions for our next conversation in September. Several concurrent planning efforts are happening in all of the agencies and we want to think about the right approaches for SR 99 within the larger system.*

Question: Do the different scenarios create different hotspots, or do volumes in the hotspots simply increase?

*Answer: The volumes and locations of the hotspots change in each scenario. Materials from the March 2013 meeting show both of these changes for the round 2 scenarios.*

Question: How do the toll rates effect freight diversion?

*Answer: Earlier scenarios looked at different freight rates to see if varied rates would change freight driving patterns. As the toll rates changed, a different multiplier for freight didn't have a big impact on diversion. Freight diversion differs between the scenarios, but is influenced by the base rate more than the multiplier.*

Comment: After the April 2013 small group meeting, I came away understanding that downstream impacts of high toll scenarios have a large impact on system. They seem to create a net negative and are not worth pursuing because of the need to raise a lot of mitigation money. I am most interested in scenarios 7 and 5a because they keep as many people in the tunnel as possible.

Comment: Furthermore, the scenarios that sharply move people out of the tunnel create a problem that no amount of mitigation can recover.

**Agenda Item #4 – Transportation System Approach to Minimizing and Mitigation Diversion**

SDOT Assistant Director for Strategic Projects Bob Chandler explained the transportation systems approach to improving SR 99, noting that this entails examining all modes and picking a scenario that supports each of them. The agreement that put the SR 99 tunnel project in place noted some of these systems strategies, and the work of the ACTT should build upon that previous work.

WSDOT AWV Program Administrator Linea Laird explained the projects that were developed from 2007 to 2009 to replace the Alaskan Way Viaduct as a multiple-project program, including the South Atlantic Street overpass, the Spokane Street Viaduct widening project, various transit investments, and the Mercer Corridor Project. Bob Chandler then gave an overview of the progress to-date on these projects, noting that the long-term transit services component of the program has yet to be funded. He also reviewed the AWV program components that are still in progress and those that are in design.

Bob Chandler reviewed some strategies that the committee could consider for the tolled SR 99 tunnel. These include bicycle and pedestrian improvements in the downtown corridor and new transit pathways into downtown.

King County Metro General Manager Kevin Desmond stated that transit service improvements already implemented during viaduct replacement construction have been a success and represent an example of how these agencies developed solutions to complex problems. Transit ridership has increased by more than 20 percent in the corridors where mitigation for construction impacts was implemented. This increase is commensurate with a reduction in vehicle traffic on these same corridors. He highlighted the problems that would occur without further funding for transit on these corridors and he explained the benefits that additional transit funding would provide.

Amy Turner explained that today's transit examples were intended to lead into the September mitigation discussion. Additional context and example improvements will be provided for other modes of transport in order for the committee to have a robust conversation about a systems approach to tolling the SR 99 tunnel.

Question: What level of transit service does our model assume?

*Answer: The model assumes transit service at 2017 levels.*

Comment: The transit improvements that have already been implemented were only designed to cover the first phase of construction. There was an expectation per the 2009 agreement that by 2014 there would be a new funding source in place to implement the transit portion of the program. Because we don't have that funding source secured, the transit piece is that much more critical.

Question: You noted that the transit market share is at 43 percent. Is that overall for commuters?  
*Answer: Yes and that includes Sound Transit trains. Our goal is to increase that market share.*

Comment: I like the idea of a systems approach but I want to caution us away from focusing on high-level solutions that rely on other people to solve the problem that has been put before us. I am more interested in the localized examples of how we can mitigate diversion. We have been fighting for four years to get a local option for transit and it is frustrating.

Comment: The committee's progress report mentioned that mitigation was a big issue that is not fully-funded and leaves a gaping hole in the project. The committee has room to make whatever recommendations are necessary to help with this, and to suggest that some revenues from this project can help cover this funding gap.

Comment: The tunnel will open at the end of 2015 and the ACTT plans to complete its work at the end of this year. Many of these mitigation options take time to put in place, including infrastructure construction. I would urge the committee to think about a practical implementation timeline.

Comment: The Executive Review Panel's assessment of the program's transit component was interesting. They noted that the goal of the SR 99 tunnel project was to develop a transportation system, and transit was key to making that system work. Transit wasn't talked about as a mitigation measure; rather, it was discussed as a fundamental part of the project.

Question: During the upcoming September meeting can we reference the materials you've provided regarding hot spots impacts?  
*Answer: Yes we can.*

Question: The afternoon commute experience in downtown Seattle from east to west can occasionally be paralyzing today. Is this a temporary result of all the various construction projects which we can expect to be eliminated when this program is complete?  
*Answer: Yes, somewhat, but we don't know exactly how things will adjust after construction. There are issues with access to the Alaskan Way Viaduct now, such as the Columbia Street on-ramp congestion that affects surrounding streets. Eastbound traffic leaving downtown Seattle is also affected by drivers accessing I-5. This goes back to the reliability and fragility of the downtown street system.*

Question: Can you give us more information about the capacity of city streets for our diversion discussions?  
*Answer: That is something we can bring to the next meeting.*

#### **Agenda Item #5 – Remaining Committee Meetings and Recommendations Discussion**

Amy Turner reviewed the proposed schedule of ACTT meetings and the topics that agency staff expect to cover. She requested that committee members review the progress report before the September meeting in order to inform the recommendations discussion.

Comment / question: Thank you to the staff for all of the work they did on this presentation. A 2010 report made by WSDOT references general obligation bonds as one of the key assumptions that the Office of the State Treasurer uses to finance projects. If that assumption has changed I'd like information on that decision. If we're trying to spend or raise money for mitigation, having a basic range of finance costs would help us understand what is possible.

*Answer: There has not been a decision about this. The co-chairs are hoping to have a discussion with the treasurer's office and will try to bring more information to the committee at the next meeting.*

### **Agenda Item #6 – Next Steps and Action Items**

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

Action items:

- Provide an update on SR 520 tolling and discuss how it relates to prior model forecasts.
- Provide guidance or feedback from the State Treasurer's office on the issue of financing tolls on the SR 99 tunnel.
- Provide the current amount budgeted for AWW O&M and R&R on the Alaskan Way Viaduct.
- Provide information on the capacity of arterials and downtown streets where there are localized effects from tolling.
- Explain localized effects of diversion from scenario 7.