



Doug's Accountability Legacy

What Gets Measured, Gets Managed

When Secretary Doug MacDonald took office in 2001, he brought with him a strong record of performance measurement and accountability, gained through his work as Chief of the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority where he successfully led the clean-up of Boston Harbor. Doug attributed his success to creating a culture of transparency that established credibility with the public. *"You can't do it with hide-the-ball techniques about money or progress or difficulties,"* he told the *Boston Globe*.

And hiding the ball was not what he had in mind for WSDOT either. Once on board, Doug immediately laid the groundwork for the agency to become more transparent and responsive. He began by delivering the first *Gray Notebook*, WSDOT's quarterly performance report, within three weeks. He then continued to establish a performance and accountability culture based on his "what gets measured, gets managed" mantra. His push for frequent and accurate "no surprises" reporting of system and project performance led to public and legislative credibility, two revenue increases and the subsequent defeat of a no-gas tax initiative.

If one wasn't inspired by his passion for this work, then one was sure to be inspired by the results. His hands-on reporting and communication approach eventually convinced even the most skeptical WSDOT staffers and outside observers. After six years at WSDOT, Doug leaves yet another impressive legacy of accountability and project delivery. But most importantly, he leaves us with invaluable lessons in rigorous analysis that focuses on getting to the bottom line, clear and transparent communication that emphasizes narrative reporting, and passion and enthusiasm for public service.

Thank You Doug!



"Highways are crowded and crumbling. Ferries need more cash to stay afloat. Lawmakers so far have no solutions. At the center of it all is the state Department of Transportation, spending \$1.25 billion a year to plug holes."

Seattle Times, April 24, 2001

"We must particularly assure our neighbors and fellow citizens that we understand their demands for accountability and performance from this Department. Good beginnings have been made at WSDOT in meeting these expectations, but we cannot rest until the Department has earned everyone's recognition and respect for 'best in class' customer-service and public accountability."

Doug MacDonald, e-mail to staff, April 23, 2001

"The arrival of Doug MacDonald as state transportation secretary offers hope that a new era is dawning. Yet, this means spending money more effectively, not spending less money."

Puget Sound Business Journal, July 27, 2002

"State Secretary of Transportation Doug MacDonald has proved precisely the engaged, creative visionary we needed to sow the seeds of new thinking and customer service."

Seattle Post-Intelligencer, December 15, 2004

". . . Doug MacDonald has put a sharp focus on accountability and efficiency . . . The Gray Notebook provides in-depth reports on agency and transportation system performance."

Washington State House Democrats, "The TPA of 2005: Saving Lives, Moving People, Delivering Goods"

"I think it's a loss for the state. Doug has been instrumental in getting projects completed on time and on budget, and that's no small thing in the transportation world. Wherever we've seen successes, it's been because Doug has been involved. He brought a level of trust to the department."

Senator Ed Murray, April 27, 2007

April 2001: Doug MacDonald begins his tenure as WSDOT Secretary

November 2002: Washington voters reject Referendum 51 transportation plan and gas tax

December 2002: The first of WSDOT's "Straight Talk" series on the funding crisis was released.

2003 Legislature approves Nickel gas tax; funds 158 projects worth \$4.5 billion

2001

2002

2003

2004

May 2001: First *Gray Notebook* published

August 2001: GNB publishes WSDOT's first congestion report

May 2002: First "Real Time" travel time web site activated

June 2003: GNB publishes WSDOT's first Before-and-After safety project analysis and first edition of "no surprises" project reporting *Beige Pages*



February 2001: WSDOT staff were surprised at Doug's quick understanding of agency operations. He requested—and absorbed—an incredible amount of information prior to his first day on the job. Pictured is the first shipment of background material and performance reports headed to his Boston home.



May 2002: Texas Transportation Institute annually publishes the Urban Mobility Report, which ranks metropolitan areas by the severity of congestion. Doug publicly challenged TTI's methodology and temporarily withdrew WSDOT support for the report.

Seattle Post-Intelligencer

During MacDonald's reign. . . [WSDOT] reformed its cost-estimating procedures and posted periodic internal evaluations of its performance on its Web site. . . Transportation-watchers credited him with restoring the department's credibility and image, and with helping pass two recent gas-tax increases.

April 27, 2007

Doug MacDonald took charge of WSDOT in April 2001. Then House Transportation Committee Co-Chair Maryann Mitchell said, "It seems to me that he is more of a hands-on type of person." She could not have possibly understood how much of an understatement this was.

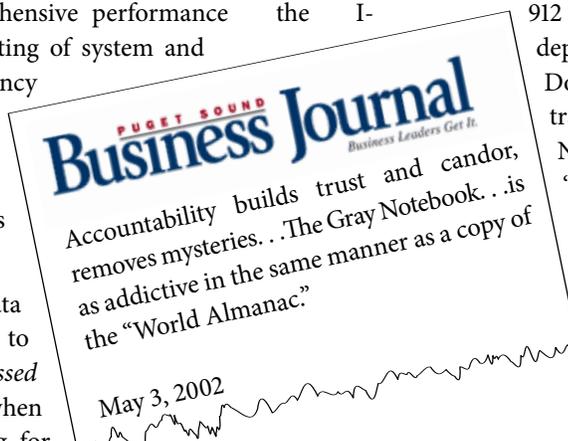
right now, in the next few weeks, I want to make sure transportation information is cogently and cohesively accessible to people. As promised, he quickly instituted a comprehensive performance program with frequent and accurate reporting of system and agency performance to support transparency and accountability. This began with the first publication of WSDOT's quarterly performance report, the *Gray Notebook* (GNB) on May 14th, 2001, just three weeks after coming to WSDOT.

Doug's insistence upon using meaningful data was not limited to WSDOT. In a challenge to conventional wisdom the new Secretary "*Messed With Texas*" and gained national attention when he temporarily withdrew WSDOT funding for

the Texas Transportation Institute's (TTI) renowned annual Urban Mobility Report. This was not a reflection on the expertise of TTI, but an indication of how serious Doug was about focusing on operational strategies and performance measures based on the most efficient use of the system. Doug told the *Seattle Times* that "*The public needs to know what we are doing to fight congestion, and whether it's working or not. Everybody gets so mesmerized by TTI, but it doesn't tell us what we need to know.*" Thus WSDOT began a national trend to focus on systems operations and reliability.

Doug's consistent communication about funding needs through his effective "Straight Talk" series, the GNB, and web based accountability reporting (<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/accountability/default.htm>) proved important in gaining the legislature's and public's trust to provide much needed funding for billions in long-overdue transportation projects. In 2003 and 2005, the legislature approved gas tax increases that amounted to a total of over \$13 billion. An initiative to repeal the 2005 tax was launched through the I-912 campaign, which challenged the department's ability to deliver projects.

Doug pointed to the department's strong track record in delivering the scheduled Nickel projects on time and on budget: "*We have done it –so tell me again what the problem is here. It is not that we have been untrustworthy. We have information, the story, on every project, available to the public. I believe the first answer to accountability is telling the public what is going on.*"

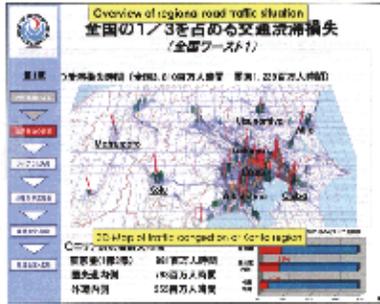


2005 Legislature approves second gas tax increase, funding 274 projects worth \$8.5 billion

November 2005: I-912 which would repeal gas tax, defeated by voters

December 2005: Doug appointed first cabinet-level secretary

July 2007: The new Tacoma Narrows Bridge opens



April 2004: Doug joined a scanning tour to New Zealand, Australia and Japan. Doug brought back this 3-D graph of a Japanese congestion report and requested that WSDOT staff replicate it in the GNB- "Make this happen."



November 2005: The I-912 campaign sought to repeal the gas tax. The vision of "transportation, 1912-style" did not resonate with voters, who instead placed their confidence in WSDOT to deliver needed projects.

September 2006-January 2007: National "Doug MacDonald Challenge" issued. The winner poured rice through a funnel to demonstrate that a steady flow maximizes throughput

The "Doug MacDonald Challenge": Though Doug was the first Secretary in over 20 years not to have been a politician prior to coming to WSDOT, his acumen in communicating with the public was unrivaled. The "rice experiment" was delivered to numerous audiences, from TRB to the morning news programs, and was consistently well-received.



K5 THE HOME TEAM
If anything, MacDonald was outspoken and propelled what had been a fairly low key position into the limelight. Under MacDonald, highways weren't boring anymore.
April 27, 2007

The initiative was defeated by voters. This was the first time in state history that voters defeated a tax decrease. The *Tacoma News Tribune* noted that "I-912's defeat was a ringing endorsement of the job MacDonald and the DOT were doing."

\$1,000 of his own money to the best public entry that could translate the jargon "throughput maximization" into Plain English in the "Doug MacDonald Challenge."

the news tribune
When he showed up in early 2001, the state was politically paralyzed when it came to transportation. MacDonald did much to change this . . . He made the DOT more transparent and communicative. When the Legislature did approve a 5 cent gas tax to finance some urgent projects, he made sure those projects got done on time and within budget.
May 1, 2007

After six years of successfully increasing the public's confidence in the department's ability to deliver services and projects, such as

the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, Doug announced his intention to resign. In an April 2007 e-mail to employees, he stated, "I take great pride in the work we have done together for the citizens of Washington State. . . we have used our time and our energy effectively and we have achieved remarkable gains. Thank you all. We have done it together."

With the increased funding came changes: the Legislature determined that the department should be a cabinet agency and report directly to the Governor. In December 2005, the Governor announced that Doug was her choice for Secretary. The decision was well-received and Senate Transportation Chairwoman Mary Margaret Haugen said that MacDonald should have no trouble getting confirmed: "Doug has worked really hard and made some real important changes in the department. I do believe there is a lot more accountability and he has listened to our pleas for more information from that agency."

Doug never shied away from setting the record straight. He stressed candor and emphasized clearly communicating transportation needs and issues based on solid data and performance results. His ability to garner media and public support were uncanny. This was particularly exemplified by his July 2006 Transportation Research Board (TRB) announcement offering

Seattle Post-Intelligencer
MacDonald came from outside the state, injecting vital doses of accountability, openness, and determination.
May 1, 2007

With Doug's passion for public service, we know that whatever Doug will take on next will be good for Washington State. We wish him as much success and fun in his next "hands-on" endeavor as he had at WSDOT.

Anatomy of a Doug Edit

One of the highlights of working with Doug MacDonald are his trademark edits. Below is an example of what WSDOT staff refer to as “paper doll” edits.

Doug brought sophisticated performance measurement tools to WSDOT. Never mind the red pen. Scissors and scotch tape are the primary tools needed here.



One of the more successful submissions- one sentence remains unchanged.

Who needs Excel?

Doug does some of his best work at night. . .

“See my rider” means: Doug uses the author’s text to write his own.

Being succinct yet detailed is no small challenge. Five pages into one- “no sweat”.

Deciphering Doug’s handwriting requires cryptographic skill and sometimes knowledge of dead languages.

Communicating Folio Style

In the spirit of Edward Tufte, Doug declared WSDOT a PowerPoint Free Zone in January 2004 and suggested that all WSDOT Transportation Research Board (TRB) presentations use folios or other means for communicating the various topics to be presented. The word spread rapidly across the 10,000 member national TRB conference. WSDOT’s folio presentations became the talk of the town and were very successful.

Doug instituted the use of the four page folio format early on and it quickly became a trademark of WSDOT’s communication style. It has proven very successful in communicating key issues clearly and succinctly to various audiences such as congressional meetings, academic presentations, legislative hearings, public information sessions, or the discussion of innovative and thought provoking issues such as the environmental measurement “challenges” in the 2005 TRB folio to the right.

The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint

Edward R. Tufte

Bullet Outlines Dilute Thought

For the naïve, bullet lists may create the appearance of hard-headed organized thought. . . a study in the Harvard Business Review found generic, superficial, simplistic thinking in the bullet lists widely used. . . bullet outlines can make us stupid.

The New York Times
PowerPoint Makes You Dumb
December 14, 2004